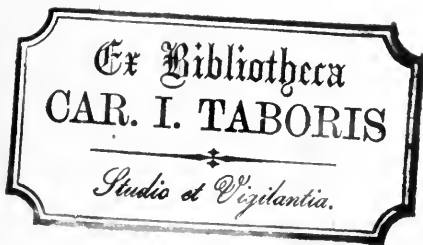




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SPANISH LEGENDARY TALES.

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SPANISH LEGENDARY TALES

COLLECTED BY
MRS. S. G. C. MIDDLEMORE
AUTHOR OF 'ROUND A POSADA FIRE'



London
CHATTO AND WINDUS, PICCADILLY
1885
(The right of translation is reserved)



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P R E F A C E.

IN speaking of myself on the title-page as the "author" of "Round a Posada Fire," I wish to explain that I use the word "author" simply in default of a better one. In that book, as in this, the stories told are popular in their character, and are the creation of no nameable individual. All given in the present volume I gathered in the course of a residence of several years in the Pyrenees, and of one or two visits in the north of Spain. Those from whom I heard them (and many more of the same kind), and whom I questioned as to their origin, could assign no other source to them than oral tradition. My own share in bringing them before the public consists in having heard them, remembered them, and put them into English in as nearly as possible the words in which they were told to me. Though I have from time to time been obliged to insert connecting or introductory passages, yet the words, as well as the substance of the tales, are mainly those of the original stories.

I need not remind anyone at all familiar with the popular life of Spain, that the prose legend, as well as the ballad, has in the course of time acquired there a fixed and definite shape; and passes from mouth to mouth, and is handed down from one generation to another, with but few verbal changes.

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FOLKLORE

The reason for this is not far to seek: the greater part of the Spanish people have hitherto found their chief mental recreation in folk-lore. Popular legends, whether in prose or verse, have been accordingly developed in Spain to an extent not easy to be matched elsewhere. Intelligent and imaginative, and at the same time untaught and superstitious, the Spanish peasant finds in these tales one of his chief pleasures.

The mere fact that they exist in vast numbers, and that many of them bear upon the same subject, renders it necessary that, if they are to be remembered at all, they must be remembered with verbal accuracy; otherwise they would in a short time become hopelessly confused one with another. One of the most popular subjects of Spanish folk-lore is the "Christ of the Vega." I have myself heard at least a dozen legends turning on this theme; and many more versions must certainly exist. It would be impossible to keep these various stories apart in the popular memory, unless they had become, so to speak, stereotyped. And this is the case with the majority of Spanish prose legends. They have assumed, in the course of time, a fixed and traditional shape, in their words no less than in their subjects.

It is a truism that the memory of those who cannot read or write is, on the average, stronger than that of those who have had a literary education. When once education is diffused among the masses of the Spanish people, those legends which have not been committed to writing will be gradually lost. The new interests which education brings with it will also weaken among the people those tastes to which tales of the marvellous appeal. But this time seems still to be distant in Spain.

At the present moment ballads, and tales such as these, are widely current among the people. The number of stories which many of them can carry in their memory is astonishing. I have known an instance of a Spaniard, who had devoted much time to collecting legends by word of mouth, who certainly knew several hundreds by heart. I have myself a retentive memory, but of the very large number which I have heard I cannot remember with verbal accuracy more than between forty and fifty. But, in general, the powers of educated persons fall in this respect far short of what can be achieved by those who have never used the substitutes for memory which education, as commonly practised, offers so freely. I may remark, in passing—to draw an illustration from the popular life of Italy—that the actors in the Tuscan peasant drama are, for the most part, unable to read or write, and that many of them learn with ease very large numbers of plays.

These stories then, let me repeat, are not my own in any other sense than that I have remembered them, and put them into English. Wherever I have been able to trace them in a printed form, I have mentioned the fact; but the source from which I got them is popular tradition. I have printed only those of which I had a tolerably exact verbal remembrance.

No better instance can be found of the nature and history of a Spanish legend than the well-known tale of the “Lovers of Teruel.”* There is probably no story more widely known in Spain, and no person with any first-hand knowledge of Spanish folk-lore can fail to be familiar with it.

* See note to the legend “The Moorish Promise,” p. 245, in which the history of another such story is also traced.

It is printed, as commonly told, in my former book. The story dates back at least to the thirteenth century, and while it has been repeatedly used as a subject for literary treatment, it remains a popular legend to this day. It is the theme of a poem by Yagué de Salas, published in the year 1616; of another by Artieda, published in 1581; of the well-known play by Montalban; of a second by Tirso de Molina, published in 1635; of a third by Hartzenbusch, published in 1836; and of an anonymous novel, published in 1838 in Valencia. Prose versions in print of a tale so old and so widely popular must certainly exist, but I have met with none. There is a very curious fact to be mentioned with regard to this story. In many cases, a poetical rendering of a common legend maintains itself in the popular memory side by side with the prose version; and in some cases the verbal agreement between the two is very striking. Yet I have looked carefully through the *Romancero General*, containing many hundreds of legends, without finding a trace of any poetical version of this most popular story. The collection contains, nevertheless, renderings in verse of many prose legends comparatively unknown. I may add, that this story, still told by thousands of unlettered Spaniards, passed at an early period into Italy, and was used by Boccaccio in one of his tales; and again, not many years ago, was adapted from the "*Decamerone*" by Alfred de Musset in his "*Sylvia*."

I have only a word to add in conclusion. Friends have remarked to me on the weird and tragic air of many of these tales. The answer is simply that such, as a fact, is the general character of the Spanish legend. Others have said that the style of them seemed to be of a different character from that which might be expected

PREFACE.

of peasants and muleteers. To this the reply is that the Spanish, like the Italian peasant, must not be judged by the same standard as the English. Illiterate as the southern peasant may be, he is not wholly destitute of what may be fairly called culture.

Tigri remarks on the purity of the style in which the Tuscan peasantry compose their "Stornelli" and "Rispetti;" and Ticknor, as well as others, has made a similar observation with regard to the Spanish Romances. Neither in speech nor manners is there in Spain that gulf between the educated and uneducated classes which exists in England.

This volume attempts to give a faithful reflection of the popular imagination of Spain, when it turns from poetry to prose as its means of expression.

MARIA TRINIDAD HOWARD MIDDLEMORE.

CHELSEA, MAY, 1885.



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SPANISH LEGENDARY TALES.

I.

THE DAUGHTER OF THE RIVER.

THE Principality of the Asturias is a narrow strip of country, separated from Leon by a barrier of hills. A second range to the north, which fringes the Bay of Biscay, is called La Cordillera de la Costa. Both of these grand chains have offshoots which run down into the valleys. It is a land of hills and dales, meadows, rivers, streams, and forests, while here and there the scenery becomes very wild and grand. The province is one, which, from its great variety of landscape, is a favourite both with artists and lovers of trout-fishing.

About an hour's ride from Luarca, in the Asturias, there is a deep and romantic valley of rocks, shaded by tall chestnut trees. Beyond this valley is a wild and dreary country, which leads to Gizon and Oviedo. In this part the Asturian mountains rise to a considerable height. For the most part they consist of a dark granite, covered here and there with a thin layer of earth. They run down in broken ridges very near to the sea, and have deep and precipitous defiles, each with its rivulet, which falls into the sea. The road lies across these defiles, of which there are seven, and they are called in the language of the country "Las Siete Bellotas" (The Seven Acorns). The middle one has a grand

and solemn air. A roaring torrent pours down the side, and flows straight and swiftly to the sea, while at the upper end of it is a precipitous wall of rock (as black as night), which is several hundred feet high. From this gorge on either side small glens branch off, and some of these are so overgrown with trees and brush that you can hardly see into them beyond a few yards.

This part of Spain is much frequented by artists during the early autumn and the spring. The "venta," or hostelry, is but an indifferent one, but eggs can always be had, and a savoury "puchero" or "guisado" (stew) got ready very soon, so that those accustomed to Spanish cookery need not starve.

Here, one lovely evening late in April, was assembled a party of three artists. They were seated round a small table in the corner laughing gaily, and comparing notes as to their respective day's work. Each one of these young men would have attracted notice anywhere. The one who sat at the head of the table, and served out the "guisado" of hare, was a tall, lithe creature, with bushy black hair, pleasant restless black eyes, and a smile that lit up his otherwise grave face like sunshine. He looked as though he had much talent and a keen, observing nature. His hands were nervous and well-shaped, but the fingers were long and restless, and looked as though they were used to much plastic work. Indeed, he had begun his artistic career as a sculptor, but finding that many effects which appealed to his artistic nature could not easily be rendered in marble without debasing the art, he had taken up water-colour painting with great success, and was one of the rising young artists of Spain. His name was Don Ramon Garcilasso.

Opposite to him sat a young man the very reverse of

him. Fair, spectacled, blue-eyed, with a round bullet head and a German appearance, he talked in a quiet and indifferent way, as if he took no interest in anything. He was called by his friends "Pancho," but his real name was Francisco Carvajal.

The third artist was much younger than his companions, very dreamy, very emotional and excitable. He was the son of a rich Barcelona merchant, and needed nothing that fortune could give him. But he had taken a fancy to the idea of being an artist, and his father had acquiesced in his desire. His work was always done by fits and starts. He had never known what it was to really earn his own living, and be uncertain of his daily bread if he did not work, as his two friends did.

The two earnest young artists, his jovial companions, did their very best, by dint of joking and poking fun at Juan Padilla (as the youngest artist was called), to instil into his mind a little of the ardent love for his work that they felt for theirs, but it was of no avail. For days he would idle about, fishing and dreaming, and never look at his easel or his picture.

The long common room in which these three young men were sitting was filled with "arrieros" (muleteers), guides, and gipsies. An elderly woman, assisted by two scraggy, ugly daughters, was preparing the different "pucheros" round the fire, while the owners of the several dishes overlooked their proceedings with attentive eyes.

Gradually, however, the respective meals were cooked, and those who had been awaiting them subsided into silence, which was only broken by the cheerful chat of the three artists at the round table.

"Juan," cried Garcilasso, "we shall have to introduce you to the Mist Maiden, the daughter of the river,

if you continue so very dreamy. You are hardly company for a mouse."

"Have you ever seen her?" said Juan, waking up.

"No, no, not I," replied Garcilasso, with a twinkle in his eye; "but ask Carvajal about her. He has seen her, and can tell you all about her."

"Really, can you?" cried Juan in a fever of excitement, and turning to Carvajal, who sat looking at his young companion with the quiet stolidity of one satisfied to the utmost with his dinner.

"Yes, I have seen her," he replied slowly, "and I never wish to see her again. She had the loveliest figure and eyes of any creature that I ever saw."

"How did it all happen?" asked Juan eagerly.

"Well," answered Carvajal, twirling his glass round and round, and looking at the tablecloth, "it happened this way. I went down to the 'Siete Bellotas' to paint the cascade for a commission I had, and was just preparing to put up my easel and materials after a hard day's work, when I suddenly became aware of the presence of a very beautiful woman. I remember at the time wondering how in the name of the Three Kings she had come there without my hearing her; because just where the best view is to be had of the cascade, there is a great quantity of brushwood all about, you remember," he said, raising his eyes towards Garcilasso, "and no sound had I heard of crackling or moving. However, she passed me, and made directly for the cascade. I noticed that she was dressed in a gauzy, filmy white stuff, which showed off her figure to the greatest advantage. When she had approached to almost the edge of the precipice, which falls sheer down two hundred feet at least, she paused a long time. All sorts of ideas of suicide and insanity crossed my mind as I hurried after her to prevent her

from doing anything desperate. She must have heard my footsteps, although I moved as noiselessly as I could, in order not to frighten her; for she turned slowly round and faced me. She had a truly lovely face, but all I remember distinctly were the most exquisite deep violet eyes that I ever saw in a human head. They were like the Mediterranean when the sun shines on it—deep and unfathomable, and yet dancing with light and blueness. She was singing to herself in a sweet low voice, and these were the words she sang :

“‘ Soy la hija del rio y de la niebla,
 Y cantando paso al mar ;
 Cuando siento los besos de las olas,
 Soy tan feliz que no puedo callar.
 A quien toco al pecho y á la frente,
 Ello no quiere mas olvidar
 Los ojos y la cancion de la niña
 Quien se llama la hija del mar.
 Vïen conmigo, y cantaremos
 Las delicias del amor.’

“‘ I am the child of the river and mist,
 And I sing as I flow to the sea ;
 When the touch of the waves has my forehead kissed,
 I am happy as happy can be.
 Whom I touch on the breast and the forehead
 Remembers for ever and ever
 The eyes and the song of the maiden
 Who is born of the mist and the river.
 Come with me, let’s sing together
 The delights of love and sea.’

“‘ By this time I was close to her ; and as she sang,

“‘ A quien toco al pecho y á la frente,’

she suited the action to the word, and laid her slender white hand on my forehead and breast. My heart seemed suddenly to turn cold, and my feet refused to move. There I stood, gazing at her ; she smiled in my face, and with a most graceful movement lay down

in the foam of the cascade and disappeared from my eyes.

“I leaned over that black and dreadful precipice, fearing to see her dashed to pieces at the bottom. I could see nothing. But I heard her voice singing :

“And while singing I pass to the sea,
Come with me, we'll sing together
The delights of love and sea.”

As Carvajal ended his story, he raised his eyes and looked at Juan to see the effect upon the boy. He was startled at the change in him. Instead of the dreamy look in his eyes, there was a dangerous excitement in them. His cheeks were deeply flushed, and he was leaning on the table, listening with breathless attention.

“I should like to see her,” he said, after drawing a deep breath.

“Better not,” said one of the muleteers from the other end of the room, joining in the conversation. “Better not.

“‘Las delicias del amor,’

in her company, mean, in the end, either madness or death. The third sight is enough.”

Seeing that Juan's curiosity was greatly excited, Carvajal turned the conversation abruptly to other subjects, and shortly after they parted for the night.

Carvajal upbraided Garcilasso, when they were alone, for asking him to tell his adventure with the mist-maiden to such an excitable and imaginative person as Juan, saying that he might come to harm, according to the superstition, if he followed the Daughter of the River many times. But Garcilasso laughed at him for thinking such things, and Carvajal soon forgot all about the matter, and fell asleep.

But not so the young Juan. The story had made a

strong impression upon his mind; far stronger than either of his companions dreamed of. He longed to see the mist-maiden and her beautiful eyes. He turned and tossed on his bed, and longed for the day to come that he might go to the Cascade of the Bellotas. At last he fell into a heavy sleep, and when he awoke he found that his two friends had gone to their work, and had left a message telling him where they were to work that day.

Now was his opportunity. His companions, who would have laughed at him had he confided to them his desire to see the beautiful Daughter of the River, were gone. The coast was clear, and he could do as he pleased. So, seizing his easel and the necessaries for painting, he started off to the Bellotas, with a lighter heart and gayer spirits than he had had for months. For was he not going to test one of the peasant superstitions of his country? Meanwhile his companions became more and more uneasy as the day wore on and Juan did not make his appearance. Neither of them dared to state his fears to the other. They cast hurried glances about them from time to time, and though each suspected the anxiety of the other, they worked in moody silence. Carvajal recalled the feverish excited look on the young painter's face the evening before, and felt certain that his fears were likely to be realized, and that Juan had gone to meet the mist-maiden, while Garcilasso remembered with pain his scepticism when "Pancho" had warned him of his doubts.

At last, about four o'clock, they both got so uneasy that they could bear their anxiety no longer, but turned to each other with white faces and trembling lips.

"Let us go and find him!" they cried in one breath; and with one accord they packed their pictures away, and started for the Bellotas.

The evening light was the best that they could have had for their sketches; and it was to their artistic natures a grievous trial to leave such a chance. Little flaky pink and blue clouds were floating like gossamer islands in the sky, while the sun departed in a golden glory. But their hearts were too sore with trouble, and they could not stay. How should they face the confiding father in Barcelona on their return, if anything happened to the young lad who had been entrusted to their care?

It was quite a long walk to the Bellotas from their work, and they arrived there long after night had fallen. But no trace of Juan could they find. They went to the edge of the precipice, and called and shouted, whistled and whooped. No answer came. All they could hear was a distant voice singing. The wind carried back to their ears the refrain—

“Come with me, we’ll sing together
The delights of love and sea.”

“There is that accursed witch again,” said Carvajal between his teeth. “I only hope that the boy has not been here to-day.”

“You do not really believe that superstition, do you, Pancho?” inquired Garcilasso earnestly.

“I do believe my own eyes, without the shadow of a doubt,” returned Carvajal gloomily, “and I have certainly seen her.”

After searching for nearly an hour, and calling in every direction, they returned together to their inn. Nothing had been seen there of Juan since ten in the morning, and it was then nearly eight at night. The two artists looked at each other with anxious faces, and were planning what they had better do next, when the door opened and in walked Juan.

He looked very white; his hair and face were dripping wet, and his eyes were wild. To the earnest inquiries of his friends he made only surly replies, sometimes requiring the question to be repeated several times before answering at all.

“But where have you been?” cried Garcilasso and Carvajal. “We have been expecting you at the forest, where we were painting; and then we went to the Bellotas, but could find no trace of you. Where *have* you been?”

“I have seen *her*,” said Juan, with more energy and excitement in his voice than he had shown since he entered. “You did not say half enough about her eyes. They are truly divine.”

“And did she touch you, or do you any harm? For you look as though you had seen a ghost.”

Juan seemed not to hear for a few minutes, and then answered slowly, while his two friends stared at him in terrified silence:

“She touched me here,” pointing to his forehead, “and here,” putting his hand on his heart; “and then I lost her and myself too.”

After this speech he finished his dinner in perfect silence, not joining in any of the bright sallies and genial conversation with which his two companions tried to cheer him. Indeed, he hardly heard a word, and very shortly left them.

“We must keep guard over Juan,” were the first words Garcilasso said when Juan had gone. “We must neither of us leave him for a single minute if we can avoid it, for either he will go raving mad with this foolish superstition (I wish my tongue had been cut out before I ever spoke of that witch), or he will throw himself into the waterfall and kill himself.”

For a week they managed to keep a constant watch

over Juan ; and although he was very surly and cross, they were patient, and tried to make amends for their former indiscretion in telling him of the mist-maiden.

But Juan grew restless under this eternal vigilance. He longed unutterably for the sight of her who had bewitched him ; and he felt that no matter what the consequences were, he *must* see her again. So one day he told his two friends that he was ill, and indeed he looked so. For nights he had had only troubled sleep, sometimes none at all. His cheeks were sunken, his complexion grey, and his eyes hollow, but lighted up by an intense fever of excitement. He really looked as though he were in the last stages of consumption.

Garcilasso and Carvajal felt that he was perhaps better alone, feeling so ill, and went to their work, quite satisfied that they would find him the stronger for the rest when they came back.

They were hardly out of sight before Juan got up, dressed himself very hastily, and went out. About noon Garcilasso and Carvajal were startled by the appearance of one of the scraggy daughters of the landlady, who, white as a ghost and breathless with the haste she had made, gasped out that the sick young gentleman had got up in his delirium and had gone in the direction of the cascade, and she was afraid would be drowned unless they hastened to his assistance.

Hurriedly leaving their work, they at once ran to the waterfall, and there, after much search, found Juan lying close to the black precipice in a dead faint. They lifted him and carried him to the inn, where for weeks he lay between life and death, and where the two young painters exercised their utmost skill in nursing him and giving him all the remedies which they could remember as being safe in cases such as his. In his delirium he would shout the song of the mist-maiden,

while Carvajal and Garcilasso gazed at each other with white and frightened faces. The fever after a time abated, only to leave Juan as weak as a child.

One night Garcilasso was watching beside him, and, tired with the constant nursing, fell sound asleep in his chair. Waking after a time with a start, he found the bed empty and Juan gone.

He roused Carvajal, and they both went at once as fast as they could to the cascade. They heard a wild sweet music, and Juan shouting out,

“ We'll sing together
The delights of love and sea.”

When they arrived at the spot they saw a white heap, which proved to be their friend, lying on the edge of the precipice. They lifted him up, but Juan Padilla was gone beyond the power of human aid, and mournfully they carried their burden back to the inn.

As they moved slowly along the paths overgrown with brushwood, they could hear the mist-maiden singing :

“ He who once hears my wild solemn singing
Will not care ever more to forget
That while I towards the dark sea was winging,
On the way thither we two had met.
I'm the child of the mist and the river,
I'm the loveliest pearl of the sea.”

II.

THE FIRE SPIRIT.

THERE is a small village on the way from Granada to Murcia, called Purullena, where the peasants used to dwell in caves and holes which were dug out of the soft hillocks. The road is studded all along with crosses and memorials of desperate fights, drunken bouts, and quarrels about love matters. The village itself is so squalid that but very few of the wretched tenements which are used for sheltering people could be called houses. In them, however, lived many persons, who were only too thankful to have a place to hide themselves in, or to take refuge from the severe cold, which sometimes penetrates even to Murcia.

In one of these forlorn and wretched huts lived a poor old woman named Cipriana, who was too far advanced in years to do very hard work, but who occasionally helped her neighbours for a bit of dinner, and took care of the babies of the village, while their mothers worked in the fields. She had had a hard life; first she was in service, then a farm-hand, and then a tailor. At last she married a fascinating barber, who was the "Figaro" of Murcia. He was somewhat uncertain in his temper at home, though outside he was always the cheeriest and brightest of beings. There was nobody like Antonio for spreading the last scandal, or telling the best story in the whole country round;

and he cut hair and shaved beards as though his instruments were made of satin. He was the favourite of all, and at last had a large practice in shaving and surgery, and especially in the use of cupping and leeches. But with his large practice he took to very dissipated habits and began to spend like a prince. He took his wife with him sometimes when he travelled, but she was more often left behind than taken. In his absences, she did the work at home, going as barber to the different customers, and doing her work very well too. But the money came to an end at last, and Antonio never returned to his wretched wife. Although it was almost a blessing to get rid of him, as he had turned out to be the bane of her life, she grieved and mourned over him as if he had been the best of husbands.

Time at last gave her peace, and she managed to live by barbering and tailoring in her native village of Purullena. When she grew older and more infirm, she took to doing odds-and-ends for her neighbours for a meal, and watching the tiny babies while their mothers were at work.

It was the "night of the dead;" and old Cipriana was sitting over her "brasero," musing over her past life, and wondering why some should be so very poor and others so very rich, when a voice almost at her elbow said:

"I can't answer that question, but I can tell you, good mother, that if the elements had their own way, everyone, rich or poor, should have his share of the good things of life. We try to distribute them equally, but some of us can't, on account of the precautions with which man has surrounded himself."

Cipriana, who had fallen half asleep, roused herself and looked about her, expecting to see some friendly visitor who had come to have a chat and cheer her up

on this ghostly night (for the spirits are supposed to return to earth on that night, and in Spain neighbours and friends congregate round the fire to tell stories and keep each other company during the wanderings of the spirits). But she could see no one, and was settling herself down for another nap when a small, flute-like voice at her elbow said, "I am here on the 'brasero.'" There, sure enough, was the queerest little pigmy of a creature that ever the world saw, sitting upon the live coals, with a curious long red cap upon his head, and his red slippers hanging out behind at the heels like two more caps. Cipriana was much astonished at the apparition, but the elf seemed to feel quite at home, and nodded to her in the most friendly way.

"Do not be afraid of me," he said, "for I may be of some help to you in improving your condition. I am sure you are poor enough and old enough to be taken care of by some generous soul who could afford it. There are lots of them at Madrid; but it is a queer world, after all," he said musingly, "for however rich people are, they never feel so, but always think they can afford nothing to anyone but themselves."

"But who are you, my little friend?" said Cipriana, much frightened, and gazing at her unknown guest with great alarm.

"I am a good friend to the human race, if men would but believe it, for I force landlords to rebuild when the houses are too unhealthy to be lived in."

"But where do you live, my little friend?" asked Cipriana, more alarmed than ever.

"Oh, anywhere," was the airy answer; "generally, when no work is to be done, in the centre of the earth; but all over the world, in fact, at one time or another."

"And why are you sitting on the blazing coals? I should think that you would find it uncomfortable.

Can I do anything for you in the way of eating? You must be hungry," continued the poor old dame, frightened to find that she was housed for the night with a spirit that would not explain itself. "I am not rich," as you see, but perhaps I could cook something to please you," she said, inwardly hoping fervently that her unwelcome guest would speedily depart. But nothing seemed further from the pigmy's thoughts.

"Well, my good dame," laughed the little man, "I won't trouble you to cook me anything, because, as I am a fire spirit, I am generally hot enough; but if you have a few sticks and a few lucifer matches, I will see to my supper myself."

The old woman was more frightened than ever, and tremblingly brought to her extraordinary visitor the only few remaining sticks and matches she had, wondering what she should do herself to light the morning's bit of charcoal.

"Don't worry about the morning's fire," said the pigmy, answering her thought. "You will find plenty of firewood ready, and necessaries to last you until my next visit."

"Oh!" groaned Cipriana in spirit; "he is coming again!"

"Yes; I am coming again," replied the little man; "and although you are so afraid of me, and have been hoping that I would not remain for the evening and night, I will tell you that I have come to help you to make a fortune, and shall not stay any longer than just to put you in the way of doing so. But first I must have some supper."

Whereupon he put the wood in the brasier, sat in the flames while it burned up, and calmly eat the brimstone of the matches, while he cast the wooden part into the brasier under him. Having eaten a bundle of

matches, he apparently felt refreshed. His cheeks were flushed and crimson; his cap became of a flame-coloured red, and his shoes gave out a deep glow.

Cipriana stared with horror at her little guest. But he appeared very comfortable, and took no heed of her distress.

“As I told you before,” he said, “I am the spirit of fire, and I know whenever any incendiary business is to be done in any part of the world. There will be a very destructive fire before very long at Murcia, and if you predict it to the authorities, you can make your fortune. Of course you must not expect to be listened to at first; but when they find that what you say comes true, then you will be well repaid. It seems hard that an honest woman like you should have hardly enough to eat, and that charletans should reap their thousands of reales.”

Here the little man got off his brasier and prepared to go, to Cipriana’s great relief.

“Remember,” he said, as he stood on the stone floor, “in a fortnight’s time part of Murcia will be in flames. Get as much money as you can scrape together to take you there, and predict the fire to the governor or anyone in authority; and if it turn out successfully, you shall see me again.”

With which words he departed as suddenly as he had appeared, leaving the old woman nearly senseless with fright. In fact, she was found the next morning by some of the neighbours sitting in her chair staring into vacancy, and muttering to herself; no fire in the brasier, and she nearly perished with cold. As a rule she was an early riser, and was up and about before her neighbours. So they naturally wondered at finding her door shut and the windows closed after the sun was high in the heavens. At first they thought Cipriana

must be ill when they saw her sitting in her chair regardless of all about her. But she soon roused herself, and went about the house doing her work as usual, and replying courteously to all the questions that her neighbours plied her with. She kept her own counsel, however, about the little visitor of the night before, and the gossips of the village got very little more information out of her than that she had been thinking pretty deeply about her life, as everyone should on All-Hallow-E'en.

Silent though she was, however, she had her mind full of ideas. Her head was spinning with all that the pigmy had said, that she might make something out of this fire that was to break out in Murcia in a fortnight's time, and that she was to scrape money enough to take her there, and to warn the authorities that this fire was to come.

But how was she to get the money together to take the journey? The dear saints knew that she was as poor as a marmot; that she had nothing really but the clothes she stood in, and a few wretchedly poor articles for daily needs. And where was she to get the money from, with which she was to travel and astonish those good magistrates by the tidings she had to give them, so that they would gladly give her a recompense sufficient to ensure the little pigmy's reappearance and her subsequent fortune?

In her dilemma, old Cipriana went to her priest and ghostly counsellor, and asked him if he could help her to go to Murcia, as she had important business there, and must get there within a fortnight. The good aged man was almost as poor as Cipriana herself, and had a pauper parish in his charge. The entire community had not more than a dozen reales among them to live upon, not to speak of anything for journeys; and

Murcia was 'a long way off. At first he thought that his old parishioner had lost her mind. She had lived in Purullena so many years, and had been always so contented and cheery over such scanty living and means, that he could not understand what business this poor old woman of over seventy years could have with such high and mighty people as governors and magistrates. But Cipriana was apparently so thoroughly in earnest about the journey and its consequences, that he could not refuse to listen.

“It is a most important secret which I have to tell, Father, and I must get to Murcia before a fortnight is over, even if I walk the whole way,” said the old woman; “for half Murcia will be destroyed if I do not contrive some means of communicating with the authorities, not to speak of any reward to me.”

“Could I write for you?” inquired the old priest, not unmindful of the possibility of some of the crumbs of importance falling to his share. “Could I write to the authorities for you, and spare you that long journey? For you must remember that Murcia is far away, and that we are neither of us as young as we were.”

“That is true,” murmured Cipriana, “but I must go myself. No man in his senses would mind a warning and threatening letter—least of all the magistrate of a large and flourishing city like Murcia. No, I must go myself. I could tell him things that would make him believe me and my secret, and—besides——” she said, talking to herself, “the little dwarf said that I must go myself, and that if it was successful——”

“What little dwarf? Why was it to be successful?” cried the old priest, much alarmed for the mind of his old parishioner, and wondering if she had sold herself to the devil. Mechanically he made the sign of the cross. Old Cipriana screamed and fell down in a fit,

and caused no small stir among the people of the village as she was carried home on a litter.

A few nights after this, Cipriana was lying in her bed, with the brasier near her to keep her warm. She was fretting over the fact that she should be lying there tied by the leg and unable to perform the journey to Murcia which was to make her fortune, when a little voice said at her elbow :

“ Good mother ! how soon do you think you shall be well enough to go to Murcia ?—because I have money enough for you in this purse.”

Cipriana had begun to expect the sudden appearance of her little pigmy guest, and knowing that he meant her well, notwithstanding his odd little ways, she answered him quite calmly, without turning her head :

“ As soon as I am strong enough, my kind little friend. I was very much disturbed and upset by my priest’s doubts; such very grave ones were they, that he had to invoke the dear Saviour and His Cross ” (here the little Fire Spirit turned as white as a sheet, and the fire in the brasier nearly went out) “ to keep me from telling him what I would have given the world, the flesh, and the devil to get rid of.”

Here again the little guest turned pale, and the fire in the brasier got very low.

“ Good mother,” said the pigmy, “ would you mind my looking about for sticks and matches ? I must have food, for both I and the fire are getting very faint.”

“ Oh dear no,” cried the old dame. “ You are a most convenient and economical guest to feed. You will find all you want in the cupboard to the left.”

The little stranger helped himself to sticks and matches, and performed the same holocaust as before, but evidently enjoyed himself highly.

At last he rose to go. Before he went, however, he said:

“Cheer up, dear old woman. Here is the purse for your journey. I shall put it under your pillow. Go as soon as you please; but the sooner you are able to go the better. I am sure you will feel stronger soon;” and with the words he stretched himself out to the height of her bed, and with his pigmy hand held hers for a second or two and then disappeared. It was like an electric shock to her. Her whole body seemed to glow and strengthen. From that moment she began to recover, and instead of being aged by her illness she seemed younger and more active than ever. All the neighbours remarked upon her renewed energy, and said that some good news must have come to the poor old dame to enliven her in that way. But Cipriana kept her own counsel, and in a few days disappeared from the village entirely.

It was very cold weather, and the diligence was as draughty and rickety a vehicle as could well be imagined; but Cipriana, in spite of her age and former feebleness, was as sprightly as a lark. For had she not a purse full of gold, and was she not treated in consequence with the attention and courtesy due to a princess? She had never been treated so well in all her life, nor had such good things to eat. Everyone was kind and attentive to her comfort, and did all they could to make her journey pleasant for her.

About half-way to Murcia the diligence stopped to take in an exceedingly handsome young man, who sat directly opposite to Cipriana. To her great surprise, after examining his fellow-travellers, he bowed to her and said, “Señora mia, we have had the pleasure of meeting before,” and immediately held out his hand to her. She was much astonished, and said that the

“illustrious señor must have made a mistake,” but gave him her hand with true Spanish courtesy, and added that “she was very glad to see him in such good health.” But the moment he touched her hand she felt the same delightfully warm glow that she had felt when her pigmy friend had bade her good-bye. This made her look at him keenly, but her opposite neighbour seemed not to see her; he only stared out of the window at the dreary wastes of country through which they were driving.

“I am a silly old woman,” she thought to herself, “to be always thinking of my little friend; but he has already made such a change in my life that I cannot help it.”

Just at this moment the young man looked round, and their eyes met.

“I do not want you to forget your pigmy friend, although sometimes you cannot recognise him,” he said in a low tone, which the rattling of the old diligence prevented the other travellers from overhearing.

The colour rushed into the old woman’s cheeks, and she blushed like a young girl. Who was this man that he should know her tiny friend? She seemed to feel that she was in the company of the devil, and held her tongue during the remainder of the journey, resenting all advances which the handsome young man made towards her.

The friendliness of this distinguished-looking young man towards the poor old woman sitting in the corner of the diligence attracted the attention of their fellow-travellers. What he could see in that commonly dressed creature no one could imagine. Cipriana was in her usual coarse peasant costume; her hands were hard and knotted with honest toil, while her features, never at their best particularly good-looking, were

furrowed and rugged, and seamed so as to be very unattractive.

At last the diligence stopped at the "posada," where it usually put up in Murcia, and Cipriana got down with the rest of the passengers and set out hurriedly in search of the Mayor's house. Suddenly a little voice said at her elbow, "Good mother, pray take me up on your arm, for I am so tired;" and turning round, Cipriana saw her tiny friend, panting and breathless with trying to keep up with her. She took him in her arms and carried him like a doll.

"You are going to try and find out the Mayor, I suppose," he said when he could speak. "Then turn here to the right and then to the left, and the large building directly opposite to you is the Mayor's house. Now, as I have a little business first to attend to, I will meet you there, if you will put me down."

Cipriana went on as she had been directed, and soon found herself at the house. The guards were very insolent to her when she asked to see his Worship, and made great fun over the idea that such a queer-looking old peasant-woman could have anything important to communicate to the Mayor of Murcia. Cipriana tried to persuade them to let her pass by every means in her power, and even went to the length of bribing them; but it was all of no use. The guards were obdurate, and only laughed at her the more for her pains. At last Cipriana was just turning away, when she met her handsome friend of the journey coming also to the same house. The guards respectfully saluted him, and moved aside to let him pass. But he stopped and said to Cipriana:

"Aha, good mother, can I be of any use to you here?"

“Indeed you can, most noble caballero!” cried Cipriana. “You can pass me in to see his honour the Mayor, for I have something of the greatest importance to tell him. Ah! pray do not refuse me, señor, now!” she cried in her despair.

“It would be hard to do so, even if I wished it,” the stranger replied, with a pleasant smile at Cipriana which cheered her heart. “Let her pass,” he said carelessly to the guards, who immediately fell back, and this strange couple passed in together.

In the company of the aristocratic-looking stranger no one challenged Cipriana’s right to be there, although many looked curiously at her, and wondered in their own minds what could have brought her there. She observed with some pride that her friend had many acquaintances, some of whom appeared pleased at his notice. And she came to the conclusion that he must be some one of great importance, and perhaps of high rank. Even the Mayor apparently held him in much esteem, for he received him cordially; and after a few minutes’ conversation, he turned to Cipriana, and asked her what he could do for her.

“To listen to me, most noble señor, is the only thing you can do for me. I am a poor old woman, and have come all the way from Purullena to warn your worship that in four or five days there will be a dreadful fire, from the Calle de la Plateria to the Monte Agudo.”

“And who put all that nonsense into your head, my good old creature?” inquired the Mayor, laughing. “If you have nothing more important to say than that, I must bid you good-day, for I have other things to do——”

“But indeed, indeed it is true!” cried poor Cipriana. “I have a friend who knows what is going on, and he told me to warn you.”

“Then you are one of a gang of incendiaries, and must be taken care of,” replied the Mayor. Whereupon he touched a bell, and the guard appeared; he handed the old woman over to him, to be conducted to prison.

“Watch her carefully, and see who her associates are,” he said to the guard. And in spite of her cries and entreaties, both to the Mayor and the young man, Cipriana was marched off to prison until something should be discovered.

The days passed drearily enough for the old woman in her prison. She tried to say her prayers and tell her beads, and thus while away some of the weary hours in her dark cell. But, somehow, when she tried to say an “Ave,” she began to think of her little friend, and to wonder where he could be. He had promised to meet her at the Mayor’s, and she had no doubt that it was owing to his nonappearance that she had come to grief in this way. She longed for a sight of the tiny man, and had hardly shaped the thought than a little voice said in her ear, “I am here, good mother, and you will soon be rescued. The fire has begun, and his Worship will soon send for you when he finds that your prophecy has come true. He will also give you a reward for your information, and you will then return home and remain there until you see me again. But keep some of the money to pay for another journey and a still longer one.” With these words he disappeared, and sure enough the very next day the Mayor sent for Cipriana, and after telling her that she was a witch, dismissed her with a reward of one thousand reales for her information and efforts to save the city of Murcia.

Glad enough was Cipriana to find herself safe out of Murcia, and jogging in the diligence on her way home to Purullena. There she found her neighbours much frightened at her absence, and spreading the

report that she was a witch and had dealings with the evil one; that she had been seen disappearing in a flame of fire, and various equally startling stories. These so-called friends were still more astonished when Cipriana reappeared among them, looking fresher, rosier and younger than they had ever seen her. They gathered round her, and asked all about her journey, where she had been and what she had done; but Cipriana had learned too bitter a lesson from over-frankness to run her head again into danger, and answered vaguely that a friend of hers had taken her to Murcia to witness some important business; and that was all that they could get out of her.

Several months passed away without any further communication from the little man. Cipriana hoped and hoped and counted the days when he might be expected, and at last began to despair of seeing him any more. But one fine spring day he came and perched on her distaff in the dusk of the evening, as she was sitting outside her poor hut, thinking of him, and wondering whether she should ever know exactly who and what he was.

“There is some more work for you to do, good mother,” were his first words. He was paler than formerly, and his clothes were of a less fiery colour than of old. His face was flame-colour, although he had rather a weary worn look. “I should have come some time ago, but I have been very busy in other parts of the world,” he said. “The business in hand will now be in Toledo. The great bridge there across the Tagus is to be burnt down in three weeks, and you must manage to get there and warn the King, who is staying there for the present. I will meet you there; for after that you must go to Madrid. Perhaps you had better leave Purullena for good and all, and go and live at

Madrid. You will be useful there, and there will be a good deal of work off and on for you to do." Saying which he disappeared, and Cipriana spent the rest of her time in arranging the few things she had to take with her.

She had had a hard life since her journey to Murcia, for her neighbours one and all looked upon her as a witch, and would hardly speak to her, nor let their children play with her, and avoided her in every way. She was therefore not at all sorry to leave her native village and see the world, where she would not be taken for a witch—a simple old soul like her. So, early one morning, she left for Toledo, taking her little bundle in her hand, while her distaff and spindle were placed in her petticoat-band. There she arrived one hot and dusty evening, and went to stay with a friend who lived near the *Puerta del Cambron*.

It so happened that the King was hearing cases of complaint from his subjects at the time of Cipriana's arrival, and gave audience to them ten days in each month, administering justice where justice was due. Cipriana therefore presented herself, and told the King that on a certain day the great bridge of Toledo would be burnt down. He listened with much patience to her prophecy, and her assurance that she had come a long way to warn him. When she had finished her story he looked at her kindly, and said :

"From whom did you get this information, my worthy soul?"

Cipriana had had one lesson and punishment for over-frankness, and was not going to be caught in that net again. She therefore answered very demurely :

"I see visions, your Majesty, and they have never failed. I prophesied that the whole eastern quarter of Murcia would be burned on a certain day. But the

Mayor would not listen to me, and in consequence the city was nearly all burned to ashes."

The King looked thoughtful, and said: "I think that you are imposing upon me; but if, within the time you name, the bridge takes fire, you shall be repaid for your trouble. I shall take every precaution to keep it safe."

"As your Majesty pleases," said Cipriana, with quiet dignity. "I am living near the Puerta del Cambron, with my cousin Pedro Mino and his wife; and they are well known there, if your Majesty should wish to find me."

The King acted upon Cipriana's warning, and placed guards night and day to watch the bridge, and the people who crossed over it. But everything went on as quietly as usual, and very little fear was felt about the fire that had been prophesied. The evening before the eventful day, however, the guards were twiddling their thumbs as usual, watching and cracking jokes with the passers-by, when they saw a poor little hunchbacked child step on the bridge, carrying a very large bag and nearly crushed under the weight of it. Every few minutes it would stop and put the bag down panting, then take it up and stagger along again. One of the guards, a young tender-hearted man, said, after watching the child for a few minutes wrestling with his burden:

"Let me help you across the bridge, my little man, with that bag."

The little creature looked up gratefully in his face, and without another word the guard slung the bag across his shoulder, took the child in his arms and trudged across the bridge with him, utterly forgetting his duty on the other side.

"What have you got in this bag that makes it so

heavy, my little man?" he said, when they were half-way across.

"I am a conjurer," said the child, "and in the bag are my implements for conjuring. I will show you a few of my tricks in return for your kindness when we get across."

"Gladly," answered the guard.

When they came to the end of the bridge, he explained to the other guard what the child was going to do, and they made a little fun of him and had a merry time, supposing that so small a child could do but little in the way of conjuring.

To their astonishment he swallowed swords longer than himself, told the men their fortunes and many things which they had done which made their cheeks red. He threw different-coloured balls in the air, and caught them on his hump, and proved himself so marvellously good a conjurer that he collected quite a crowd around him; and the guards forgot their duty, and stayed looking at the little wizard, until night was almost upon them. Suddenly the child grew smaller and smaller, his cap and shoes were of flame colour, and a red glow covered his small person all over.

"Get away to the end of the bridge, on dry ground," the pigmy said to his friends the guards, "for I am going to send off a red light, and it might explode and injure you. I would not requite your kindness in that way."

"But all fire and explosives are forbidden to-night," cried the young guard, stepping forward to stop the pigmy's hand. But he was too late. The red light had gone to the centre of the bridge. The guards and the bystanders ran for their lives to the solid ground, and to their horror they found the child lost. But there was a curious little flame-coloured pigmy dancing a fandango

in the flames. The next morning there was no vestige of a bridge to be seen. It was burning the *very day* that Cipriana had foretold.

The King sent for her, and gave her two thousand reales for her information and efforts to save the bridge. But he told her to leave Toledo within twenty-four hours, or he would have her taken up for a witch.

The little dwarf appeared again, and told her to go to Madrid, where there would be much work to be done. She was to take a lodging in the Lavapies* quarter, and there he would let her know how she was to go on. Cipriana, obedient to orders, went as soon as she could to Madrid. Her cousins bade her farewell with all their hearts, for they looked upon her as a witch, and were only too glad to get her out of the house. For six months she lived in Madrid without any sign or knowledge of her little friend. Meanwhile, in some mysterious way, the news got abroad that she had been the means of foretelling the fires in Murcia and Toledo. The neighbours became suspicious of her, and avoided her as much as they could, and she was quite conscious of their dislike. It made her a little unhappy, but she comforted herself with the thought that in foretelling evil she was really doing good to society at large, if she could only induce people to believe that what she said was true. Her little friend appeared about this time, and helped her to be more contented. For he had much work for her to do, and she was constantly in and out of the palace, foretelling fires, for which she was as constantly rewarded.

But after living two years in Madrid, Cipriana gave notice of a fire in the Lavapies quarter where she lived. Everything that she had hitherto predicted had come true, and great had been the destruction in the city.

* Lavapies, a well-known poor quarter in Madrid.

In the two years that she had been in Madrid the rumour of her being a witch had spread rapidly through the city; and she was as nearly isolated as a human being could be without being a hermit, and living in a cave. But nobody believed, in spite of the truth of her former assertions, that this fire was to take place in the Lavapies quarter. It was so poor, and so many miserable beings lived there, that no one dreamed that such a thing *could* happen without real malice. But it *did* break out on the day that Cipriana had foretold, and all Madrid had now kept itself informed as to her forebodings and prophecies, so that she was quite a famous person.

The wrath of the populace was so great, and the priests were so malicious against Cipriana for her various shortcomings as regarded Mother Church (and they were as influential as they were malicious), that Cipriana soon found herself in a deep dark cell in the common prison. There she remained for a whole year, being taken out occasionally to be tortured as a witch, in order to confess who were her accomplices in the incendiary work which had been going on all over the country. As she had no accomplice but the little pigmy, she had nothing to confess; and after several torturings in a dungeon set apart for that purpose, she was formally tried and condemned to the stake.

Her little friend had quite deserted her in her need; and the days wore away, bringing her nearer and nearer to the fatal morning, and still no help came to her. She was very old, and her strength was but scanty. The very thought of the stake made her flesh creep whenever she remembered her impending fate; and she prayed fervently to be allowed to die quietly in her cell before her torture came. But it was not to be. The fatal day came, and rose bright and beautiful. She

was to be burnt in the great public plaza of the city at noon. She was arrayed in the usual yellow garments, painted all over with devils and tongues of flame, and escorted by a long procession of priests, acolytes, and soldiers. When she arrived at the stake she was once more exhorted by her confessor to save her life by revealing the names of her confederates, and repent of her evil ways. As she had no confederates excepting her pigmy friend, she could confess nothing; and, poor soul, she was in spirit as devout a Catholic as any of the crowds who came to see her die, and this she maintained with her last breath.

She was given over to the executioners and bound to the stake; the faggots were lighted, and pitch flung on to make them burn, "a sweet, holy, savoury offering to the Virgin," as the priests said. Cipriana shrieked with agony and fear, till she heard a small voice say in her ear, "Don't be afraid; I will see that you do not suffer pain; and she saw her little friend dancing about in the flames, where he seemed to be enjoying himself not a little. He had a large burning faggot in his hand, which he suddenly blew out and applied to Cipriana's nose. In an instant she was beyond pain, stifled by the bane, as well as the fortune-maker of her life, the *Fire Spirit*.

III.

THE WALLED NUN OF AVILA.

SITTING on the wall of the citadel at San Sebastiano on a balmy July day, and idly throwing pebbles into the sea below, I heard this story for the first time. I wish I could give the sound of the sweet voice, and the choice, delightful Spanish of the white-haired, dark-eyed, sparkling little lady who related it; but as that is impossible, I am content to recall her personality as a pleasant memory of some very happy days.

“Avila is one of the prettiest cities in Spain. After the long diligence drive (I am speaking of many years ago, before railroads were thought of) over dreary wastes, with hardly a tree to break the monotony of the road and relieve the bleak grey of the mountains, you pass over the Puerto; and the pleasantest, sweetest of plains opens before you so unexpectedly that for a moment you believe yourself in Paradise.

“The lines of walls and towers of the little mountain city have an imposing effect as you approach them, and remind you of the old pictures of feudal cities, with their castellated fortifications. But the streets inside, though very picturesque, are narrow and gloomy.

“Soon after I became a widow, I went to stay with some intimate friends, who had taken a fine old house at a few miles' distance from Avila, on the road to Madrid. It had been a convent in the old

days; but when the convents were suppressed in Castile and in the more northern provinces, the building was bought by a wealthy Spaniard. He furnished it with great care and in good taste, and my friends were lucky enough to secure it on a long lease. It had been empty for a long time, and there were vague reports floating about the neighbourhood that it was haunted, and that nobody could be induced to live in it. But my friends were singularly unsuperstitious for Spaniards; and having brought their servants with them from another part of Spain, where they could have heard nothing of the legend of the house, they remained there quite contented and happy for many months without any disturbance.

“The house itself was a delightful one. All the interior had been altered excepting the long stone corridors; the cells had been thrown into each other and made into large rooms, full of sunshine and comfort. From the upper floor (there were only two) there was a charming little stone staircase, which communicated with the cloisters. The pillars of these cloisters were beautifully carved, and enclosed a pretty, dainty garden full of flowers and vines, which climbed up over half the house. Behind the cloisters were the vineyards and kitchen garden. It was a scene for fairyland, when on a moonlight night great patches of white light were thrown upon the pavement of the cloisters, and a dim haze filled the garden and made the splash of the tiny fountain doubly pleasant and dreamy. At the end of the upper corridor, opposite to the little stone staircase, was a projection in the wall which attracted my attention, for the rest of the passage was quite even; and I remarked upon it to my friend, who was showing me about the house.

“She changed colour a little, and said rather hastily,

'Oh yes; there are many queer things about the house,' and deliberately turned the conversation into other channels. My room was nearer the stone staircase than the projection in the wall. Although I thought my hostess's manner a little singular at the time, I soon forgot all about it.

"There is a superstition among some Spaniards that persons who have not received Christian burial are permitted to walk among their old haunts twice in the year—at Easter, when our Lord rose from the dead and liberated all mankind, and at the 'noche de los difuntos' (All-Hallow E'en). It was about the end of Lent that I went to stay with my friends; and at midnight I used to be waked up by hearing a footstep gently echoing through the stone corridor, which apparently descended the staircase, for it never returned. Night after night I lay awake, listening for the sound which I felt sure would come, and night after night the same soft slow footstep passed my door on its way to the staircase which led to the cloisters.

"At last one night I had the curiosity to open my door very softly and look down the corridor. It was a lovely night, and the moonlight was streaming full in at the window. There was nothing to be seen. Not a human being was about, and yet I could hear the footsteps going down into the cloisters step by step, bringing the two feet together on the same step before going to another, as children do. I thought to myself as I went back to my room that the person had escaped me this time, but that I would be quicker another night. For two or three nights after this, when I heard the footstep coming along at the other end of the passage, I opened my door and waited to see the person pass. I could see nothing, but I could hear the soft, slow footstep pass me not one whit quicker or

slower than before, while a cold wind blew in my face, and the step sounded further on and descended the stairs into the cloisters.

“At last I could not resist speaking to my friends about these curious sounds. They both turned pale when I told them that I had followed the step, and they begged me to do nothing rash, lest I should come to harm.

“‘You will hear stranger sounds still,’ they both said, ‘but you must pay no attention to them. We have got used to them, and the servants sleep quite apart from this end of the house, so that they hear nothing. Pray do not let them suspect that there is anything wrong with the house. But *there is*, and that is all we know.’

“I saw that it made my good friends uneasy, not to say unhappy, to speak upon the subject; so I held my tongue, and asked no more questions, but determined to find out what was the matter for myself, by hook or by crook. I had always been told that I was remarkable for my courage in danger, and I said to myself, ‘A ghost can do me no harm, for my conscience is clear of intentional sin.’

“A little before the ‘Semana Santa’ (Holy Week) the priest from Avila came out to bless the house, as is the custom among us. The servants and all of us were assembled in the lower hall to be sprinkled and blessed, and Don Ramon (my friend) accompanied the priest and the acolyte over the other parts of the house. He proposed that I should remain below with the rest of the family, but I refused to do so, and went everywhere with them. As we went along the upper corridor, the priest sprinkled the walls here and there, muttering the prayers of blessing, and as he passed the projection in the wall some holy water fell from the brush upon it.

In an instant the house rang and rang again with piercing shrieks, and then we heard heavy moans and groans. The acolyte and our host ran away, and the priest and I were left looking at each other with pallid faces and trembling limbs. I then told the priest what I had heard during my stay—the footsteps, and the unwillingness of my friends to talk of the sounds about the house.

“‘Some poor soul must have been murdered here, and has not had Christian burial,’ he said; ‘but find out all you can while you stay, and let me know the result, my daughter.’ This I promised to do.

“‘We waited until the groans had ceased, and then descended to the lower hall. Not a word was said about what had happened, and the priest took his leave.

“‘On Easter Sunday my friends said to me, when we parted for the night, ‘If you hear strange sounds to-night, mind and keep in your room quietly. Don’t on any account leave it, or some harm may befall you.’

“‘Nothing can hurt me,’ I said, ‘and I mean to see what this ghost is like.’

“‘They entreated me to do nothing so rash; but at last, seeing that I was quite determined, they said that they would watch with me. We talked and chatted about other matters till after midnight, and I began to think that perhaps we were fools for our pains, when we heard the sound of falling bricks and stones and mortar at the other end of the passage, where the projection was. I rushed out, followed by my friends. The moonlight was streaming in. The projection was still walled up, and we still heard the same sounds, while between us and the stone stairway stood a tall, slight figure dressed like a nun. From her side hung

a large silver crucifix, and her garb showed her to be of the Dominican order. For a minute she stood with her back towards us, and then slowly descended the staircase to the cloisters, with the same soft slow step that I knew so well.

“We followed her to the stairs, and heard the same slow steps pacing up and down, up and down, but we could see nothing, excepting that every now and then a dark shadow was thrown across the patches of moonlight in the direction of the steps.

“We listened for an hour or more to the footsteps, when suddenly they ceased, and we heard the sounds of bricklaying going on at the projection in the wall, voices and laughing, cries of anguish and weeping. At dawn all was still and quiet enough, and we returned to our rooms with white faces and quaking knees.

“‘What awful sin can have been committed here?’ I said, ‘to cause this poor ghost such mortal agony?’

“My friends were quite as much perplexed and anxious as I, to know the secret of the house; but at that time the owner was away from home, and the reports of the people in the neighbourhood were so contradictory and absurd that no faith could be placed in them at all. We were therefore obliged to possess our souls in patience. But the days slipped away; my visit came to an end, and nothing more had occurred since that Easter night to alarm us. That eternal footstep continued, however, and as usual never returned.

“A year passed away before I heard anything more of the nun. Occasionally I received letters from my friends, but no reference was ever made to that fearful night, or what we had seen and heard.

“Just after Easter I got a long letter from my friend,

in which she said, 'The ghost has begun to walk again. We had hoped, as we had heard nothing particular since you were with us, excepting the footsteps, that perhaps she was quiet and at peace for ever. But last Sunday the whole household was roused by shrieks and cries, lamentations and weeping, sounds of masonry and trowels, bricks falling and being replaced. We rushed to the spot, servants and all, and saw the nun in the corridor, pacing slowly towards the staircase, wringing her hands as though in terrible agony of mind. These sounds continued till dawn. The servants are paralyzed with fear, and go creeping round the house in couples, afraid to breathe. We sent for the proprietor, and asked him to tell us the true story of the house, and here it is. It seems that one of the younger nuns who lived here when it was a convent was unfaithful to her vows, and was discovered. There was a convocation of the Order to which she belonged, and the conference lasted fifteen days. She was tried and convicted, and she and her lover were condemned to be walled up alive. In some way or other she contrived to warn her lover of his impending fate, and he escaped. But she, poor creature, suffered this dreadful death, and was walled up inside the projection at the end of the corridor. The proprietor has granted us permission to pull down the projection and see if any nun is to be found there, and in that case give her remains Christian burial, and thus let the poor creature rest at last. If you would like to come and see the end of the ghost which you discovered here a year ago, we shall be only too glad to have you with us at the time.'

"You may imagine that my curiosity was so thoroughly aroused that I was only too pleased to go, and that I travelled to Avila as soon as possible after the

receipt of my friend's letter. The news that the projection in the old convent was to be pulled down soon got bruited abroad, and people came from far and near to see what happened.

“The Bishop and two of the higher ecclesiastics came out from Avila to perform the ceremony of burial, with the attendant priests and acolytes.

“The masons began their work, and a dead silence fell upon us all. My friends stood next to me. The servants shivered and shook behind us, and as the bricks fell down one after another we turned and whispered to each other, ‘That sound we have heard before.’

“The projection was six bricks deep, and cemented very firmly. It required much patience and strength to remove them, and the masons at last were tired out, and began to say that there was nothing there, and that we must be fools (‘locos’) to think so.

“‘What is that white thing hanging behind the next line of bricks?’ I asked, as they were preparing to close up the place again. The masons very reluctantly undid one more row of bricks, and there, standing in her open coffin, was the nun, dressed just as we had seen her that night—black veil, silver crucifix and all, as perfectly preserved as though she had been embalmed. Her features were distorted by a look of horror and fright, and we all shuddered as we looked and realized what dreadful punishments Mother Church could inflict.

“The Service for the Dead commenced, and when the benediction was said over the remains of the poor young creature, who had erred so much and been punished so terribly, a deep sigh of contentment was heard to come from the coffin, and the agony of the face changed to a sweet, happy look. The coffin was removed from the niche, and no sooner had the outer

air touched the body, than the remains crumbled into dust.

“We buried her in consecrated ground, and since that time all strange sounds have ceased in the old house, and the walled nun of Avila at last rests in peace.”

IV.

THE FISHERMAN.

1844
AN OLD MANSION

(ON the French side of the Pyrenees, but not very far from the border of Spain,) is the little fishing village (of Ciboure,) and across the bridge stands the larger one (of St. Jean de Luz.) This latter village or town is famous for possessing (the house where Louis XIV. lived while he was waiting to marry the Infanta of Spain, and that in which the Infanta was herself lodged.) The latter is a curious square (red-brick) building, of four stories, looking on to the public square, (and nearly opposite the house where her future lord lived.) It has such an antiquated, tumbledown, picturesque look that the eye is attracted to it almost at once; and not until you have had a good look at it, and perhaps a little chat about it with some of the men who are always loitering in the vicinity, can you tear yourself away to see the rest of the quaint, old-fashioned town (of St. Jean de Luz.) Behind the (Maison de l'Infante (as it is called)) stretches the Bay (of Biscay,) blue and smiling in the sunshine, or covered with white crests, or churned into high waves of white foam by the least storm. Of course (the Maison de l'Infante,) like all old houses, is supposed to be haunted.

For a long time it had such a bad name that hardly anyone ventured to live in it. But at last an (English) family led the way, and took an apartment in the

dilapidated old house, fast going to ruin for want of care and supervision, and infested by rats. Even then it was difficult to get servants to stay, and a constant change in the household was the result. There were rustlings of silk dresses heard in the passages, varied by the clanking of swords, which seemed to drag and touch every stair as their masters descended. In vain did the mistress explain that the sounds proceeded from the chinks and cracks with which the house abounded, and through which the wind whistled at every opportunity. It was nothing but the wind, she said. But the servants could not be persuaded to believe it. Was it the wind, they demanded indignantly, that puffed into their faces for a second with an icy blast when they were in a sheltered nook on the stairs, and which blew their candles out with no warning whatever? The wind, indeed! It was no such thing! It was the ghosts of the long-dead ladies-in-waiting to the Infanta who blew the candle out from sheer devilry, and gave them, the servants, a cold, shivery, creepy feeling as they passed up and down the stairs. The English family who lived on the second floor cared but little for the chatter and superstitions of their foreign servants and neighbours. A family from California named Hendrick took the third floor for a year. These were the only two families in the house.

One evening the Californians gave a small dinner-party, and some ten or twelve guests were invited. The lower floor was uninhabited, and the stairs were of course very dark. One of the guests invited to the Hendricks' dinner was Madame de Margot, a widow lady visiting (St. Jean de Luz) for the summer. She groped her way up the stairs successfully, with no lamp or light to guide her, until she came to the second floor. Here there was a dim lantern hanging at the corner of

the corridor, and casting only a feeble glimmer on the staircase, which wound and turned in rather a corkscrew fashion on that story. In the wide corner she met a lady coming down, who apparently was waiting to give her a chance to pass, and stood in the round of the staircase to make room for her. Madame de Margot glanced at the lady as she went upstairs, and bowed her acknowledgment of the courtesy. But she could not help taking a second good long look at her polite friend, who was dressed in so old-fashioned a way that she seemed to belong to a period long past, and to have stepped out of a French picture of the seventeenth century. At first she thought that the unknown lady friend was going to a fancy ball; for she was dressed in a quaint Pompadour costume of lavender and blue, and her hair was turned over a cushion and powdered. Her hands were white and small, and the lace on her bosom and sleeves was exquisitely fine and rare. A curious scarlet cloak of fine cloth hung round her shoulders, and was fastened by a ribbon round the neck. The lady was holding her cloak open, and her arms and neck were quite visible, while her pretty hands held the two sides of the cloak far apart, as if she were trying to avoid contact with Madame de Margot. All this Madame de Margot saw as she quietly looked at her, while she toiled slowly and breathlessly up the stairs and passed her.

The apartment of the Hendricks was prettily arranged, and at first there were many rare and charming objects which attracted the eye of Madame de Margot. Then the other guests began to arrive; and it was not till she was seated next the host at dinner that she remembered her meeting on the staircase.

“Is there a fancy ball going on in St. Jean de Luz to-night?” she inquired of Mr. Hendrick.

“Not that I know of,” he replied, looking rather astonished. “There are very few gaieties in this quiet place; and I think the whole town would be shaken to the foundations by anything so exciting as a fancy ball. Why? Did you see anything going on as you came here which looked like one?” he added, laughing.

Madame de Margot looked very grave as she answered:

“I met a curiously attired lady on the stairs, who made me think of a fancy ball because she was dressed in the costume of Louis XIV.’s time——”

It was now her host’s turn to look grave. He became as pale as a ghost, pushed away his plate of soup untasted, and glancing hurriedly around him, he said in a whisper:

“Dear madam, do not please breathe what you have told me to any one of the guests, nor to my wife. Tomorrow I will tell you the whole story;” and with that Madame de Margot had to be contented.

The evening passed; the dinner was good, and the guests were pleasant, but she noticed that Mr. Hendrick was very uneasy, and wondered what had troubled him. At last the time came for the guests to say good-night. Madame de Margot departed with her maid, who had taken the precaution to bring a lantern. It was very acceptable, and Madame de Margot thanked her for her thoughtfulness.

“Don’t say anything about it, madame,” whispered the girl, in a trembling voice. “I will tell you what I have seen when we reach home, if we ever do. The holy Mother protect us!”

“What do you mean?” cried Madame de Margot.

But the maid only set her teeth hard, and hurried her mistress home as fast as she could through the

narrow, quaint, unevenly paved streets of St. Jean de Luz.

“Madame must have thought me rude to-night,” Thérèse said, as she undressed her mistress.

“Well, I must confess that you were not polite,” returned Madame de Margot. “What was the matter with you?”

“Oh, madame, you do not know the horrors of that house! I have heard much about that Maison de l’Infante, but I have always laughed. To-night I SAW!”

“And what did you see?” cried her mistress, turning suddenly round upon the girl as she was brushing her hair—“and what did you see?”

“Old Pierre the waiter was telling me what a dreadful house it is to live in, and what awful sounds you hear there in the dead of night—such tramping up and down stairs, such a rustling of silk dresses; and sometimes they see a young lady.”

“What kind of a young lady?” cried her mistress, in terror.

“I listened for some time, madame, and I distinctly heard the rustling of a dress and then a light footstep on the stairs while I was waiting for you, madame; and I asked Pierre what it was. That was how he came to tell me all this. When I asked him what the noise was, he said, ‘Come and see.’ So I went to the head of the stairs, and there was a young lady in a red cloak walking up and down, up and down in the corridor below, every now and then stopping to listen. Her dress was so old-fashioned, too, madame; and she wore her hair powdered and raised high over a cushion, with a blue bow tied over it. It made me so cold and creepy to watch her gliding along that I began to feel faint, and Pierre had to give me some

cognac. But he told me such dreadful stories about the house." *DOÑA MARGARITA*

Madame de Margot's curiosity was now fully aroused, and she begged Thérèse to tell her the story about the house.

FEELSA "Indeed, I would gladly know it myself," replied Thérèse. "*PÉDICO* Pierre did not know the *real* story of the house, and though he told me many horrors, he could not tell me what haunts the house, nor why it does."

So Madame de Margot had to possess her soul in patience, until she met her host, Mr. Hendrick, on the square the next evening. She immediately took him aside and claimed his promise to tell her the story of the curious lady whom she had met on the stairs.

"Even my maid Thérèse knows that there is a legend attached to the house; but she cannot tell me what it is, and my patience has been fearfully tried," she said.

"Well," replied her host, "I suppose I must tell you what I have been told, although, mind, madame, I do not vouch for the truth of it. The story goes, madame, that in the Grand Monarque's time, when he married the Infanta of Spain, one of the maids of honour to the Infanta, who was to accompany her Majesty to Paris, died very suddenly, and people said that she had been poisoned. They said she was too great a favourite at the court, and many jealousies arose on her account. At any rate she died very suddenly, just as she had dressed to go to a ball. They say that her ghost wanders about disconsolately in search of her mistress, or of some familiar face which she knew in the old days. Twice a year she has been seen outside the house: on the Eve of St. Jean and the 'night of the dead.' Then woe betide the fisherman who takes her in his boat!"

“What happens to him?” cried Madame de Margot, now thoroughly interested and startled.

“Eh, madame!” cried Mr. Hendrick; “what happens to him no one has found out. Joseph Borthéry and the others never returned to tell.”

“Who was Joseph Borthéry?” inquired Madame de Margot.

“Joseph Borthéry was the brother-in-law of your landlady, and was as true and honest a man as ever trod the earth. He had a wife and two or three children, and he gained his livelihood as a fisherman. He was generally very fortunate in his hauls of fish, and managed to dispose of them to the best possible advantage. Everyone liked him, everyone respected him, and he had not a single enemy. His one fault was a love of making money—a very pardonable fault, when you consider that his wife and children were the one thought of his life, and their comfort his one desire.”

“On the Eve of St. Jean he went out fishing, and was as happy as a man could be. He had been about watching the putting-up of the crosses of flowers all over St. Jean de Luz and Ciboure, the neighbouring fishing village where he lived, and at eleven o'clock prepared himself for his night's work. His wife was comfortably in bed, and his children asleep; so his mind was easy about them. The night was a lovely one. The moonbeams danced merrily over the Bay of Biscay and lit up the Tower of Ste. Barbe, on the hill beyond and behind St. Jean. They made great white patches on the grass near by, and the sands on the beach shone like gold.”

“The scene around him was peaceful. His boat was filled with tackle, bait, fishing materials, and a coloured sail. And Joseph Borthéry was just placing the oars

in the rowlocks, when he saw a lady on the shore at the back of the Maison de l'Infante, beckoning to him. But he paid no attention to the signs she made. He had no time to lose in carrying ladies about, if he cared to do any fishing for his family. It was late already, and if he cared to have a successful night of fish, and of consequent gain, he could not afford to waste a single moment. The appearance of the lady was charming. The moon shone down on the powdered hair, on the blue bow, the scarlet cloak, the fair jewelled neck, and the mittened white arms. He could hardly bear to refuse her, as she folded her hands beseeching him to take her. But he thought steadily of his wife and family; of the fête ^{FIESTA} next day, when according to his profits would be the limit of their pleasure, and pulled strongly out into the bay. When at a safe distance from the shore he made the sign of the cross, and turned to see which way he was going, and when he again bent to his oars and looked at the shore, the fair lady had disappeared. His haul of fish was an enormous one, larger than he had ever had, and he returned to his family with much money in his pockets; for he sold all his fish at the market before going home, and had nothing to do on the fête ^{FIESTA} of St. Jean but to amuse himself and his family.

“He told the story of what he had seen to his wife. She turned pale as she heard him.

““Oh, Joseph!” she cried, ‘never listen to her; she is a ghost, and lures people on to evil. Promise me that you will never listen to her!’ ^{QUERIDA}

““I won't if I can help it, ma chère,’ answered Joseph cautiously. ‘If you could see her you would find it hard to refuse her. And as to ghosts, I don't believe in them, and never shall.’

““Eh! don't boast,’ interrupted his wife; ‘ghosts

may exist without your believing in them, Joseph. You are as simple as daylight, and anyone might deceive you, for you would walk into the snare like a blind puppy.'

"Joseph saw no more fair ladies for some months. He went to his fishing regularly, and was fortunate in the hauls he brought back. At last, as the summer turned to autumn and the autumn changed to winter, he had almost forgotten his adventure.

"On the 'night of the dead' he went out as usual late at night to fish. And there also was the same lady, with the red cloak, bare arms and jewelled neck, standing on the shore and entreating him to take her. But he was steeled against her blandishments, and thought of his wife and children. At last, in despair, the lady held up a purse, weighted apparently with gold. In the dim moonlight Joseph could see that it was not a large one, but that it glittered as though knitted with gold, and the clasp certainly was of gold. He resisted the temptation to go back for some time, but the purse was more than his determination was equal to, and the thought came to him that the contents of the purse would add greatly to the comfort and support of his family (and all merely for taking a lady to Ste. Barbe). His heart relented, and he returned to the shore, took the lady on board, and rowed as hard as he could to Ste. Barbe. His heart felt heavy and cold when he offered to help the strange lady into his boat. He really tried to assist her, but she seemed to glide into the boat, and the hand which she held out to him was cold and helpless. Apparently, however, she needed no support from him. He was seen to row in the direction of Ste. Barbe, and to turn round the corner into the wide Bay of Biscay. But he was never seen again.

SEA OF CORTIZ

“For weeks and months his wife Elise watched for Joseph, putting a light in the window where he could see it on his way across the Bay, but Joseph Borthéry never returned to his home or to St. Jean de Luz.

“That is the legend, dear madam,” said Mr. Hendrick, “as it was told to me, of the old Maison de l’Infante. You evidently met the lady on your way to us the other evening ; and your description of her made me willing to believe that there are more things in heaven and earth than we yet know of.”

V.

*THE PETRIFIED MAN.**

(IN the days of Alfonso the Avenger, who succeeded his father Ferdinand IV.,) there were beautiful large tracts of land on the sides of the hills (near Daroca,) which were let out in small vineyards to the poorer wine-growers. They were all remarkable for the heavy bunches of grapes which they produced, and for the excellent wine which was made upon them; and the fame of these vineyards spread far and wide. Every peasant who had a bit of money was anxious to hire and farm a piece of them, were it ever so small; and many were the disappointed ones whose hearts burned with unsatisfied longing for those (Daroca) vineyards.

They lay upon the side of the hill exposed to the southern sun; the rich red earth was covered with sticks, from which the vines hung in beautiful green garlands, and the vintage-time was looked forward to with the greatest delight by the farm servants and by the helpers who were engaged for the occasion, when there was a very good season and a great quantity of grapes.

One of the fortunate beings who possessed two of these vineyards was a certain Mateo Blanco. He was

* The outline of this legend is mentioned by Ford. The name is given there of Pedro Bisagra, but I give the name that was told to me, Mateo Blanco. This is a popular legend, and well known to most peasants in Spain.

a shrewd, longheaded, calculating peasant, who knew how to turn his money to account, and his sister, who lived with him, knew how to make two ^{PESEFAS} go further than other people's ^{TOSTONES} duros. Together they scraped, and pinched, and struggled, and saved until they became very wealthy people in the neighbourhood. The vineyards had two or three very productive years; this added still more to their income, and with the increase of their fortunes increased also their pride and their stinginess. They had never in their lives helped anyone but themselves. Even their own servants and farm dependents were treated like dogs and fed like pigs. They were never known to give a ^{CENTAVO} copper to a poor starving creature, nor a crust of bread to any human being. They always had plenty of work to give during the vintage, but they preferred to slave their own servants nearly to death rather than take on new hands. Their fame spread through the country all around. Those ready for hire knew that there was no chance of employment at Mateo's, and consequently never tried for it, but got employment elsewhere. In time, however, Mateo and his sister became so crusty and stingy that even their own servants, accustomed to hard treatment, complained. One by one they left, until there was no one to till the ground, or attend to the vineyards, or look after the farm. Mateo and his sister tried to do the work themselves, but they found that this was a very different thing from ordering others to do it. Naturally the vines suffered in consequence, and yielded but little in comparison with other years, although it was an overflowing vintage.

This went on for two or three years, and then the sister died from overwork. This was a great blow to Mateo, for she was of a far more energetic nature than he, and had kept up her activity almost to the last, so

that he had hardly noticed that she was ill until he lost her entirely. He had thought her thinner at times than she had been when a young girl ; but he comforted himself with the reflection that as women grew older, they naturally grew thin with the anxieties and cares of life, and never thought much more about her ; and she, to do her justice, never complained. She went on digging and delving, tying and pruning, feeling that each day she was getting weaker, and yet dreading to tell her brother and put him out more, now that his farm hands had left him. Her one good trait was her affection and devotion to her brother. After her death Mateo was unable to keep up the two farms alone. He was lazy by nature, and had preferred to sit quiet and sleep rather than go out and turn his hand to steady work in the vineyards. Nearly all the really hard labour had fallen to his sister's share. He scarcely knew what to begin upon without her to tell him. He determined therefore, as he could not keep up the two farms properly, to sell them if he could. But his narrow stingy ways were punished abundantly. For the land was so impoverished from neglect that no purchaser was willing to give the price he demanded, and it lay for many years on his hands.

While waiting to sell he became so reduced that he was forced to go out seeking work himself as a helper, and after some time got employment. His own farms naturally suffered still more. Fortunately it was an unusually heavy season, and many hands were required.

But he got on badly with his mates. In spite of his poverty Mateo could never bring himself to be civil with his fellow-workers. Because he had been once rich, he gave himself such airs that his companions were deeply offended, and would hardly speak to him. They were every bit as good as he was, they said to

each other, and looked defiance at him whenever he came near them. He used to order them about very much, as though they were still working for him. And they resented his authoritative ways and haughty tempers. They determined to join together and watch Mateo, so that if he did anything worthy of rebuke, they could complain of him. Each day the man who worked nearest him was told off to watch, and report upon his conduct.

One day the men were all sent early to the vineyards with their baskets, and there was a splendid prospect of a fine vintage. The men were already treading the grapes in the cart prepared especially for the purpose. The bright-coloured fluid was running into the jars set ready for it, and the treaders, fine, clean, healthy looking lads, were singing and keeping time in their work with the music. The vineyard was alive with busy men and women filling their baskets to overflowing with huge and beautiful clusters of grapes. As the baskets were filled they were brought to the cart and the contents emptied. The sun was shining brilliantly, and the whole scene was gay and cheerful. Mateo was working with the rest, but somehow his basket was slow in getting filled. His companions to the right and left of him had filled and emptied their baskets three or four times before his was ready to carry to the cart. And all this was not lost upon Tomas Resian, who was close by, and who wondered a little why Mateo, generally a quick man when he chose to bestir himself, should be so slow with so easy a task as grape-picking. He kept his eye pretty closely upon Mateo, and after a few minutes he saw him put several of the largest grapes into his mouth instead of into his basket. After watching him for some time, and seeing that more grapes went into Mateo's mouth than into

his basket, Tomas mentioned the fact to his companions, who thenceforth watched Mateo closely.

Mateo certainly never intended to steal his master's grapes. He had been his own master so long, and had always been accustomed to indulge himself with a little fruit upon his own land, so that he was not conscious half the time that he was eating another person's property. He was never able to realize that he himself was working for some one else, and had no right to the grapes which he abstracted. Every now and again he would drop the fruit into the basket below, but more frequently and quite mechanically he put it into his mouth without being at all conscious that he was robbing his employer.

His fellow-workmen saw these misdoings with great delight; and each one as he watched Mateo's proceedings complained to the overseer of him, grumbling loudly that they who had their baskets many times filled during the day should be scolded and found fault with for the smallness of their weight, while Mateo was left in peace with but few baskets, having eaten three quarters of the grapes given into his charge. At first the overseer was loath to believe such unpleasant reports of a man with whom in past days he had been on very friendly terms; and he felt, besides, keenly for his friend in his change of fortune. But at last the complaints about Mateo became so frequent that he was obliged to refer the matter to the proprietor of the estate. Spies were placed to watch Mateo, and one and all brought back reports of the same character as the first complaints—that Mateo put more grapes into his mouth than he did into his basket; and finally he was sent for by the proprietor and the overseer.

They were sitting in great state when Mateo was ushered in, with all their documents and complaints

before them, and they examined him. When Mateo understood what was the charge against him, he became very indignant, and said:

“Am I an hidalgo and the son of an hidalgo for nothing? I have been rich myself, and the owner of farms far more successful than these upon which I work. Because I have fallen by misfortune and become poor, is that a reason why I should be insulted by being classed with thieves?”

The two men who were his judges felt sorry for him, and listened to his indignant protest with patience and sympathy, and determined to try Mateo again, and to give him another chance.

“Of course, Mateo,” said the proprietor, “I can quite understand how hurt you must feel at the insinuations and complaints of men who have been farm-hands under you. I can also quite understand how hard it must be to realize your altered fortunes. We will give you another chance; but do try to put some restraint upon your desire for the grapes, and bear in mind that you are working with people whom you have offended and treated badly in times past.”

“I don’t know what you mean,” growled Mateo, as he lounged back to his place in the vineyard.

His companions were told to watch carefully, and he was permitted to return to his work. But night after night the same complaints were made, that more grapes went into Mateo’s mouth than into his basket; and when the amount that he handed in daily was weighed, it fell more than two-thirds short of the ordinary measure.

At last, the overseer asked the proprietor if he himself might dress in peasant’s clothes and watch Mateo as a workman. The idea was delightful to the proprietor, and he furnished the overseer with an entire suit

of workman's clothes, and for those two or three days did his own overseeing. It was a fearfully hot day, and the fruit lay between the cool dark leaves, looking so refreshing and so tempting that nothing but a sense of his duty kept the overseer from following the example of Mateo. But though he worked like a galley slave, and filled his basket nine or ten times over, he found Mateo always in the same place and with his basket about half full. Eight out of every twelve bunches of grapes he ate. And after three days of this experience the overseer was forced to own that Mateo was very deficient in labour, and his complaint was of the same burden as the others—that Mateo carried more fruit to his mouth than he did to his basket. Mateo was consequently brought up to see the proprietor again. In vain the master expostulated with him, and asked him if he could conscientiously swear before the Saints that he filled his basket and ate no grapes.

“Eh, hombre!” cried Mateo. “What do you think I am made of, that I should steal from you? If I were not so poor, I would leave you now—this very minute, and you might sing till you were hoarse before I would deign to work on this very poor farm. Have I not been rich myself, and did I not make more money than you can? Do you suppose that I know nothing of what a vineyard ought to bring in? You must be ‘tonto (foolish) if you do.’”

The proprietor felt ashamed of the part he was taking, and remained convinced that if Mateo stole, it was from sheer absence of mind, and not intention.

For some days after this all went well. Mateo brought his baskets in full at all times of the day; so very full that they nearly parted company and lost the grapes. Suspicion was lulled for a time; but one day,

the proprietor and the overseer were going over the property. It was almost the end of the vintage, and only a few rows of grapes remained to be gathered. While walking about they turned a corner suddenly, and found Mateo with his basket at his feet, about half full, eating the grapes, which were large, sweet, and specially grown for a very choice kind of wine, for which they had more orders than they could well fulfil. And there was that abominable Mateo devouring them greedily! The two men could not repress a groan as they saw their choicest and rarest vines despoiled in this bold and unprincipled manner. Mateo turned round with a half-devoured bunch in his hand, and faced his employer.

“Now, what have you got to say for yourself, you rogue?” inquired the proprietor with much wrath. “I have caught you myself, in the very act, and you cannot escape with any more of your lies. What have you to say for yourself, you rascal?”

“Say for myself?” replied Mateo, with an innocent expression on his face. “What should I have to say for myself, but that I am gathering grapes for your interest and profit?”

“But you are eating more than you pick, you scoundrel!” said the master indignantly. “Do you mean to tell me that I, who have been watching you for the last twenty minutes, am blind or drunk, or that I am accusing you falsely of eating my most valuable grapes?”

“Eating your grapes!” said Mateo fiercely. “Do I not know—I, a vine-grower myself (and a not unsuccessful one)—that these are a rare and choice kind of grape, especially grown for a very rare and choice kind of wine? Va—señor, you could not think so ill of me as that! May the blessed Saints turn me into a stone

PRINCE OF DARKNESS

image if I have committed such a fraud upon you, or robbed you in the smallest way!"

Here he stooped and placed his basket on his arm, preparatory to leaving, and in a moment a curious change came over Mateo. The proprietor and overseer were almost frozen with fear. The Saints, whom Mateo had invoked, had taken him at his word. His feet seemed glued to the spot. He tried in vain to move. And gradually his legs turned to white stone.

Mateo's face was full of horror.

"What is the matter with me? I cannot move!" Here he looked down at his feet and uttered a shriek when he saw that they were turned to stone. "Oh, señores! dear señores!" he cried in his agony, "cannot you help me? Pull me out of this! don't stand looking at me, but pull me out! If I could only get my feet out, I should be all right. See! my body is quite as usual. I have lied to you, oh my master! and I *did* eat the grapes; but I did not mean to steal from you—I did not, indeed. And I will never do it again, if you will only forgive me, and help me out of this!"

His eyes were almost starting out of his head as he held out his arms appealingly to his employer.

Both men did what they could for him. They tried to move him by main force, but it was of no use. They pulled and they tugged. Then they called all the workmen, and together they tried to pull him from the ground. They rubbed him with vinegar and oil to take the stiffness out. Some of the strongest men fainted with fear when they saw their comrade's plight. But it was all of no use.

The stone seemed to creep further along his body. They then fell on their knees and implored the Saints to stay their vengeance upon a penitent man.

"He appealed to you because he believed himself

innocent," they cried, "and because he was so poor. Who knows better than you, oh blessed and merciful Saints, that perhaps these grapes were his only food and sustenance in his poverty? We have been too hard upon him."

But they appealed in vain. When they turned towards the object of their prayers, he was beyond the reach of human aid. He was turned to stone, just as he stood, his basket on his arm and his eyes staring into vacancy.

* * * * *

In the corner of an old garden in Daroca, travellers are to this day shown with great awe the "Man of Stone."

VI.

THE LEGEND OF THE JESSAMINE.

A GOOD many years ago there was a great sensation made in Madrid society by the shutting-up of a certain beautiful young lady of high rank in a convent against her will. It was said that her ambitious brother forced her into this seclusion because of what he called her refractory conduct. The tale, as it was told to me, was as follows :

Handings of the region

I.

Selma de Cordillera had been left, when quite an infant, dependent upon her brother, one of the proudest grandees of Spain, and grew up a spoiled darling. Her beauty and accomplishments, even when a child, attracted many admirers ; and from them all she chose a rising young artist, whom she loved with all her heart. But her brother had other and more exalted wishes for the young Selma's future, and would listen to neither remonstrance nor entreaties. He commanded her either to marry the man whom he had chosen for her husband, or if she refused, the convent was open to rebellious women. The Marquis of Miranda was an old and hideous-looking man, who had all his life been known as the Don Juan of his province. The expression of his face was enough for Selma. She recoiled from him as from a serpent the

first time she saw him, and assured her brother that she preferred death to a marriage with the Marquis of Miranda. Her brother was very angry, and forced her, after various threats and insults, all of which Selma bore with unwavering patience, into the Ursuline Convent (near Madrid.) *NEAR BY*

After the two years' novitiate she became a nun. Crowds of people went, they say, to see the poor child take the veil. There was hardly a dry eye in the cathedral as the ceremony proceeded. But when the question was asked her whether she chose the blessed life of "marriage with Christ" of her own free will, she gave a loud shriek and cried, "No, no! a thousand times no!" The young artist, Luis Meñoz, her lover, who had witnessed the ceremony from behind a pillar, rushed out at her cries and tried to save her from the punishment to which her brother had condemned her. But he was too late. Before he could reach the high altar, Selma had been carried in a half-fainting condition through a side-door into the sacristy; the door closed behind her with a loud bang, and poor Luis Meñoz fell upon the steps in a swoon.

After Selma's public renunciation of the world, the artist disappeared (from Madrid,) and for many years nothing was heard of him. About a month after the dreadful scene in the church, Selma, or, as she was called in the convent, Sister Eulogia, fled from the convent. How she escaped no one could tell. But gone she had, and what was more, had left no trace behind her. She disappeared from human ken as surely as if she had never existed. Of course the news made much talk and scandal in ^{THE TOWN} (Madrid) for several weeks. Selma's brother was furious at the shame cast upon his name and family. For people somehow connected this escape with the young artist's love and

his disappearance. There was no proof of anything of the kind, but the charitable world said what they thought, and the Duke of Cordillera heard all that the charitable world had to say through his friend the Marquis of Miranda, and felt wounded and sore. But Selma had gone.

II. *in the next town*

Many years after these events (in Madrid,) a tall, handsome woman was seen going towards one of the confessionals in the church (of Nôtre Dame at Paris.) She was leading a little girl by the hand, and both were dressed in deep mourning. There was no mistaking that face and figure to those who had once seen her. It was Selma, though an older, paler, more mature Selma than she who graced the society (of Madrid) in her younger days. The little child looked like her mother in miniature.

“Mamma,” said the little one, when her mother had lifted her to a chair to wait for her, “when is Gracias coming back? Has she gone away for very long, for I have no one to speak to now, while you go to whisper into that queer, three-sided house? Will she soon come back to her little Paz?”

A look of agony passed over Selma’s face, and her lip trembled as she said :

“Gracias has gone very far away, my darling, into a country where we shall join her by-and-by, if we are as good as she was.”

“But can’t she come back to us, mother?” wailed the child.

Selma shook her head, unable to speak for the grief at her heart, while her eyes filled with tears. She had suffered much, this poor soul, since her escape from the convent. Luis Meñoz had contrived to get some

communication with her by bribing one of the servants of the convent. She escaped with the aid of the servant friend, and joined her lover at the appointed place. They were married, and lived at first as happily as two young birds in the great busy life of Paris, he teaching drawing and painting, and she music and embroidery. Three children were born to them—two girls and a boy. The parents could barely earn enough to keep them, and being delicate, the children were more or less ailing all the time. Poor food and scanty precarious means told upon the children, and gradually they faded and died before the mother's eyes—the mother who would have given her life's blood to shield them from harm. The boy sickened first, and passed away; then the little Gracias, ten years old and her parents' little helper and counsellor, took the scarlet fever, and before Selma realized that she was dangerously ill, she died.

The spring of her life seemed to break under this blow. The gaiety and sport of the house died with Gracias, and the little Paz grew up among sad and quiet surroundings. And now Luis Meñoz, the dearly loved husband and father, lay ill at home; and Selma knew that soon he would join Gracias in that far-away country of which she had spoken to the little Paz. Her heart was heavy and sore as she knelt before the confessional and poured out her soul in earnest prayer. Her prayers ended, Selma left the church with Paz, and turned her face towards the Montmartre quarter of the city. They passed a small flower-market on their way home, and Selma purchased a tiny bunch of jessamine.

"It is papa's favourite flower," she said to the little girl, as she gave it to her to carry.

7

III.

large city

In a garret at the top of one of the poorest-looking houses in a miserable street of the (Montmartre quarter of Paris,) a young-looking man sat bolstered up on a pallet-bed; near him, so that he could reach them easily, were materials for etching, and before him was a small drawing in pen and ink. Thin and worn and ill as he looked, very different from the young artist of former days, Luis Meñoz was happy in spite of his poverty. And they were very poor. From the glassy look of his eyes, anyone acquainted with disease could tell in a moment that he was not long for this world, although he had made a hard struggle to conceal from himself the fact. Every now and then he would lay down his pen and lean back on his pillows, gasping for breath. Then, after a little time, he would collect all his strength and go on with his work, until the next paroxysm of pain forced him to lie back again. The furniture of the room, though scanty and poor-looking, was kept scrupulously neat and clean. While he was lying back upon his pillows after one of these attacks of pain, the door opened, and Selma walked in with the little Paz. She hastened to the bedside, lifted his head with one hand, while with the other she hastily poured some medicine into a glass which stood near, and put it to his lips. For a few minutes he revived.

“Oh, my darling!” she said to him tenderly; “it is cruelly hard to see thee suffer and be too poor to give thee good medical aid, when a pittance of my brother’s fortune might save thee yet.”

“I am afraid it is too late for that, Selma,” he said. “We knew well what we were doing when we married, and braved thy brother’s anger.”

“But I would not change our condition for his, rich though he be; and I would do the same thing over again if I had the chance—wouldst thou not?”

A tender caress was his answer. The little Paz now stepped forward with her tiny offering. She was tired of being forgotten. Luis’s face brightened at the sight of the flowers he loved so well.

“It was kind of thee,” he said, looking gratefully up into Selma’s face, “to remember my favourite flower in the midst of all thy care and anxiety, Selma.”

“It smells very sweet, papa,” remarked Paz; “but there are so many prettier flowers than that one. Why dost thou love it so much?”

“I will tell thee, little Paz,” said her father. “In the days before I married thy dear mother, I was very unhappy, and wandered about in different countries trying to divert my mind until I could see her again. In the course of my travels I met an old hermit, a true man of God, who had travelled much himself, and had been a great deal in the Holy Land. His life was rude, solitary, and hard, and his food was poor and scant; but mine was not much better, and it comforted me to tell him all my anxiety and trouble. He was only too glad to listen and help me with advice, so he allowed me to stay with him for a time. In his poor ill-furnished hut there were two or three large pots of these flowers, which you think so lightly of, my dear little Paz. These he tended with the greatest love and care. One day I asked him why he loved these flowers so tenderly, and neglected others quite as beautiful, which grew wild in the plains about us. ‘My son,’ said he, ‘these lovely fragrant creatures are a constant lesson to me of endurance. For when our Lord died upon the cross for the manifold sins of the world, which did not know and which did not

appreciate Him and His sacrifice, there was then, as now, a profusion of flowers growing around Jerusalem. Among them was this flower, which grows luxuriantly about there, and which then was a beautiful rose-colour. On the day of the crucifixion'” (and here Luis made the sign of the cross, and Selma and little Paz did the same)—“ ‘on that awful day, when the veil of the temple was rent in twain, the delicate and tender flowers died from fright and sorrow; but these beautiful jasmine blossoms hid their lovely heads behind their glossy leaves, and *endured* the grief and shame with our Lord. Only when He was dead did they venture forth, and lo! they were white instead of pink. Endurance in great trouble and sorrow is the lesson that they teach, and therefore I always have them near me, and tend them with such loving care.’ This is why I love them so much also, little Paz, for they have comforted and helped me in many a heavy time of sadness and of woe.”

IV.

Not many weeks passed before Luis Meñoz joined his daughter Gracias in the eternal world. Selma bore her dreadful sorrow bravely and well; but although she kept up and went through her daily routine of work, her health gave way and gradually failed her. She placed the little Paz in a convent school, where she seemed happy and content, and had no one but herself to look after. “It is better so,” she said to herself. “If I starve, the child will be well cared for.”

After her husband's death, she always wore a bit of jessamine. In the summer she contrived always to have a spray, whether she went without food or not; and in the winter she embroidered a lovely blossom of

jessamine upon the bosom and sleeves of her black gown. Once a favourite pupil asked her why she chose always that particular flower; and Selma told her friend the legend of the jessamine, and what it had been to her husband and to her. As long as her strength held out, Selma continued her duties, always encouraged and strengthened by the little flower and its sweet story. But the day came at last when nature refused to work. For some days her pupils watched for her in vain; and at last the girl who had asked her why she always wore the jessamine became anxious about her, and found her out up in her poor and desolate home. She found her, but in a dying condition, and remained with her until the end. With her last breath Selma whispered, as she kissed a spray of jessamine, "My God, Thou knowest that I HAVE endured!"

VII.

THE MASKED BALL.

IN one of the narrowest and steepest streets of Toledo, there stood, a great many years ago, a fine, large, old house. Over the portal was the coat-of-arms of the noble family of Verano. It was an imposing-looking building, and was built on the Moorish plan. Through the delicate iron scroll-work of the gates might be seen a large "patio," or courtyard, with a fountain playing in the middle, and beautiful flowers growing all around. For many years but few visitors were allowed to enter, for the master of the house was old and feeble, and saw hardly anyone but the priest and the doctor. *PATRÓN*

The old Conde de Verano was a long time in shuffling off this mortal coil: every now and then there was a report that he was sinking fast, but he revived in a marvellous way after each attack, and lingered on and on until people whispered to each other that he must either be the Wandering Jew himself, or else have committed some awful crime, for which he was doomed to live on for ever.

There was one bright thing in all that dreary house, and that was the grand-daughter of the old Count. She was sixteen years old, and as pretty and sweet a little fairy as ever was seen in Toledo. She was the life of the house, and there was not a creature in it, from

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ANDRÉS MESA

the solemn old major-domo to the groom in the stable, but would willingly have died for the little Countess Teresita (de Verano.) She was small, slight, and agile, with tiny hands and feet. Her head was beautifully placed upon her shoulders, and her great black eyes made a curious contrast to the masses of rich brown hair which were coiled round and round the small, well-shaped head. Her mother had been one of the beauties of Seville, and had died when she was born. Her father lived with the old Count, in this dreary old palace in the Calle de la Trinidad. But nothing could sadden the spirits of Teresita. Her laugh was like a peal of bells, and she had such coaxing, wheedling ways, that even the solemn-visaged old major-domo could not refuse her anything. Her father was a man of considerable refinement and taste, and adored his little daughter to his heart's content, all the more that she resembled in many ways the mother whom he had loved so dearly.

At last the old Conde de Verano died, and his son lived quietly with his daughter in the dreary old palace. The term of mourning having expired, all Toledo was excited by the news that the Conde de Verano was going to give a masked ball, to introduce Teresita into society.

Many years had passed since most of his old friends had crossed the threshold, and great was the curiosity of those who were fortunate enough to be invited. None of the guests refused, for the house was said to be haunted, and all were anxious to see in company with one another what the old palace looked like inside. Besides that, a masked ball was quite a new thing to the good people of Toledo. The evening came, and the old palace was brilliant with a thousand lights. The suites of rooms were hung with choice old

tapestries, and the handsome silver and gold chandeliers sparkled with lights and reflected a thousand brilliant colours. The walls were hung with old armour, and the broad marble staircase was thronged with people, and all were dressed in dominoes and masks. At midnight they were all to unmask. The guests were more or less startled, therefore, at meeting a man dressed entirely in armour, with visor down, who wore neither domino nor mask. He seemed to know no one, for he was met several times in different parts of the house, and always alone. The clanking of his armour and sword could be heard a long way off; and as he came near, people involuntarily stepped aside, so chilly did the air become as he strode past, regardless of everything and everybody.

It had been arranged between the Count and his daughter that they themselves should not dress in dominoes and masks. Don Jayme thought Teresita too young for that kind of thing, and they stood together at the end of the long drawing-room to receive their guests. Teresita looked very lovely in her white gauzy draperies, and she had no lack of partners for the dances which formed the chief part of the entertainment. Her simplicity and gaiety charmed all hearts; and the knowing ones prophesied that she would be a great success. Her father's heart swelled as he heard these comments upon his darling.

The only thing which disturbed everyone's enjoyment was the entrance of the man in armour, from time to time. He walked straight through the different rooms, paying no attention to anyone, and the fun and conversation died away as he passed. People whispered to each other, and wondered who the strange knight might be. Some suggested that there was a story of the house being haunted, and that perhaps this was the ghost;

others, that the armour was only put on for the evening, and that the knight had made a mistake and thought it was a fancy-dress ball, instead of a masked one. In short, all sorts of suggestions were made. Teresita was too full of enjoyment and delight to care about the knight at first; but even she could not help noticing the disturbed looks of the people about her, and the dead silence which fell upon them all as the knight passed through the rooms at long intervals. She determined to find out something more about the man. She went all through the rooms until she found Don Jayme.

“Mi padre,” she said, “who is the curious caballero, dressed in armour, who keeps walking about all by himself?”

“What caballero?” asked Don Jayme, turning pale. “I have seen no one dressed in armour.”

“Seen no one dressed in armour!” cried Teresita, turning round to look at her father. “Where are your eyes, dear papa? We have all seen him, and I am sure you can hear his sword and his armour rattle and clatter a mile off. Why, there he is, coming through the door now! Don’t you see him? Can’t you hear him?”

Don Jayme said nothing, but turned white to the very lips. He neither saw nor heard anything himself; but he knew that the appearance of the ghost of the house portended no particular good fortune, but rather disaster.

At last the time came for everyone to unmask. It was like a transformation scene; everyone bloomed out in gay costumes and bright colours, and lent additional brilliance to the already beautiful rooms. The servants handed round wine and cake, chocolate and ices; and the air was filled with the hum of many

voices. Everybody seemed very happy, and began nibbling cake and sipping wine. But after the first taste, the guests looked at each other. First one and then another put down his glass, with a face of disgust. What could be the matter with the wine? It looked like a rich heavy Burgundy, but it tasted like blood. At the moment that one of the guests was saying, "It tastes like blood," the knight in armour entered the room. In a second the voices were hushed, and all gazed silently at the figure, which looked neither to the right nor to the left, but strode across the floor as though he were in a hurry. But Teresita, with a courage unusual for so young a girl, quietly left her seat, and placing herself in front of the figure, said :

"Señor Caballero, will you not unmask now and join us at supper?"

The figure did not answer, and the guests shuddered and covered their eyes when they saw what the young girl was doing ; but when they looked again the figure had gone, and Teresita lay on the floor in a dead faint. She very soon recovered her senses, however, made light of the whole matter, and was among the gayest of the company for the rest of the evening.

"So much for trying to be polite to people whom you do not know," she said, laughing. "But the man is very strange. Perhaps he is mad, poor thing!"

Don Jayme had made no answer when Teresita said that the knight in armour was coming in at the door. He could see nothing, nor could he hear anything ; but he had heard enough of the ghost in his boyhood to remember that those whose attention the ghost wished to attract were the very persons who were both blind and deaf as far as he was concerned.

The ghost was restless about something, and he must find out what it was. As soon as he could leave

his guests unnoticed he made his way to the room of Juan, the old major-domo of the house. He had been in the family ever since Don Jayme was a baby, and was a most valuable and trustworthy servant. To him the ghost was an old acquaintance, for he had, or thought he had, seen it several times. It generally portended nothing good when it appeared, that Don Jayme knew; but its precise significance he did not know, and therefore he had slipped away from his guests to ask information from old Juan.

He was startled when he saw him. For the first time in his life Juan appeared frightened. Don Jayme had never seen Juan look so before. Poor Juan's lips were white and trembling; his eyes seemed starting out of their sockets, as if they were straining to see something that was far off. When he saw his master enter the room he held up both hands, and said in a frightened whisper:

"Why, master, what is the ghost walking for? You have doubtless seen him;" and he seemed anxious for Don Jayme's answer.

"No, Juan; I can neither see nor hear him, but the señorita has, and so have all the guests."

Old Juan fell back in his chair, and gave a groan.

"You MUST hear him, Señor Conde! He is coming along the passage now. Can't you hear his armour clashing and his sword clanking over the stones? There he is, just passing the door! Can't you see him?"

Don Jayme did his best. He listened carefully, even eagerly, and strained his eyes to see the shadow of a man in armour. Juan saw that he was making a great effort, and groaned again.

"No," said Don Jayme, after a few minutes' pause; "no; I can hear and see *nothing*."

“Oh, Dios!” cried poor Juan, “how can I convince the Señor Conde? Come into the hall and see if all the armour is there.”

They went together into the hall. Apparently all the armour was there; but to make quite sure, they counted the pieces hanging up. Almost at the further end of the hall one complete suit of armour *was missing!*

They turned and looked at each other. Don Jayme’s face was now as white as Juan’s, and he whispered:

“What does it mean, Juan? the ghost’s walking!”

“It means—it means misfortune,” replied Juan, almost in a whisper. “There! he is coming towards us again. Surely you can see him now, señor!”

“No,” replied Don Jayme; “I see nothing.”

“He is making enough noise to wake the dead,” muttered Juan to himself. “Don Jayme must be deaf not to hear him.”

While Juan and his master were trying to fathom the mystery of the ghost, the guests were beginning to feel uncomfortable at remaining any longer in a house that had the reputation of being haunted. The small hours had already begun, and who could tell how many more ghosts might be seen that night? The guests moved about uneasily, and made inquiries for the host. Teresita did her best to amuse them, and begged them to stay for a few more dances. But her efforts were unavailing; and seeing that they were really in earnest, she pressed them no more, but sent a servant to find her father. The strange events of the evening had made a startling impression even on her young mind. She was therefore not astonished that her guests should wish to leave a house where they had been witnesses of such ominous sights.

Don Jayme, the moment that he had seen the last

of his guests, returned with all speed to Juan, with whom he consulted as to what they should do to get rid of the ghost.

“If he would only go with the guests, how glad we should all be!” sighed old Juan. The servants were frightened almost out of their senses, and sat close together in the kitchen, talking in whispers and shivering whenever they heard the clattering of the sword along the stone floor, as the knight strode about the house. Teresita sat for a time alone in the drawing-room, where she had that evening had so much enjoyment and dancing. She was not at all tired, and would joyfully have gone on dancing for two hours longer if the guests had not been so frightened by the knight in armour, and gone away together like a flock of sheep. She wondered where her father was, and why he turned so pale and did not answer when she pointed out to him the knight coming into the room.

At last she got tired of sitting by herself. There was a long pier-glass at one end of the drawing-room, and as she rose she saw herself reflected in it. She looked almost as fresh as when the evening began; and she walked up to the glass and stood admiring herself for some time. At last she began humming a gay bolero air, and involuntarily her feet kept time to the music, till she found herself dancing to her own reflection in the glass. She danced and capered till she was tired, and sank exhausted on a sofa. She rather wondered why no one had come up all this time to put out the lights and shut up the house. She listened attentively, but not a sound could she hear of anyone stirring, excepting occasionally the tramp and clatter of the knight in armour as he made his rounds. She had become so used to the sound that it did not disturb her in the least. The servants were too

frightened to move from the kitchen, unless they all went together, and Don Jayme and Juan were talking together in the major-domo's room. Juan confessed to feeling nervous, because he said that he had been told by his late master that the ghost had walked when Don Jayme's grandfather was away fighting in the wars against the Moors. The ghost appeared there for two days and three nights in the very same suit of mail. At the end of the three days, the news came that Don Andres had been killed in battle, and the ghost disappeared as suddenly as he had come.

"Have you seen him before to-night, Juan?" inquired Don Jayme.

"No, señor," was the reply. "I was carrying some candles into the drawing-room before the company came, when I met him on the stairs. I thought at first that perhaps some señor might have come early by mistake, or that perhaps you had armed yourself in that fashion to astonish your guests. But soon afterwards I saw you come out of your room dressed as you are now, and then it flashed across me what it was. And ever since the figure has been marching up and down the house. He seems to have finished his rounds for to-night at any rate, for I hear his footsteps no more."

Just then Teresita, who had been hunting all over the house for her father, opened the door, and seeing him, she immediately began talking about the ball and the guests, and finally the man in armour.

"I think he must be tired by this time," she said, "for he has been walking for four whole hours; but I do not hear him now, and although I have been all over the house to find you, I have neither seen nor heard him."

All this excitement had tired Don Jayme very much.

"Let us go and have a glass of wine," he said, "and

refresh ourselves before we go to bed ;” and he led the way to the dining-room. Juan followed his master, poured him out a glass of wine, and retired, quite satisfied that the ghost’s watch was over for that night.

Teresita had stayed behind for a few minutes to give directions to her maid, but joined her father in the dining-room almost directly after Juan had left him. He was sitting in his usual chair at the head of the table, apparently sipping his wine, for his glass was half empty, and he held it in his hand, which was resting on the table. Teresita had hardly time to do more than notice this, for she was startled by seeing the knight in armour standing erect and immovable behind her father’s chair.

“ Why, there is our friend the knight, papa,” she said, “ standing directly behind you. If you turn your head just the least little bit, you cannot help seeing him. But her father taking no notice of her remark, she touched him, and a shriek resounded through the house, which brought all the servants hurrying into the room. Don Jayme was *dead*.

For days and weeks Teresita’s life hung on a thread, but at last she recovered. Her gay spirits were gone, her face was pinched and worn, her hair was perfectly white. It is said that one of the sweetest of the nuns, in the days when the church of Sta. Maria la Blanca had a convent attached to it, was named Teresita de Verano. The old house in the Calle de la Trinidad is empty, and supposed to be haunted still by the knight in armour.

VIII.

THE CASTLE OF JATIVA.

JATIVA is an old Moorish town on the road to Valencia. A chain of mountains stand behind it; while before it stretches a large and luxuriantly cultivated plain, divided off into gardens full of orange trees and pomegranates. The turreted walls of the castle stand out conspicuously against the hillside.

The building is still picturesque, and, although now for the most part in a ruinous condition, one wing of it used to be habitable. At one time, many years ago, it was garrisoned by a battalion of one of the best Spanish regiments. Although the castle was not the most cheerful abode in the world, life was not dreary, for the views all around were lovely, and the little town of Jativa was not far off, where the officers and men were always welcome. They were brave, honest, and manly; but they were Spaniards, and of course superstitious. The Castle of Jativa has many legends attached to it. Some of these were known to most of the soldiers, and naturally they would have preferred to be stationed anywhere but at the Castle of Jativa. However, they were bound to follow their officers and to obey orders, and the orders were that they should, for a time at least, garrison this old fortress.

It was the "All-Hallow E'en." The weather had been blustering and cold. Piercing winds blew through the

valley, and snow had begun already to fall. Those soldiers who were not on duty were in the guard-room, huddled round a large and wide ^{FIRE} brasier full of glowing coals, trying in vain to warm their frozen feet, and their fingers which were blue with cold. The bells in the town of Jativa were tolling dolefully at intervals, and the church bell at the foot of the mountain could be heard at the top, clanging mournfully. The wind whistled round the old castle, and blew in gusts against the windows, and through its many chinks and crevices. The snow-flakes struck upon the windows as though anxious to be let in. Many of the soldiers were wrapped in their cloaks and rugs, but still the cold was so searching that, in spite of the brasier and their precautions, their teeth chattered as they sat crowded together round the hot coals.

It is the custom in Spain to sit up all night on "All-Hallow E'en," and tell stories. They are generally tales of ghosts, or of the miraculous intervention of some saint, or the Madonna. The soldiers at the old Castle ^{of} Jativa were no exception to the rule, but were telling stories round the glowing brasier, and trying to forget the cold and the stormy weather outside. Each one was to tell a story in turn; the circle round the brasier grew larger when the guards were changed, and those who had been on duty outside came in nearly frozen, and crouched over the burning coals. Many of the tales told had been of a ghostly nature, and the night was far advanced. At last, midnight struck from the church clock at the foot of the mountain. The bells kept on sounding drearily at short intervals, and the soldiers, terrified by the stories they had heard, crept closer and closer and kept each other warm. The wind rose and fell in great gusts, and whistled and moaned till it sounded like a soul in pain. The win-

dows rattled, and the doors creaked mournfully. All at once the soldiers heard a curious sound, which came neither from the windows nor the doors. The quick even tread of the sentries pacing their rounds could be distinctly heard. The men looked at each other with white faces and trembling lips.

“What was that noise?” said one of them in a whisper.

No one answered, but they all listened more attentively. The sound came nearer and nearer, and it seemed as though some one was dragging along a heavy chain. It rattled and clanked; and with one impulse the men left the brasier and retired to the farthest corner of the guard-room. At length they saw a man dressed in Moorish costume steal quietly into the room. His feet and hands were chained together, and it was the long, heavy chain round his ankles that made the clattering sound. His face had a terrified expression upon it, and he looked round him as if expecting some one to come after him. The soldiers watched him with bated breath and frightened faces, straining their eyes to discover who was coming after the Moorish prisoner. In a few minutes he had crossed the room, continually glancing around him and behind him, the chain clanking whenever he walked, though he moved with the greatest care and precaution. At last he passed through the open door into the passage, and was no more seen; but the soldiers did not dare to move from their place at the end of the room. They could still hear in the distance the dragging of that dreadful chain.

“Did you see how pale he looked?” at last said one of the soldiers in a whisper. His voice shook so much that it sounded as though his teeth were chattering.

“Yes,” said another, with a decided quaver in *his*

voice, "and did you notice how thin his hands and body were?"

"Has anyone heard of any story attached to this place?" inquired a third, courageously lighting a cigarette.

"There are plenty of them, I believe," returned one of the men who had been a long time in the regiment, "but I never heard one of any Moorish prisoner. Perhaps he was captured at the battle of Almansa, and kept here as a prisoner. Ay! what is that?"

For at that moment they heard shouting outside—a din and clash of arms, a great hum of voices apparently giving orders; moans and groans as of wounded men, and every now and then a voice seemed to appeal for mercy.

With one bound the men rushed to the door, and cold and snowing heavily as it was, they stood in the open space before the castle, and looked eagerly about for signs of the fray. Although they still distinctly heard the noise, the din of voices, the clash of arms and the suppliant voice, they could see *nothing*—absolutely *nothing*. The sentries on duty ran up with breathless haste to inquire what was the matter. The men told what they had seen, and they all looked in each other's pale faces aghast. The officers of the regiment came hurriedly from their quarters to find out what the disturbance meant, and they also stood motionless in the bitter wind and listened to the noise. Many swords apparently came clattering down upon shields upraised to receive the blows. Groans were heard as from dying men, growing fainter and fainter until they for the moment were lost in silence.

In a few seconds, louder and deeper groans would be heard, and every now and then the pleading voice could be discerned above the din.

The bells down in the valley clanged and boomed

most dolefully, and the one in the church at the foot of the mountain rang out its dismal funeral note; the wind whistled and moaned; dogs barked and howled below—and still, through it all, the men could hear distinctly the blows and the voices. The soldiers stood and listened in a stupid petrified attitude. At last one of the sentries, happening to look towards the main building of the castle, uttered a cry. All turned their heads to look, and echoed the voice of their comrade.

The main part of the castle was, as we have said before, in a ruinous condition. It had neither roof nor window-fittings, yet nevertheless mysterious lights were seen flitting here and there through the whole building: now at this window and now at that, as though people were hurrying to the scene of the battle. This changing of lights from one window to another continued for an hour or more. Then suddenly the noise of battle ceased entirely. The groans continued for some few minutes after the din had stopped, and after becoming fainter and fainter died away altogether. The pleading voice could still be heard, and the rattling of the chain was again audible, as though it were being rudely pulled along and dragged over the passage and floors. The soldiers stood listening, some of them in no slight alarm, but determined to see, or rather to hear, the end of the adventure. They heeded neither the deadly cold nor the driving snow-storm. The wind whistled and moaned round the castle, rattled the window-panes, and creaked the doors, while the snow-flakes pelted against the windows like mad things. The bells still continued to ring out dolefully in the silent town below, and the little church bell at the foot of the mountain responded with a wailing sound, while the clock in the church tower struck two. Now and then the dogs barked and disturbed the

silence of the night. The lights in the ruined part of the castle were still to be seen, but instead of moving rapidly about from one window to another they seemed stationary in the lower part of the building.

Strains of music were heard, but they sounded a long way off. It was the music of a "zarabanda," a stately kind of ancient Spanish dance, with the measure well and distinctly marked. The rustling of dresses could be heard, and every now and then a peal of laughter rang out into the air. Two or three of the soldiers ventured to peep in through the broken remains of the windows, but they could see nothing. The music sounded sweet and distant, and the steps of the dancers were distinctly audible, while the room seemed to be filled with soft and harmonious whisperings. One man who had climbed up and thrust his head into the room insisted that he had been brushed against by one of the invisible fair ones.

The snow had ceased by this time, the wind blew less bitterly, but the bells of Jativa tolled dolefully and incessantly, and the clock of the church below struck three. As the last stroke of the hour sounded, the stately flowing music of the "zarabanda" changed into dirge-like chanting. It was a requiem. Wailing choruses followed, interrupted every now and then by a cry of "Ay, de mi! ay, de mi!" as if it came from a broken heart. The soldiers drew closer together, and those venturesome ones who had been peeping in at the windows joined their comrades with all speed. The chanting continued with intervals of wailing and broken-hearted cries for nearly an hour. As suddenly as the funeral march and requiem had begun they ceased, and again the din of battle was heard raging furiously. It seemed to be death and no quarter with these invisible foes. The blows upon the shields were

something terrible to hear, and came clattering down with a sound of relentless vengeance. The soldiers, finding that there was really nothing to see, listened with trembling limbs in the passage of the castle to the fearful and savage warfare going on outside. Again the moans and groans of the wounded and dying were heard, and sometimes the cry of one in mortal pain. But the complaining, pleading voice which had been heard before was silent, and only blows and shouts were now to be distinguished in the fray.

The listeners waited patiently to see the end of this night of horrors. The whole garrison was up, officers and all, and had no desire to go to bed, although their teeth chattered with the cold, and they were weary both in body and soul.

“What horrible tales this castle could tell if it could only speak!” said one of the soldiers to another.

“Yes,” answered the other; “there must have been some pretty doings up here to make the spirits live over again such horrors as we have heard to-night. Fancy being bound to do this twice a year—on St. John’s Eve, as well as to-night.”

“Perhaps they have pleasanter reminiscences for St. John’s Eve,” said a third soldier, joining in. “They cannot have been at swords’ points all the year round. There must have been pleasant things to remember and to act over again.”

“I only hope that we shall not be quartered here another year,” remarked the first speaker. “It is enough to make one’s hair turn white with awe. And yet there is nothing to do but to stand by and listen, and then one feels such a fool.”

“Another time we should understand it and not be frightened,” said the second soldier. “There they go again with their funeral chants. *That* makes my flesh

creep more than anything else that has happened to-night."

The noise of the fighting had suddenly ceased, only to begin again the funeral chanting, the dismal distant music, the rustling of long robes, and the mournful wailing cry of one in deep distress. The cold had become less bitter, the wind had been lulled to rest, and the bells in the town seemed to ring out less dolefully, while the clock at the foot of the mountain chimed six.

With the first faint streak of dawn the music, which had sounded distant all the time, grew fainter and fainter until it ceased altogether, and nothing more was heard.

The old woman who supplied goats' milk to the garrison every day came later this morning than was her wont. This was annoying, as after their long and cold vigil the men needed their hot coffee and chocolate all the more. One of them was so angry and cold that he upbraided the old crone roundly. She looked at him calmly, and answered, when he stopped his tirade for want of breath:

"Ay, Señor Caballero, but I would not come up here before broad daylight for any money to-day. Pretty sights and sounds you must have seen and heard all night! I am glad that I was not in your place; it would have killed me. I wonder that you are alive to tell the tale. Everyone was talking of you all down below last night, and pitying you for being perched up here, shut up with the ghosts. You may thank the blessed Saints that you are still alive. For there have been evil ghosts seen and dreadful deeds done up here on the 'Noche de los Difuntos' in this old Castle of Jativa."

HACIEND

IX.

THE SMUGGLER'S DAUGHTER.

EAUX CHAUDES, as everyone knows, is a tiny village in the Pyrenees, through which there is a road across the mountains into Spain. A little way beyond the Eaux Chaudes the bleak and dreary road passes a curious side-path, going apparently to the skies, but really only leading to Gavarnie, a neglected and untidy little collection of houses, peopled with gruff, blunt, and boorish peasants. After passing Gavarnie the road lies cold and white between barren-looking mountains, or rather very high hills, for many miles without any break or habitation. No smoke pointing to the existence of a house is to be seen by the weary and belated traveller, as he jogs along on his jaded mule. The road is so lonely that for many years it was the favourite highway for those who desired to enter Spain "without questions." Troops of mules may be seen trudging along with their gay yellow headgear, red ear-rosettes, and tails gaudily braided with red and yellow trimmings. Men with knee-breeches, and heads tied up in gay kerchiefs, carrying curious many-coloured woollen cloths, with manifold tassels bobbing at the edges, are to be seen wearily making their way in company with the sleek, silky-looking jennets which are travelling slowly over the border into France. This road used to be a dangerous one, infested by smugglers

and robbers (who were their aiders and abettors), and by wolves. For a long time, even the police refused to explore that region unless accompanied by a mounted guard. It was as much as their lives were worth, they said; and the road was left clear for the marauders.

But in spite of the dreariness and barren waste of this road, it was peopled in every direction, and woe to the man who was belated there. For many years these hiding-places (which probably the people who lived in them called "home") were never discovered; but shocking crimes were committed on the road from time to time, which called loudly for investigation. No one liked to be the first to start upon this dangerous expedition. All made excuses. This one was ill, another could not leave his infirm and aged parents, and some excuse was found to deter each of those told off for the service. At last, things came to such a pass that a large mounted guard was sent off to explore the road, from the border of Spain to the Eaux Chaudes. A flagrant case of robbery and murder had occurred.

A young Spaniard named José Quederos, and his cousin Federigo Menillo, who had been born and bred in France, were going through the Pass on their way to Pau, on horseback. They were gay, brave young men, accustomed to duelling and fighting, and anxious to play with edged tools. From sheer bravado they went on this road to see what wolves, robbers, and smugglers were like, to their cost. For some two days after starting out they met with no accidents. But gradually they came into a very lonely and desolate part of the Pyrenees. The mountains rose high and bleak on each side of them, with great ravines at intervals dividing them. The two youths were full of life and spirit, and as they rode along

told each other stories calculated to keep them cheerful, and make them laugh. But as the evening stole on they gradually became silent, watched the sun set, with a slight tremor at their hearts (if the truth must be known), and settled themselves well in their saddles with their pistols in their hands. Every now and then they passed one of those dreadful-looking bleak ravines, and were only too thankful when they got safely by.

"I wonder if we have got to the Pass yet," said Menillo to his cousin. "It is somewhere on this road, I believe, and they say a very dangerous part."

"Perhaps the danger is not so great as we have been told," returned Quederos laughingly. "Very often people repeat travellers' tales, and they generally end in nothing."

The night was closing in upon them fast as they rode along, and a white mist was rising from the valley, shutting off from their view the dim outline of the landscape. They could no longer see any road in which to guide their horses. They seemed to be riding through a sea of white curling foam, and at last they gave themselves up to the horses and trusted to their finding the right path by instinct. All at once their horses were stopped by a group of rough-looking men, who grasped their bridles and demanded their money. They made a vigorous resistance with their weapons. But it was all of no use; the ruffians outnumbered them, and surrounded the two unfortunate youths. One of the robbers snatched the pistol from the hand of Menillo, and thrust at him with his dagger. He fell back mortally wounded. Quederos, meanwhile, was so occupied in warding off the attack of his foes, that he did not observe the fate of his cousin. The bandits were nearly successful in capturing him, and were struggling to bind his arms

together, when suddenly a girl appeared at the corner of the road, with a flaring paper lamp in her hand, holding it high above her head. The lamp cast a lurid light upon the mist around.

"Manuelo! Pepe! Juan Maria!" cried the girl, in an authoritative voice, "do no more! It is the order of Don Pablo—no one is to be sacrificed to-night. It is the night of the Annunciation, and all life is to be spared."

The robbers had paused in their occupation of tying the young Spaniard. There was a silence of a few minutes, and then one of them said:

"Don Pablo's orders come late for one of us. This gentleman is gone beyond human aid," pointing to the body of young Menillo, which lay stretched upon the ground, apparently dead.

"He has perhaps only fainted from loss of blood," answered the girl. "Carry him to the tent, and I will look after his wounds. Meanwhile the other young man will follow me with the rest of you."

Two of the robbers seized Quederos by the wrists, and marched him between them, while two carried Menillo's body, and the rest followed slowly behind with the horses. The girl walked quite alone in front, and was treated with the greatest respect by the band of rough men, who obeyed her orders implicitly and without a murmur.

They went for some distance, a mile or two perhaps, along a road overhung on both sides by bleak-looking mountains. Suddenly, at a turn in the road, they came upon a huge boulder which seemed to have been thrown down from the mountain above during some dreadful storm. Here the maiden stopped, and Quederos noticed that there was a pathway between the boulder and the mountain. The mountain looked grim and dreary as the whole band stood before it; but after a minute,

during which the girl knocked once, twice, and thrice, slowly and with a pause after each knock, the grey stone of the mountain seemed to swing back, and a low inclined path was seen descending as it were into the very centre of the earth. They entered, and after a few minutes came into a wide low room hollowed out in the rock. A fire glowed in a large brasier in the centre, and the men crowded round it to warm themselves, while an old and decrepit man hastened to prepare food for them.

The smugglers began talking all together, boasting of their exploits in a dialect unknown to Quederos, gesticulating wildly. Meanwhile, the men who carried the body of his comrade walked to the farther end of the vaulted chamber, where the girl was sitting alone, and at a motion from her laid him down. As his eyes became more accustomed to the gloom of the place, Quederos found that the cave was roughly divided off by curtains and brilliant stuffs into three rooms; the one in which they were then assembled being the largest and more especially the common room, for here and there in the corners were bundles of hay laid down as if for beds for the men. On one of these roughly made beds Menillo was laid, and the girl went into an inner room and immediately returned with a beautifully wrought bottle. Pouring a little of the contents into her hand, she began chafing the wrists and hands of Menillo. Finding that this had no effect, she undid the waistcoat of the young man, and felt his heart.

“It beats still,” she murmured to herself. “There is still hope. O Santa Maria! save us from committing murder on this holy night.”

So saying, she rubbed a little of the liquid round Menillo's mouth, and held the bottle under his nose. He heaved a long deep sigh, which was almost a groan.

At a word from the girl two men advanced, and opening his shirt, found a long uneven jagged wound just under the left breast.

“That is the Hunchback’s mark. There is no chance for his life, señora, for that knife has a poisoned blade,” the men cried.

She, however, did not give up hope for a long time. She patiently bathed the wound and stanching the blood which flowed fast and freely from it. Quèderos assisted her as well as he could. He saw at once that his cousin’s life was ebbing slowly away. And at last, finding all her efforts unavailing, the girl turned to him and said in a low voice :

“He is dying, I fear.”

“He is dead !” returned Quèderos.

The girl turned quickly towards the bed. It was too true. The jaw had dropped, and the slow laboured breathing had stopped. Menillo was beyond all human help.

In his anxiety about his cousin, Quèderos had forgotten that he himself had been wounded in the fray. But now, when all the excitement was over, he began to feel faint ; the room and the figures of the men crouching about the brasier turned round with him, and he would have fallen on the ground had not the girl standing near him caught him in her arms. In a moment, without calling for aid, she poured a little of the liquid from the beautiful bottle into his mouth, and in a few minutes he became conscious enough to know that he was leaning against her for support. As soon as she saw him open his eyes she called to the two men who had helped her with Menillo, and ordered them to put Quèderos to bed at once. In an instant they lifted him off his feet, and carried him into another room. Here it was cooler. All the furniture was handsome,

and the room was fitted up as a bedroom. The men undressed him, and under the girl's direction put on a poultice of healing herbs, and bound up his wounds as though they were used to that kind of work. Their touch, though they were rough-looking men, was tender and gentle, and Quederos, worn out with his long day's journey, the excitement of the skirmish with the robbers, his cousin's death, and his own wounds, was soothed by the soft herb poultice, and fell almost immediately into a deep sleep. How long he slept he did not know; but when he awoke, the room was still lighted up by torchlight, and instead of the young girl who had attended to his wounds, a handsome, grey-bearded old man sat in a large chair opposite his bed, reading a pile of letters which lay on his knee. Beside him on the bed were the papers and purse of Quederos. For some time Quederos studied the face of the man opposite him with much attention, but an involuntary movement on his part betrayed the fact that he was awake, and in an instant the old man had clutched the letters, papers and property, and rose to his feet.

"Ah, my young friend," he exclaimed, "you are feeling better for your long sleep, I am sure!" Then feeling his pulse, he said in a low voice, "Weak, but decidedly improving. Manuela knew what she was about when she saw to your wounds. In a few days we shall have you up and about."

Quederos wondered at first who he was, but in a few minutes he knew that he was in the presence of the chief-smuggler, the captain of the band, for Manuela lifted the curtain and addressed the old gentleman as "Don Pablo" and "Padre."

After a few minutes' conversation in the strange dialect which the men had used to each other the night before, Don Pablo rose, and with a smile said :

“I will now leave you to be cared for by Manuela, and these”—waving the papers and purse in the air—“I shall keep in safety for you till you are strong enough to need them.”

Manuela then called the two men who had put him in bed the night before, and aided them to dress his wounds. When they had retired, and he was once more comfortable in his bed, he said to Manuela:

“I suppose Don Pablo will keep those papers and my purse for ever. What does he want them for?”

“I cannot hope for one instant that you will ever get them again,” returned Manuela coolly. “He will use them for your ransom, and if he fails in getting what is demanded, you will never need them any more.”

This sounded rather sinister, but Quederos smiled inwardly as he remembered how many there were in Spain who cared for his life, and who would rescue him if it were possible.

“Who is Don Pablo?” he said feebly.

“He is known in the outer world as the famous robber ‘El Diablo,’” the girl answered sadly.

Quederos started from his bed, falling back again with a groan as his wounds opened afresh. Manuela quietly bound them up again without calling for further aid, and in a few minutes Quederos recovered. After a long silence he said:

“Señorita, do you like the life you must lead here?”

“Like it?” cried Manuela, rising from her chair, with horror in her face, and raising her arms to heaven—“Like it? Santa Virgen! I HATE it! I LOATHE it! I DESPISE it! But what can I do? I can go nowhere without being tracked, and who would help Manuela, El Diablo’s daughter, in the outer world? Who would give her a helping hand, and hide her from the knife of the Hunchback?”

"I would," said Quederos, in a solemn voice.

"You would?" she whispered. "But you are still a prisoner, and how can *you* help *me*?"

"I shall not be long in bondage," said Quederos, with a smile. "My people are powerful and rich, and they will not leave me here long for want of a large ransom."

How often in the after-days he regretted this confidence! For behind the curtains stood Don Pablo, and he, listening to the conversation, acted according to his information.

Manuela's face had a terrified look upon it as Quederos said those words, and with a curious gesture she gave him to understand that there were listeners all around them. She began arranging the bedclothes, and as she tucked them round his neck she formed the words with her lips, "Be careful what you say, and speak by gestures."

From that time Quederos was the most silent of men. Although he lay ill and wounded in his bed for more than a month, he was hardly ever heard to say a word in conversation. But he had many chances of gesture-talking with Manuela, and he became much interested in her.

She was tall and slight, with finely cut features, a rather stolid expression of face, but the most beautiful, soft, liquid eyes, like those of a gazelle. Her dress was of a flowing, loose shape, and her magnificent hair hung down her back almost to her feet, under a small silk cap ornamented with gold coins. Her hands were small and of a peculiarly pretty shape, and her feet were shod in soft satin slippers.

She was so handy and helpful, and made so many hours pass pleasantly for him in his weariness and pain, that when she was sometimes absent Quederos missed

her sadly, and was always more fretful and difficult to manage when she was not by. Now and again he saw her father, the handsome old chief who had listened behind the hangings. But there came a time when a lull seemed to fall upon the company. Manuela stayed longer and came oftener to see him. Only two or three of the men appeared at this time. At last Quederos could not understand the entire silence throughout the cave, and by gestures demanded of Manuela, when she came to see to his comfort the last thing before she retired herself, what had happened that such a dead silence reigned throughout the cave.

“The whole party,” she motioned with her lips, “are gone to meet a troop of travellers, laden with precious things, who are on their way to France. They may be gone a day or so, or they may be gone a week; perhaps more. My father, meanwhile, is negotiating with your people, señor, for your ransom. They do not seem to like the sum named, which is large, and is owing to your indiscreet words the other night.”

“When will your father return?” Quederos inquired, in the same quiet manner.

“I do not know,” she replied. “Probably soon—but he will be in a bad temper if the negotiations do not turn out as he wishes.”

During these few days of quiet, the two lovers (for they had become such and nothing less) had a very pleasant interval of undisturbed happiness. They could communicate with each other freely without fear of interruption. But this interlude lasted only a short time. One day, one awful day, the chief returned. Diego, the slave, clapped his hands as a signal to Manuela that her father had come. In an instant she had left Quederos' side (for he was now able to sit up a little

while), and was in the room, which served as the common apartment, to receive her father.

His face was stern, and his voice harsh and angry, as he gave orders to the different servants. Then he kissed Manuela in an absent way; his thoughts were evidently far off, and he seemed hardly to realize what he was doing. Suddenly he roused himself, and calling Diego, the slave, he bade him tell all he knew of the movements of the band.

"There has been but little news of them, *mi amo*," Diego said, with a trembling voice. "They were going to meet a party of travellers, and bring them here, lightened of many of their burdens. Once only we have seen the branch slanted, and since then we have heard nothing."

Manuela had stood silently beside her father's side while Diego said these words. After a moment's thought, Don Pablo turned to her and said: "And you, have you anything to tell me?"

"Only this," replied Manuela, in a low voice—"only this;" at the same time she handed him the branch of an oak, on which were three deep red marks and a roughly cut cross.

Diego uttered a cry of despair, and wrung his hands. Even Don Pablo was moved and agitated, for he started as his eyes fell on the cross. Manuela cried silently as she looked on.

"When did this come?" asked Don Pablo, in a hurried whisper.

"I found it in the usual place when I went for water this afternoon," she replied, also in a whisper.

"How many men were in this expedition?"

"All, except Diego and the two Basques."

"Then no time must be lost. Diego, go by the covered passage to El Rubio, and tell him to send all

the men he can spare at once, for they are wanted by El Diablo."

Diego disappeared like an arrow. Manuela still stood at a little distance from her father, and watched him anxiously as he stared at vacancy with knitted brows and a steady gaze. He had apparently forgotten all about her, for he muttered out loud to himself: "Things are working terribly against us. The whole band are in imminent danger unless help can reach them soon. Those dogs of police are in full scent, and are tracking us down. Then that precious prisoner of ours is being searched for; and his people, instead of paying his ransom, prefer to threaten us, and have set half Spain and France upon us. If anything happens to the band, his life shall pay for it, ransom or no ransom; and only his dead body shall return to his family——"

A very slight movement of the curtain disturbed Don Pablo in his thoughts. He strode across the room, lifted the curtain, and looked around. Not a soul was to be seen.

"Manuela!" he cried—"Manuela! where in the name of the foul fiend are you?"

"I am preparing your supper, mi padre," answered a distant voice, and presently Manuela appeared with a puchero in one hand and a plate in the other. "What is the matter?" she said very quietly, as she placed the food before him.

He seized her by the wrists, and turned her face to the firelight of the brasier, and scanned it fiercely. She was a trifle pale, but that was all. Her clear bright eyes returned his searching look fearlessly, and not a feature of her face flinched. The firmly set mouth and chin seemed cast in marble, as she stood almost defiantly before the angry chief.

"If I thought," he said slowly—"if I thought that

you were capable of betraying us or our secrets, I would kill you with my own hand as you stand there before my eyes, with that innocent look upon your face."

Then he slowly released her, and began eating his puchero (stew). She served him, removed the dishes, and seemed to be absorbed in his welfare. But her mind was in a whirl, quiet though she appeared externally. She was wondering how she could make her lover understand the circumstances of the case and the danger which threatened him—indeed, which threatened both of them. For whatever touched or hurt him reacted upon her. His life had become dearer to her than her own. Something must be done, and that soon, for she had overheard enough of her father's spoken thoughts to know that the band was in great danger, perhaps cut to pieces and destroyed by this time, and that their surprise and attack was mainly due to the active exertions of Quederos's family, who had set the authorities upon their track. She must manage to warn him, but her father was especially watchful of her movements that evening, and it was not until she took him his night draught that she was able to say a word to her lover. She had passed through his room holding the marked branch in her hand, a signal which she had taught him meant danger. As soon as she heard her father's snores as he lay back worn out with the fatigues and anxieties of his journey, she went to Quederos, and said with her lips :

"You must get up and dress. If the band is destroyed, your life will pay for it ; and I am powerless to save you. Now I can take you by an underground passage to a place of safety, from which you can make your way home."

He did what she bid him, though, weak as he was, he trembled in every limb. When he was ready she

tied a coloured handkerchief round his head, placed a bundle of Spanish tablecloths over his shoulder, and opening a door, of which he had till then been perfectly ignorant, led him carefully along a dark pathway for three or four hundred yards. Then they emerged into a curved passage lighted up at intervals with torches, so that they could make out their way. Every now and then they thought they heard voices, and Manuela would gently push Quederos into one or other of the rifts (with which the walls of the cave were seamed) and go on a few steps herself. But no one disturbed them; and at last, after a long journey, during which Manuela supported Quederos from time to time, they came to the mouth of the cave.

This Manuela opened, and let her lover out, after carefully looking up and down the road to see if anyone were in sight. In a few minutes she waved a white handkerchief, the signal that all was safe. At the bend of the road she turned to him and said:

“My darling, we must part here.”

“But surely you are coming with me!” he cried. “You could not be so cruel as to leave me; and I could not leave you to meet your father’s anger alone. Rather would I die also——”

“No, no,” she said, with a smile. “The only thing you can do to help me is to come back with a great troop of soldiers. I could not desert my father. I would by that time have placed him and his in safety, and I shall be ready to accompany you. But do not betray my father,” she cried quickly. “Say only that I am a maiden in bondage in a cave.” Placing a wallet of provisions on his shoulder, she pointed out the road. “Turn to the right at the first turning and keep straight on, and you will soon be over the border into Spain. Adios, adios!”

Then with a long kiss and an assurance that he would soon return for her, they parted; and Quederos saw the door of the cave shut behind the woman he loved best in the world before he started upon his journey home. In less than twenty-four hours he was at home; and it was not long before he was travelling upon the same route, but on horseback this time, and accompanied by a large guard of soldiers.

* * * * *

Don Pablo meanwhile had waked from his sleep, and saying to himself, "Now for my prisoner," had gone to his guest's room. But the room was empty; the bird had flown. Mad with rage he went to his daughter's room, and on the way stumbled over the bodies of the two Basque servants, snoring loudly upon the floor. Manuela was not to be found.

"Fools, dogs, blind pigs!" he cried to the servants as they stood trembling before him; "do you not see that both the prisoner and my daughter have made their escape while you have been sleeping?" Then, having thrashed and cuffed them till he was tired, he tied them by their wrists to two rings in the walls, from which their feet could hardly touch the ground. "You may stay there and swing till my return," he said, as he left them. The two poor wretches gave many a loud cry of anguish, as they hung in this painful position, and saw their tormentor disappearing into the darkness.

When Don Pablo came to the curved passage he stopped, for he saw a figure which looked like Manuela's coming towards him from the farthest end. When she came very near to the corner where he was standing, Don Pablo suddenly confronted her. She started and turned pale.

"Where is Quederos?" he said sternly.

"Gone to his home," Manuela said quietly.

“And you helped him to escape, I suppose?” her father questioned in a mocking way.

“I did,” was the low reply. “I love him, and I have saved him.”

“Traitor that thou art!” cried Don Pablo, white with rage. “Take what thou deservest!” and he gave her a blow in the face which brought the blood gushing from her nose and mouth, and felled her to the ground. In a moment more the glitter of a knife was seen in the air, and he had stabbed Manuela mortally.

“Die, false one!” he said, as he gave the blow.

She raised herself by a superhuman effort, and gasped out, “Save thyself and thine—for he promised not to return—for two days to give thee—time to escape—I have not betrayed thee——” and with a groan she fell back dead.

When Don Pablo saw what he had done, he recoiled with horror—especially as he heard her last words, which showed that she had tried to protect him to the last. For a long time he seemed as though he were paralyzed, looking at the dead body of Manuela lying at his feet. But finally he remembered that she had said that Quederos had promised her forty-eight hours for safety before proceeding against him. There was therefore no time to be lost. He could not stop to bury the body of Manuela, but after stretching and composing her limbs he left her lying where she had fallen. As he was going away, however, the love of greed and of glittering things overcame him, and returning to her side he took off the gold coins hanging on her forehead and the jewels of every kind upon her person. Then he hurried away, and left his dead for Quederos to bury.

He found the slaves crying out with pain from their punishment, and hastened to cut them down.

“Dogs of slaves!” he said, as they tried, in spite of

their painful and swollen ankles, to stand upright before him, "we must leave this cave for another more secure. Put the brasiers out as nearly as possible, and remove all necessary treasures quickly, for the hell-hounds are upon us."

The jewels and coins in his hands told the slaves in a twinkling what had been the fate of Manuela.

In a few hours the little company had escaped, after putting a withered branch marked with a cross and a dagger across the mouth of the cave opening on the road to Gavarnie.

The cave was empty, and only the torches in the curved passage flared down upon the upturned mutilated face of Manuela, the daughter of El Diablo.

* * * * *

The horrible fate of his love fired Quederos with such rage and hatred, that he and his troops were not long in tracking the band of smugglers and robbers among whom he had passed so many weeks.

They were brought to Spain and tried. El Diablo and three or four of the ringleaders were executed, the rest being imprisoned for life.

Not far from the Spanish border, between that and the spot where she and Quederos parted for the last time, stands a small black cross, bearing the name of Manuela. When they found her in the passage of the cave, Quederos and his men buried her tenderly among the mountains where her life had been passed, and which she had loved so well; and only the little cross marks the spot where lie the mortal remains of the smuggler's daughter.

X.

DON RODRIGO LADRON.

BEFORE the war of Granada was begun by Ysabella the Catholic, there was an interval of peace and rest, during which both she and Ferdinand were able to make certain important modifications in the plan of reform which they kept constantly in view, and which occupied them nearly all Ysabella's lifetime. The first was one of the most important: viz., the proper administration of justice. During the anarchy of Henry IV.'s reign the authority of the king and judges had fallen into such contempt that the law had no force whatever. The inhabitants of the cities were no safer than if they lived in the open country. Every man's hand was against his neighbour. Property was plundered, murders committed, coaches were stopped, and the numerous fortresses scattered broadcast through the land were employed as strongholds for robbers and cut-throats.

Late in the fifteenth century there lived a certain judge of Castro-Nuñez, named Carlos de Mendana, who spread terror wherever he went with his horde of bandits. He had so many strongholds in his possession that he compelled the cities of Burgos, Valladolid, Segovia, Salamanca, Avila, and others, to pay him tribute for the protection of their territory. He was also one among many, but perhaps the strongest, of

the knightly freebooters. He was not always cruel, however, but a Spanish Robin Hood, being kind to the poor, though robbing the rich, and sometimes even releasing his victims for a mere whim. He was known all over Spain as Don Rodrigo the Robber-Chief, and only his intimates and followers knew that Carlos de Mendana and Don Rodrigo Ladron were one and the same.

There are many stories told about the exploits of this daring robber, but the following is one of the best.

Toro is the capital of the small province of the same name, and although now so dilapidated and decayed, was in the old days a city of some importance. Don Pedro entered it in 1356, to put down a rebellion. Near it was fought the battle between Alonso V. and Ferdinand, which gave the crown of Castile to Ysabella, and destroyed all the hopes of her niece, Juana La Beltraneja. Here also, after Ysabella's death, the celebrated Cortes was held which gave the reins of government over Castile into Ferdinand's hands. The town has a fine bridge and a pleasant promenade, from which can be seen the Almenas de Toro, whose praises Lope de Vega has sung.

From Toro, ^{CANANEA} one cold evening in ^{Sancta Fe} December, there started a coach for Valladolid. ^{LAS CRUCES} The places were all taken, apparently, by people well-to-do in the world, and worth robbing—for they all carried knives, as if prepared to defend their property and lives. The road from Toro to Tordesillas was famous then for being infested with robbers. Among the company travelling in the coach were an old lady and her niece; the former very nervous and timid, the latter handsome, blue-eyed and brown-haired. Carmen de Rojas was an orphan. Her father, the Conde de Rojas, was of a noble family in Toledo, where he had died, leaving his mother-

less and now orphaned daughter to the care of her aunt on her mother's side, and she had lived at Toro all her girlhood. She was a great beauty, and eclipsed most others whenever she appeared in society; and she was as good as she was beautiful. The inmates of the coach, as fellow-travellers, and perhaps fellow-sufferers, became communicative in the common danger. Their talk was chiefly of robbers, and the narrow escapes that they or their friends had had in various other journeys. The night was far advanced before anyone dared to close an eye; but at last tired Nature asserted her power, and soon nothing was heard but the deep breathing of the passengers.

Suddenly the carriage was stopped, the driver and zagal fell on their faces under the horses, and the passengers were summoned to alight. Carmen de Rojas awoke to find herself and her fellow-travellers surrounded by a crowd of men with fierce, dark, wicked faces, who were pillaging the company as quickly as possible. Carmen and her aunt stood a little apart from the rest, and were the last to be searched. Carmen thus had a chance to make her observations. After the first few minutes she could just make out in the darkness the dim outlines of a man on horseback, who stood awaiting the result of the robbery, apparently without taking any part in it himself. He seemed to be a person of authority, for every now and then he gave to the robbers orders, which were obeyed, although sometimes reluctantly.

At last it came to the turn of Carmen and her aunt to be examined. The light of the lantern fell full upon her lovely frightened face. Her eyes were like forget-me-nots, and wide open with fear; her face was as white as the driven snow; but, in spite of her terror, she struggled with the robbers and defied them.

“I have nothing worthy of the attention and designs of these señoras,” she said, drawing herself up haughtily, “neither has my aunt; and the first man that touches either her or me, *vaya*——” and the glitter of a long knife flashed in the light.

The sound of argument and strife caught the attention of the robber-chief concealed by the darkness. He saw the young girlish figure defending her aunt and herself, and wondered that anyone so delicate and slight should dare to do what none of the men of the party had ventured to suggest—defy their despoilers. A great pity overcame him; and as the first robber advanced towards the girl the deep voice of the invisible chief said, from the darkness:

“Leave the señoras alone! we do not hurt women and children.”

With much reluctance the robbers abandoned their prey, and the travellers were allowed to take their places in the coach again.

The gentlemen who had been rifled of every valuable that they possessed, in spite of their murderous-looking weapons, showed their dissatisfaction at the distinction made between them and the two ladies; one going so far as to express his anger in words:

“Had I known that women and children were exempt from these robbers,” he said spitefully, taking off his hat to Carmen, “I should have passed over my worldly goods to the señorita’s care.”

“So would I,” murmured the rest under their breath.

Carmen looked at them with flashing eyes:

“Señores,” she said, with a low bow, “if you had had the spirit of a girl of nineteen, you would have saved your worldly goods, and prevented two women from being attacked.”

The rest of the journey to Tordesillas was performed

in silence. The travellers eyed Carmen and her aunt with much distrust, as if they were in league with the robbers.

At Tordesillas two of the passengers got out, and two strangers got into the coach. One had a fierce and exceedingly coarse face, full of sensuality and wickedness. The other, who sat next the door of the conveyance, was a remarkably handsome man, a little past his prime, perhaps, and showing traces of care and anxiety on his face, but with kindly eyes which smiled at you—a smile that fascinated all who saw it.

He seemed to know all the country by heart, and pointed out all the interesting places to his fellow-travellers, who were much attracted to him. He was told all the particulars of their robbery by the sufferers, who took care that he should hear the distinction made between them and the women, and he was not slow in perceiving how much they had made the ladies suffer for the unlooked-for courtesy which they had received at the hands of the robbers. His companion during this conversation could hardly restrain his mirth, and often broke out into open laughter. There was something in the tone of the new traveller's voice which reminded Carmen of the voice which had come from the darkness, and had directed the robbers in their work. She turned and looked full in his face; but the kindly eyes, pleasant smile, and courtly ways of the stranger disarmed all suspicion. His eyes told her that he admired her, and as he addressed all his remarks to her, the fact soon became evident to all the company.

Nothing alarming occurred until the coach passed Ponte Duero. Between Ponte Duero and Valladolid there is a bare and lonely patch of country, like so many that exist in Spain. Here again the coach was stopped, the driver and zagal as before threw them-

selves under their horses' bellies, and a robber came to the door to request the passengers to alight. The stranger near the door touched the robber on the wrist. The moment that their eyes met, the robber changed colour, stammered, and begged pardon.

"Shall I show you my passport?" inquired the stranger, with a most engaging smile.

"Pardon me, señor," replied the robber, "it is not necessary."

The coach was permitted to proceed without more delay, and they reached Valladolid without any further annoyance.

"I wish we had had you with us when we were attacked the last time," said the man who had insulted Carmen.

"I wish I had been," returned the stranger, with a smile; and his companion laughed outright, such a long and loud laugh that the rest of the company stared at him in amazement.

The stranger, after breaking the ice with Carmen de Rojas by admiring her, ventured to speak to her directly; and gradually they got communicative. He discovered in the course of conversation that she was the niece of the rich banker De Rojas in Valladolid.

"De Rojas," he cried, when he heard the name, "why, he is an old friend of mine! Give him this card. I am going to Valladolid, and will do myself the pleasure of renewing my acquaintance with him."

Carmen promised that she would give the message. Living in a simple and retired way in Toro, she had never heard of Carlos de Mendana. She put the card in her pocket, and very shortly after they arrived in Valladolid.

Several weeks passed before Carmen saw her fellow-traveller again. She had given the card and message

to her uncle, who turned pale when he saw the name, she thought. But it might have been only her fancy.

Carlos de Mendana never forgot a promise, and one fine day, many weeks after the uncle of Carmen began to breathe again, he appeared, much to the amazement and discomfort of De Rojas.

“Ah,” cried De Mendana, “and we meet thus after so many years! You turned traitor, did you? And tried to get us all hanged but yourself? Well, we are still alive, in spite of your amiable intentions, and intend to keep alive without your permission.”

“Hush!” said the Conde de Rojas in a whisper, shutting the door of his room. “I only did what I thought would be for my own interests to save my neck. But do not tell my niece.”

“Do not mention your niece’s name in the same breath with that villainous transaction,” said De Mendana. “She is too pure and sweet to be brought into our guilty transactions. And yet I—blood-stained, guilty wretch though I am—love her, and have claimed acquaintance with you again for her sake. Let me try to win her for my wife, De Rojas: put no obstacle in my way, and I swear not to tell her of your treachery, nor to damage you in any way. She shall never know of your former share in our enterprise, nor shall she suspect my occupation as long as I live.”

The Conde de Rojas pondered long and deeply over this solution of his difficulties, as he paced up and down the long room like a caged animal. De Mendana meanwhile sat at the table, drumming impatiently with his fingers, and watching his victim narrowly.

The Conde de Rojas was a well-built, powerful-looking man, with a young face and prematurely grey hair. In days gone by he had been one of De Mendana’s troop of freebooters, and one of the most

reckless and pitiless of the band. They had all been engaged in a terrible murder and highway robbery, and were relentlessly pursued and tracked by the "Santa Hermandad," or Holy Brotherhood, which Ysabella had re-established in order to check the unbounded license of the noble freebooters. Juan Conde de Rojas was taken prisoner, and to save his neck he betrayed the hiding-places of many of his comrades, who had fled to their mountain fortresses for safety, and who were punished with death. Until now, he had contrived to avoid meeting his former chief, Carlos de Mendana. But unfortunately love had upset all his calculations, and here he was in the power of his old master, who had never been known to forgive or forget. By giving his niece in marriage to him, he could buy off his own freedom and be safe from all attacks from his former comrades, and yet retain the reverence and love of his niece, who was the apple of his eye, and who returned his affection with all the devotion of a simple and loving heart. Carlos de Mendana had never been known to break a promise once given. And yet—and yet—Juan de Rojas was loath to buy his freedom at such a price—to give his darling into the care of so guilty a wretch as Carlos de Mendana.

After a severe struggle with himself, during which his former chief watched him with a sarcastic smile upon his face, he consented, and an agreement in writing was duly drawn up and signed, in which Juan de Rojas promised to give Carmen in marriage to Mendana, on condition that she should never know her husband's profession as chief of a horde of robbers, nor should she ever be told of the share Juan de Rojas had had in their former exploits, nor of his treacherous conduct towards them.

Carmen saw a great deal of De Mendana during her

stay at her uncle's house, and became more and more attracted by him as she came to know him. He could be very charming and winning when he liked, and as he laid himself out to please, he succeeded so well that the girl had learned to love him before she became aware of the fact herself. Therefore she offered no resistance when she was told rather abruptly one morning by her uncle that he had chosen the Conde de Mendana for her husband.

The marriage took place almost immediately, on account of pressing business which recalled him to Castro-Nuñez, so Carlos de Mendana told her, and the ceremony was performed very quietly and unostentatiously, considering the worldly rank of both parties. But Carmen de Rojas cared very little for outward show, and never thought it strange that there was so much hurry and secrecy about their wedding. She loved her husband with all her strong young heart, and he devoted himself to her with an ardour and tenderness which amazed Juan de Rojas, who had not seen that side of his character, and never dreamed that tenderness and love could exist in a man whom he had seen so unscrupulous and relentless. But Carmen's aunt wondered why no grand festivities were given on such an occasion by so wealthy a family of Valladolid. However, she kept her wonder to herself, and travelled back as far as Toro in the coach with the newly married pair. Carmen, of course, went farther on to Castro-Nuñez, and it was a curious circumstance that the coach in which they travelled met with no accidents by the way, while the coach before them and that which followed them were rifled, and some of the passengers who resisted were murdered.

For several years they lived very happily at Castro-Nuñez. They had four lovely children, and Carmen was

as happy as the day was long. Carlos de Mendana was so devotedly fond of his beautiful wife that for her dear sake he gave up all personal share in the pursuits of his followers, contenting himself with his duties at Castro-Nuñez, and directing his henchmen either by message or by personal conversation.

Carmen sometimes wondered who the curiously wild and suspicious-looking characters could be who came to the castle as intimate friends of her husband, and who always asked for Don Rodrigo. This mysterious personage seemed to be the chief of her husband, for though he was never visible, Carlos always seemed to be informed of his plans and his orders, and Don Rodrigo seemed to be much revered and obeyed by his friends. For several years, as we have said before, Carlos de Mendana avoided all personal collisions with the "Santa Hermandad," who were doing their duties as administrators of justice. But at last a fray took place between them and the followers of Don Rodrigo, in which so many of the latter were made prisoners and executed that De Mendana felt in honour bound to expose himself to the dangers into which he had unwittingly led them. So telling Carmen that he was called away to the assistance of Don Rodrigo, and that he might not return for some time, he departed, after a very tender farewell to her and the children.

During his absence, Carmen's aunt came to visit her. For a month Carmen had heard nothing of her husband. She became anxious, and after bearing her suspense as bravely as she could alone, the tension became so intolerable that she determined to speak to her aunt. She told her that Carlos had gone to assist his friend, and added innocently, "I wonder who Don Rodrigo can be, to whom Carlos and his friends are so devoted."

Her aunt stared, and said when the speech was repeated :

“WHO did you say? Don Rodrigo? Why, he is a famous robber-chief, well known all over Spain for his misdeeds. And do Carlos and his friends associate with HIM?”

This revelation distressed Carmen very much. She wished that she had not asked the question, for if Don Rodrigo was a robber-chief and Carlos an intimate friend of his, it did not speak well for Carlos to be associating with him. Her anxiety increased, and made her really ill as the days wore on and no news came from Carlos. At last one night, under cover of the darkness, a man whom she had never seen before asked to see her, as he had a message about Don Rodrigo for her.

He was fierce-looking by nature, but his face was white and ghastly as well. He had an ugly, half-healed scar across his cheek, and was dusty and weary with hard riding. Moreover, he had an anxious, sad expression upon his face, which contrasted strangely with his otherwise hardened appearance. Carmen instinctively felt a horror of the man, and drew back from him towards the door. He noticed it.

“You need not be afraid,” he said, with a weary smile; “the widow of Don Rodrigo, my best friend, need fear nothing from me or from his friends. Don Rodrigo is dead, and they are bringing his corpse home to be buried.”

“But I do not know Don Rodrigo——” stammered Carmen.

“Oh yes, you do,” interrupted the man; “only too well, alas! only too well, and I am sorry for you.”

Carmen’s heart beat fast, and she could not control her agitation. A great dread filled her very soul with

foreboding, but she had not much time for suspense. A melancholy procession wound into the courtyard of the house, carrying torches and a rough kind of bier, upon which lay a body covered with a cloak. The men, as desperate a looking band as one could meet anywhere, and rendered doubly so by the fierce glare of the torches, laid down their precious burden with great care in the large hall of the castle, and withdrew respectfully to a distance, while Carmen advanced to remove the cloak and see what Don Rodrigo looked like. She knelt, lifted the cover, and fell with a shriek upon the body. The hall echoed with the shriek, and everyone rushed forward to assist and comfort the beautiful distracted widow of Rodrigo. In vain they tried to raise her. In that shriek life had departed. Carlos de Mendana had kept his word. While he lived Carmen de Rojas never knew that she was the wife of Don Rodrigo Ladron.

XI.

THE WERE-WOLF.

THE principality of the Asturias is a country where oaks, chestnuts, and silver firs grow in the greatest luxuriance. It was the mountain refuge of the ancient Spaniard, who resisted and remained unconquered by either the Roman or the Moor. It was the cradle of the Hispano-Gothic monarchy, and was more difficult of access than most parts of Spain. It was therefore less exposed to Moorish invasion. The climate is damp, and very cold in winter, though temperate in summer. The principal business carried on there is cattle-breeding.

The peasants live in the greatest freedom; they can own land and cultivate it for themselves; and moreover they are secure from robbers, who would find but poor booty in such a lonely and sequestered region. The farms and cottages consequently look more comfortable and well-to-do than those of the same class in Galicia.

The following legend is one which is common to many mountainous places all over the world, and was told to me by one of the Basque servants who are often to be found in the Pyrenees. She said:

“I was brought up in a country where forests abound, and where the road to the nearest market-town lay through those deep dark glades with not

a hut or a hovel anywhere near. I was the youngest of thirteen children, and when most of my sisters and brothers went to Madrid and elsewhere and started in life for themselves, of course a great deal of the work fell upon my shoulders. I had the cattle to pasture, the pigs to fatten, the fowls to feed, the fish to catch, the cotton and wool to spin, and to sell in the market-town, besides all the cooking and household work to do. At one time my father was absent on business. He had to sell some cattle, and as very often he was obliged to go a long way off before he could get the price that he asked, we never expected his return until he appeared. It so happened that during his absence the funds ran short. My mother was more than half paralyzed, and could hardly speak distinctly enough to direct me in what was to be done. At length we came to our last penny. The meal and flour barrels were almost empty. I did not know what to do. I hardly liked to leave my poor sick mother alone, or for strangers to take care of; and yet, we had so little to eat until my father could possibly come back that a journey to the nearest market-town seemed inevitable. I put it off from day to day. I killed as many of the oldest fowls as were available, and caught fish in the nearest river with my hands. The winter was an unusually severe one, and the weather was bitterly cold. The snow was nearly two feet deep, and fortunately for me the rivers were frozen over, so that I could stand on the ice, break a hole in it and stir up the stiff half-frozen fish in their holes with a big stick, and catch them before they had time to slip away. At last, however, everything came to an end. The meal and flour barrels were empty, the river was so hard frozen that I could not catch the fish, and starvation stared us in the face. My father did not return, and

my mother whimpered like a sick child at the short commons which I was forced to give her. One morning, therefore, I started off to the nearest market-town, which was five miles away, for I could not see my mother starve. I left her in the care of a friend, who lived a mile and a half away, but who came over when there was urgent need. I was well wrapped up, and carried my basket of spun thread on my arm to sell. It took me hours to make my way through the drifts, and it was late before I turned my face towards home. I had made a lucky marketing, had sold my thread for quite a large sum, and with my basket full of the most necessary things, and with the barrels of meal and of flour promised in a couple of days, I trudged along the snow-tracks as happy as a queen. It was dark when I was still a couple of miles from home, and I lit my lantern and trotted along without a thought of fear. About a mile away from home, I met an old man wrapped in a tattered brown cloak huddled up to the chin, with a battered old felt hat on, and a stick. He walked very lame, and looked blue with the cold. As I passed him he besought me to give him something to eat, as he had not tasted food that day. He looked so starved, so poor, and so wretched that I broke off a large piece of bread from the loaf in my basket, and gave it to him. He snatched it from my hand like a wild animal, and I watched him eat with a feeling of pleasure that I had at any rate kept life in one hungry human being. I noticed that as he eat his bread, his teeth were sharp and pointed; and as the darkness deepened more and more, that his eyes had a queer long shape, and turned green and narrow. But at fifteen years old one has no ill-thoughts of people, so I thanked our Lady of 'Angustias' for permitting me to help one of her children in his extremity, and

thought no more of that queer look. He shrank from me, as I made the sign of the cross, with such a sudden movement that I caught him by the arm to steady him. Nothing more happened till we got home. At the door I said: 'Poor man, you seem so very weak and ill, and it is so bitterly cold, that I am sure my mother will give you shelter and food for to-night, and you can continue your journey in the morning.'

"'I shall be very grateful if you will do so,' he replied; and again as he smiled his teeth appeared sharp and pointed, and his eyes narrowed and turned green. In a minute, however, the look had passed, and for the first time in my life I got frightened, the more so because the house-dog, who came bounding to meet me, suddenly turned cowering away, shivering as though he had the ague, and howling as loud as he could, while he crouched close to the wall near his kennel.

"As he passed the sheepfolds and pig-pens, the animals all ran into the farthest corners, while the hens tumbled over each other in their fright, and lay on the floor in the remotest part of the roost. I thought all this was very strange, but said nothing; only I wished that I had not asked this man to pass the night under our roof. As soon as we got into the house, a little tiny kitten, which was a pet of my mother's and always lay on her lap, began to spit, humped up its back, waved its tail, and disappeared under the bed, where it remained all the evening.

"'The animals seem to be dreadfully afraid of me,' the old man said as he entered; 'and I am so fond of them.' Again his teeth looked sharp and pointed, and his eyes were longer and greener than ever.

"'Strange to say, my mother took the greatest fancy to him. She offered him food and shelter, and pressed him to stay. I was really much astonished, for she

usually disliked all strangers, and dreaded the sight of a new face.

“I cooked the supper and placed it on the table, and among the dishes was a small plate of stewed kid, which I had got as a relish for my mother. To my amazement the old man snatched it from my mother’s hand, and before our very eyes eat the whole plateful, his teeth sharpening and his eyes growing narrow as he snapped and snarled at his food.

“‘I am afraid of him,’ my mother said to me in her broken way, after I had shown the stranger to my room, which was the only one we had to offer him.

“‘Why, I thought you liked him very much when he first came,’ I answered.

“‘I did,’ returned my mother, more plainly than she had spoken for months; ‘but he is dangerous, and you must keep watch with those.’ Here she pointed to some firearms that hung over the fireplace in the kitchen where we were sitting.

“My peace of mind, as may be imagined, was broken for the night, and I determined that at all risks I would sit up. If nothing happened, so much the better. If anything did occur, I should be on the spot. The kitchen led into my mother’s room, so I determined that I would remain there. For if the stranger was a thief, he would have to pass through the kitchen first.

“It was an awful night outside. The wind blew in great gusts, and the snow fell thick and fast, covering the ground for miles around with a heavy white blanket. In spite of the weather, however, I went to the kennel, unchained my good Moro, and gave him some food. He was only too glad to get into a snug warm place, and lay down quietly before the fire in the kitchen. Then I went to the sheep, pigs, and hens, and folded them all cosily for the night. Then I hunted up the

little kitten, who came from under the bed most willingly, although she still shivered very much. She took her supper near Moro at the fire, and I shut up the house for the night.

“I shut the kitchen door because it was cold, took down my father’s old-fashioned blunderbuss, and a thick stick, which hung over the fireplace, and loaded the former. I took the kitten on my knee, while Moro lay down at my feet, and after some time, listening to my mother’s even, gentle breathing, I fell sound asleep. I suppose I may have been asleep a couple of hours, when Moro waked me by the most unearthly howl. The kitten was spitting and crying on my knee, and I perceived by the light of the small oil-lamp that the kitchen door was wide open, and that a huge wolf was standing in the doorway, his green, narrow eyes glaring, his teeth pointed and snarling, all ready for a spring. In a moment I fired my gun, which took effect in the side of my foe ; and I was just going to brain the huge beast with the loaded stick when I saw that it was the body of the old man whom we had housed that was lying on the floor before me.

“He was so terribly wounded and so evidently dying that I left him, to soothe and reassure my mother, who was very much frightened, and cried out for me to come to her. After I had coaxed her to sleep again, I returned to the wolf, whom I found just alive. Looking up into my face he gasped :

“‘You have done me a real kindness in ridding me of this dreadful life, and I thank you.’

“I said one or two prayers over him, and watched him till dawn, when he died. I took him out into the woods behind the house, dug him a grave, and buried him.

“When my mother awoke she was insane. The next

day my father returned, and he and my confessor were the only people to whom I confided the horrors of that night.

“A few days later we heard that a huge wolf, which had made great havoc and ravages among the flocks of the neighbouring farmers, had been missing for a day or two, and was supposed to have met his fate at last.”

XII.

THE GHOST OF THE ARENA.

(“TOLD BY A BULL-FIGHTER.”)

“I AM a native of Leon. My father was a ‘contra-bandista,’ and smuggled mules into France, over remote and secret passes of the Pyrenees. We were very proud of our sleek, handsome jennets and mules. Their coats were as soft and smooth as silk, and we took great pride in keeping them as glossy-looking as a lady’s tresses. We made large sums of money, but we also ran great risks of detection and imprisonment. Although my father made me sometimes accompany him, the trade was never to my taste. I hated the cold nights under the stars, and the constant dread of being discovered and shot, so once when we were crossing one of the passes I ran away. For days I wandered about, getting a bit to eat occasionally, and managing to keep life in me until I reached a large city, full of clean white buildings, which they told me was San Sebastiano. I asked if there was a ‘corrida de toros’ (bull-ring) there, and on being told that there was, I made my way to the place, saw the manager, and told him my story, and my desire to be a bull-fighter.

“At one time there used to be a good school there for training bull-fighters. After various preliminaries I was admitted, and found some twenty or thirty other young men who were going through their training for

the SONORIAN desert
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'chulos.' The great favourite of the school was a young 'espada' named Fernando Nuñez, as handsome and as graceful a creature as the dear God ever made. He was always pleasant, always kindly, and had a cheerful greeting and a smile for each of us, and was the idol of the whole school. He was very young, perhaps the youngest 'espada' that was ever seen in the arena.

"The bull-ring of San Sebastian stands—or used to stand—on a long, sandy stretch of plain on the other side of the railway line. It was a large wooden amphitheatre, and the pens for the bulls were quite apart, but connected with the arena by a long dark passage, through which the bulls were driven into the ring. For three or four hours every day we practised jumping and vaulting in the arena, playing with the lasso and bulls with tipped horns.

"There was to be a great bull-fight on the feast of San Sebastiano, and Nuñez was to try his skill there, for the third time, in his capacity of 'espada.' He was considered by the authorities the 'rising star' as a bull-fighter, and almost equal to Montes in point of courage, daring, and dexterity. He was always very kind to me, and rather picked me out from my comrades to be his constant companion. I was much flattered, of course, by this distinction. Perhaps I showed my elation too much; for an old bull-fighter (who had served many years in the arena, and had retired from public life only to be master in the school at San Sebastiano, with a pension from the Government) said to me one day:

"'Mi hijo, you will not misunderstand me if I give you a word of warning, will you?'

"'I shall be only too grateful to you,' I replied, wondering what on earth I had been doing to incur a censure in my work.

“Do not go so much with Nuñez. He is very fascinating and very charming, and, so far as I know, as good as he is handsome. But his absence is better than his company. You remember the old proverb, that “Niñas y vinos son mal à guardar;” and he is as enticing as wine.’

“But he is so good and pleasant, that he cannot have sold himself to the devil,’ I said. ‘Of what are you accusing him?’

“I am not accusing him of anything,’ replied the old man, crossing himself devoutly; ‘but’—and here he put his mouth close to my ear—‘he is a *doomed man*.’

“A doomed man?’ I cried. ‘But why? Who could wish that poor fellow any ill? He is so good, and kind, and gay!’

“No one wishes him ill on earth, I am sure,’ said the old man eagerly. ‘But the ghost of the arena follows him like a shadow by day and by night, and I am sure that he is a doomed man. I have been in this business for many years—long before you were born, and I have had my triumphs as ‘*espada*,’ but I have never known one to live who was followed by the ghost. Montes was doomed by it, so was Cuchares, so were many others I could name; and now this poor young fellow——’ The good old man broke down with tears in his eyes.

“But what sort of creature is this ghost?’ I asked. ‘Does it follow all the company?’

“Oh, *santa fé*, no!’ cried my friend Rodriguez. ‘It only follows certain people who are to die. You will see a double shadow of the same shape and size as he, walking beside him by day and by night, and—and—a few days before the bull-fight comes off, the ghost stands before the arena door with a drawn sword, and accompanies the doomed man *everywhere*.’

“‘I cannot believe it!’ I cried; every hair on my head was standing up with fright, and my body was wet with a clammy cold.

“‘Just wait and see,’ said old Rodriguez sadly. ‘I shall not go and see him fight, because I could not bear to see him killed, for I love him.’ And saying this he left me.

“I turned the matter over in my mind, and came to the conclusion that Rodriguez was getting silly, and that I had better mention nothing of what he had told me to anyone.

“The days passed, and Nuñez was still the gayest of us all; as happy and gentle, as unselfish and thoughtful for others as usual, and more beloved than ever. My fears and terrors for him had almost ceased, when one day I happened to go with Nuñez to the arena to watch him practise with a bull. I sat meanwhile on the barrier and watched the performance, applauding his agility, his grace, and general ease and composure.

“To my horror I saw on the sand of the arena *two* shadows together. When one moved, the other moved. When Nuñez waved a ‘manta,’ the double did the same; when he turned gracefully on one side of the bull, the double shadow turned aside with the same grace and ease.

“I nearly fell from my perch with faintness and fright, but I resolved to see the thing to the end, and clung to the seat with all the strength that I had left. I rubbed my eyes and looked again. Yes! there was certainly another figure practising with Nuñez, of exactly the same size, height, and form, with the same grace and ease of manner. And this double kept pace with us when we left the arena, until we reached a church near the school, when it disappeared.

“I was so disturbed by this apparition that I decided

to ask some of my comrades whether they also had seen the strange double, fearing that having brooded so much over the story of the old bull-fighter, my brain might have become affected.

“‘Oh yes,’ cried my comrades, when I told them what I had seen, ‘the ghost follows him wherever he goes : but that is a superstition, and we do not think anything of it.’

“‘But old Rodriguez thinks a great deal of it,’ I exclaimed, ‘and believes most fully that Nuñez is a doomed man. I think some one ought to speak to Nuñez and warn him.’

“‘Then tell him yourself,’ retorted my comrades, ‘for we don’t believe a word of all those superstitions that old Rodriguez is so fond of telling. He is an old imbecile.’

“I tried hard to believe that the old bull-fighter was foolish and a slave to current superstitions. But day after day passed, and the double still accompanied my friend Nuñez. At last I resolved to screw up my courage and tell Nuñez the whole story.

“It was three days before the fight was to come off that I went one evening with Nuñez to take a look at the bulls that he was to kill. It was a lovely moonlight night : one of those exquisite evenings which impress themselves upon one’s memory. The moon sailed along in an unclouded sky, as round and full and clear as could be seen even on a summer’s night. In the distance we could just hear the sound of the waves breaking on the shore, and the nightingales were singing sweet love-songs to each other. The long sandy tract near the arena glistened like gold, and the building rose strangely out of place in that peaceful quarter.

“My mind had been easier for a day or two. The shadow had ceased to follow my friend, and I was be-

ginning to believe that Rodriguez had imposed his imbecile fears upon me by way of a joke.

“When we came to the door of the arena, Nuñez entered first, and I stood looking at the moon for a minute or two. As I turned I distinctly saw a white figure with a drawn sword between me and him, which turned round and walked with him shoulder to shoulder. *It was the double!*

“It accompanied him everywhere—in the arena, in the pens of the bulls, in the keeper’s quarters—everywhere. When we sat down to have a glass of wine with the keeper, the shadow sat down beside Nuñez. When we left to return to the school, the double escorted us, shoulder to shoulder with Nuñez, and three shadows were reflected by the moonlight on the ground.

“I could bear it no longer, and when, at the church door, the shadow left us as usual, I told Nuñez of what I had seen, and of the fears and dread I had for him in the coming bull-fight, and besought him to give it up, at whatever cost to himself.

“He turned a little pale as he listened. Then he laughed merrily, and laying his hand on my shoulder, he said:

“‘My dear fellow, thank you for the warning. But I have no fear of the ghost. Fate is fate. I shall not die before my time, ghost or no ghost; and if I am to die, I will not shirk my duty. I will die in harness. But I do not believe your superstition.’

“He evidently thought no more about my warning, for the next day he was as cheery as ever, laughing gaily and chatting merrily to everyone that wished to speak to him. Rodriguez (to whom I told what I had seen) and I went about listless and sad, feeling as though we were assisting at a murder, or going to do so.

“The day of the bull-fight broke clear and bright : not a cloud was to be seen in the sky. As the hour approached for Nuñez to go, Rodriguez and I started for a long walk.

“ ‘ I cannot go to see him killed,’ said the old man ; and I felt very much of the same mind.

“As we were leaving the house, we met Nuñez in his beautiful embroidered dress, drinking ‘courage’ (as bull-fighters call the absinthe which is given to them before they go into action) with his other comrades.

“ ‘ Come and wish me luck, both of you,’ Nuñez said gaily to us, and we complied with inward misgivings. For both of us wished most devoutly that all was over, and that he was safe back amongst us. ‘ And,’ he continued to me, as we drank with all the honours, ‘ give me that white pink in your button-hole, Alvarez ; and if anything happens to me, the ghost shall give it back to you,’ he added, laughing.

“The whole company shuddered in spite of themselves. For though they pretended not to believe in superstitions, his words sounded like tempting Providence or braving the devil.

“Rodriguez and I went on our walk, and returned about seven to the school. We had forced ourselves to talk about indifferent subjects, knowing what was occupying the minds of both ; and had become almost cheerful and hopeful before we reached our door. The first thing that greeted our eyes was the body of Nuñez being carried into the church, near the school, *dead*. The ghost had made good his warning, and the brave lad had met his fate, cut off from life in the prime of his manhood. His comrades, silent and pale, were wringing their hands in agony. ‘ Oh that we had warned him !’ was in the minds of all.

“I would not go to bed alone that night, but turned

in with old Rodriguez; and in the dead of night we were awakened by a martial footstep, and we saw a white, dim figure with a drawn sword stop at the bedside, drop something on the coverlet, and depart as solemnly as it had entered.

“In the morning, on the coverlet lay my pink, white the day before, now faded and *scarlet*.”

XIII.

THE SERPENT WOMAN.

THERE lived in the twelfth century a certain Don Juan de Amarillo, who dwelt, not far from Cordova. Although not very young himself, he had a handsome young wife, whom he adored. He introduced her to all his friends; but though she made a great sensation by her beauty, wherever she appeared, yet, in some way or other, she contrived to make enemies and no friends among either sex.

No one knew where she came from, nor what her name was before she was married. All that was certain was that Don Juan had been absent from home for many years, that he had never been heard of by either friend or foe in all that time, and that he had returned as suddenly as he had departed, but bringing with him a wife.

There were many stories afloat of her origin and character. Some said that she was a strolling player, whom Don Juan had rescued from ill-treatment and persuaded to marry him for his name and position. Others said that she was a witch, and had bewitched the old Don Juan by means of love-philtres and noxious herbs.

These stories were none of them true. But people repeated them to each other, and were quite satisfied in believing them. Meanwhile, Doña Pepa went about

and enjoyed herself, unconscious of the tales that were told of her, but not unconscious of the terror she inspired. She was quite aware that people shunned her, and avoided her whenever they could. She was a wonderfully handsome woman, with regular features, dark eyes, and a head like that of a beautiful statue. Her figure was singularly flexible and lithe. But in spite of her beauty, people looked askance at her, and felt, without being able to say why, that there was something wrong about her. She had some curious tricks of manner which were startling. When she was pleased, she would raise her head so that it seemed really to lengthen two or three inches, and she would sway her body to and fro with delight. Whereas, if anything displeased her, or she disliked anyone, her head seemed to flatten out, and the touch of her hand was like a bite. She delighted in hearing and repeating all the ill-natured stories that she could about her neighbours, and, in short, seemed as spiteful as a woman could possibly be.

To all outward appearances, she and Don Juan got on excellently well together. But the servants of the household told a different tale. They said that at home they wrangled from morning till night, and that sometimes Don Juan was positively afraid of his wife, especially when her head flattened, for then she looked, and really was, dangerous. People said that they also had seen a look of alarm creep over the old man's face, even in company, when she showed any signs of anger.

Things went on like this for many years, but still Don Juan and his wife seemed to live in peace and harmony. To be sure, the servants, who had been in the family for years, left one after another; and when questioned as to their leaving, answered that the señora

was a witch, and that the angel Gabriel himself could not live with her. How their master managed they could not imagine, unless she had bewitched him.

Then it was rumoured about that a favourite nephew of Don Juan was coming from Aragon to pay him a visit, and to be formally acknowledged as his heir. As he and his wife had no children, he wished to leave his wealth to this nephew, the son of an only sister who was dead; and in course of time the friends and neighbours of Don Juan were invited to meet the stranger.

He was a frank, open-faced, and open-hearted young man, about twenty-seven years old, who at once won the hearts of all who saw him. He was not at all jubilant or overweening at the honours thrust upon him as his uncle's heir, but spoke quite ingenuously of his former poverty and the disadvantages as well as the pleasures of his boyhood, to his aunt's intense disgust.

Doña Pepa could not bear to *hear* of poor relations, much less to let the world know that Don Juan de Amarilla had any such belongings. And she gave young Don Luis such a look of mingled scorn, hatred, and disgust as made him shudder, and kept his tongue quiet for the rest of the evening. The guests tried in vain to draw him into conversation; he had received such a rebuff in Doña Pepa's glance that he became utterly silenced, and wondered what sort of woman she could be. He had seen what the guests had not observed (for nobody else had at that moment noticed her, that her head had flattened, and that her eyes had grown long and narrow; that she had moistened her lips (which were white with rage) with a hissing sound, and that *her tongue was forked*. He had heard queer stories about his aunt, but had hitherto never paid much attention to them. Now everything he had ever heard in his life came back to his memory, and it was

with the utmost effort that he forced himself to sit through the evening, and tried to appear interested in all that went on.

The more Don Luis was known, the more popular he became. Everyone liked him. His uncle worshipped him, and could hardly bear him out of his sight; for he reminded him of his dearly loved lost sister, and of his own past youth, before he became entangled in the world's wickedness and folly.

Even Doña Pepa could not withstand the freshness and charm of her innocent young nephew, and although she was continually angry with him for his careful avoidance of her, she could not retaliate upon him as she had often retaliated on others—for as time went on she had learned to *love* him.

He lived in constant fear of her, and tried to keep out of her way by every courteous means in his power. But she would not let him escape from her. She dogged his footsteps everywhere. If he went out for a walk, she was sure to come and meet him, and he felt certain that he was watched—not for his good, but with a jealous eye.

One evening he went to see a friend who was having a sort of reception, and stayed out rather later than usual. When he got to his uncle's house he lit his little taper and proceeded to his room. As he did so, he stumbled over what he supposed to be a coil of rope. To his horror the rope unwound itself, and proved to be a large black snake, which glided upstairs before him, and disappeared under his uncle's door. The thought instantly flashed across his mind that his uncle was in danger of his life; and without hesitation he pounded and knocked and shouted at the door for at least five minutes. They seemed to him five hours. But his uncle was old and sleepy, and it took him some

time to wake up. However, at last he came to the door and demanded crossly what his nephew meant by disturbing his rest at that time of night.

"I saw a large black snake creep under this door, my dear uncle, and I was afraid that you might suffer from it before I could help you," replied his nephew.

"Nonsense!" said Don Juan, turning pale, "there is no serpent here;" and he tried to shut the door again. But Don Luis was determined to search the room. Doña Pepa was apparently asleep.

The room was carefully searched, but nothing could be found. His uncle was very angry; but as Don Luis was leaving the room, crestfallen at his failure, and wondering whether he was losing his mind, Doña Pepa opened her eyes and gave him one of her evil glances; her head flattened, and her eyes grew long and narrow. He left the room with an undefined sensation of terror; he could not sleep, and when he dozed for a few minutes, his dreams were of snakes and of loathsome reptiles.

The next morning he found only his aunt when he went down. His uncle had gone out, Doña Pepa said. Don Luis had taken such an aversion to her that he could hardly bring himself to speak to her, and she took intense delight in plying him with questions, which he felt himself obliged to answer as became a Spanish gentleman.

But at last he could bear it no longer. Doña Pepa was giving very evident signs of rage, and he was hastily beating a retreat, when she strode across the room, seized him by the arm, and said:

"You shall not treat me with such disdain; you shall learn to fear me if you cannot learn to love me."

At the same moment that her hand touched his wrist, he felt a sharp sensation as if something had stung him. He threw her hand off and hurried out, thinking

for the time no more about his pain. But in the course of the day his arm began to swell rapidly and to throb painfully, until at last the hand and fingers were swollen to such a degree that he could neither close them nor hold anything with them. He then became rather alarmed, and decided to go to a hermit who lived not far off, and who was renowned for his skill in the treatment of poisons, as well as for his piety.

After examining the arm the old man said, "It is a serpent's bite."

"No, it is not," interrupted Don Luis. "My aunt grasped my arm in a frenzy of rage, and this is the result."

"Worse still," answered the hermit; "a serpent woman's bite is sometimes deadly."*

"Can you do nothing for me?" cried Don Luis, in despair. "I hate her, and I have been persecuted by her for weeks."

"Yes, and you will be persecuted by her still more. She will take refuge in your room instead of on the landing. Put these leaves upon your arm, and keep wetting them when they become dry, and your arm will probably get better. As to conquering her, that will be a more difficult matter. If you can keep awake, you will get the better of her. But if you sleep *one minute*, you will be at her mercy."

"What shall I do to her? I would do anything short of murdering her," said Don Luis excitedly.

"Take your sword, when you find her a little way from the door, and hack off a piece of the snake, and see the effect. Then come to me again."

With this advice Don Luis was obliged to be

* The superstition still exists in Spain that a woman who has led a bad life is obliged for a certain number of years to become a snake every night; those with whom she is angry are bitten, and their cure is more difficult than when the bite is that of a serpent.

content. His arm was so much soothed by the hermit's treatment, that he determined to try the rest of his advice.

That night, when he went to his room, he undressed and was just getting into bed when he espied the snake coiled in a huge mass at the foot of it. Without a sound he drew his sword, gave a stroke at the snake and cut off a piece of the tail. The snake reared its head and showed its fangs, preparing apparently for a spring; but Don Luis gave another blow, and another piece of the tail came off. With a hiss the snake uncoiled, dragged itself to the door, disappeared down the stairs, and crept under Don Juan's door.

The next morning Doña Pepa did not appear. His uncle said that she had a habit of sleep-walking, and had run something sharp into her foot.

"I can guess what ails her," thought Don Luis to himself, as he condoled with his uncle, who seemed really troubled.

Don Luis had carefully preserved in a drawer the pieces of the tail which he had cut off; and on looking at them the next morning had found that they were the toes and instep of a human foot.

For some days he neither saw nor heard anything more of his aunt in any shape. But at last she reappeared and greeted him most cordially. He noticed, however, that she halted decidedly in her gait, and reported everything to the hermit.

"Have no pity for her, my son," replied the hermit, "for she intends your destruction. If you have any mercy upon her, she will have none for you. The next time strike about a foot from the head, where she cannot hide her disfigurement."

A few evenings after this conversation with the hermit, he found the snake awaiting him in the court-

yard, and as usual it went upstairs before him, and coiled itself on a chest in the farthest corner of the room. All the doors in the house seemed to be constructed for harbouring and helping snakes, for they were scooped away underneath for two inches.

Don Luis drew his sword and struck as nearly a foot from the head as he could. The snake made a bound to the door and disappeared, the head first and the body following and joining it outside, and it then disappeared under his uncle's door.

The next day Doña Pepa disappeared from human ken for a month. "She had a dreadful abscess on her finger," his uncle said, "which had kept her awake for many nights, and she must lie by for a time and have it lanced."

"I can guess what ails her," thought Don Luis, and went to his friend the hermit to report matters.

On the way he met an old servant who had been in his grandfather's family, and had lived with Don Juan after his marriage, but had been amongst the first to leave. The old servant stopped him and said:

"I have been anxious for a long time about my master and you. Is he well? and what is going on there? I did not like to call at the house, as I left of my own accord. But I had to leave, for I could not bear to live with that horrid snake in the house, Doña Pepa."

"What do you mean by 'snake in the house,' Jorge?" asked Don Luis. "Did you ever *see* a snake in that house?"

"Indeed I have," replied the old servant indignantly. "She followed me all over the house, until I nearly lost my wits. If I went into the kitchen, it was there; in my room, it was there; and at last I went away because when I spoke to my master about it,

he grew so angry that I saw he thought I was lying. Have *you* never seen the snake yourself, señor? for everyone else who lived there has."

"Yes, I have seen the same thing myself, if you press me so hard," answered Don Luis; "but what can I do more than I have? In snake form, I have cut off one foot and one hand. What can I do more, short of murder?"

"One thing more," said old Jorge earnestly, "one thing more, and that is to watch until she is out. Go to the chest in the master's room, under the left-hand window, and open it. You will find a queer skin, striped like a serpent's, folded up in the right-hand corner. Burn that, and you will find that the snake will not torment you any more."

"Are you sure?" inquired Don Luis, earnestly.

"Quite sure," answered Jorge, as earnestly.

Then they parted.

But the more Don Luis thought over the advice of the old servant, the less inclined he felt to act upon it. It seemed a treacherous thing to do, to go into his uncle's room, steal a serpent's skin out of his chest, and burn it without knowing what might be the consequences of such a deed. So he resolved to go to his friend the hermit, and ask him what he thought. When he had told his story, the old man sat a long while musing and silent. At last he said: "I can quite understand your scruples, and sympathize with you in your feeling for your uncle. But I am afraid that there is no other way of destroying an influence so pernicious as that of Doña Pepa; for you are not the only one whom she has either utterly depraved or injured in some way. And such people are better out of the world than in it, as the mischief they do is incomparably greater than the pleasure they give by

their beauty. However, for a month at least, she cannot do you much harm. She is too much injured to show herself until she can hide her misfortune. But if she begins her torments again, I should be inclined to tell the whole case to your uncle, and then say to him what you intend to do."

Upon this advice Don Luis acted. For a month Doña Pepa kept her room, and he saw no more of the snake. After that time, however, she reappeared, and he watched to see how she concealed her wounded hand. It was all covered with a silk handkerchief, and he asked after it with apparent zeal. Doña Pepa coloured deeply, but answered with much dignity; she looked thin and pale, and her face was worn with pain. Don Luis's kind heart ached when he saw how he had hurt her. His uncle took great pains to tell everyone that poor Doña Pepa had had to have her hand amputated for a wound which had mortified, and which had threatened her life. Very few people believed the story, for somehow or other Don Luis's adventures with the serpent had got wind and everyone suspected that Doña Pepa's sufferings were the first punishment for her many deeds of sorcery.

But after a short interval the same troubles began again. Don Luis found the serpent rolled up anywhere and everywhere; in the courtyard, on the stairs, in his room, in every nook and corner, in his boots, under his rug, over his clothes, until he began to think that he was going mad and saw snakes *everywhere*. One morning, however, he awoke and found the snake under his bedclothes, winding itself round his body. He gave it several hard blows, and wounded it in various places, till it glided quietly out of the room. He then at last decided that the time had come to tell his uncle the whole story. When he saw him

in the dining-hall, he asked him how Doña Pepa was.

The old man looked very much disturbed, and said hesitatingly :

“ I have not seen her this morning. But I suppose she is well.”

“ Have not seen her this morning !” repeated Don Luis, feigning surprise. “ Is she not at home ?”

“ Well, yes, she is at home,” replied his uncle, more embarrassed than ever. “ But sometimes she is not well enough to see me.”

“ Oh,” said Don Luis significantly; and the matter dropped for the time.

Later in the day, however, Don Luis contrived to find his uncle alone, and then he told him all that he had heard. At first Don Juan was very angry, but as his nephew proceeded and he heard the long list of annoyances and torments to which he had been subjected under his roof, he became very pale and silent.

There was a long pause after Don Luis had finished, and then his uncle said :

“ Well, I can say nothing—nor can I help you in any way. This much I *can* tell you, that I sympathize most deeply with you—for—for that snake has been the bane of my life.”

“ Then,” said Don Luis earnestly, “ you will not blame me if I punish the snake the next time as it deserves.”

“ No, I should not blame you, if you can do it,” sighed old Don Juan, little dreaming that his nephew already possessed the secret of killing her. And the conversation ended.

For his uncle’s sake Don Luis bore with patience the annoying attentions of the snake as long as he could; but after a month more of torment he watched his

opportunity when Don Juan and Doña Pepa were out, and went into his uncle's room. There he found the chest under the left window, just as old Jorge had said. On one side was a queer striped skin, which he immediately recognised as the snake's. He was preparing to light a fire and burn it, when he heard his uncle and Doña Pepa returning. He had only time to close the chest, slip away to his room, and hide the skin, before they entered their room.

As soon as he heard them descend into the hall, he prepared and lit a fire, and took out the skin, rolling it up in his hand to make it smaller, when he heard fearful shrieks below. He rushed out to learn the cause, and was told by one of the servants that Doña Pepa had had fearful cramps, as though her body had been folded up. Then Don Luis knew that what he had heard was true; and, without giving himself time to think, he threw the skin upon the fire. In a moment it was in a blaze, and crisped and curled into nothing.

Having watched it burn to the end, he went down to his uncle. Don Juan was walking up and down the room wringing his hands. Doña Pepa was stretched out upon a couch, looking very white and ill. The family physician was sitting beside her, holding her hand and feeling her pulse.

"What has happened?" asked Don Luis. "Is Doña Pepa ill?"

"She is dead," replied the physician solemnly; "and I cannot discover what was the matter nor what can have killed her. She was in excellent health, as far as I could make out, an hour ago, when I was called in to see her for convulsions; and now, with no bad symptoms at all, she has suddenly died. I cannot understand the cause at all."

Don Luis thought to himself that he perhaps could

throw a good deal of light upon the subject. But he held his tongue.

When Doña Pepa was laid out for burial, the old nun who had prepared her for her last resting-place, confessed that she had seen the figure of a large snake distinctly traced upon the entire length of her body.

Don Luis and Don Juan lived very happily together for years after the death of Doña Pepa. His uncle seemed like a boy again, so light-hearted and gay was he. When his friends came to see him, he would say : "I have not been so happy for many a long year."

And Don Juan's friends thought it strange, but Don Luis did not. The hermit and one or two others only knew the secret of the Serpent Woman.

XIV.

*THE CHRIST OF BURGOS.**

THE cathedral at Burgos is one of the finest in Spain. It cannot, perhaps, boast of the treasures of those at Seville and Toledo, but it has in its day been of much consequence. The Sacristan likes to tell (though I am not sure that the fact is authentic) that Rodrigo Borgia was an archdeacon there before he became Pope under the name of Alexander VI. Unfortunately, now houses and streets have been built up around it, which give it a rather mean and blocked-up appearance. But when seen at a distance it has a superb effect, and towers above its surroundings, a splendid pile of florid Gothic, with decorated pinnacle which at a distance might remind us of Milan Cathedral.

But although Burgos cannot boast of such wealth and church silver as Seville or Toledo, she still has two treasures which are unique. One is the wonderful crucifix, and the other is the Flycatcher (Papamoscas). To both are attached legends, and the following is one of the best of those told of the Christ of Burgos.

Towards the end of the twelfth century there lived a certain Count, named Castro Mogica, who was Chancellor of Burgos, and a man of immense wealth and wide estates. He was greatly feared by the inhabitants, for

* This legend is mentioned in the old and first edition of Ford's "Handbook for Spain," vol. ii., p. 901. Also in the "España Sagrada," vol. xxvii., p. 495.

he was one of the most cruel and inhuman of men, and, for the mere pleasure of seeing others in pain, would torture his servants and laugh at their agonies. He neither feared God nor man, and was hated by everyone who knew him. He had had two wives, both of whom had died in sudden and mysterious fashion; his two sons were kept in such straitened circumstances that they rebelled against him, and were punished by being thrown into the dungeons of the castle, where one of them became insane and died by his own hand; while the other, aided by the servants, made his escape and fled to Palestine.

A few years passed, and one morning the world of Burgos was startled by the news that the Count Castro Mogica had been found in his room, lying on the floor, dead. It was rumoured that he had been poisoned. No one expressed surprise. The only wonder was, that it had not happened before. But who could have done it? Who was the culprit? And then the question arose in the public mind, Would the man or men convicted of the crime be held guilty and brought to justice for ridding the world, and Burgos in particular, of such a fiend as the Count Castro Mogica? For a long time no one could discover who had committed the crime. The head servant, a sort of major-domo named Fernando, who was at first suspected, as being known to have hated his master, was away in Valencia at the time of the murder, visiting his father, who was very ill and supposed to be dying.

At last a small bottle of a deadly poison was discovered in the room of a young "criado" (servant), who had been cruelly maltreated by the Count in his lifetime, and who had often been heard to threaten to do something desperate to his master if he ever got the chance. In vain the boy protested his innocence.

Circumstances looked strangely against him ; and, in spite of his assurances that he knew nothing about the murder, he was thrown into prison, to be kept until the new Count could be sent for and return to see justice done. This took a long time, for in those days there were but few who could write, and the letter or message had to be sent by hand. At last, however, some one was found who was going to Palestine, and willing to undertake the charge.

Fernando, when he heard the news, came back from Valencia, and took charge of the castle and everything in it until his young master's return. Meantime, the boy Pedro languished day after day in prison.

Fernando appeared much shocked when he heard that his old master was dead. He had been his servant for many years, and although he detested him as much as the rest of the world, he had contrived to obtain an ascendancy over the mind of the old Count by pretending to be a sorcerer, and he had often frightened the Count into leaving him in comparative peace, when the other servants were being maltreated to afford their master amusement. He of course was the proper person, so everyone thought, to take charge of things till his young master came home, and a more faithful and devoted servant would be hard to find, so everyone said.

At last, after many months of weary waiting, the young Count returned, and was received with open arms by Fernando, who had known him as boy and man. The young Count Mogica was a mere youth when he escaped from his father's tyranny ; and he returned a fine, handsome, robust-looking man, much bronzed by the suns of Palestine, and in every way a worthy descendant of the noble family to which he belonged.

After hearing the circumstantial evidence of the case against Pedro, who was still in prison, he decided that the boy was the poisoner of his father, and he was condemned to be executed in a month. The anguish and despair of Pedro were terrible to witness, and he pleaded his innocence so well that the young Count was moved to tears, and wavered much in his opinion as to the guilt of the poor boy. But who else could have done it? So the sentence was given.

“The dear Cristo,” cried Pedro, extending his arms to heaven when he heard his fate—“the dear Cristo and Nuestra Señora are my only help now! Help me to prove my innocence!” he cried, as he was carried away to prison again.

The morning after the trial was over, a Burgalese merchant arrived from sea, who stated that he had seen a crucifix, with the Saviour upon it, steering itself across the Bay of Biscay. This astounding piece of news frightened the people of Burgos almost out of their wits.

“Pedro’s prayer has been heard, and the Christ is coming to prove his innocence,” they said.

The crucifix appeared, and performed many miracles as it passed along to a convent in the town. It healed many sick, and raised ten men from the dead, and finally brought so many offerings to the convent that the Archbishop ordered it to be taken to the cathedral, which was accordingly done.

A few evenings after these things had happened, the young Count was sitting reading in his private room in the dusk of the evening, when suddenly his father appeared before him, and sat down in a chair not far off. He could hardly believe his eyes, and for some seconds he sat staring at the ghost, without a word. At last the ghost of the old Count said :

“Why do you harbour my murderer?”

“Your murderer?” replied his son. “Why, your murderer is lying in prison, and will be executed in a few weeks.”

“My murderer is in this house,” returned the ghost, “and I can prove it to you; but you, on your side, must promise to do exactly as I bid you.”

The young Count promised, after some hesitation. The ghost then said:

“You must give a banquet.”

“But it would be unseemly so soon after your death,” cried the son, “and people would think me mad. For, as you know, it is not the custom here to give feasts, except on great occasions.”

“Let them think what they like. Do as I bid you. It will save that boy Pedro—who never did me harm—from a shameful death.”

“Well, suppose I give the banquet—what will happen?” inquired the young Count.

“I shall sit between two of the guests, invisible to them, but clearly visible to you and the man who poisoned me; and if ever you saw guilt depicted on a human face, you will see it on his.”

The ghost then departed, and the young Count wondered if he himself were going mad to see such visions. For several days he did nothing about the dinner-party, but wandered about moping and unhappy, fearing for his mind. One evening he was pondering over his extraordinary hallucination, when he heard a voice beside him say, “Remember your promise—you still harbour my murderer in your house!” and, turning round, he saw the ghost sitting beside him.

At this moment Fernando, the major-domo, came in carrying lights, and had advanced almost close to the table near which the Count was sitting, when his face sud-

denly changed in expression ; he turned a deadly white, his eyes starting from their sockets as they lighted on the chair in which the ghost of the old Count was sitting. Both the candles fell from his hands on the floor and went out.

“ How careless you are, Fernando !” cried the young Count angrily. “ And what is the matter with you, that you look as though you had seen a ghost ?”

“ And so I have,” muttered Fernando between his teeth, as he tremblingly tried to relight the candles ; but his hand shook so much that finally he took them outside to relight them.

“ You know now whom to deal with,” said the ghost to his son, and with these words departed.

When Fernando returned, he gave a hurried look at the chair in which his former master had sat ; but seeing no one there he recovered his spirits, and the evening passed without any remark about the ghost.

The young Count had a troubled night. He was loath to believe that Fernando, an old and trusted servant, and one who had often helped him and his brother in their scrapes with their father, had actually taken his life, villain though he was. Few knew better than he how tyrannical, how cruel, and exasperating the old Count could be ; but to take his life—that was a different thing ; it was going a little too far. As he reflected upon the horror of his situation, he remembered how thoroughly and with his whole soul his father had enjoyed life. Even his most fiendish actions seemed to afford him the utmost delight. And his life was taken away from him by—it was too horrible to think of!—by a servant whom he had trusted confidentially, who almost knew the innmost workings of his mind, and who had been the truest friend that his children had ever had. After all that Fernando

had done for the family in general, would it be right to betray him and hand him over to justice? was the thought which haunted the young Count. For several days he pondered over the matter, until he nearly went mad with doubts and mental struggles. The ghost of his father came to him every night, and stood by his bedside with glaring, furious eyes, and reproached him for his pusillanimity.

“Is a servant to be more considered than your father?” it inquired angrily.

At last the poor young man was driven so desperate that he determined to take his father’s advice, and invite his friends to dinner and see what effect it would have upon Fernando.

It was not the custom in Spain, even in those days, any more than it is now, to have banquets except on grand occasions. Hospitality, in the form in which it is practised in England, is an unknown thing there. After a tournament, or when the king came to a city, it was thought needful to give a banquet, but not as an everyday thing. Therefore, when the young Count sent out his invitations, the nobility of Burgos was startled not a little. “Castro Mogica must be mad,” they said; but in spite of their suspicions and ill-natured gossip, no one who had been invited refused to go. All the guests wondered, but were delighted that anything so strange as a dinner-party should have fallen to their lot.

When the evening came, the great palace of the Castro Mogicas was blazing with light. The dining-hall was radiant with candles and glittered with brightness. The table and buffet was laden with old family plate. The young Count received his guests with great courtesy and cordiality, but his face wore a curiously anxious look, which was remarked by all the guests.

At times, one might almost have said that the young man looked haggard and old.

The dinner began. It was choice and excellent, and the guests, most of whom were well able to appreciate a delicate well-ordered meal, enjoyed themselves heartily. The hilarity and enjoyment were at their height when the young Count, who sat at the head of his table, saw his father's ghost walk in and seat himself between two of the guests who had been his most bitter and sworn foes during his lifetime. The two gentlemen, who had been up to that time very cordial and friendly in their political discussions, shivered as the ghost of the old Count sat down between them.

"It is very cold all of a sudden," said the one to the other.

"Must be a draught somewhere." But from that time their conversation ceased, and they sat cold and silent till towards the end of the meal.

The ghost of the old Count had seated itself on the opposite side of the table from the door, not far from his son, so that anyone coming in could not see him at once, but could not pass him over without notice in serving the young master of the house.

Fernando had felt himself in his element all the evening. He liked the importance of a banquet, and bustled about hither and thither, feeling very happy in having company about him once again. He hated solitude, and was glad to be surrounded by gaiety and cheerful society. Hardly had the ghost of the old Count seated itself comfortably when Fernando appeared with a dish, held high in the air, his face beaming with radiant smiles. The young Count watched him narrowly. He had almost reached his master's chair, and was just preparing to place the dish in front of him, when his

eye fell upon the two guests, between whom the ghost of his old master was sitting. In an instant his face changed: he became ashy pale, his body and hands trembled: the costly dish of dainty food dropped upon the floor and was broken to atoms, and Fernando stood and gazed, stupefied, at his old master. His eyes seemed to start from their sockets, his mouth opened and his jaw dropped, while all the guests got up from their seats in alarm at seeing his altered appearance.

“What is the matter with the man?” they all cried.

Fernando’s terror only lasted a few seconds. But meanwhile the young Count saw his father rise and approach his chair.

“Who is right now, you or I?” he whispered, as he passed and disappeared.

When the Count was sure that the ghost was gone, he said to his guests, who looked pale and horror-stricken:

“My servant is subject to fits. Do not mind him. He is an old and faithful creature, and so we overlook his failings.”

Fernando appeared no more that night, but retired to his room under the plea of being ill. The two gentlemen, whose conversation and warm friendship had been interrupted by the presence of the ghost, became communicative and friendly once more. And the dinner-party ended with no more unpleasant accidents.

The young Count, in spite of what had occurred, was sorely perplexed and grieved. He could not bear to deliver over to an ignominious death one who had been so kind and good to him and his brother when they were cruelly oppressed by their father. For a few days after the dinner-party, therefore, he did nothing. But his father’s ghost haunted and tormented him so continually, that he determined to give Fernando one more chance.

There was a great feast-day of the Church approaching, and he ordered Fernando to be in readiness to attend him to high mass. The day came; the cathedral was crowded to overflowing, the miraculous crucifix rose dark and solemn in the centre of the nave. And as the young Count, followed by Fernando, passed close to it on their way to the high altar, the Christ of Burgos detached its right arm and pointed with the outstretched hand at Fernando, while at the same instant the blood began to flow from the feet, hands, and side.

“A miracle! a miracle!” shouted the people, who stood near, as they looked and stared. There followed a tremendous uproar. When order was restored the Bishop had the cathedral doors closed, and made the people walk past the crucifix one by one. At last it was Fernando’s turn to approach. No sign had been made hitherto, and the people were beginning to think that the culprit had escaped, when the Christ again raised his hand and pointed at Fernando, while the blood flowed once more from feet, hands, and side. Fernando, his face white as death, and shaking all over, the very picture of abject fear, was taken more dead than alive to the court of justice, where he confessed to having poisoned his former master the night he left for Valencia. He detailed minutely how he had put the liquid into the soup, and then placed the bottle in Pedro’s room, hoping that he would be suspected. Then he begged his young master to forgive him on the score of the love he had borne him, for whose sake he had rid the world of such a monster. But the Count was inexorable, and let justice take its course; and Pedro, when he had almost despaired of deliverance, was raised to Fernando’s place in the house of his master, whom he served faithfully until his death many years after.

XV.

*THE FLY-CATCHER ("PAPAMOSCAS").**

ANYONE acquainted with the interior of the cathedral at Burgos will remember a curious little doll over one of the side doors. Now it is as silent as the grave, because it excited so much attention and merriment during mass that one of the bishops got incensed, and had the wires which were attached to it cut. But in its day it was intended to strike a bell at the quarters and the hour, like the two men on the old clock at Venice, and like the figures which come out by machinery at Strasburg. This little doll is called Papamoscas, and used after striking the bell to give the most fearful shriek, in remembrance of an event in the life of Henry of Trastamare, brother to Pedro the Cruel. The legend runs thus :

While Henry of Trastamare was wandering about in exile and waiting for another chance to revolt against his brother, then King of Castile and Leon, he diverted his mind by hunting with his friends and followers, and by tournaments and other knightly games and amusements.

One day, when he was out hunting, he saw an enormous boar running a little in front of him, but so

* This legend is mentioned by Signor de Amicis in his book on Spain.

near that he was tempted to give it chase. Thinking that his comrades were following him, he kept his eyes fixed upon the boar, expecting every moment to get within killing distance.

After a time he discovered that he was no nearer to the boar, that he had left his friends behind, and that darkness was closing in upon him. He could hear the wolves howling in the distance. It is not encouraging to be lost in a forest, and hear the wild animals beginning their nightly prowls. Although Henry of Trastamare was never accused of a lack of courage, his spirits flagged on this occasion; and to add to his discomfort, the boar which he had seen only a second before suddenly disappeared. His superstitious nature (and he was very superstitious) took alarm at once. He almost fell from his horse with fright, and commenced saying his prayers and crossing himself, when the forest was lighted up by a white soft light, and he saw a beautiful graceful woman standing by his side. Seizing his horse's bridle, she silently led him out of the forest through intricate and entangled paths. The branches which overhung the roads separated as though by magic. When the lady reached the edge of the forest, she said in a sweet musical voice :

“Turn to the right and then to the left, and it will then be a straight line towards the cathedral.”

Prince Henry was still so amazed at his adventure that he could hardly speak. He saw the lovely face of his preserver, and began : “How can I thank you, most charming señora——” but all traces of the lady had vanished. The forest behind him was as black as night, and only the stars above showed any light. The moon was rising when Henry of Trastamare arrived at his quarters, where the alarm had been raised, and parties were starting out in search of him. His friends were

not a little startled at his adventure, which he told without delay. What did it portend? Success or defeat in their plottings against Pedro?

Cruel and unscrupulous as he was, Henry of Trastamare was a devout Catholic, and never missed going to early mass. Weeks passed away. Never since his adventure in the forest had he seen the lady who had befriended him in his need, though he had done all in his power to find her. One morning, when he went to early mass, he saw a very graceful and, as far as he could judge from her profile, an exceedingly handsome woman kneeling on her mat some yards in front of him, intent on her devotions. He could hardly keep his attention on his prayers, so firmly did he believe that she was his unknown friend of the forest, and so earnestly did he keep her in sight. There were but few worshippers at that early hour: only two or three old women going to market with their baskets were kneeling here and there in the vast cathedral, so that virtually he and the unknown lady of the woods (as he continually called her in his thoughts) were alone. When the mass was ended, the beautiful stranger turned to depart. She was dressed entirely in black, mantilla, dress, and fan, and she carried a handkerchief in her right hand. Henry of Trastamare recognised her at once as the lady who had guided him through the forest. She was half-way down the nave of the cathedral when she dropped her handkerchief. Prince Henry hastened to pick it up, and presented it to the fair unknown. She turned and faced him, saying, "Muchissimas gracias, mi Rey;" and without another word she turned and left him.

The Prince's heart beat high. She, an unknown person, had called him her King. Was it a sign of good fortune or an evil omen? He wished that he could have questioned her a little more, but she appeared and

disappeared so rapidly that he had no chance to ask her anything. For many weeks he frequented the early services, and looked carefully for the strange lady who had disturbed his peace of mind so much. But she never came to church again, go at what hour he would, and at last he gave up the search in despair.

Some months later, Prince Henry got belated again in a forest in the Asturias, when he was planning his intended warfare upon his brother, and was attacked by six wolves. He killed two, but his strength was not equal to the other four, and he would have been devoured had not the Lady of the Forest suddenly appeared and uttered a most unearthly scream; upon hearing which the wolves fled terrified, with their tails between their legs, and Henry of Trastamare was saved once more by his unknown friend. He was determined that she should not escape him this time, and advanced with a quick step to meet her. But she had no intention of disappearing as suddenly as she had come, for she came towards him, and, after listening to his courteous words of thanks and of admiration, she said in a sad voice: "We shall never meet again. Our ways lie in different directions. Yours leads to honour and glory; mine into oblivion. I can do no more for you, my Prince. Farewell." And with these words she disappeared.

In vain he tried to find her. He searched far and wide in the forest, but with no success.

"You shall never be forgotten," he shouted, and the echoes of the forest returned—"Never!"

In 1366 the people of Castile and Leon revolted against Pedro the Cruel, on account of his continual atrocities; and after three years of desperate fighting, Henry of Trastamare besieged his brother at Montiel, and took him prisoner.

Duguesclin had then joined the standard of Henry of Trastamare, and Pedro begged him, as an old friend, to help him to escape. The wily Frenchman, desirous of entrapping Pedro, pretended that he would do his best to procure his freedom. Pedro accordingly went by invitation to the tent of Duguesclin to arrange the matter, and as everyone knows, when he reached the tent, Pedro was basely assailed and murdered.

The prediction of the Lady of the Forest came true. Henry of Trastamare became King of Castile and Leon; and in remembrance of the help of his unknown friend, he caused the "Papamoscas" to be made, that the unearthly scream should keep her from being forgotten.

But the Bishop's command has frustrated his design. The figure stands with its mouth open, apparently catching flies, and the Lady of the Forest has sunk into the oblivion which she foretold.

There are few who know the origin and the legend of the "Papamoscas."

XVI.

*THE BEWITCHED VIOLIN.**

THERE was a certain half-witted Genoese servant who went to live with a Gallican gentleman for three years. At the end of his service, instead of the nine crowns which were his due, his master, a very avaricious man, gave him only three, trusting to the man's vacancy of mind to cover his deceit. And he was right in his calculations. The servant never discovered that he had been cheated, but considered his three crowns a fortune, and went on his way rejoicing over his good luck.

As he was walking along near the river, singing like a bird, he suddenly heard a voice beside him saying :

“And what makes you so very merry?”

He turned round and saw a queer little dwarf panting and almost running to keep pace with him. He had the wickedest look on his face that Andrea had ever seen, and the latter crossed himself hurriedly as the dwarf came up with him. The little personage had

* Part of this story I have traced to the “Romancero General,” vol. ii., p. 253. It is there said to be “anonymous.” The footnote says : “The same power which is attributed in this story to the enchanted violin, was possessed also by the hunting-horn which Oberon, King of the Fairies, presented to the celebrated and pious Hugo de Burdeos, according to that most delightful tale of chivalry, written in the fourteenth century, about this hero, who, full of devotion and of good faith, but weak and love-sick, achieved a multitude of tender and amorous enterprises and many warlike adventures. The book which describes them is most pleasant and amusing.” I have been told that a similar story to this is to be found in German, but I have not come across it.

very pretty manners, however, and Andrea was rather ashamed of himself for having suspected him of evil. The dwarf, as soon as he could get his breath, repeated his question, "What makes you so very merry?"

"Who would not be merry with a purse full of money in his pocket, as I have?" answered Andrea gaily. "I have three whole crowns all belonging to me, and there is nothing in the whole world that is not open to money."

"That is very true," answered the little dwarf, with a deep sigh; "it would make me a rich man for life if I had a purse full of money. Would you be willing to exchange it for the gifts I can give you? I would grant you any wishes that you please, provided there are only three."

"It is worth thinking of," returned Andrea; and after a few minutes' consideration he consented, on condition that, first, he should have a crossbow and arrows which should bring down anything he aimed at; secondly, a violin which should make everyone dance when he played it; and, thirdly, that all his requests should be granted on the spot.

"You shall have all your three wishes," answered the little dwarf; and immediately there appeared the crossbow and arrows, and the violin.

"The first time that you ask for anything, you will find that your third wish is also granted," said the dwarf; and, taking the purse of money from Andrea's hand, he disappeared, as suddenly as he had come, in a blue flame.

Andrea walked along as happy as a king. "Could anyone be more fortunate than I?" he said to himself. "To be sure, I have no more money, but I have what is quite as good."

A little while after the dwarf had left him so sud-

denly, he met a Jew staring up into a tree, and listening to a thrush which was singing as though its little throat would burst.

“What a lovely voice that bird has!” said the Jew to Andrea; “and what would I not give to possess the bird!”

“Oh, that is very easy,” replied Andrea, pointing his arrow at the bird, and it fell to the ground. The Jew immediately ran among the bushes to secure his prize; but Andrea was not going to let him have it without paying for it, fool though he seemed. So, while the Jew was searching among the brambles and rocks for the bird, Andrea took up his violin and began to play a few chords, and the Jew began to dance. The more he played, the more the Jew danced; and as he played faster and faster, so much the faster did the old usurer dance, until his limbs seemed to be flying apart. The brambles and bushes were crushed under his feet, and the very rocks crumbled away and became dust, while the Jew capered and panted and danced, until he sued for mercy.

“For heaven’s sake,” he gasped, “spare me, and leave off playing that detestable violin! There is some devil’s work in it, and I shall drop down dead in a few minutes from exhaustion.”

“What will you give me if I leave off?” inquired Andrea.

“I will give you a hundred florins. They are all I have in the world,” whimpered the Jew.

Andrea took the money, and went on his way singing, leaving the Jew lying on the road in an exhausted condition.

As soon as he could get enough breath and strength to walk, the Jew went to the nearest town and made a complaint against Andrea, saying that he had been

robbed by him, and giving such an exact description of him, that in a very few hours Andrea was arrested and brought back.

The Jew made out such a good case by dint of mixed falsehoods and truth, that Andrea gaped and stared and wondered, and could make no defence. He was accordingly found guilty of highway robbery, and condemned to the gallows. He was asked if he had anything to say in his own behalf, and he said to the Judge :

“I should take it as a very great favour, if you would allow me to play one last tune on my violin.”

“No, don't let him !” shrieked the Jew. “We shall die of his violin !”

But according to his third wish, it will be remembered, Andrea was to have whatever he demanded. The Judge therefore could not deny him such a modest request, and courteously told him that he should be very glad to hear him, if he would play no melancholy tunes.

“Oh no !” exclaimed Andrea, “you need not be afraid. I am the most cheerful man alive.” And indeed he seemed so. For with the sentence of death upon him, and the gallows to hang him already prepared in full sight, he played the most delicious bolero that ever was composed. It was irresistible. First one and then another got up, and began to dance, till at last the whole court looked like a ball-room, without the ladies. The Judge and the Jew capered opposite to each other, and tired themselves out in their efforts to outdo each other in feats of bolero-dancing.

At last the company was exhausted, and thought that the joke had lasted long enough.

“Enough !” cried the Judge. “We have had enough of your fun.”

But Andrea played faster and faster, and more quickly and friskily did the company dance. The more he played the more they flew about, until after two hours of fearful exhaustion the company in a body begged and implored of him to stop.

Andrea answered as coldly as if he had been an iceberg :

“When the Jew will tell the true version of what passed between us, and also where he got the money which he charges me with stealing, then I will stop.”

“Stop at once, good man!” shrieked the Judge. “You shall be pardoned, and the Jew shall be forced to tell the true story; but I shall die of this dance if you do not finish playing on that diabolical violin.

Andrea then stopped. Some of the people dropped on the ground, and fainted from sheer exhaustion. The Jew was called upon to tell the story of how he had made the money, and acknowledged that he had stolen it. But, when asked how Andrea had obtained the hundred florins, he kept to his old version.

Suddenly the violin spoke: “It is a lie, saving all your presences! My master brought down a bird which sang very sweetly for the Jew, and he was going to take it without even a ‘thank you’ to my master. He played on me, and the Jew was obliged to dance till he begged for mercy and promised the hundred florins to my master. And that is the true story.”

Then the violin proceeded to make the most horrible and diabolical faces, so that those who gazed at it in profound amazement and fright thought the devil in person had come among them. “It is true—it is true,” whimpered the Jew; and the people, with one accord, shouted, “Hang the Jew—hang the Jew!” which was accordingly done, without shrift. And Andrea walked out a free man again.

With his bow and his violin Andrea made his fortune, collecting here and forcing there ; and at last he died a very rich man.

Of his friends who undertook his affairs after his death, none could play the violin, and among other of his effects it was sold. It was a daintily shaped instrument, curved to just the right form and of the sweetest tone. When Andrea used to play it, it almost spoke, and drew tears from people's eyes when he was sentimental or sad. Its fame had spread throughout the country, and of course the sale of it was an easy affair. At last it fell into the hands of a Toledan music-seller.

Andrea, though rather wanting generally in common sense, had had the wit to keep to himself the origin of the violin, and not a soul knew that it was bewitched, and dependent for its success upon the temper and character of its owner. The price asked for it by the music-seller at Toledo was an exceedingly high one ; but, in spite of that, everyone who knew how to play the violin longed to possess this particularly famous instrument of Andrea.

Its next owner was a celebrated violinist named Pascual Cabrera, who took it to Madrid, where he was engaged to give a certain number of concerts. He already was the happy possessor of an Amati, but he had not yet made a fortune ; and as he had heard of Andrea's good luck by his violin, he purchased it, hoping that the same happy result might follow.

But he did not know that in the temper and character of the possessor lay the secret of the tone and behaviour of the instrument. Pascual Cabrera was of a rather quarrelsome nature ; jealous of his comrades who played better than he, or, as he called it, " were favourites of the public," and of a nervous, excitable, and irritable temper. For the first few weeks, when

he was earnest and placid in his work, the violin behaved beautifully, and really touched one's heart to listen to. It wailed for its dead master, and fairly sang his praises whenever the new owner played anything that was sweet and sentimental. It was especially charming in sad and minor chords. The Amati sank in the estimation of its master, and retired into private life.

The night of the first concert came, and the violin was tuned and ready. Among the performers was a clever young violinist, who played before Pascual Cabrera and was much applauded. The approbation given to this young artist filled Cabrera's heart with hatred and rage, and he walked upon the stage determined to make a great sensation and to cut out his rival. But he reckoned without his host. At the very first touch of the bow, all the strings snapped as though cut with a knife, and Cabrera had the mortification of seeing his rival take his place and entertain the audience, while he himself retired to put on fresh strings. When he next got up to play, the violin uttered a fearful shriek of discord; and while Cabrera looked at it in perfect astonishment, it began to sound of itself and the audience began to dance. The more he tried to stop it, the faster the violin played, and the more the people capered and frisked, until they fairly danced themselves out of the hall into the street to be out of the reach of the sound.

"The violin must be bewitched," they all cried, "and Cabrera has sold his soul to the devil."

In vain did he remonstrate with them and tell them that he had only lately bought the violin; that this was the first time he had played upon it in a concert-room. No, they would not listen to him; and as far as he was concerned the concert proved a lamentable failure. The news spread abroad, and he could get no engage-

ments on account of the bewitched instrument. The managers were afraid that some such pranks would again occur and spoil their concerts; and at last Cabrera was reduced to great poverty, and forced to sell his violins to keep himself from starving.

Once more, therefore, the bewitched violin was for sale, and this time the purchaser was a poor lad, passionately fond of music, but too poor to afford lessons. The mysterious fiddle had got such a bad name that it was sold for a mere song, and Tomas Rabida thought himself a very lucky man, as he walked out of the shop with his new purchase under his arm. Whenever he had a moment to spare from his work he would pick out chords on his cherished violin. He was a patient, sweet-tempered, pious lad, and the violin gave out under his touch the sweetest tones. But it got him into all sorts of trouble.

When he had learned to play quite decently, he was one dark evening trying to pick out a new and sentimental love-song, and stopped for a moment opposite a very grand palace.

The master of the palace had reason to suspect that his daughter encouraged the attentions of a young gentleman whom they knew and whom he disliked extremely. He had often given the young man to understand that he did not want him for a son-in-law, but the young man would not take the hint, and persevered in his attentions, and finally was forbidden the house. Then he took to serenading the object of his devotion, and, as ill luck would have it, sang and played the identical tune which Tomas was picking out on his violin. Thinking it was the young man again serenading his daughter, the master of the palace no sooner heard that air than he rushed out of his house and gave poor Tomas a good beating, and before the lad had time to

explain went back into the house again like lightning, and left Tomas gaping in the street with astonishment and anger. On another occasion he was playing in his own room in the lodging-house where he lived. The moment he began to play, all who heard him began to dance throughout the house, and could not stop until he stopped. The inmates of the house complained of Tomas, and after various remonstrances he was ordered to quit. He was quite in the dark about the peculiarities of his violin, and considering himself very much maltreated, complained of his landlord to the Judge of the city. But the Judge could do nothing for him, as the whole household complained of Tomas and his fiddle as a nuisance. House after house did he try to live in, and always with the same result—after a few weeks the inmates complained of him and his instrument. At last the violin took to playing in the middle of the night by itself, and he, as well as the rest, was forced to get up and dance until dawn, when it chose to stop as suddenly as it had begun. Then he appreciated what a trial he must be to the rest of the house, and understood his unhappy position.

At last matters were brought to a climax. Tomas one day had a quarrel with an old friend; so bitter was the feud that they parted enemies for life, and Tomas came home and went to bed full of rage and unkind thoughts and wishes. In the middle of the night he was awakened by a heavy load on his feet. He sat up in bed, lit a light, and beheld a hideous dwarf sitting on his bed and making faces at him. The grimaces were so horrible that Tomas sat staring at the dwarf, too appalled and terrified to speak. Then he thought it was a dream, and to make quite sure he put his hand out, and lo—it was the violin! Much relieved, he took it and put it back in the corner of the room again.

The next morning he laughed out loud at the remembrance of his dream. His eyes naturally turned towards the corner where he had placed the violin, and there sat the same dwarf making faces at him and grinning from ear to ear. He went up and touched it, and it was the violin. "The thing must be bedevilled," Tomas said to himself, and hurried to his parish priest. To him he told the whole story, and begged of him to come and sprinkle it with holy water and exorcise it. The priest came, but no sooner did the holy water touch it than the violin gave a piercing shriek, burst into a thousand pieces with a loud report, and disappeared in a blue flame.

XVII.

*THE RENEGADE JEW.**

IT will be remembered that when Ferdinand and Isabel the Catholic were trying to make Roman Catholicism the universal faith of Spain, they did their best to persuade the unfortunate Moors to embrace Christianity before they proceeded to extreme measures, such as expulsion and war. Those Moors who became Christians were allowed to retain all their possessions in Spain, but they were carefully watched and made to observe most punctiliously at least all the outward forms and ceremonies of the Roman Catholic Church. Those who did not embrace Christianity were exiled from Spain with only the possessions which they could take with them. The same propositions were made to the Jews at first; and some of them, though outwardly observing religiously the forms and ceremonies of Christianity, were still at heart Jews of the first water, and merely Christians from interested motives.

There lived in Toledo, about the end of the fifteenth century, a celebrated beauty named Beatriz de Mendoza. She and her husband, Juan de Mendoza, were most devout Catholics, famous for their piety, their constant attendance at church, their great charity, and their adoration of each other. They were always

* I have traced this story to the "Romancero General," vol. ii., p. 355. It is called there "The Jew of Toledo."

spoken of as "two bodies and one soul," and lived as happily as possible. But after a time a coolness sprang up between them for some unknown reason. People could not quite make out what was the matter. Indeed, they themselves would have been puzzled to say whence the coolness arose; but certainly their visitors felt that there was a difference, and wondered among themselves what could be the cause. Beatriz would have said that her husband absented himself for a certain time every evening, and never would tell her where he went. And this secret kept from her made the "little rift within the lute" at once. He would have said, had he been questioned, that her suspicions were intolerable to him, and that her idle curiosity should not be gratified; and he became in consequence more and more secretive.

The house in which they lived belonged entirely to them, and on the ground attached to it there was a stable with a room behind for grain and straw. In this room behind the stable Juan, the devout Catholic, revealed his true character and his apostasy. He was, unknown to his wife and to the world in general of Toledo, a Jew, Christianized from interest. In the middle of the room behind the stable he had an enormous crucifix erected, the Christ on it being life-size. And every night he belaboured the Christ with an enormous bludgeon, and wounded Him sore, while he apostrophized Him thus: "Impostor and malefactor that thou art! art thou the All-powerful and Omniscient One that people think thee? If thou wast really what the Christians believe thee to be, thou wouldest resent my insults and smite me, and I should believe in thee."

The wounds of the Holy One opened afresh, and while the blood flowed from His side, hands, and feet, the Cristo said:

"My brother, for I am a Jew like thee, if I were not

the Son of the Divine Love and Perfection, I *should* smite thee. But I have once suffered not only for thy race and Mine, but for those who did *not* believe in Me; and in mercy and love I do not smite thee. Why open My wounds afresh by thy cruelty?"

"Cruelty!—it is the Christian dogs who are cruel in making me live such a hypocritical life to protect my property; and as I cannot punish them, I hold thee responsible as their head;" and he again belaboured the figure on the cross.

One night, after suffering much from jealousy and evil suspicions, Beatriz de Mendoza followed her husband secretly, and saw him go into the room and lock the door. She listened for a long time, and heard blows and cries and remonstrances; and then she peeped through the keyhole and saw Juan, her devout and pious husband, beating the body of the Saviour, and abusing Him with all his might. She uttered a cry of horror, and, nearly fainting with fright, fled, and succeeded in reaching her room without Juan's seeing her. He had heard the cry, however, and opened the door and looked out. Seeing no one, he continued his brutality for some time longer. Then he went to his rest. When Beatriz thought he was asleep, she stole out to the grain-room, and, kneeling down before the Christ, she implored His pardon for the cruelty of her husband, sobbing and crying as though her heart would break.

"Forgive him, sweet Jesus!" she cried; "he must be mad to treat Thee so. He cannot intend really to maltreat Thee, for he has a kind heart, and has been a good husband to me. Let my belief in Thee and in Thy blessed Mother cure his unbelief, O Saviour mine, and forgive him as Thou didst those who crucified Thee long ago!"

Juan de Mendoza meanwhile had followed his wife, dagger in hand, and heard her prayers and entreaties for his pardon. This was more than he could bear. He entered the room, and seizing his wife roughly by the arm, shouted :

“Woman, do you really mean to tell me that you believe that that malefactor and impostor up there” (pointing to the cross) “is All-powerful, and that his mother can help you or me or anyone ?”

“I do! I do! indeed I do!” Beatriz replied, between her sobs. “Forgive my husband, O dulce Jesu! Forgive him, for he knows not what he says.”

Juan was beside himself with fury on hearing these words, and, seizing his wife, he stabbed her three or four times with his dagger, saying :

“When Mary and that infamous impostor will cure you of those wounds, then I will believe in them.”

Roused by her screams and cries, people rushed to the house and demanded what was the matter. Juan said nothing was the matter, but the crowd burst into the room and found Beatriz de Mendoza lying on the floor in a pool of blood, and apparently in a dying condition. Suddenly the room was filled with rosy light, and the Blessed Virgin descended on a luminous cloud, her beautiful hair curling upon her shoulders. The Christ then directed His Mother how to bind up the wounds which Juan had inflicted upon Beatriz. In a few minutes she rose from the floor, completely healed.

“Dost thou now believe ?” the Cristo said to Juan.

“No—and never shall !” shrieked Juan defiantly.

The people, who had seen the miracle performed before their very eyes, held their breath with fright at the blasphemy of Juan, and for a moment stood paralyzed with astonishment. It was only for a moment,

however; the next they had seized him, bound him, and, in spite of the prayers and entreaties of Beatriz, hurried him along to prison.

For days and days the council of bishops and priests considered the case of Juan de Mendoza, and tried in every way, by threats and by rewards, to bring this renegade Jew into the bosom of Holy Church again. But it was all of no avail. Juan continued to rail at Christ and Christianity, and was finally sentenced to die at the stake.

People flocked from all parts of Spain to see the "dog of a Jew" die. And Juan de Mendoza died as he had lived, cursing and blaspheming with his last breath.

XVIII.

*THE CONFESSION OF DON PEDRO.**

IN Spanish superstitions there are three kinds of ghosts: the "Duendes," which are ghosts that come to warn against some impending fate; the "Almas de los difuntos," which walk on the "night of the dead;" and "Almas de pena," whose punishment is to lead other people, of whom they are fond, to perdition—and these ghosts, I regret to say, for the sake of the sex, generally take the form of a beautiful woman.

Don Pedro de Ycaza was a great hunter. There was no difficult mountain that he had not climbed in search of game, and he never led a hunting-party that did not return with their saddle-bags full to bursting.

He was a handsome, powerfully built man, and rich withal. His friends and acquaintances wondered why, being so well off, he had never married. He was quite advanced in life when he made the confession which I am about to tell. Those who knew him when he was younger said that he was then cheerful and gay, and always the life of every party he went to. But for many years he had hardly been seen to smile, and a gloomy expression had settled upon his face, and rarely left it.

It was late in December, when two travellers alighted

* There is a story similar to this in some parts, in a book called the "Tradiciones de Toledo."

at the palace of Don Pedro in Barcelona. They had a Parisian look, and yet they spoke pure Castilian. Apparently they were old and dear friends, for Don Pedro received them with open arms and with as near an approach to a smile as his face could assume. After dinner they sat round the fire and talked of old times, and among other things of a certain beautiful Marquise de Longchamps.

"Ah! Pedro," said the older of the guests, "how I tried and tried to marry you to her! The handsomest woman in France, and with such a heap of money! Do you remember how all your friends worked to find you a good match? But it is not too late even now, and I have such a good one in view for you. Why don't you marry? You are not too old. Girls always prefer elderly men, you know; and this one is so pretty and so well brought up—just out of a convent, and easily moulded to your wishes and tastes."

There was a long and awkward pause. At last Pedro said:

"Well, there are many reasons why I should not marry, and good reasons too. The first is, because—I am married already——"

"Married already!" exclaimed his friends in one breath. "Where, when, and to whom? We never heard of any wife, nor have you ever spoken of her. Are you a Moor, that you keep her shut up in a seraglio?"

"No," replied Don Pedro sadly. "It is a long story, but if you do not mind listening and sitting up with me quite late, you will both hear the story and see my wife. But on one condition, that you do not speak (whatever you may witness) either to her or to me after she comes, until she has gone again. Once a year, this night in December, she is permitted to come and see me. There will just be time enough,"

he said, looking at his watch, "for me to tell you, my old friends, how it all happened. But you must promise to keep it secret, as I have for so many years."

They both promised, and Don Pedro began :

"I was bear-hunting in the solitary mountains of the wild part of the Asturias, nearly eleven years ago, and got separated from my comrades. I wandered about until dark, trying to join my friends ; and at last, when night set in, for safety's sake climbed into the highest tree that I could find, leaving my horse to wander where he liked, certain that my call would soon bring him back when I wanted him. I had been asleep some time when I was awaked by the call of a hunting-horn, most beautifully played. It was none of our calls, so I looked out cautiously to see what manner of men were hunting at midnight. The night was a very dark one, but the whole place seemed to be lighted up in some mysterious manner. Suddenly out of the darkness stepped the most beautiful woman I ever beheld. She was exquisitely formed, and was dressed in some gauzy stuff which showed her figure off to perfection. About a yard away from where I was she stopped under another tree, and played again a sweet tune upon her horn. And as I watched her I saw all sorts of animals coming in troops one after the other down the mountain paths. There were bears, wolves, wild-cats and lynxes ; and when they came very near to her, I quaked with fear for her safety. But she seemed to have no fear for herself. She stood quite unmoved, with her back against the tree. The wolves crouched at her feet and looked up admiringly in her face, while the cats stood on their hind-legs and clawed her gown. The lynxes rubbed themselves against her and walked round her, while the bears reared themselves one by

one to their full height and laid their heads on her shoulders. She caressed each one in turn, and they actually purred with delight, making such curious and blundering efforts to be graceful, that it was all I could do not to laugh outright. She then sat down in the midst of them for a few minutes, and, after talking to them as though they were human, she stood up again. The animals crouched at her feet once more, and seemed to do homage to her. Then she held her hands over them and dismissed them. Each one went home again apparently quite contented. When the last one had disappeared, the beautiful creature played another tune upon her horn, and a flock of goats and deer came cantering along the mountain passes one after the other. She fed them and petted them, and seemed to love them very much; but after a few minutes they were dismissed in the same curious fashion, and again she blew a long blast. A troop of horses came galloping along the mountain passes, neighing and kicking up their heels as though they were too happy to go along quietly. These performed a sort of dance around the lady, who in turn caressed them and rode on their backs. Each one as he carried her seemed very proud of his beautiful burden, curving his neck and stepping daintily about the place. After an hour of what seemed like teaching she dismissed them, and sat down under the tree again. She then took down her hair, which was very long and golden, and combed it with a golden comb. At the same time she looked towards the tree where I was hidden and watching her every movement, and suddenly said, 'O man, come down from that tree and talk to me.' Then she sang a lovely song, in a sweet melodious voice which was irresistible; and as she sang, I slowly, and utterly against my better judgment and my will, got down from my tree and approached her. She seemed to take no

notice of me, but went on singing till I was close to her, when she said, 'Sit down, and don't be afraid.'

"For some time we talked as if we had known each other all our lives. But gradually I fell asleep. When I woke, my lady had vanished. But the remembrance of her never left me, and her image never faded from my mind. I was really in love, for the first time in my life; and night after night did I go, at the peril of my neck, to try and obtain another sight of her, and have another chat. Months passed, and I saw nothing of my beautiful lady; as I was giving up the search in despair, I met her suddenly in a lonely mountain pass. My heart gave a sudden bound, and I determined to ask her to marry me, and once for all to decide my fate.

"No sooner thought than done. I represented to her that I was rich, and that she should have all that money could buy. But she gave me a look of scorn and said: 'I am as rich and more so than you: that would have no weight with me. Only one thing do I require of the man whom I marry, and that is——'

"'What? oh! tell me what?' I cried eagerly, seeing that she hesitated. 'If you require powerful friends and absolute sovereignty, you would have it with me.'

"Again she gave me such a look of contempt that I almost shrivelled up from fear and pain.

"'Such things do not attract me,' she said, 'for I am far more powerful than you, and could kill you with a word. The man whom I marry must never utter the name of the Virgin, nor cross himself.'

"I was so much in love that although I thought the request a strange one, I did not realize all that it implied. And after a few moments' consideration I consented to her terms, and we were married.

"She was much admired in Madrid. Wherever she went she created a great sensation. But she was per-

fectly indifferent to the admiration she received, and indeed she seemed hardly to remark it. When we went out in the streets, people would throng about the door, only to see her come out, and would throw down their cloaks for her to walk over. But she passed it all by as if it had never occurred, and took no notice. She was devotedly fond of me, and we were very happy.

“One curious thing about her was that she never seemed to wear shoes or stockings. This seemed very strange to me, and one night, urged by intense curiosity, I looked at her feet when she was asleep. What was my horror when I found that she had two hoofs like a horse, with iron shoes on them! For some time I could not shake off a feeling of dread that she was something unearthly. But she was so womanly and so affectionate in other respects that after a time I learnt to forget that she was deformed.

“In the course of two years we had twin sons, who were the joy and pride of our lives. She could hardly let them out of her arms, much less out of her sight. When they were nearly four years old, I came home one day from a very successful day's hunting. The bags were filled to bursting, and the game as usual was thrown down in a corner of the large stone dining-hall, and the dogs lay down near it on guard.

“Suddenly, while we were dining, one of the pointers gave a loud howl, started up on his feet, and turned somersaults all round the room two or three times without stopping. It then crawled to my feet, and dropped down dead. My wife, afraid that the dog might be mad, hurriedly caught up the babies who were one on each side of her, and held them in her arms, while she got on a chair to be out of the reach of the dog. I was very much alarmed, and forgetting my promise altogether, I said: ‘Santissima Virgen Maria, there is

some witchcraft and devil's work here!' and, crossing myself, hurriedly stooped to examine my dog. I heard a peculiar sound from the other end of the room, which was half a neigh and half a scream. I looked up, and beheld my wife changing into a black horse. The children held on to the mane, and wings came from the sides. Gradually rising into the air, she went up and up, and flew out of the window, carrying the children with her. Once a year they come to see me, and to-night I am expecting them. But make no noise, nor speak when they appear, or something awful will happen."

The friends of Don Pedro, who had listened with great attention, were much astonished at this extraordinary story, and looked timidly from time to time at the door.

They were not kept long in suspense, however, for pretty soon after Don Pedro had ended his tale the door opened, and one of the most beautiful women that they had ever seen entered the room. Her long, golden hair floated over her shoulders almost to her knees. She was dressed in a fleecy white kind of stuff, and her blue eyes shone like stars. Behind her came two seven-year-old colts. The three men rose at her entrance; the two friends retired to a corner of the room, and left Don Pedro to receive his guests alone. The beautiful lady walked up to him and kissed him affectionately on both cheeks. The two little colts rubbed their heads against his shoulder, and testified their delight at seeing him in a thousand pretty ways.

"They have grown taller since last year, Pedro, have they not?" said their mother.

"I should hardly have known them again, Zara," he answered.

The lady called the two colts to her, and, as they knelt before her, she took them by the tails and pulled

off their skins,* which, as they were a tight fit, must have been a painful operation; but the two little animals did not seem to mind it at all.

The two friends, who were watching the proceedings with intense interest, shut their eyes when they saw the skins coming off, thinking that there would be a cry of pain. But, hearing nothing, they looked again, when to their astonishment they saw two charming little boys, sitting upon Don Pedro's knee. The skins were folded up like little coats, and lay on the floor in a corner of the room.

Don Pedro and his wife conversed a long time in an undertone, and the little boys began to get bored. Their eyes wandered about the room, and at last lighted upon the father's two friends who sat in the corner, staring with all their eyes, but as white as ghosts. The children got down from their father's knee, and walked up to the two gentlemen.

"Who are you, and how do you do?" said they in musical voices, each holding out a tiny hand.

"We are friends of your papa, who have come a long way to see him. Do you come often to see him? He is very lonely, poor papa," said one of the gentlemen, as one child clambered on to his knee.

"Is he?" said the child, looking wistfully at Don Pedro. "We only come once a year to see him. But I should like to come oftener, only we can't."

"Why can't you?" inquired the gentleman.

The little boy hesitated for a moment; but the other child, who was seated on the other gentleman's knee, spoke up and said:

* This idea must be of Eastern origin, for in Frere's "Old Deccan Days," p. 183, the jackal takes off his jackal-skin, and washes it and brushes it, and puts it on again. And again, at p. 223, where the young princess takes off the old woman's skin and washes and hangs it up to dry.

“Because no one can speak the charm. We cannot ask papa to do it, because it has no effect after the first time, and he has already done it once when we went away with mamma.”

“What is your name, my child?” inquired the friend who had not yet spoken.

“Pedro.”

“And yours?”

“Pablo.”

“And does it not hurt you when that little coat is pulled off?”

“Oh no!” cried Pedro. “Mamma takes off our coats every night, and then she teaches us manners, and reading and writing. I wish some one would say the charm that papa said, and then we could always stay with papa. It is sometimes very cold outside when it snows and rains.”

The time was drawing near to midnight, and at last the beautiful lady called the children. “We must go,” she said.

But the children clung fast to their new friends, and Pablo said:

“Say the charm—oh, *please* say the charm!”

The two gentlemen looked at each other, and holding the children tightly by the arm, said, “Santa Virgen Maria,” crossing themselves as they said the words.

The beautiful lady, who was standing up near Don Pedro, suddenly staggered back, and would have fallen to the ground had not Don Pedro caught her in his arms.

“My time has come, Pedro,” she whispered. “Farewell! The children are saved;” and after heaving one deep sigh the beautiful lady was dead.

XIX.

THE GHOST OF THE RED CLOAK.

ONE of the many peculiar "cosas de España" which meets the foreign traveller at every turn in Spain is the long bare stretch of lonely country between the cities, which he has to traverse either on muleback or by diligence. For miles and miles no human habitation can be seen; nothing rises before the eye but the bleak rugged Sierras or the dusty white plain, according to the part of the country through which he happens to be travelling.

Very early on a windy cold morning in November the young clerk of a large wine-trading house in Malaga started from Madrid in the lumbering old diligence for Soria. The road in many parts is so lonely and uninhabited that nearly the only houses to be seen or heard of are the stopping-places for the diligence. Here you can be accommodated with a decent "puchero" or a "guizado," and, if need be, supplied with a bed. For sometimes the most important parts of the tumbledown, rattling diligences say good-bye every now and then to the body of the vehicle, and have to be fastened together again on the road. Then the weary traveller, who has been bumped and jolted out of all patience, is only too thankful to take what he can find in the way of a bed and decent food. The diligences, to begin with, are, as a rule, battered and old. There are ropes for reins, and old worn-out chains

for straps; and as the "mayoral," or, as they would call him in America, "the boss of the coach," prefers to drive up and down hill and over mountain precipices and valleys at as fast and perilous a pace as the horses will go (calling them the most scurrilous and insulting names that he can think of meanwhile), it is no wonder that the lumbering old thing decides for itself where it will stop and go no farther for either "mayoral" or "zagal" (the ubiquitous boy who runs alongside and encourages the animals by stones and offensive speeches).

The diligence in which Don Manuel Herrera was travelling was no better than the rest, and chose to break down at Adradas. Here there used to be in the old days a very miserable, stable-like hovel, called by courtesy a house, where food and lodging were announced as being provided for the weary traveller. It used to be kept by "La Catalina," as she was called by her acquaintances. "La Catalina" was about as repulsive-looking an old hag as could well be found in the province of Soria. She had long, thin, skinny arms, and a hare-lip, and eyes that looked round the corner; and her face had the most sinister look upon it, as though she intended your murder that very night, and was plotting against you from the moment that she first saw you.

Manuel Herrera's heart sank at the first sight of his future landlady; but he comforted himself with the thought that she might be like a singed cat, "better than she looked," and that perhaps her culinary efforts and accommodation for resting might be passably decent. And to tell the truth, "La Catalina's" cooking, according to her lights, was far too good to be despised. Her recipes were few, but she contrived with her three or four dishes to make her guests

contented, and not to let them go starving away, which is after all the main point. She could make a "puchero" (a kind of stew), "guizado" (a game or rabbit stew), or toss an omelette as well as any Spaniard, provided always that she had the materials. But she generally had enough in the house to feed the few and rare guests who visited her dwelling on their way, and for those also who were forced by circumstances to remain for the night.

Manuel Herrera was ushered into a long low house, whitewashed and rough. In the middle was a long corridor, at the left side a dark kitchen, with a bright open fire, which gleamed and shone red and gold, lighting up the bare tables and scanty earthen pipkins and pans so dear to the Spanish heart. To the right of the long corridor was a stable, and at the farther end of this was a small stone staircase which led to a room over the stable, and of the same length, wherein were arranged two or three chairs, four or five rude settles with straw and bedding upon them to serve as beds, and a table or two. Manuel Herrera watched the "mayoral" and "zagal" while they cleaned the horses of the diligence and bedded them down for the night. Then he joined them round the kitchen fire, each one watching his own particular "puchero" or "guizado," as the case might be, and telling stories to while away the time.

After his dinner Manuel Herrera felt very tired. His bones were aching and sore from the constant jolting of the diligence, and he threw himself down on his straw bed with a sense of relief and delight. "La Catalina" informed him as he left the kitchen that the "mayoral" and "zagal" would be his only room-mates. He slept very soundly, how long he could not tell; but he awoke suddenly, as one does under a sense of danger,

or when there is a strange person in the room. The cold November moon shone clear and bright in at the window, and made a great white patch upon the brick floor. He could hear the distinct snores of the "mayoral" and "zagal" at the end of the room, who were sleeping as only peasants can sleep. Still Manuel could not combat the feeling that some one else was in the room. He listened attentively for some minutes, but could hear nothing. His eyes gradually got accustomed to the objects in the room. There was a large chair not very far from his bed against the wall opposite, and sitting in it he distinctly saw by the light of the moonlight, which streamed across one end of the chair, a man with a red cloak folded across his shoulders. He looked and stared—yes, there still sat the man in the red cloak. "This must be nightmare," he thought, and pinched himself to be quite sure that he was not dreaming. He could still hear the snores of the "mayoral" and "zagal;" and again turning his eyes in the direction of the chair, he saw the statue-like figure in the red cloak. He sat up in bed and rubbed his eyes, and when he looked again the figure had gone.

The next morning he missed a very valuable ring from his finger, but his watch was still under his pillow. He inquired of "La Catalina" and of the maid who came to help in the morning whether they had seen it. No one had noticed it upon his hand, nor had they seen or heard anything of it. When he told the "mayoral" and "zagal" about it, they exchanged glances and laughed.

"We have not seen it, señor," they said. "You'll have to find 'El Capitan.'"

"Capitan! Who is 'El Capitan'?" asked Manuel; "and where does he live?"

"Oh, how are we poor devils to know? We cannot

tell the señor, but we thought perhaps he knew him and could find him."

"How soon shall we start?" inquired Manuel, seeing that no signs of any diligence or horses were to be seen.

"Start?" cried the two men, in one breath. "This is a fête-day, and we shall not leave until to-morrow."

"Then I shall see the man in the red cloak again," thought Manuel to himself—"and perhaps can find 'El Capitan.'"

He spent most of the day in going round the city, and to mass at the church called by courtesy the cathedral. After the service he got into conversation with several of the most respectable of the farmers who stood in groups talking busily to one another. The peasants all knew him as the gentleman who was staying at "La Catalina's" on account of the breakdown of the diligence. By a natural courtesy they responded cordially to his advances, and he soon became on quite friendly terms with them. They told him their hopes and fears for their sheep and crops, and of their poverty, and their families. At last Manuel ventured to ask one peasant, with whom he had become almost intimate, if he knew how and where he could find "El Capitan."

He looked straight at his companion as he asked the question. To his utter consternation, the expression on the man's face changed entirely. From a look of perfect serenity, it changed to one of perfect terror and perplexity.

"Whom are you seeking?" he stammered, his teeth chattering and his hands shaking. "I cannot have heard you aright."

"I want to speak to a man called 'El Capitan.'"

"Hombre!" interrupted the other. "Don't tempt Providence! He who sees 'El Capitan,' sees the devil

himself. Be careful not to incur his displeasure, for you are not safe one minute after."

With this the old peasant turned away, white and trembling with fear, looking on all sides to assure himself that no one had overheard the conversation.

Several times in the course of the day did Manuel try to get at the bottom of this mystery. But every-time that he mentioned the name of "El Capitan," he noticed the same look of abject fear on the face of the person with whom he was talking, and had the same caution given to him with every sign of secrecy.

He began to think that "El Capitan" was the very devil himself; and at last, after many ineffectual attempts, he returned to "La Catalina's" house. Only the "mayoral" and "zagal" were there; and after a particularly savoury supper they all went to bed, as they were to be off at dawn. That night Manuel slept so soundly that he heard and saw nothing; but the next morning his watch, the only other valuable that he had with him, had disappeared. In vain he asked if anyone had seen it. "La Catalina" only became angry, and asked him if he thought her house was a den of thieves; that, though she was a poor widow, she had always had a good name and was respectable; and that if the Señor wished to discover robbers, he must go elsewhere to seek for them than in her house. The "mayoral" and "zagal" laughed aloud when he told them about his loss, and said:

"Eh, señor, what can one do when 'El Capitan' is in the neighbourhood?"

"And where is he?" inquired Manuel.

"Eh, quien sabe?—who knows?" they both answered, shrugging their shoulders and grinning at each other.

Manuel saw at once that no information was to be

obtained from them. They were most probably either in league with the mysterious "Capitan," or as afraid of him as the rest.

Manuel therefore said no more about his losses, and apparently resigned himself to his fate. He travelled on to his destination; did his business there, and returned to Madrid in the same diligence, with the same "mayoral" and "zagal," but without stopping anywhere "en route."

When he arrived at Madrid, he went to a café which he frequented in the Puerta del Sol; and while he was looking about and watching the people at the different tables he suddenly espied an old friend, by name Colonel Cadenas, whom he had not seen for some time.

Colonel Cadenas was a tall, determined-looking soldier, with keen bright eyes and a dark, heavy moustache. They had many things to talk over, and each questioned the other as to his business in Madrid, both being Malaga men. Manuel explained his business very easily, but the Colonel seemed rather embarrassed to account for his visit to the capital in anything like a satisfactory manner. Manuel noticed his hesitation, and turned the conversation at once, telling the Colonel everything that he had undergone in his travels, casually mentioning the mysterious disappearance of his ring and his watch, the appearance of the ghost in the red cloak, and "El Capitan." At this the Colonel, who had been rather absent in his answers and attention, suddenly became attentive, and listened with the greatest earnestness to all that Manuel had to tell.

The two men sat for some time in silence, when the Colonel said abruptly:

"Should you know 'El Capitan' if you met him?"

"No, I think not," returned Manuel; "but I should recognise the red-cloaked creature anywhere."

“He and the Capitan are one and the same,” said the Colonel quietly; and I am sent by the Government to take him alive or dead.”

Manuel started from his chair. After staring at the Colonel for some time, he controlled himself and sat down, saying:

“Why are you sent after him?”

“Because he is a most notorious robber, and exercises an immense influence for evil all over the country. He is the captain of a large and dangerous band of robbers, and has done much damage. The Government has decided and ordered that he shall be taken alive or dead. Do you think that you could guide me to this place where you saw the red-cloaked ghost?”

“Oh yes,” replied Manuel; “if he be the Capitan, I can point him out, to a dead certainty.”

“Then put off your journey, and come with me. I can make it worth your while,” said the Colonel eagerly.

Manuel considered for a few moments, and finally decided to go and solve the mystery with the Colonel. When he had arranged his own affairs, the two friends met on the diligence for Agradas early the next morning. There were fifteen or twenty other passengers, who apparently did not know each other, so little was the conversation between them, and the diligence was almost inconveniently full.

“I wish we had not so many companions,” whispered Manuel to the Colonel, when they were starting.

“They are all my men, or nearly all,” returned the other, in a whisper; “armed and prepared for the same expedition as ourselves.”

“For ‘El Capitan’?” cried Manuel, astonished.

“Yes,” was the answer.

When they came to the house of “La Catalina,” the

diligence only stopped to rest and change horses, and some few of the passengers went on with it. Quite a number of the passengers, however, descended at the inn door, and went their different ways. Manuel and the Colonel entered the house alone, and were ordering their dinner, when a man dressed in peasant's clothes came in and sat down near the fire. Manuel saw a curious look of understanding pass between the Colonel and the peasant. When they went upstairs the Colonel said: "He is one of my men, that peasant, and he as well as the others have their orders. We shall probably catch the 'Capitan' to-night."

All through the day and evening the peasant sat in the kitchen, apparently doing nothing but warm himself. Occasionally he said a few words to "La Catalina," and finding that he knew something of the neighbourhood, and a good deal of the people, "La Catalina" gradually became very friendly with him. But he bored her nevertheless. She had reasons of her own for not wanting him about just then. However, he seemed quite unconscious that he was in the way, and there he sat, looking stolid and inattentive to everything except the cooking, which he watched carefully. But though to outward appearance only a stupid lout, in reality he was carefully noticing everything that "La Catalina" did, and straining his ears to catch the slightest suspicious sounds. Among other things he noticed that there were four "pucheros" on the fire. As one by one they were ready, and Catalina served them up, he inquired for whom each one was.

"One was for the Colonel," she said, "a second for Manuel, the third for himself——"

"And the fourth?" asked the peasant.

"What fourth?" exclaimed 'La Catalina' angrily, turning fiercely on him. "Hombre! what fourth 'puchero'?"

“Mi ama!” returned the peasant mildly, “don’t be angry with me. I thought I saw a fourth pipkin up in the corner there.”

“Well, you thought wrong then,” said “La Catalina” snappishly; “and even if there were one, what business is it of yours, I’d like to know? Even if there were one, which there isn’t,”—and here she gave a vicious shove to something at the back of the fire—“Even if there were another ‘puchero,’ have I not the right to cook for my son, so long as I do not ask you to pay for it?”

“Assuredly,” the peasant said soothingly. “And so the señora has a son? And does he live with you?”

“Just now he is with me, but generally he is away on business.”

“Ah!” thought the peasant, “he is here just now, and is going to have a ‘puchero.’ I’ll wait and see what he looks like.” So he leisurely ate his “puchero,” smacking his lips and prolonging his meal as much as he could. He could see that “La Catalina” was getting nervous as the time went on. She kept looking every now and then to see if he had nearly finished, and tried to hurry him on by polite inquiries. Did he not like the “puchero” that he ate it so slowly? And so on.

The peasant replied: “It is because I like it so much that I am lingering so long over it, good mother.”

And he went on eating his supper quietly and slowly. All this time “La Catalina” was fidgeting about the kitchen, visibly uncomfortable.

Her eye fell on the two suppers of the gentlemen upstairs, and a bright thought struck her. She could get rid of the peasant by asking him to do her a favour.

She turned to him and said: “I am not clean enough to go and tell the señores that supper is ready; would

you do me the kindness to go upstairs and tell them that their 'pucheros' are nearly cold?"

"Certainly, if you will show me the stairs," which "La Catalina" did with much alacrity.

The peasant's manner changed entirely when she left him. He ran lightly up the stairs, gave the message to the Colonel and Manuel, whispered hurriedly, "Her son is in the house, but does not appear; don't come till I whistle," and descended quickly to an angle where he could see anyone coming through the stable. "She will now give the son his supper," he thought to himself; and he was not wrong. In a minute he saw "La Catalina" coming towards him with a smoking-hot "puchero," a bottle of wine, and a large piece of bread. At the middle stall she paused, entered it and disappeared. The peasant carefully stole behind her, and saw her slide back a panel of the stable boarding and go up some stairs. He then returned to his angle and watched. She returned in a few minutes, her hands empty, and looked carefully about her; but, seeing no one, she sped away back to the kitchen as fast as she could go. The peasant gave a low whistle, and a minute after the Colonel and Manuel came down to their suppers, and the peasant walked out into the street. He did not go far, however; only round the house. There he met a comrade, and they together went behind the stable, where they found a stone staircase leading into the garden. This staircase they mounted, and found nothing at the top—no door, no entrance from the outside of any kind.

"There is another sliding-panel door in the inside," thought the peasant to himself. He said nothing to his companion, however; but simply gave him a few whispered directions, and then sauntered into the kitchen again, just as stupid and stolid a clod as nature

ever made. Another look was exchanged with the Colonel, and that was all.

After their supper was over, the Colonel and Manuel went up to bed. The Colonel slept in Manuel's former bed, while he and the peasant slept or pretended to sleep in those formerly occupied by the "mayoral," and "zagal." The moonlight again streamed in at the window, as on the night when Manuel had slept there last. If he had not heard the tramp of feet round the house, he would have thought that he was dreaming. But they were all too anxious to sleep. At two in the morning they all saw the ghost in the red cloak sitting in the chair. No one stirred, but all breathed heavily as though in sleep. They saw the ghost rise, softly steal towards the Colonel's bed, and put his hand under the pillow. As soon as he was fairly out of the chair, the peasant and Manuel crept out of their beds and silently came up behind the ghost or "El Capitan." The Colonel rose in his bed and seized him. He raised his knife, which was in the right hand, and was going to plunge it into the heart of the Colonel, when his arms were seized by Manuel and the peasant. The latter gave a shrill whistle, and the room was instantly filled with armed men.

He fought desperately, but when he saw that the room into which he intended to retreat was also filled with soldiers, he perceived that resistance was useless, and allowed himself to be taken. In vain did "La Catalina" plead and beg for her son. She even went so far as to show and offer to the Colonel and his men bags of money and of treasure, if they would only let her son go free. But they were unswerving in their duty. The "Capitan" was taken to Madrid, tried, and sentenced to death. Manuel recovered his watch and ring. The trial occasioned great excitement all over

Spain, for the prisoner was one of the most influential robber chieftains in the country, and commanded a large army of robbers. Murders and thefts without number were proved against him. Thousands attended his execution. So at last, after many years, peace and security reigned once more in the Soria.

XX.

*THE MIRACLE OF SANTA BUENAVENTURA.**

DAROCA, as we have had occasion to mention in a former legend, is a small village on the road from Teruel to Calatayud. It is in a picturesque position, lying in a valley surrounded by hills, upon which here and there rise Moorish walls and towers. The valley is shaped like a funnel, small at one end and large at the other, and is subject to dreadful inundations. In these days a tunnel has been cut, which is called the "Misa," and which lets the water out; and this passage serves, when dry, as the fashionable promenade.

In one of the streets of Daroca there is a shrine to Santa Buenaventura, and underneath it, enclosed by glass, is a large mill-wheel. Many people have wondered much when they have seen it; but the inhabitants of Daroca would not part with that mill-wheel for any price, for it is one of the many signs of saintly intervention which have been showered upon that pious little city, and "thereby hangs a tale."

About the middle of the fifteenth century Daroca was threatened with a terrible inundation. For days and weeks rain had fallen in heavy showers. The hills

* Mention of this legend is to be found in the "Historia" of Diego de Castrejon y Fonseca, Madrid, 1641; in Ford's "Handbook of Spain," vol. ii., p. 875; and in the "Antiguëdades" of Nuñez y Quiles Zaragoza, 1691.

about the city were furrowed into cataracts; and thick mists gathered over the town.

The inhabitants did not dare to move out of their houses for fear of being overtaken by the floods. Guards were placed at different points to watch and open the sluice-gates of the city in case of an inundation; and for weeks the inhabitants of Daroca watched the weather with anxious hearts. But as nothing happened in all that time excepting the continual rising of the river, the peasants became easier in their minds, and gradually relaxed in their watchfulness and care. The guards were still kept at their posts, it is true; but they were not very vigilant, and almost considered the danger over, in spite of the continual rains and the rising of the rivers near by.

At the head of the valley there was a mill worked with a water-wheel, where lived the miller with his wife and pretty daughter Rosa. One night, after a continual rain and a sound of roaring waters, the old priest of the village was ambling home on his lazy old mule somewhere in the small hours, after confessing and shriving a poor dying woman far up among the hills. He was dead tired, and the constant exercise in the cold air had made him very sleepy, which the slow jog-trot of his lazy mule certainly increased rather than lessened. Suddenly he woke with a start, and saw standing before him a beautiful woman dressed in blue, with a silver star on her head, whom he at once recognised as Santa Buenaventura, whose shrine was in the corner of a street close by. She seized his mule by the bridle, and said to the astonished old priest:

“Why art thou sleeping while the people suffer and die? Is this the care thou takest of the flock of God? This is my particular feast-day, and they shall not die if I can aid them. Listen! hark! Do you hear that

roaring sound? It is the flood coming upon us! Fly! fly! to the gates and tell the guards to open them wide, while I go to the mill!" and with these words she disappeared. The old priest, now thoroughly awake, was frightened nearly out of his wits, and felt sore at the scolding which the saint had given him for neglect of his parish. Nevertheless, he spurred on the old mule as fast as he could, with the noise of the coming waters sounding in his ears, and rode to the gates of the city. The guards were sound asleep, and he had great difficulty in rousing them to their duty. Then, seeing that they were there to do their work if needed, the old priest jogged back as fast as his mule would let him to the mill. He arrived just in time to see the lady, whom he had met in the road, step upon a marvellously narrow crossboard and unhinge the wheel.

It went into the surging waters with a bounce, churning the stream white as it rushed along down the valley towards the city gates. The guards, when once awakened, could find no one about. The priest had entirely disappeared, and they began to think that the whole thing was a dream, when they heard the well-known and dreaded sound of the rushing waters, which they had expected to hear for so many weeks. It had come at last, then, this dreadful inundation which they had expected and feared for so long. The guards rushed to their posts, but in vain did they tug at the chains and try to open the sluice-gates. They would not turn, and all the time that dreadful sound of tearing, rushing, boiling water came nearer and nearer, and the men tugged harder and harder at the gates. It was of no use. Suddenly they saw the mill-wheel spinning down the valley, and with a crash it burst the gates open, and the city and people were saved by the miracle of Santa Buenaventura.

After the danger was past, the old priest naturally became the object of great reverence and awe, for had he not been addressed by Santa Buenaventura herself? and had she not charged him with the message to the guards?

The old priest carefully withheld the scolding he had also received from the beautiful saint, but would tell the story in the way which told best for him to anyone who would listen. The wheel was considered far too sacred to be used in the mill any more, and was carefully placed under glass at the foot of the shrine of Santa Buenaventura, the deliverer of Daroca.

XXI.

THE SILVER SPECTRE.

FROM the days of the Phœnicians there were silver-mines known in Spain; and as centuries went on, while some became exhausted, others were found to take their place. Some, as we all know, still remain. The hope of finding the precious metal, and of suddenly becoming rich, was one to which the imagination of the people always clung; and, like other popular fancies, it took shape in legends of gnomes and dwarfs, who helped dim-sighted mortals to find the hidden treasures.

In one of the mountainous districts where silver abounds, but where until then it had remained undiscovered, there lived a certain poor muleteer, named Pablo Fornarete. He was employed by a man who had made a large fortune by breeding a fine strain of mules, to convey these mules across the plains and sell them in Madrid, and across the mountains into France. Although his master was rich, and his journeys were long, and sometimes very dangerous as well as fatiguing, he was paid a mere pittance, which was just enough to keep body and soul together. As he travelled peacefully along the high-roads, he occasionally met rich señores riding fine blood-horses, with embroidered trappings and all the outward signs of wealth; and simple-minded Pablo used sometimes to wonder in his own mind why the dear Señor made

some so very rich, and permitted others to remain so very poor, though they worked hard all their lives to keep skin and bone together. But it never occurred to him to be in the least jealous of these rich people; only he could not help wishing that the Madonna would put a little more into his pocket. For with just a little more he could marry his dear Rosita, down there in Andalucia, who had been waiting for him so long. When these tempting thoughts and delusive wishes crossed his mind, good honest Pablo would sigh and show his teeth, light his pipe, and beat his mules a little faster along the road. But he had nothing bad in him, and gradually he would become his own contented self again, merely saying, "It is not the will of the Domine Dios yet. *Paciencia!*"

Some of the stretches of country that he had to traverse were so long that he was often unable to reach any kind of shelter for the night. At those times he used to lie down in the fields with his mules and sleep with one eye open, watching that none of his master's property was stolen. In the summer it was very pleasant to lie out in the open air, with the stars above him, watching the fire-flies as they sparkled and flitted in the brushwood or over the wild flowers, which grew freely everywhere over the plain. But in the winter it was quite a different matter. The wind blew so bleakly that he could only wrap himself up in his warm cloak and get as near his animals as he could, for their heat. The stars used to blink at him, he thought, to encourage him; but they and the moon seemed cold and unkind, and he never wasted much time in looking at them in winter, anxious to get as much sleep as he could before starting again in the cold bleak dawn.

One summer's night Pablo, metaphorically speaking,

pitched his tent in a valley at the foot of a chain of curiously shaped and rugged mountains. It was a lovely night, and the valley was filled with the sweet scent of flowers. The sky was unclouded, and the moon sailed in queen-like fashion through the vast space which belonged to her. The entire valley lay bathed in silver light, and the fire-flies were not visible in the universal brightness.

Pablo saw that his mules were comfortably nibbling at their pasture preparatory to resting for the night, before he stretched himself near them, and rolling a cigarette began to smoke. He could not sleep on such a night so early, and with his progress with the cigarette his thoughts became more active.

His mind travelled to Andalucia, where Rosita lived, and he wondered what she was doing at that moment while he was dreaming in the open air. Then he wondered when he would ever earn enough to marry her, and thought what a nice wife she would make, and how she would bring sunshine with her wherever she went, and make his small means seem twice as much. At last, in the midst of his castles in Andalucia he fell sound asleep.

When he awoke, the moon had nearly set, and the valley was only half as bright as when he went to sleep. He looked towards the chain of mountains at the end of the valley, and their sides appeared to be running with bright silvery streams down their rugged sides. Pablo could not believe his eyes, and rubbed them to be sure that he was quite awake. But all the same, when he looked again, there were still the bright silvery ridges on the mountain running as lava does on the sides of Mount Vesuvius during an eruption. And on the top of the mountain there was the figure of a man, in shining armour, with lance and spear, preparing to

descend into the valley. Pablo gazed awe-struck at the whole scene, and bathed his eyes with the dew lying on the bushes all around him; but still he saw the same thing. After a time, however, fatigue overcame him, and he again slept soundly.

Suddenly he heard a voice, almost in his ears, saying in a whisper: "Do not forget the spot where you saw me. It means a fortune to you, and the power of making your dear Rosita rich for life. I am the guardian of the silver mines, and appear only at certain seasons of the year. Do not forget me, for I may prove to be your best friend." Saying which he vanished.

Pablo was in a very disturbed and miserable state of mind when he awoke. He longed to go straight to those distant mountains, and see whether they contained silver or not. But the dawn was breaking, and he had a long way to trudge with the mules before they could reach any shelter for the night. He gave one long scrutinizing glance at the particular mountain on which he had seen the streams of molten silver. But the mountain told no tales. It reared its proud head, grey and stern-looking in the dawn, and gave no sign that anything extraordinary had happened in the night. So Pablo was forced to be content with the memory of what he had seen, and started off with his mules at a brisk rate towards their destination for the night.

He met various friends on the road—other muleteers who were going home again after a fair day's sale—and had many gay and gossiping conversations, which, peasant-like, he enjoyed hugely, and picked up plenty of knowledge of his friends' doings. But all the time he thought over the extraordinary scene that he had witnessed, and heard that curious low whisper in his ears: "Do not forget the spot where you saw me. It means a fortune to you, and the power of making your

dear Rosita rich for life." These words were a running musical accompaniment to everything that he did or said. Even the heels of the mules seemed to keep time with them. They nearly maddened him—those everlasting cadences; for although he racked his brains to see *how* he could be benefited by the Silver Spectre, he could see no way by which he could become rich. The Silver Spectre had himself said that he only appeared at certain times of the year. Probably he should, therefore, never see his "best friend" again, and he was not at all certain in his own mind that he should know the exact peak of the chain upon which he had seen the silver lava.

His thoughts became very melancholy as he continued his long and tedious journey. Once arrived at Pau, however, he had no time for speculation or dreaming; for he was so busy in selling his mules at a good price that it was only when he started to go back again with a newly purchased pack-mule, laden with necessaries and French articles, that he remembered his curious experience with the Silver Spectre.

He stopped as usual in the same valley to rest and sleep, and was just unburdening his new mule to let her graze about and lie down, when he saw a tall, rather handsome man coming towards him, dressed in a long grey garment like a priest's. He carried a pilgrim's staff in his hand, and seemed to be very weary and footsore.

"My brother," he said, addressing Pablo, "can you help me to get up that mountain in front of us? Your mule is still fresh, and in any case cannot be as tired as I am. I wish to visit a hermit brother who lives half-way up the mountain, and I will reward you amply if you will only consent to let me use your mule."

Pablo resisted for a long time the tempting induce-

ments which the tired traveller offered him. But when he discovered after a little more parley that the particular mountain which the pilgrim wished to climb was the identical one on which he had seen the streams of silver lava, he consented to lend the mule to the stranger, on condition that he should accompany him. This was readily agreed to. The pack was hidden away in the bushes in case of robbers, the mule was re-saddled, and they started for the mountain, the pilgrim on the mule, and Pablo trudging patiently behind.

When they had climbed half-way up the mountain-side, the stranger dismounted, and throwing the reins to Pablo, said :

“ Remain here for a time and wait for me. But should I not return by dawn, wait no longer, for you will know then that I shall not need either the mule or you any more.”

He then went farther up the mountain, turned round a sharp angle, and disappeared from Pablo's sight. For a time the pack-mule nibbled here and there wherever a scrap of green cropped up. But finding this amusement rather a losing game than otherwise, it went quietly off to sleep. Pablo entertained himself by exploring the mountain and trying to knock off bits of the rock with his boot, hoping to find some small nuggets of silver. But the bits of rock which he knocked off were very much like other rocks that he had seen before, and he sat down, disappointed and angry, to await the return of the stranger. Then it suddenly occurred to him that the pilgrim had given him no payment, although he had promised him ample reward. If he returned, it would be all right ; but if he did not, he should have gained nothing except needless fatigue for a man whom he had never seen before in his life. This did not improve his temper, and he

started off in the direction which the stranger had taken, hoping to find him and square accounts at once. But he searched in vain. No one was to be seen, and after screaming and shouting till he was tired, an overwhelming weariness and sleepiness came upon him, and stretching himself out on the ground he fell sound asleep.

When he awoke the day was just breaking, and no one was in sight. Pablo then began again to shout and call, but with the same results as the evening before. Very angry was he as he made his way down the mountain to where his mule was tied, cursing and swearing and vowing that he never would do a good-natured thing again for any stranger, were he the angel Gabriel himself. As he placed the pack upon the mule, he thought the saddle-bags felt extraordinarily heavy, and putting his hand in he found them filled with large pieces of rock similar to those which he had knocked off the mountain the night before. At first, in his rage at being deceived, he was inclined to throw all this heavy lumber away ; but he suddenly remembered the silver streams down the mountain-side and the words of the Silver Spectre. They were soothing and comforting to him, and quickly replacing the heavy lumps in the saddle-bags, he started for his master's house. When he reached home, he told his master what he had seen and heard, and showed him the curious pieces of rock which had so enraged him. The quick eye of the master caught sight of little threads of white sifting in tiny veins all through the rock, which had escaped the rougher sense of his servant. He borrowed some of the blocks from Pablo, and went with them to a friend who was skilled in geology, as then understood.

He at once saw that there was money to be made out of it, and inquired where these pieces of rock had

been found. Pablo's master could not tell anything about it, and reluctantly confessed that his muleteer had picked them up somewhere on the road. He had hoped to enrich himself at Pablo's expense, and would have done so had he not foolishly forgotten to ask the name and position of the mountain.

Pablo was at once sent for, and saw that something important had happened, and that it had something to do with the rocks. He refused to tell where he had found them unless he was rewarded for his information. A sum of money was given to him at once, and more promised him if he would conduct the geologist and his friends to [the mountain itself, if things proved to be what he supposed them to be—a silver mine of great richness.

Pablo did what he agreed to do, and the mountain proved to contain a very rich silver mine. Pablo was handsomely paid. He was rich enough to marry his dear Rosita, and went to live in Malaga, where by careful saving and hard work he in later life became, for a peasant, a very rich man. But he never ceased to attribute his success to the pilgrim stranger; and used to relate with much delight his adventures with the Silver Spectre.

XXII.

*ZULEIKA, ZORAIDE AND FATIMA.**

WHEN King Ferdinand waged war against the Moors and at last expelled them from Spain, a certain Moor, named Clotaldo, was elected one of their chiefs, because of his great strength and bravery. He married and had three daughters—the most beautiful creatures that mortal eye had ever seen. The king, their father, loved them so much that he could not bear to part with them, and when they became of marriageable age he shut them up in a tower, which he had built for them on the top of a high mountain, and shut off from the rest of the world by precipices on three sides. He, being himself a magician, left them in the care of three enchanted horses, who were very wild and formidable to all who came near. Then the king felt sure that nothing and no one could get at his daughters. In a moment of vain boasting he said, that any man who

* I have traced this story to the "Romancero General," vol. ii., p. 284, where it is called the "Enchanted Princesses, and the Bad Faith of Brothers," and it is attributed to Alonzo de Morales. Whether in such cases priority is to be given to the version in poetry or the one in prose, it is impossible to say. In the little note attached to it, the collector and arranger, Don Agustin Duran, remarks on the fact that among the multitude of stories which for generations everybody has known by heart, so small a number have ever found their way into print.

Traces of this same story are to be found in Washington Irving's "Tales of the Alhambra," *i.e.*, "The Three Princesses." I have given the story as it was told to me, and it tallies pretty nearly with the Romancero poem.

brought him his three daughters from this fortress tower should marry one of them. The report spread through the land, and young knights, the flower of Spanish chivalry, came from far and wide to try their fortunes and risk their lives for the sweet sakes of these beautiful creatures. But one and all failed, and lost their heads according to the mandate of the king. At last, three brothers from Denmark, well born and very handsome, attracted by the prospect of encountering dangers and difficulties in rescuing these lovely captives, came to the court in Africa, and begged permission to enter the lists as competitors for the hands of the princesses. The two eldest brothers only asked that horses and weapons should be furnished them. But the third brother begged that he might have a cart with two oxen, a cord two miles in length, some nails, a hammer, and enough provisions for a week. The king, quite certain that his daughters were beyond the reach of human rescue, provided all that the brothers asked, and the two eldest rode off on their fleet steeds in triumph. They soon arrived at their destination, but they looked and longed and sighed in vain, for no earthly way could they discover of scaling the precipices. At last, after two days of idleness and despair, they returned to the city, prepared to die. On the way back, however, they met their youngest brother, who was coming slowly along with his oxen. They told him how desperately high the castle tower was, and tried to discourage him in every way; but neither threats, nor entreaties, nor discouragements could daunt him; and he at last persuaded his brothers to return with him, as he was sure, he said, that by some means or other he should liberate the three princesses, and then the three brothers would marry the three sisters. For a week he tried to scale the precipices and

failed; but at last he found a place at which he could get a footing, and by almost superhuman exertion he managed to climb to the top. Before he started he wrapped the cord round him, and tucked the hammer and some nails into his belt. When he reached the top of the mountain, the fortress door opened, and three of the most beautiful beings he had ever dreamed of stood before him. The eldest said: "Oh, most noble and valiant knight, what evil star has led thee to this castle? How didst thou contrive to climb up to us? Know, O knight, young and handsome though thou art, nothing but death awaits thee; for we are enchanted princesses, and under the care of wild horses who will trample thee under their feet."

Then the three beautiful creatures began to weep. The young knight was much disturbed at their tears, and said: "Oh, lovely maidens, death would be a delight in such a cause! My heart is oppressed at your lamentations, but I shall, I am sure, be able to save you, if you will but obey my directions."

They joyfully promised to obey him in everything, and he prepared to fasten the rope securely to one of the battlements. In this way he let down two of the princesses; when it came to the turn of the third princess, Fatima, to descend, she unfastened a necklace from her throat and said to the young knight: "Most noble preserver, accept this small token of our boundless gratitude. Never part with it, whatever happens; it will help you through all difficulties, and you have many still before you, one of which is to pull out a hair from the tail of each of the three horses, our guardians;" and, saying this, she tied the rope around her, and reached the ground safely. The two young knights below had watched their brother's progress with rage and envy in their hearts. No sooner,

therefore, had the third princess descended than they cut the rope, mounted their swift horses with the three fair damsels, and sped away like the wind to the court of Clotaldo, who was much amazed at seeing his three daughters safe and sound on the earth again, instead of in the tower on the mountain-top where he had placed them. He could not go back from his word, however, and the two young knightst were married in due time to Zoraide and Zuleika.

The poor youngest brother, meanwhile, was shut up in the mountain tower. At first, when he saw the trick which had been played upon him, he was in despair, and sat down to think over his desperate condition, and try to find some way of escape. At last he bethought himself of the horses whom he was to master. Sadly he went through the deserted palace, in which he found continual traces of the occupations and amusements of the three beautiful girls whom he had just freed. At last he came to the stables in which the three horses lived. At the sound of the door being opened, he heard a great plunging and tearing about. For a few minutes the young knight hesitated, then, taking the necklace in his hand, he attached it to a button of his coat and opened the door wide. A strange spectacle was before him. The three horses were standing side by side, rearing on their hind-legs, prepared to trample upon anyone who intruded upon their domain. But as soon as they caught sight of the necklace dangling from his button-hole, they became as docile and obedient as children. They rubbed their heads against him, and let him fondle them, while they walked round him, neighing with pleasure. They even allowed him to secure the hair from each of their tails, which the princess Fatima had told him he must possess. He at last jumped upon the back of the

smallest and apparently wildest of the horses, and lo! the animal gave a tremendous leap, and he felt himself carried over the battlements of the castle and sailing through the air. When he could control his nerves enough to look, he opened his eyes, and saw a country around him full of mountains and rocks which he had never seen before. When they had reached the ground in safety, the horse stopped of its own accord, and when the young knight had dismounted, the horse said: "My master, if you ever need assistance from me, or from my comrades, you have only to blow upon the hairs which you have in your keeping, once, twice, or thrice, as you require us—once is for me; twice for two of us; three times for us all." Having said this and fondled his master once more, the horse suddenly gave a cry, spread out its fore-legs and disappeared. The young knight wandered about for some time, bewildered and unhappy, not knowing where he was, and feeling strange and lonely. At last he met a shepherd, dressed in skins. He inquired his way of him, and persuaded him to change clothes with him. Then the young knight killed a young lamb, and of the skin made himself a cap. By dint of begging and pretending to be a fool, which always claims compassion in Spain, he contrived to find his way to the court of Clotaldo.

Here he determined still to keep his incognito and sat as a mendicant in the courtyard of the palace, ready to run errands and pick up any information that he could. He constantly saw his two wicked brothers going in and out of the palace, and his heart burned sorely as he watched; but he had patience, and bided his time.

Meanwhile the Princess Fatima resisted the constant entreaties of her father that she should marry, hoping

that some kind fate would contrive to send the young man to whom she had presented her necklace once more across her path. She therefore had another necklace made precisely like the one she had left behind her at the castle. When it was finished, she said to her father, who still tormented her to give him a son-in-law :

“ If you really wish me so ardently to marry, I will do so on one condition only. Whoever will bring me a necklace, exactly like this one in *every particular*, shall be my husband.”

The king, overjoyed at his daughter's decision, immediately sent the necklace, by the fool at the door, to the best jeweller in the city, desiring him to find some one who could bring the duplicate of the gems to him in twenty days. If no one was found by that time, he should pay with his life. All sorts of jewels were sent to Manuel the jeweller to look at, but none of them was quite like the beautiful necklace sent by the king. At last he was compelled to try and copy it himself. Necklace after necklace was finished, and sent up for inspection, but there was always some defect or some difference. And the days slipped by. At last, the evening of the nineteenth day came, and the poor Manuel looked sad, weary, and desperate, and prepared for death the next day. The fool, who had watched him very carefully, came to him at night and said :

“ My master, what is the matter with you, that you go about so heavily and look so sad ?”

“ Well, fool,” returned Manuel, “ it can do me no harm to confide to you my woe, for my hours are numbered now, and my heart will feel easier for telling my secret to some one, no matter to whom.”

Then he told all his dilemma, and how he was prepared to die on the morrow, as agreed upon, in case

of failure. Then he showed the young knight the necklace. With great delight he recognised the copy of the one that Fatima had given him.

"Master," he said, "do not be discouraged. By dawn to-morrow you shall have the duplicate, on my word of honour!"

"Your word of honour on earth is worth nothing, O fool!" answered Manuel. "I was a fool to tell you, for you are nearer heaven than I."*

The fool said not a word, but went a mile outside the gates of the city, and blew upon one of the tail-hairs of the enchanted horses. Instantly the smallest horse appeared, and asked him what he wanted.

"I have left the necklace in the clothes which I exchanged with the shepherd where you left me. By dawn I must have it."

"It shall be done, my master," answered the horse, and disappeared.

At dawn the next day Manuel was roused by the fool, who brought the duplicate necklace in his hand.

Manuel was overjoyed. "The love of Allah has overshadowed you, my brother," he said. And at the appointed time he took the necklace to the king.

Fatima at once recognised the necklace which she had given to the young knight, and demanded so imperatively of whom Manuel had got the gems, that he—although greatly tempted by the fascination of her beauty to claim the finding of the necklace for himself—could not get the words out, but told the story as it really was, from beginning to end. The king immediately sent for the finder, thinking that anyone possessing such a jewel must be of, at least, decent and presentable birth. His horror may therefore be imagined

* This is a Spanish superstition, that idiots are nearer to the Divine Heart than the sane.

when his future son-in-law presented himself in the shape of an ill-clothed shepherd, and apparently an idiot besides. But the eyes of love are keen. Fatima was not deceived by the disguise. She knew her young knight at once, and the two contrived a meeting in which everything was explained to Fatima, and they agreed that his present disguise should be kept up until he saw his path clear for the full justification of himself, and the certain disgrace of his unworthy and disloyal brothers.

In vain did the king remonstrate with Fatima against her extraordinary and disgusting choice. He was none too pleased with the sons-in-law whom he already had, he told Fatima; but that she, his favourite daughter, should choose an idiot and a dirty shepherd for her husband, nearly broke his heart. But Fatima insisted upon marrying the man who had furnished her with the necklace.

"It is your own doing," she answered the king. "You have urged me to marry many times. I promised to accept the man who should bring me the duplicate of my necklace, and my royal word cannot be broken. My birth obliges me to keep it."

The only way, therefore, in which the king could vent his spite upon his new son-in-law, was by insisting that after the wedding ceremony the young couple should live outside the city gates. But even this slight did not disturb the sweet temper and patience of the "fool," as he was universally called. The marriage took place, and the young couple lived, as the king had ordered, outside the city walls.

Fatima had been married about a year, when her father was afflicted with some trouble of the eyes, by which his sight was threatened. The best doctors could do nothing for him, and said that he would be-

come blind unless he could procure water from a fountain in Asia*—very difficult to find—with which to bathe them. The young knight, as soon as he heard what was needed, went a mile away from his house, and blew once upon the hair of his favourite horse. Immediately it appeared.

“What does my master desire?” it said.

“Some water from the fountain in Asia.”

“It shall be brought, my master,” replied the horse, and disappeared.

In a day it returned carrying, tied to its mane, a large gourd full of the water desired. As the young knight was making his way towards the palace, with his precious burden, he met his two brothers going in search of the wonderful lotion prescribed for the king.

“Too late, my friends!” he cried, with triumph. “I have the precious remedy here, and am carrying it myself to the king.”

“What will you sell it for, fool?” inquired they eagerly.

“I will sell it for the gold and silver pears which the king gave you when you were married,” answered the fool.

They gave him the two gold and silver pears he demanded, and carried the water in triumph to the palace. The king’s eyes were cured directly, and the two sons-in-law were duly praised and applauded for their devotion to the king.

Not many months passed before the king was attacked by a grievous internal complaint, which tormented him very much and which threatened his life.

The doctors recommended the milk of a lioness from

* I need not say that I am not responsible for the geography or history of these tales.

the jungles of India, and said that nothing else would cure him. But the lioness must be persuaded to part with her milk, and not killed or wounded to procure it. The two sons-in-law were in despair. They did not know what to do, and the king quite made up his mind that his fate was sealed. The young knight walked a mile away from his home, and blew on two of the hairs which he had got at the mountain fortress. The two horses came obedient to his call, and inquired what they could do for their master.

“Get me some milk from a live lioness in the jungles of India,” he replied.

“Master, it shall be done,” they said, and disappeared.

Before night he had a large gourd full of milk, and proceeded to the palace with his prize. On the way he met his brothers, who greeted him with :

“And what has our fool got this time?”

“Some lioness’s milk for the king’s complaint,” he answered.

“What will you sell it for?”

“Only for one thing, and that is that you will let me cut off the left ear of each of you,” replied the fool.

The two brothers considered a great while before they consented, and tried to coax the fool to take something more reasonable in exchange for the milk; but the fool was inexorable—the ears he would have, or nothing. So the brothers consented to have their left ears cut off, thinking that their hair would conceal the loss. And they took the milk to the king, who was instantly cured, and the sons-in-law came in for an immense deal of praise from the world for their devotion to the king.

Six months had hardly passed before Clotaldo heard

that a neighbouring king was coming to wage war against him. He therefore sent for his two sons-in-law, and desired them to go and reconnoitre and give him an account of the number and force of the enemy. The fool meanwhile had called his three horses, and started to meet the enemy. Like Sant' Jago, he appeared like a meteor on his white horse, carried dismay into the ranks of the enemy and put them to flight, and returned with the head of the chief upon his spear. When he turned to thank his three horses on his arrival home, he found three handsome young men beside him.

"It is we who should thank you, our master, for liberating us from our enchantment," they said.

The young knight was on his way to the palace with his trophies when he met his two brothers going on their errand of spies.

"Time well lost, my friends," he said. "I have fought the battle with the assistance of my friends (introducing the three young men), and am now on my way to the king with the head of his enemy."

"What will you sell it for, fool?" inquired the brothers.

"I will sell it on one condition, and one only : that you allow me to brand you as my slaves with a red-hot iron."

The brothers demurred very much at this condition ; but as on no other terms could they obtain their coveted prize, and as no one would see the mark under their clothes, they allowed the fool to brand them with the letters of his name, and departed to the palace with their dearly purchased trophy.

Now the king, in spite of all that the two brothers had done for him, could not endure the sight of them. Fatima, his favourite child, had not been to see him

since her wedding-day, alleging as the reason that where her husband could not go, she would not either. The king was very angry with the fool for not trying more to please him and restore the family peace; and as he was the most available person upon whom to vent his wrath, he gave orders that he and Fatima should leave the country, and never return to it.

The young knight and his wife accepted their fate without a word, only begging that, as a last favour, they might give a farewell feast, at which every one of note at the court should assist. People laughed and shrugged their shoulders, and said the fool was more foolish than ever; but nevertheless they were quite willing to give him a pleasure which cost them nothing, and they accepted.

The evening came, and, to the astonishment of all, the young knight appeared handsome and clean, and dressed in the most superb costume, studded with differently coloured precious stones.

“My time has come,” he said, as he approached Clotaldo, with the beautiful Fatima upon his arm.

Then he told his story from beginning to end: how he had liberated the three princesses, and been defrauded by his brothers; how he had got the water from the fountain in Asia, and he showed the gold and silver pears which his brothers had paid for it; how he had got the milk from the lioness, and he showed the ears he had cut off, and asked the king to shave off the whiskers and cut off the hair of his brothers, and the ears fitted exactly; how he had fought the battle and killed the king—here he made his brothers bare their shoulders, and showed that they were his slaves, with his initials branded upon them.

The king was so delighted that he made the young knight his successor. The two unnatural brothers and

their wives were banished from the city, and publicly disgraced.

The king lived but a short time after these events took place, and Fatima and the young knight reigned in his stead.

XXIII.

THE LEGEND OF THE ALMOND BLOSSOM.

I.

IN the days when Toledo was still in the possession of the Moors, there was a grand assembling of the tribes for the tournament given by Azarque in honour of Celindaja. The city was all astir with bustle and confusion the night before. There were to be feats of arms and dancing. There were to be feasts and tiltings. The courtyards were filled with slaves cleaning their masters' arms, polishing their lances, sharpening their arrows, and fastening the pennons and standards that were to wave on the morrow.

There were collected in and about the city all the tribes then famous for chivalry and bravery, such as the Gomeles of Granada, the Gazules of Alcala, the Audalles from Ronda, the Sarracinos from Cordova, the Mazas, the Alfarries, and the Achapices; and above all the Azarques, the powerful Vanegas, the Portoleses, and the Abencerrajes. For had they not come to do honour to Azarque and Celindaja? And were ever lovers more worthy of honour and festivities than they—the one so fair and graceful, the other so noble and renowned both in love and war?

The day broke fair and clear, and all Toledo went wild with astonishment and admiration of the beautiful

sight that passed before their eyes. All the tribes were of equal bravery and strength, and dressed in their particular costumes. The Gazules were in red liveries, with fringes of fine gold, and scarlet and yellow plumes in their caps; the Audallas in yellow liveries, with grey, blue, and white plumes in their caps. The Saracinos wore blue, mulberry, and straw colours. The soldiers from Granada wore scarlet liveries, and the pomegranate waved upon their banner; while the Azarques, bearing themselves more arrogantly than the rest, wore green, yellow, and black plumes upon their caps. The others put on their best and most beautiful garments, and all made a brilliant display in the narrow streets of Toledo. The city resounded with trumpets and martial music. Every window was filled with heads as the procession passed to the Zocodover, where the festivities were to take place.

The queen of the fête was of course Celindaja, who in her splendour, all silk and gold embroidery, shone like the moon among the stars. Her languid, almond-shaped dark eyes and ruddy hair made a striking contrast to the olive skins and jet-black locks of her companions. And Azarque walked beside her, proud of the beauty whom he could call his own.

There were tiltings and tournaments, feats of archery, and games of skilful riding, and the Azarques always gained the day. When at last the Moors were tired of the sports, and had won the hearts and tender glances of the languid Granadine beauties scattered about over the Plaza, dressed in their most gorgeous clothes, a trumpet sounded. Three or four beautiful calls were played upon it, to the great astonishment of the Moorish bands assembled for amusement and festivity.

“It is a Christian bugle-call!” cried Azarque, starting

from his place. "The Christians must be upon us!"

This speech broke up the gathering, and the different tribes began to prepare for battle, united by a common danger. At last there appeared upon the scene a herald bearing a white flag. The Moors at once placed their weapons in rest, and Azarque rose to demand the intruder's errand.

"I come on the part of Don Ramiro of Aragon," replied the herald, "to request that he may be allowed to join in the wedding rejoicings of the chivalrous and noble Azarque and the lovely Celindaja."

"Is he alone?" Azarque asked.

"Quite alone, excepting for his own immediate servants, of whom I am one."

Permission was then given to him to join in the festivities, and the Moors most renowned for bravery and skill were ordered to engage with him in the tournament.

In a few minutes a knight, clad cap-à-pie in mail, appeared seated upon a beautiful charger white as milk. His visor was up, and his horse was adorned with rich crimson velvet trappings, studded with gold and precious stones. His armour was of steel, and the only colour that he wore was a pink scarf across his shoulder and over his breast, while in his casque he had a branch of pink almond blossom. His motto was "Fidelity."

After bowing low in the direction of the balcony, in which were assembled the queen of the feast, Celindaja, and her attendants, the knight put his lance in rest, and the herald threw his gauntlet down as a challenge to the Moorish chiefs.

Now it happened that among the maidens assembled round the lovely Celindaja, and permitted on account

of the occasion to witness the games, was a Christian maiden, who had been a captive for several years. She belonged to a noble Aragonese family; but the ransom demanded for her was too great for the poverty of her people, and, hopeless of release, she had gradually become reconciled to her new surroundings. For months she had waited and watched in vain for news of her deliverance. But summer changed to winter, and winter blossomed into spring and summer, and still no one came for Ysabella, the fair handmaiden of Celindaja. Many eyes turned in her direction on this day of rejoicing, and many were the suitors for her favour, but her heart was stony and cold to all. She received everyone with such disdain that Celindaja rebuked her more than once for her haughtiness.

“Why dost thou treat my people with such contempt?” she would say to Ysabella. “The highest chiefs of the Moors cast eyes of love upon thee, and thou regardest them with disdain and aversion. Who art thou, to despise the race of Islam?”

“I am a Christian maiden,” was Ysabella’s answer, while her eyes flashed and her cheeks glowed, “and would die sooner than mate with a dog of a Moor!”

Celindaja was often so enraged at the obstinacy of her handmaiden, that she punished her severely; but, maltreat her as she might, Ysabella retained her cold and haughty demeanour, and kept at a distance all who tried to win her favour. At the jousts and tilting Ysabella stood, as usual, behind her mistress’s couch, fanning her with an enormous fan made of peacock’s feathers mingled with gold and silver. Her dress was of white silk striped with gold, with a blue vest and a cap heavily fringed with gold sequins, while her long black tresses hung nearly to her knees. Bangles of gold clasped her wrists and arms, which were bare to the

shoulder ; and other bangles glittered on her ankles, while her small feet were cased in blue silk slippers crusted with silver embroideries. Her large eyes wandered hither and thither, gazing listlessly at the gorgeous spectacle before her. In vain did her admirers perform feats of strength and fine horsemanship, hoping for a smile of approbation from the lady of their heart. To all she gave the same haughty disdainful inclination of the head, and they passed on angry and disappointed.

Only when the coming of the Christian knight was announced did a look of attention come into her face. Even then it was not interest or eagerness that lit up her eyes and made her draw herself proudly to her full height. The very sight of the chain-mail, the heavy charger, and trappings of the north, whence she came, made her heart leap with pleasure, and reminiscences of former days of tournaments in her own home came crowding upon her memory with painful vividness.

Ysabella was tall and slight, and made a conspicuous centre to the group, rising as she did above her companions, and forming a fine background to the lovely beauty of her mistress, who reclined rather than sat upon her couch. No wonder that the first glance of Don Ramiro fell upon her as he saluted Celindaja and her maidens.

Had anyone in that splendid assembly noticed the Christian slave called Ysabella, he would have seen her first start suddenly and then lean eagerly forward for a second view of the strange knight.

The first game of tilting was won, after a severe struggle, by the Christian knight. The Moors, amazed at the skill and prowess of their adversary, and astonished at the novel style of defence which he introduced, could not restrain their admiration, in spite of their

mortification, and bursts of applause and shouts of approval filled the arena, whose walls echoed and re-echoed them. But none of these things did Ysabella see; the shouts of admiration fell dead on her ears, for the favourite slave of Celindaja had fallen in a swoon upon the floor.

II.

The festivities and games lasted a week, and at the end of that time much jealousy of the Christian knight had arisen, first because he was nearly always victorious in the lists, and, secondly, because Ysabella showed such evident interest in the stranger. Many a Moorish chieftain returned to his house with broken lance and wounded body, vowing vengeance upon the man who had overcome him.

The last day came, and the victors in the games were to be honoured by receiving scarves from the hands of the fairest of the ladies. Ysabella, as usual, stood behind her mistress, but was dressed so differently and so richly that even Azarque stared. Her usual blue vest and sequins were exchanged for a beautiful pale, amber-coloured silk, embroidered all over with pink almond flowers, and her arms were covered with bracelets and bangles. Her eyes were as brilliant as stars, and her cheeks were bright with colour. No one in Celindaja's train had ever seen the Aragonese slave look so beautiful as she did that day.

After the procession, the Moorish chiefs, who were jealous that the Aragonese knight should carry away any of the honours due to themselves, begged the king to insist that, as a last test of skill, Don Ramiro should perform the special Moorish feat of picking up a bracelet three times running with his spear while riding at full gallop round the arena. Don Ramiro paused a

minute before complying with this request, but at last said that he would do it on one condition, namely, that he should have the bracelet of Ysabella, the Christian slave. Celindaja and her Moorish attendants looked angry at this stipulation, and eyed Ysabella with jealousy and hatred in their hearts. She, however, never changed colour, but calmly and haughtily unclasped a thick bracelet from her arm, and handed it to her mistress, who gave it to Don Ramiro.

The Aragonese knight rode three times round the arena at full gallop, and each time picked up the bracelet with the utmost ease. Even the Moors themselves could not have done it with more perfect grace and skill, and they forgot their jealousy and rage in admiration of the wonderful horsemanship of their adversary. When the knight came with the other victors to receive the scarf, Celindaja herself was so delighted with his adroitness and skill that she almost involuntarily took off her sash from her waist, and, handing it to Ysabella, said, "As you are a Christian, you can give it to him."

But Ysabella was too quick for her. Like a flash of lightning she had unfastened and given her own sash to the victor, which, curiously enough, matched the one he wore across his breast. At the moment that he received the scarf he returned the bracelet. The Christian slave clasped the bracelet on her arm with apparent disdain, but her heart was bounding and leaping within her, for in the hollow of her bracelet she had seen a folded paper.

III.

The tiltings and rejoicings were ended. The feasts, however, kept on late into the night, and Don Ramiro was fêted with true Eastern hospitality. The populace haunted the streets till the small hours, anxious to

catch a glimpse, if only for a moment, of the splendid trappings of the horses and the beautiful dresses of their riders when the festivities should have ceased. But all things come to an end, and gradually all was still in the old Moorish city.

The quiet, crooked streets lay in tranquil silence, when suddenly the muffled tread of horses' feet was heard coming from the direction of the Alcazar. The night was dark, the moon was just rising, and sending a ghostly light through the streaks of clouds which rose on either side, and scudded rapidly away towards the east. Once in a while a gleam of light fell upon the armour of three horsemen who were quietly, almost stealthily, passing through the deserted and silent streets. When they came to the Puerta del Cambron the sentinels were all asleep. Making as little noise as he could, the slightest of the three horsemen unbarred the gates, and, shutting everything carefully behind him, mounted his horse, and away the three went, racing over mountain and valley on their swift steeds until they were safe from pursuit.

"Art thou able to keep up at such a pace?" anxiously inquired the apparent leader of the party of the delicate-looking page who followed him, and who at once rode beside him, while the other attendant fell immediately to the rear.

"I can do anything which will keep me near thee," was the answer, in a rich sweet voice—"anything that will free me from that hated slavery."

For days and days they journeyed—Don Ramiro and his two followers; Ysabella, the slender page, riding as hard and faring as roughly as her companions. Once over the Moorish frontier, however, Don Ramiro made several halts to ease his companions, especially Ysabella, who was treated with all the chivalry and deference

imaginable. For was she not betrothed to Don Ramiro when they were mere babies? and had he not rescued her from a worse fate than death—slavery?

At last they came to Saragossa, after many days of hard riding. As soon as the people knew that the beauty of Saragossa was once more among them, the whole city was decorated with flags, while brilliant brocades and embroideries hung from all the balconies. The bells rang throughout the city, and the people thronged the streets, rejoicing at the return of Ysabella.

IV.

Some time after these occurrences Don Ramiro and his beautiful bride Ysabella stood together on a terrace overlooking the country around Saragossa. The moon shone placidly over the quiet plain.

“Didst thou think that I had forgotten thee in thy captivity among the Moors?” whispered Don Ramiro.

“I hardly dared to hope,” Ysabella whispered in return. “After so many years it was hard to believe that any of my own kindred remembered my existence.”

“Dost thou remember the almond blossom which thou gavest me long ago? Thou saidst then that it was the emblem of fidelity. I always wore a spray afterwards. I had no idea whither thou hadst been carried; but I vowed that wherever thou mightest be, thou shouldst see the emblem of our troth, and I felt sure that thou wouldst respond.”

“Fidelity is after all the peace of life,” she answered.

XXIV.

*THE CORPORALES (ALTAR LINEN) OF DAROCA.**

As we have already had occasion to mention the village of Daroca, in Legends VIII. and XX., there is no necessity for describing again its picturesque position, nor repeating that the place is liable to terrible inundations.

Daroca, though so insignificant, has been the scene of various miracles, and among them is one establishing transubstantiation, equivalent to and almost contemporary with the similar and more famous miracle which took place in Italy, at Bolsena.

Towards the middle of the thirteenth century there lived a certain Count, named Berrenguer Dentenza. He hated the Moors with an exceeding hatred, and when not called upon to wage war against them for his king, he did so for his private pleasure, and made raids against every unoffending Moor who lived within his reach.

There lived also about that time a certain powerful

* This legend is mentioned in Ford, vol. ii., p. 875 ; in "La Historia de los Corporales," Gaspar Miguel de la Cueva, Zaragoza, 1590 ; in the "Rasgo" of Moza, p. 113 ; in the "Coronica de España," Beuter, Valencia, 1602 ; and in the "Antigüedades," Nuñez y Quiles, Zaragoza, 1691. It is an old legend, but still very popular.

chieftain of the Moors, in the Castle of Chio, in Valencia. Muza Ben Zarail was exceedingly respected and loved, not only by his own people but by the Christians of the province, for his wisdom, integrity, and mild and peaceable behaviour. Now Dentenza had really no grievance against Muza Ben Zarail, but being wearied by a long period of peace, he determined to molest and harass him for what he thought religion's sake. He therefore called together his chiefs and men-at-arms, and informed them of his intention of besieging the Castle of Chio. They, of course, were nothing loath, hating the Moors as a nation no less than their master. One fine morning, therefore, they sallied forth, trumpets blowing, pennons waving, helmets and armour glistening in the sun, and after three days of hard marching sat down to besiege the fortress, Count Dentenza having previously picked a quarrel with Ben Zarail upon some trivial pretext.

The castle was considered almost impregnable, and the siege lasted three months. The inhabitants were reduced to eating dogs, cats, and horses. Famine stared them in the face, but their opponents fared well every day, while the supplies for the castle were cut off. Each day new breaches were made in the castle walls, and the brave Moors were threatened with death in two ways; either by the walls falling down from the great fissures in them, or by the assaults of the enemy outside. The inhabitants were on the point of surrendering, when suddenly the whole horizon seemed dark with marching troops. From east to west, from north to south, these troops descended like a never-ceasing torrent, and twenty thousand Moors stood in the field to relieve their friends, the unfortunate inmates of the castle. The Christian army was now attacked on both sides, and the troops were mown down like

hay between the lances of the Moors behind and the arrows of the Moors in front. The night after this, Dentenza had a dream, in which he saw the Saviour come to him and tell him not to be afraid, but with five of his knights to give battle to the whole Moorish army on the morrow. In the morning, therefore, Dentenza, full of faith, with five of his companions, went out alone to fight their enemies.

The priest, whom he had brought with him from Daroca, had for some time doubted the doctrine of transubstantiation, but agreed to give Dentenza and his five knights the sacrament before they started on their dangerous errand, and consecrated six wafers. But, before the party could communicate, the infidels made the attack. The Christian knights fought like heroes, and, after a long day's struggle, defeated the twenty thousand Moors. When the battle began, the priest, who did not care to expose his sacred person to the mischances of a battle-field, collected his six wafers, wrapped them up in the church linen or "corporales," and threw them into some bushes, before hiding himself in the woods not far off. When the fate of the day was decided he reappeared from his concealment, and went in search of his wafers, which he had consecrated with so much care. But, instead of six wafers, he found six bits of bleeding flesh. Thus, to the doubting priest the doctrine of transubstantiation was amply proved. Much appalled, he hurried back to the camp and told his story. Dentenza, remembering his dream, felt sure that the Lord had been present with them and had fought for them; he told his dream to the troops, and all the soldiers fell on their knees, and gave thanks for the great miracle which had been performed almost in their very midst. The six knights, naturally enough, wished to divide such a treasure amongst them. But

they did not feel that they *could* divide the body of Nuestro Señor without committing a sacrilege. So they decided that they would send the wafers, done up in their respective napkins, on the back of the priest's mule; and they agreed that wherever the mule stopped, there they would be contented to leave the "corporales." The mule started off alone, returned to Daroca over mountains without any road, and knelt down before the door of the parochial church of San Pedro. Offerings poured in. Many souls were saved, and the church much enriched.

The "Santo Mistero," as it is called, is preserved in the Collegiata at Daroca, and, when carried through the streets to a death-bed, is spoken of as "Su Majestad" (His Majesty). Whenever the bell is heard announcing its coming, everybody kneels, wherever they are, either at a dinner-party or in a muddy street, until it has passed. In Italy, where a similar legend prevails, the people content themselves with placing a lighted candle in the window; but there is no country so particular as to the outward observance as Catholic Spain.

At the Escorial the "Forma" is exhibited for adoration on the 29th of September and the 28th of October. When the palace was plundered by the French, they were so busy emptying the casks of wine in the cellar, that they did not discover the holy wafer which the monks had hidden there, and which was restored to its original place with great pomp on the 28th of October, 1814.

XXV.

THE LEGEND OF THE OLEANDER.

THERE is a certain quarter in Toledo, known as the Puerta del Cambron. The bull-fighters live there, and the washerwomen, who have been working all day at the brink of the Tagus, come here to their homes in the evening, swinging along in groups, and carrying their well-filled baskets of wrung-out clothes poised gracefully upon their heads. There also dwell the women who work for the tailors of Toledo, and who can be seen going to their work early in the morning, with their handkerchiefs tied under their chins. All the poor congregate there in the evenings, and stand at their own doors to enjoy a quiet chat with their neighbours across the street.

In one of the poorest and most tumble-down of the houses of the Cambron quarter a couple of women were talking across the narrow street to each other.

Theore Inez was hanging up a few ragged fragments of clothes, which had contrived to hold together in the beating and scrubbing of the morning, along with other clothes which she had to wash for some of the noble families of Toledo. In the middle of her work she espied her opposite neighbour, Cristina, sitting in the

window mending a dilapidated and much-patched pair of trousers.

“And how goes it with the poor Celestina?” she inquired, pitching her voice for the required distance. “Eh! but she looked thin and ill when I saw her the other day, with her pale white face and the large, wild, dark eyes! Eh! mi Madre! such big eyes! The saints help us—but she cannot live much longer if she does not sleep! Has she slept yet?”

Cristina, who had been waiting till her voluble neighbour gave her the chance to put in a word, now seized her opportunity.

“No,” she cried, “not an eye has she closed! She is always the same, always tossing her head about from side to side of the pillow, and talking wildly about the things she sees in the room.”

“Eh! Santa fé!” interrupted Inez, “I should think she might talk wildly and see things, with not a wink of sleep for so many days! She’ll talk wilder yet, mark my words, if she gets no relief soon.”

Cristina merely shook her head ominously. She had nothing to say against the prophecy of her neighbour. She had known the fact for some weeks, that her daughter Celestina was very ill indeed, and in a dangerous condition, and did not need any remarks from her friend Inez to inform her of what had been her daily fear.

The room in which she sat looked poor and shabby enough, with its scanty furniture. On a straw bed in one corner of the room lay a young girl in all the delirium of fever, tossing her arms wildly about, and sometimes muttering, sometimes shouting, scraps of songs, and stringing together the most incoherent sentences as fast as she could rattle them off. A few miserable, hungry hens straggled about the room, and

pecked and scratched in a hopeless manner, as if no such chance as a scrap of food could fall to their lot.

Cristina was a widow with two children, a son and the daughter Celestina, who lay ill in the corner of the room. The son was a charcoal-burner, and was away for weeks at a time in the mountains, coming home occasionally, when he could get a holiday, to visit his native place, Toledo, and see his mother and sister, of whom he was the chief support. Cristina usually worked for a tailor; but since her daughter had fallen ill, she had been allowed to work at home. When her neighbour Inez had espied her from her opposite window, she was mending her son's trousers, which he had brought back on his last visit. She had a few pieces of coarse clean underlinen near her as she worked. She was finishing the last piece of mending, and had a chance of sending these clothes to him by a fellow-workman who was returning to the mountains. Every now and then she gave a look over at the bed in the corner, where Celestina lay tossing and moaning, crying out wildly at one moment, and sobbing the next.

The girl looked as though she had gipsy blood in her. Her skin was dark but clear, and her face was pale and thin. Her large jet-black eyes were opened to their widest extent. From the thinness of her cheeks they looked twice as large as usual, and heightened the weird expression of her face. Her long black hair hung in masses over her shoulders, and her lips were parched and dry.

The doctor who had attended her was by no means a skilful man. He was old-fashioned in his ideas, and thought that bleeding was the only cure for fever. But Celestina, after copious cuppings, still had a pulse that frightened him. She was delirious and sleepless, an

he had told the mother that it was only a question of time, and that nothing short of a miracle could save her.

“The Blessed Virgin and the saints are all-powerful,” poor Cristina had answered to this cruel announcement. “Perhaps if I pay for masses and pray hard, they will have mercy upon a lonely old woman like me, and save my daughter.”

To this speech the doctor had vouchsafed no answer. He was sceptical himself as to miracles, but it was none of his business if other people chose to believe in such things. So he shrugged his shoulders, put a piece of silver into the old woman’s horny palm, and departed. Since then he had never darkened Cristina’s doors again, evidently considering the case as hopeless.

But Cristina kept up a good heart, and continued to pray and have masses said for Celestina, having faith that a miracle would be performed for so good a girl as her daughter.

Her faith had held out for many weeks, but for a day or two past she had doubted very much whether the saints and the dear Mother Mary had listened to her prayers. Inez, she knew, was frank and outspoken in her speech; but, all the same, her heart sank within her as she listened to her prophecy that Celestina would talk wilder yet if she got no relief soon.

If the help did not come from Heaven there would be *no* relief. The doctor had left them; *she* knew nothing to do excepting prayers and masses, and Celestina seemed as far away from sleep as ever.

Several days after this conversation with Inez, the Feast of St. Joseph was celebrated in Toledo. As everyone knows, this festival takes place on the 19th of March. By that time the weather becomes very

warm and balmy in Toledo, and most of the spring flowers are out, and to be purchased at every street corner.

Cristina went to early mass at the cathedral, and, as usual, paid for a mass for Celestina's recovery. The girl was as delirious and restless as ever. Her eyes were, if anything, larger and more wide awake, and her lips more parched and pale.

All through the day the streets of Toledo were thronged with holiday-makers. The Zocodover, in the city, the Paseo de las Rosas, outside the walls, and the Paseo de Madrid, which is near the Puerta de Visagra, were crowded to overflowing. It was the Feast of St. Joseph, and the people meant to make the most of their holiday. Gay laughter could be heard everywhere. Fireworks were seen shooting up into the sky, and plays were being acted in the open air on the three paseos. The tinkle of guitars and the playing of flutes and violins drew people to the smallest but prettiest of the three paseos, the Zocodover, where dancing was going on.

All the hum and distant merry-making of the usually dull and sleepy old city was wafted up with the breezes to the lonely little window where poor Cristina stood ironing a pile of coarse but white linen.

Her neighbours had all gone to the festival. Not even her talkative friend Inez had remained behind. Cristina's heart was very heavy as she ironed near the window to catch the first glimpse of the returning holiday-makers. She knew that they would tell her all that they themselves had done and seen and heard, even to the last fragment of gossip that might be going the rounds of Toledo. But she knew, too, by the shadows on the houses opposite that some hours must pass before she could hope to see her friends.

Meanwhile she prayed fervently to St. Joseph, and begged of him to spare Celestina any more suffering if the saints and he and the Blessed Virgin could do nothing to save her.

“The girl has been like that,” she said aloud in her fervour, pointing to the corner of the room where Celestina lay tossing and turning in her fever—“the girl has been like that for ever so long, and she would be infinitely happier and blessed with the saints. O dear St. Joseph, either save her or take her, as seems best to thee; but do not leave her lingering on any longer.”

Then she began to hum and sing to herself some of the hymns dedicated to St. Joseph to help to while away the time until her friends could return. Celestina’s quick ears caught the familiar sounds; and although the mother had sung very softly, she seemed to be disturbed by them, and began in her madness to shout at the top of her voice the words and odds and ends of popular songs that she had heard sung at the theatres. Cristina ceased her singing at once, but Celestina was dead to all things, and continued her shouting, with intervals of laughing, until the neighbours returned from their merry-making.

It was very late before Inez came back to her own house. But Cristina was bound to sit up and get all the news from her chatterbox of a neighbour. The other friends had been very kind, and told her all that they had seen and heard as far as they knew.

But the next best thing to going one’s self to see the fun and merriment of a holiday like the Feast of St. Joseph is to have a friend, who also is a near neighbour, from whom nothing escapes.

Inez was a kind-hearted soul, and she kept her ears wide open, or had, as the saying is, the “film off her

eyes." There was nothing that went on around her that was unnoticed. She seemed to see out of the back of her head, and caught the very whispers of the wind. When she had a holiday—which was but seldom, poor woman! for she worked hard, and had a large family—she made the most of it, and came back full of the gossip and jokes she had heard. Her bright, restless black eyes wandered far afield, and saw just the very things which her neighbours would have hidden from her. For Inez was a sharp and a long-tongued woman; and, though there was really very little harm in her, she often said things, quite at random, which rankled in her neighbours' minds, and caused them to call her a "meddlesome, prying, evil-tongued vixen."

Cristina was the best friend she had. For although sometimes her tongue was sharp, even to her, there was nothing in Cristina's honest, hard-working life which her neighbours were not welcome to know and to see.

It was therefore with the expectation of a great treat that Cristina awaited the return of Inez.

At last she appeared, laden with trumpets, and all sorts of cheap penny toys for the children, with sweets for herself and her husband. As she stopped for a moment under the window of the house where Cristina lived, all out of breath with climbing the hill so rapidly, she said:

"Eh, neighbour, I cannot mount thy stairs to-night, but will tell thee all I can from my window."

So she shouted across the street the fragments of gossip which she had gleaned during the "fiesta." Such bits of stray news as that Juan the shoemaker's daughter, Teresita, had gone into service at Seville; or that Serafina, the gipsy, had received fifty francs

for dancing the national dances before a company of distinguished English, were among the many scraps of information with which she regaled the ears of her friend Cristina, who listened eagerly, and drank in all that her neighbour was willing to tell.

Poor creature! she had been shut up all day in that hot room, with only her own sad thoughts and her sick daughter to keep her company. And to her these odds and ends of gossip were as enthralling as a ball to a young girl. She liked to hear how her neighbours were faring; of the good luck that came to them, their sons or their daughters, and it must be confessed also of any scandal or misfortune that came to their share.

It was very late when Inez had satisfied Cristina's longing for news, and it was certainly two in the morning before Cristina closed her window and locked her door.

She laid wet linen on Celestina's hot forehead, and bathed her hands to cool them before she went to bed herself. It was the only thing she could afford to do, poor soul; but she did it thoroughly and constantly, hoping that Celestina's lingering so long in life was only an answer to her many prayers, and meant that the good St. Joseph would surely work some cure for the malady. The time had long gone by when she could afford to pay the doctor for medicines; and if Celestina lived, it would either be because her strength was greater than they had supposed, or because some miracle was to be performed in her favour. If they could only make her sleep the doctor had said there would be a change at once, either for life or death. But it was many days since Celestina had closed an eye. And they had tried everything that her small purse could afford.

With these sad thoughts in her mind, and feeling the weight of her coming bereavement very heavily on this particular night, poor Cristina laid herself down upon her bed of straw in the corner opposite to that which Celestina occupied.

She was a heavy sleeper, and was especially tired on this evening, owing to her long and anxious talk with her neighbour Inez. How long she slept, she could never tell; but she was awakened by a very bright light in the room. At first, with her eyes full of sleep, she thought that the house must have taken fire; but gradually, as she became conscious of things around her, she saw an old man with a branch of oleander in his hand bending by the side of Celestina, and waving the flowers over her. He had a loose brown gown and cloak wrapped round him, and carried a staff in his right hand, while a golden glory encircled his head.

Cristina was so frightened that she fell on the floor, and, covering her eyes with her hands, prayed aloud to St. Joseph.

In a minute or two she heard a soft and gentle voice say: "My daughter, thy prayers are heard, and I have come to cure thy child. Behold, she sleeps!" And with this the blessed saint departed. The light faded in the room. But, before it quite went out, Cristina looked at Celestina, and to her amazement the girl's eyes were closed, and she seemed in a deep sleep. There was no more rest for her that night. She listened intently to her daughter's regular breathing, and the startling hush of the room, after the incessant chatter of so many days, was almost more than she could bear. She burst into a flood of tears, and through the watches of the night could not help believing that in the morning she should find Celestina dead.

But when the morning broke, bright and sunny, the

girl still slept, and Cristina's heart grew lighter as the hours wore on. The doctor had said that with sleep or a miracle she would recover, and behold she both slept and the dear St. Joseph had brought her that lovely branch of pink flowers which still lay on her breast, and which the mother dared not touch for fear of disturbing the sleeper.

She stood and looked at the flowers for a long time, and listened to the calm, even breathing which sounded like music to her motherly ear.

For three days Celestina slept calmly and without a break. Cristina had told her wonderful adventure to Inez, who hurried across the street to verify the extraordinary statements of her neighbour. Celestina sleeping after all these days of feverish delirium and wakefulness, and all for a branch of oleander which St. Joseph had brought and had placed upon her bed! Cristina must have lost her wits from over-anxiety and watching!

But to her amazement she found Celestina really sleeping. There was no pretence about it; and on her breast lay a large bunch of oleander, the lovely pink blossoms and glossy thick leaves looking fresh and sweet against the girl's white skin. The question was (as Inez said afterwards, when relating the whole thing to her neighbours)—the question was, where did the branch come from, if not from St. Joseph himself? For between the time when she had parted from Cristina at her window, and the time when they had met in the morning, no one was astir. No one could say that she, Inez, was not as early a riser as could be found in Toledo, and she had seen Cristina the first thing after opening her window in the morning.

The people of Toledo were much interested in and impressed by the miracle which had been performed

upon Celestina, and congratulated Cristina wherever and whenever they met her.

When Celestina awoke, the fever had abated, her eyes looked calm and reasonable, and the whole expression of her face had become sweet and gentle.

From that time she began to mend, and in a few weeks had entirely recovered. She was looked upon with great awe and reverence by her fellows, and the oleander ("adelfa") is called familiarly by the peasants, to this day, the Flower of St. Joseph.

XXVI.

*A MOORISH PROMISE.**

WHEN the warfare between the Christians and the Moors was at its height, an incident occurred on the frontier of Granada which has given rise to legends, pastorals, and plays.

Rodrigo de Narvaez was Alcaide of Alora, a fortress on the Spanish frontier. During the siege of Granada there were often months of idleness, when only small skirmishes took place on either side. These periods of enforced inactivity must have been very wearisome to most of the Spanish army. At any rate they were so to Narvaez, who, tired of idleness, sallied forth one night

* In the "Romancero General," vol. ii., p. 137, there is a romance on "Don Manuel Ponce de Leon," 1154, almost exactly like this legend, by Pedro de Padilla, and the note attached remarks: "It is almost a repetition of the generous deed of Narvaez with the Moor Abindarraez." The story can be found also in Pulgar's "Clares Varones," in Argote de Molina's "Noblezas," 1588, fol. 296; in Conde's "Historia de la Dominacion de los Arabes en España," vol. iii., p. 262; in Villega's "Inventario," 1565, fol. 94; in Lope de Vega's "Remedio de la Desdicha," Comedias, vol. xiii., 1620; in the "Quixote," Part I., chap. v. Timoneda wrote a "Historia del enamorado Moro Abindarraez" (Fuster Bibl., vol. i., p. 162); and the story is mentioned in Wolf's reprint of the "Rosa Española," 1846, p. 107. It was also the subject of a long poem by Francesco Balbi de Correggio in 1593. While doubtless Montemayor in his "Diana," Book IV., borrowed from Villegas; and Ferrant Mejia ("Nobiliario," Seville, 1492) has a passage in vol. ii., chap. xv., in which he counts Narvaez among his ancestors. This legend is a most popular one among the Spanish people. See Ticknor, Spanish edition, vol. iii., p. 333, foot-note.

in search of adventures with only a few soldiers. They did not search far, for very soon they came upon a Moor, handsomely mounted and well armed. He was singing out cheerfully into the silent night, and this was the song that he sang :

“Nascido en Granada ;
Criado en Cartama ;
Enamorado en Coin,
Frontera de Alora.”

“Born in Granada ;
Educated in Cartama ;
In love in Coin,
On the frontiers of Alora.”

A personal combat ensued, and the brave Moor was taken prisoner. His name was Abindarraez, and he was an illustrious Moor, belonging to the exiled and persecuted family of the Abencerrajes. He had fought like a tiger, and had behaved so courageously alone against several enemies that De Narvaez was rather surprised at his utter and hopeless dejection and singular sadness after his capture.

“Why are you so depressed and melancholy, O noble Moor?” he asked at last. “These events are but the natural accidents of war ; and, brave as you are reputed to be, you should not now need patience and courage to endure.”

But Abindarraez only shook his head and said never a word. By dint, however, of entreaties and prayers the Alcaide wormed the secret from his captive.

“Know, then, O most noble Alcaide, that this very night I had promised to carry off clandestinely the love of my soul, who is the daughter of the Alcaide of Coin, on the Mussulman frontier. To disappoint her, the pearl of my heart, and be faithless to my word nearly breaks my heart——” and tears filled the dark eyes of the captive Moor.

“But why not ask her father for her manfully and openly?” inquired the Alcaide.

“Because her father guards her with a jealous eye, and does not favour our love. For when he suspected that she was the shining-star of my existence, he carried her off to a place far away from me. Then I was like a traveller over a rough and precipitous country, O Alcaide, who sees suddenly a total eclipse of the sun and is left in utter darkness. O my Zara,* when shall I behold again thy lovely face, thy eyes like stars, thy lips red like pomegranates, and thy hair perfumed and waving? When shall I hear thy voice as sweet as the note of the nightingale, singing to thy lute? That thou shouldst think me false tempts me to end my life, which is but sad and lonely without thee.”

For a few minutes the Alcaide pondered deeply. At length he broke silence with these words :

“Noble Moor, if I believed that you would keep your promised word to a Christian as you do to your Zara, who is as the flower of your days, I would permit you to go and keep your promise to her.”

The Moor drew himself up proudly, and his eyes glistened for the first time since he became a captive.

“As surely as I am here your captive now, Alcaide,” he said, “so surely will I return to be your captive, if you will permit me to go and keep my appointment with Zara. I have never failed in my word till now—and it will be to Zara, whom I love better than my life. Name your terms.”

“That you will return in three days to be my captive,” answered the Alcaide.

“I will,” returned the Abencerraje, with the solemnity of an oath ; and on the instant he was freed.

Zara sat watching behind her latticed window for

* Called in some of the romances “*Jarifa*.”

her Moorish lover. She had dismissed her maidens, and sat with her chin upon her beautiful white hands, looking out in the direction from which Abindarraez would appear. But she could see no one. The stars came out one by one, and the moon began to rise, casting her silver light over the fleecy clouds about her. But still nowhere could she see her lover. Then in despair she sat down and began to weep. "He has forgotten me and his promise. Among the Christian maidens, he thinks no more of Zara. *Mi bien!* what shall I do without thee? I, Zara, the forsaken!"

While she was lamenting thus, she heard a voice from without, singing,

"Enamorado en Coin,
Frontera de Alora."

With a spring she was at the window, and was soon in her lover's arms.

"Oh, *mi alma*, art thou really come?" she said.

"Zara, my beloved, why dost thou weep? The crystal tears are still coursing down thy cheeks. Didst thou doubt that I should come? Nothing but chains and bonds could have kept me from thee." And with loving words and sweet caresses he took her from her father's house.

Two days passed, and the time drew near for the Moor to return to Alora. He hardly knew how to break the news to Zara, who was now as happy as the day was long. He looked so sad and so unhappy as the hours passed, and the truth was still untold, that Zara at last said:

"What troubles my lord? He has only to tell Zara, who will do her utmost to drive the sickness from his soul."

"Zara, thou knowest that I would do anything to

preserve my honour. To redeem my word to thee and keep my tryst with thee, I made a promise which is hard to keep; but which I must fulfil, hard though it be. Know then, O gentle Zara, that before coming for thee, I fought with the Christians and was made a prisoner. I was so miserable at the thought of seeming to be false to thee, that I could neither eat nor sleep, but went about like one who fainteth for water. The Alcaide, who behaved like a brother, and treated me with the greatest kindness, sought to know the cause of my sorrow and drooping. At first I kept counsel with myself, and let no one into the closet of my thoughts; but he asked me so frequently to tell him the reason of my sadness, that at last I told him that I should have to break my tryst with thee because of my captivity; and, being a man of honour and chivalrous withal, he gave me my liberty on condition"—here Abindarraez hesitated; and then added, with a sigh, "on condition that I would return, after three days, to be his captive again."

For a few minutes there was silence between them; and then Zara said slowly:

"There is a remedy for all but death. Send a very large ransom—larger than the Alcaide could demand for thee, and he could not desire then to separate us."

The Moor's face changed almost at every word that Zara said, and when she ended her speech he was deadly pale.

"Can it be possible that you, my Zara, should *dare* to propose dishonour and treachery to me? I certainly shall return and keep my word to the Alcaide, whose trust in me allowed him to set me free to marry you. He said, 'If I believed that you would keep your promise to a Christian as you do to your Zara, I would permit you to go to her.' And not only shall I go to

Alora, but you shall come also, my Zara;" here the Moor drew himself up proudly, and Zara, looking with a timid air into her lord's face, saw something in it which silenced her, and she obeyed.

The next day found them at Alora.

The Alcaide, meanwhile, had been very uneasy. He was in an awkward position. Should the Moor really be a man of his word, all would be right; but if he took the opportunity of escaping and never returning, his own head would pay the forfeit. As the third day drew to a close, his anxiety became greater and greater. At last he made up his mind that the Moor was faithless. "How could I have ventured to trust a Moorish dog?" he said to himself. "And yet he seemed so true. Woe is me!" As he spoke the curtain was lifted, and the Moor appeared, leading in Zara closely veiled.

"Behold me," he said, "and with me my other self, your captive Zara."

The Alcaide was much relieved, and regretted that he had mistrusted the Abencarraje for a minute. He treated his captives with great consideration and tenderness; and finding, after a few months, that the king had great influence with the father of Zara, he exerted himself to the utmost to get the Moor and his father-in-law reconciled. It was a difficult matter, but after a time it was arranged, and Abindarraez and his Zara departed in peace.

XXVII.

*THE ADVENTURES OF A PILGRIM.**

THE town of San Domingo de la Calzada, between Burgos and Logroño, has the honour with Calahorra of belonging to a bishopric. The tutelar saint San Domingo (not he of inquisitorial memory) was an Italian who was sent to Spain in 1050, as an exorcist, at the entreaties and prayers of the peasants, who were nearly starved by locusts. He performed the miracle of sending the insect tribe into the country of the Moors, and liked his new abode so much that he determined to remain there and not return to his own country. He afterwards paved the way to Compostella for pilgrims to the shrine of Sant' Jago de Compostella.

Not far from Burgos, there lived a good farmer and his wife, named Robrés, who had three or four children. One of them, much to the delight of the parents, determined to be a monk, and as a first step performed a journey to Compostella.

He was a very good-looking youth, and caused many heartburnings among the maidens of the villages through which he passed, but he paid no attention to them. Indeed, his own heart was so pure and single,

* This legend is mentioned in three different places in Ford's Handbook, and passes as three separate stories. I give it as I heard it, as one legend.

that he did not even remark the admiration which his beauty caused. He walked night and day, excepting three hours, which he reserved for repose, during the heat of the day; and ate sparingly wherever he stopped, praying at every shrine and church that he came to. Towards the end of the fourth day, he came to a dark wood. Felipe, for that was his name, was half inclined to encamp and spend the night at the entrance of the wood, so dark and cheerless did it appear. But he soon became ashamed of himself for his fear, and after saying one or two prayers and crossing himself at least once a minute, he ventured into the forest. Every now and then he heard the cry of wolves, and sometimes a strange bluish light illuminated the wood for many yards ahead; but when he crossed himself and repeated passages from his breviary these lights disappeared entirely, and the cries grew fainter and fainter as he went on. He kept on saying his prayers, but the road grew narrower, and he found himself in a tiny path near a waterfall of some kind, for he could hear the rush of water not very far distant. As his danger increased, and he wandered about trying to find his way, he utterly forgot to say his prayers; the blue lights appeared in the distance, he could hear the barking of the wolves, and to add to his bewilderment he heard voices in altercation ahead of him. He stole nearer as noiselessly as he could to the spot where he heard the voices. To his horror he saw two pale and shadowy mendicant friars disputing with each other. They had large wallets upon their shoulders, filled with the fragments which they had collected in their day's march.

“But I have gained more than you, therefore I ought to eat more,” said the one friar to the other.

“That is not true,” retorted the other. “I have

toiled harder than you, and had poorer people to deal with than you; therefore to me should fall the best things, for I have expended more flesh and blood and strength than you, with all your whining ways."

From words they came to blows, and at last they laid down their wallets, and taking off their cloaks, and filling their cowls with stones, they belaboured each other until they fell down from weariness and wounds, and died. The pilgrim watched the whole proceeding with trembling limbs and quaking heart.

"To think that they, for whom Christ died, should fight for such pitiful causes!" he said.

He waited until all was quiet, and then he dug a grave for each of the friars. It took him a very long while, but nothing came amiss to him for religion's sake. But when he turned round to take up the bodies and bury them, lo and behold! they had clean disappeared. He searched everywhere about, but could find nothing. He then filled in the graves, and, tired out, climbed a tree to sleep. He had not been long asleep before he was waked up by the barking of wolves. Almost a minute after, a pack of wolves passed the tree where he was, led by an enormous grey she-wolf. Her tail was up like a flag, her eyes glowed like fire, and swiftly she ran at the head of her followers. Suddenly she wheeled round, and stopping under the tree, where the young pilgrim sat in terror, she snapped at the bark of the tree, while the whole pack sat looking up at him, snapping and snarling without ceasing. At last, after an hour's ineffectual sniffing and snarling, the she-wolf led them on again, barking and tearing through the wood like demons. He had just fallen asleep again, when he heard footsteps, and peeping cautiously down he saw five or six men who were carrying a large iron box. After some discussion

they laid it down underneath the tree where he was. Then a dispute arose among them as to the exact spot for burying it, until they could conveniently carry it away again.

“I did more than you others to get it,” said one of the robbers, “and therefore I should have a larger share, of course.”

There was a pause, during which the pilgrim said from the branches of the tree, in as sepulchral a tone as he could assume: “It is stolen property, and is not yours at all.”

At this the robbers, terrified at the voice, all ran away as fast as they could, and for the rest of the night the pilgrim was left in peace and quiet.

The next morning, at the first streak of dawn, he descended from his tree and opened the box. He found it full of silver jugs and other valuable things; and having buried it under a different tree three or four yards off, which he marked so that he should know it again, he proceeded on his journey to Compostella.

On the way he stopped at a roadside inn. The landlady of the inn was an exceedingly handsome woman, and took a great fancy to the young and good-looking pilgrim. But he being single-hearted, and bent upon his prayers and his journey to Compostella, took no heed of her devotion, and left the inn without the least idea that he had left behind him a woman thwarted in her affection, who was already vowing vengeance against him. She was so wounded and sore at the young pilgrim's utter disdain of her that she had placed in his scrip or wallet some of the spoons belonging to the inn. After he had been gone half an hour or so, she pretended to miss her spoons, and sent the police after him. He was a slow traveller, and therefore was not difficult to find. He protested his innocence, and

opened his wallet with the greatest alacrity—and there were the spoons! In vain did he remonstrate and say that he knew nothing about them. There they were, and the police did their duty and took him before the judge.

“Ah, rogue that you are!” exclaimed the judge, as he stood before him. “Hardened sinner that you are! We have caught you at last, have we? Only a few days ago you committed a robbery at the house of the Duke of Gomeles, and at last you have brought yourself into trouble.”

The pilgrim saw that there was some misunderstanding, and that he was in a difficult position for proving his innocence. But, desperate as the case seemed, he did his best, telling how he had seen the robbers and frightened them away, and ended by saying that “he could take the judge to the very spot, because he had buried the chest himself, and marked the tree.”

“I have no doubt you did,” said the judge drily; “but that shall not save you. You shall show where the silver is hidden, and then you shall be hanged for your sins——”

“But,” stammered the pilgrim, “if I show you where the rogues hid the silver, surely you will let me continue my journey to the shrine of Sant’ Jago de Compostella——”

“Enough!” shrieked the judge; “take this obstreperous fellow away!” and before he could say another word, he found himself handcuffed and surrounded by soldiers, walking back on the road over which he had come, towards the wood where he had buried the chest.

The pilgrim was a man of great pride, and when they got to the place where the treasure was hidden, he now utterly refused to show the hiding-place. This made

the soldiers all the more suspicious of him, and without more ado they hung him on the nearest tree and left him there.

After some months had passed, the parents got anxious about their son; and as they heard nothing of him, they determined to start in search of him. After much toil and many hardships they came to the spot where the pilgrim's body still swung in the air. They were passing under it, all unconscious of its being their son, when the body spoke to them.

"I am not guilty of the robbery for which they put me up here," it said; "but although dead to you in the flesh, I am very happy and well elsewhere, through the intercession of the blessed St. Dominic."

The parents, much delighted with this news, and thinking it a miracle (as indeed it was), hurried off to the magistrate to tell their good tidings.

The magistrate, who was rather hasty in his temper, was just sitting down to his dinner when the farmer and his wife desired the honour of speaking to him. There was a pair of plump roast fowls before him on the table, and when he heard what the good people had to say, he laughed at them outright, and said sneeringly, "Why, you might as well tell me that those chickens will get up and crow!" *which they immediately did.* It is needless to say that the judge did not finish his meal. The fowls were taken to the cathedral, where they were placed near the high altar. A pair of live chickens are still preserved there, and are supposed to be directly descended from the miraculous pair. To this day a white feather from these sacred chickens is worn in the hat by the pilgrims to the shrine of Sant' Jago of Compostella.

XXVIII.

THE CHRIST OF THE OLIVE.

NOT far from the quaint old Moorish town of Cordova, after you pass through the Puerta del Osario, on the road to the Ermitas, there are several beautiful olive plantations, which were owned at one time, long ago, by a rich Spanish noble. The vegetation in the valley is splendid; the roads are bordered with hedges of magnificent aloes, which grow very tall and throw out enormous leaves. There are orange trees covered with fruit, and stately palms wave their graceful heads, while the olive leaves tremble in the wind, and show their silvery twinkle. These plantations used to produce an enormous quantity of oil, and were a source of great wealth to the proprietor. A sort of bailiff lived upon the place with his wife and one little daughter, who was called Consuelo. She was the very joy and sunshine of their existence, with her pretty brown hair and dark eyes. She was a peasant like all those among whom she lived, but she seemed to be far above them. Not a boy in Cordova, or in the country round about where they lived, would have said one word to hurt her, or have done anything to injure her. With all their hearts they would have defended and shielded her from all evil. Among the peaceful olives her life was chiefly spent, until she grew to womanhood. Her only outings were to mass on Sundays, at

the cathedral, and to market sometimes, when her father was going in with his olives, or to buy the necessaries for the house.

It is impossible in Spain for a girl so pretty as Consuelo to be long without lovers. At fifteen years' old she had plenty of swains, all more or less pleased at being allowed even to look at her or adore her from afar. Three or four were too bashful to give her more than a passing greeting and significant glances when she sat at the window, with an occasional serenade on the guitar. But there were others who were bolder, and who courted her openly and admiringly. Among them was the overseer—a young man of twenty-eight, who worked under the father of Consuelo. His name was Diego Montales; he had known Consuelo ever since her babyhood, and with his strength had grown his love for her. As a lad he had been assistant on the plantations, and, when he had no special work to do, had played with Consuelo as a baby, guided her tottering footsteps; and as she grew older, and more and more lovely, he became her companion and taught her to read, write, and keep accounts. In fact, he taught her almost all he knew himself. And Consuelo unwittingly returned his love. But she was not conscious of it, until an unlooked-for event forced the confession from them both.

Once in every three months the secretary of the master of the property came to visit the plantations, to look over the accounts, take back the moneys received, and generally explain to the Marques de Santillana how matters were progressing. In an evil moment he met Consuelo; he was riding over the olive farms with the bailiff, and saw her, with a basket at her feet, receiving the olives in her apron as they were thrown down to her from the trees, and

placing them in her basket, ready for pressing and putting into brine. Her pretty head was well defined by the gay amber-coloured handkerchief round her head, tied across her forehead and fastened in a knot under her hair with a coquettish bow at the side. This fashion is popular among peasants who work under the hot sun, because it prevents sunstroke. In the tree above stood Diego Montales, cutting, pruning, and gathering the olives, which he threw into the bright-coloured apron spread wide open to receive them. With her eyes upturned towards the man she loved best in the world, what wonder that they sparkled with a soft and radiant light, that her cheeks were flushed, and that her pretty mouth was parted with a beaming smile which showed her small, even, pearly teeth? Altogether she made a very attractive picture to the eyes of the amorous secretary, so unaccustomed in the city to find anything so fresh, so unstudied and so picturesque-looking as Consuelo Cadenera. Never in his life had he seen anyone at all like her, or anyone who so completely charmed him as she. He was accustomed, of course, in his capacity of secretary to a noble, to meet all sorts and kinds of men; but as to women his experience was limited, he having only met hitherto those whom his master was used to meeting. They were fond of flirting, and their ideas never went much further than talking of dress and fashion and the last scandal. But here was a creature completely different, so simple and fresh, with such pretty ways and unstudied manners, that the young secretary, Pepe Hernandez, suddenly discovered that his supervision was necessary oftener than ever before, and his visits became more and more frequent, much to the disgust of Diego. With a lover's keenness of sight he soon perceived what the frequency

of the secretary's visits meant, and he guarded Consuelo most jealously whenever Don Pepe (as he was called) appeared. Apparently the parents of the girl saw nothing. They may have had their own private opinions about Don Pepe and the interest he had so suddenly developed in olive-farming. But, if they had, they said nothing to Consuelo about it, and the girl went on her unconscious way as simple and fresh as ever.

But although Diego did his best to keep Consuelo out of the way when Don Pepe came to the plantations, the latter thwarted all his plans by continually throwing himself in Consuelo's path. The two men soon understood each other's game, and their mutual regard was certainly not increased by the knowledge.

At last, Diego could bear it no longer, and spoke out his heart to Consuelo one evening as they were walking home from work among the olive groves.

It was a lovely evening. The sky was full of soft, fleecy, pink and white clouds, changing from one shade to another under the setting sun. The new moon was visible, and the air was sweet with the scent of flowers.

"I wish," said Diego, as they went along, "that Don Pepe would come less often. I cannot see that he is of any use here, and I cannot bear to have him poking his nose into your father's affairs as he does," he cried passionately. "One would think, to see him, that we were all thieves plotting to rob the Señor Marques of half the farm produce."

Consuelo laughed. "Oh! Diego," she said, "I do not think he means to suspect us; and I know that my father finds his opinion valuable when he is ignorant of the wishes of the Señor Marques, for he told me so himself. I think you are unjust to Don

Pepe. He can have no reasons for being unkind and suspicious."

"I suppose I am jealous," answered Diego, with a smile. "For to tell the truth, Consuelo, I cannot bear to see him near you. I believe that I am jealous of the wind blowing upon you, or the sun shining upon you. Oh! querida, if you only knew how I love you, I am sure you could not have the heart to refuse me, or not to love me in return!"

"But I do love you," cried Consuelo. "And I do not think that you need be jealous of Don Pepe; for he neither cares for me nor, I am sure, do I for him."

So the matter was settled entirely to their own satisfaction, and Diego and Consuelo were as happy and as blithe as any two birds. But they reckoned without their host, if they thought that Don Pepe would leave them happy without a struggle. He had seen at once how matters stood with Diego, and determined to do his best to part the two lovers.

Consuelo's father was a sturdy old peasant, who had a sharp tongue, but whose heart was kindness itself. Diego had grown up under his eye from boyhood, and he loved him like his own son. But the old man had a great admiration for Don Pepe's opinion, and a blind belief in his capacity and his word. If *he* found fault with any of the work, woe betide that particular farm-servant who had done it! Don Pepe began by finding fault with the work done by Diego, and gradually insinuated a little word of distrust of him and his morals into the old man's ear from time to time. Every visit that he paid he had some fresh scandal and misdeed of Diego to tell, and although old Cadenera was slow to believe anything against his favourite Diego, he at last was roused into dismissing him. It was like a thunderbolt both to Diego and to Consuelo.

Even her mother cried out against the injustice of sending Diego away, with no proof excepting the word of Don Pepe. For old Juana Cadenera was no fool, and saw what her husband did not, that Don Pepe hated Diego because he loved Consuelo and wanted to get rid of his rival. But the old man said it was as much as his place was worth to contradict or disobey Don Pepe, and he had brought instructions from his master for the dismissal of Diego. So, much as he regretted it, Diego must go.

Poor Consuelo was utterly heart-broken at the departure of her lover, in such an ignominious way, just as he was beginning to put by money for himself.

Two paths met not very far from the house, and at the corner stood a large wooden crucifix with all the emblems of the Passion arranged upon it—a common practice in Roman Catholic countries, in small and out-of-the-way villages. It had got the name of the Christ of the Olive, from a small branch of the tree being always placed underneath it. Consuelo could not sleep for thinking about Diego and Don Pepe's injustice, and, after tossing about half the night, she determined to go out and pray to the Christ of the Olive, so near to her own door. Everyone had gone home long ago, and there was nothing to hurt her in those peaceful groves of olive trees, with their silvery pale leaves, the colour of which tradition said came from their still reflecting a little of the glory which flooded the earth at the transfiguration on Mount Olivet.*

It was a lovely night. The moonlight was streaming down over the pale ghostly trees, and not a star was visible as the moon seemed to sail calmly through the peaceful summer sky. The dark crucifix rose high

* Spanish popular belief has thus localised the scene of the Transfiguration.

into the air. Consuelo knelt at the foot of the cross and poured forth her heart in sobbing supplication.

“Oh, Cristo, dulce Jesu,” she cried, “if Thou wilt not help me none can. Diego will go, and my heart will break. Oh! what shall I do! What shall I do!” She prayed for a long time and then got up from her knees, and was returning to the house, when she heard a voice say, “Be comforted, my daughter, all shall be well.” And looking up she saw that the arm of the Christ was stretched out over her, and His hand was blessing her. She uttered a cry of wonder and fright, and fell on her knees; but when she looked up again, the hand was still blessing her. Thanking the Lord with all her heart, she then went home, and soon fell into a sweet sleep.

The next morning she told her mother what had happened. The old woman was very much startled, and made Consuelo repeat her story two or three times.

“It must have been a dream,” she said at last; and Consuelo went to her work with a heavy heart. But her story set her mother pondering, as she went about the house-cleaning and cooking. If, she thought to herself, the Cristo actually said that he would help the little one, there can be no harm in asking Don Pepe to repeat his stories about Diego before him. To my mind they are all lies, told to make his own love-making easier.

When her husband came home to dinner, therefore, she took him aside and told him about Consuelo’s dream, as she called it. “Now, there can be no reason,” she said, “why Don Pepe should refuse to repeat his tales of Diego before that divine image, if they are really true. And it would ease the child’s mind of the impression made upon her last night.”

Old Cadenera had felt anything but easy in his

mind about his treatment of Diego. The lad had always, hitherto, been known as honest and hard-working; and it was difficult to believe that he could so suddenly become as bad and vicious and idle as Don Pepe had made out. But the master had sent orders that Diego was to be dismissed, and therefore it must be done. If it would make Consuelo happier to hear Don Pepe repeat what he had said before the Cristo, it could do no harm, though it would do no good as far as Diego was concerned. It had always been the desire of his heart that Consuelo and Diego should marry, and he had purposely thrown them as much together as he could. But, of course, if the boy was as bad as Don Pepe represented him to be, why, it was better to know it in time, and save Consuelo any further unhappiness. He did not know anything about their confession to each other, and, as Consuelo's manner towards Diego was very much the same as usual, he had never suspected that any understanding existed between them. After turning the matter over in his mind for a long time, he determined to ask Don Pepe to repeat his accusations before the Christ.

When Don Pepe came on his next visit, therefore, Carlos Cadenera told him the whole story of Consuelo's dream, as they all called it (excepting Consuelo herself), and asked him if he would mind, as a personal favour to him, repeating the charges against Diego before the Christ of the Olive.

"It is not that I doubt them or your word for one minute, you understand, señor; and it can really make no difference as to Diego's going, but it will relieve the little one's mind very much, for then she cannot imagine any longer, as she does now, that Diego is unjustly treated."

"But surely you do not believe in any such nonsense

as that, Cadenera, do you?" asked Don Pepe, turning very red.

"Eh, señor, who can tell? Strange things have been brought to light by the Christ before now, and there may be more things in heaven and earth than we think possible. But you will do me this favour, señor, will you not?" said Cadenera.

"Oh, certainly, if you care for any such foolery," replied Don Pepe, laughing.

The news of Consuelo's dream and the willingness of Don Pepe to repeat his accusations against Diego soon spread through the plantation. Diego was a great favourite with his mates, and they one and all believed him to be the victim of a base calumny, and were much delighted when they heard that Don Pepe was to go through this ordeal. They were all very superstitious, as Spanish peasants are, and believed that he would not be able to stand the ordeal without a miracle taking place.

It was a motley crowd that gathered around the Christ of the Olive the morning that Diego was to go away. Big burly peasants, both men and women, wild-looking, unkempt creatures, stood about with their knives or pruning-hooks, or with just what they happened to have been working with, in their hands. Don Pepe began his complaints against Diego: Diego was idle; Diego was immoral; Diego had done this, Diego had done that. Suddenly he stopped short in the middle of a sentence. A cry came from the frightened peasants. "El Cristo! el Cristo!" they cried. Everyone looked up. The arm of the Christ was again stretched out, and Don Pepe never spoke again, for *he was dumb*.

The miracle was duly reported to the proprietor of the plantations, who answered that he had never

ordered Diego's dismissal, nor had he ever heard anything against him. Don Pepe was disgraced, and not very long afterwards Diego and Consuelo were married, to the great joy of both parents, but especially of old Juana, who said triumphantly, "If I had not urged Carlos to do it, we should never have known the truth."

XXIX.

THE HERMIT OF THE ROCK.

ON the road from Logroño to Calahorra the traveller has to pass several small villages before reaching Lodosa, which is not far from Calahorra. It lies at the foot of some high rocky hills. The country around is very fertile and well cultivated, and in the rocks and hills are some curious holes or caverns which are supposed to have been excavated by the Moors.

Every now and then the river Ebro, which runs close to Lodosa, overflows its banks, and occasions much distress among the peasantry. In the old days when these inundations occurred, the peasants used to have special masses said, and made a pilgrimage to the village of Mendavia, some miles distant from Lodosa, near which lived a very saintly hermit, whom they consulted on all occasions of famine and distress. But in the course of nature this good and saintly man died, and the hermitage of San Anatol remained empty. The inhabitants for a long time were puzzled as to what to do and to whom to go in cases of affliction and misery.

About six months after the death of the good old hermit of San Anatol, as he was called, a rumour went round the village that a venerable and exceedingly holy old hermit, called Brother Bartolomeo, had taken up his abode, as good luck would have it, in one of the

rock-habitations near Lodosa. This was welcome news for the villagers, who flocked to see the new adviser.

He was apparently very far advanced in years, which led the worthy peasants to fear that their newly found treasure and friend could not long remain among them. His hair and beard were snow-white, and the latter reached to his waist. He was very pious and very austere, so people said, and he performed miracles. He healed the sick and raised the dead, and helped everyone who needed his aid or was in trouble.

Every Sunday crowds of people went to visit him in the rough-hewn, dreary cave which he had chosen for himself. It was the first of a number of rock-hewn houses which extended in a line far out of the village of Lodosa on to the lonely road leading to Calahorra. He was renowned for his goodness to the poor, although it seemed that they could hardly be poorer than himself. His cell was small and cramped. His bed was a bundle of straw, or grass when he could get it, up in one corner of the miserable hut. A pitcher of water and a loaf of bread were all that was visible for food; and, excepting a large crucifix and a skull and cross-bones, there was no other furniture. From time to time the villagers brought him presents of cakes, dishes of "puchero," or bottles of red Val de Peñas. But these presents were rare, for the poor creatures had neither the time nor the gifts to offer frequently.

It was a stormy, cold, raw day. The wind was bitter and keen, and the rain poured in torrents. In the village there was woe and distress, inside as well as outside a certain house, where lived a young peasant, named Manuel Hermuelo. He, without any fault of his own, had had many losses from bad crops and misadventure; and now, to add to his troubles, the little money which he had saved (and

very little it was) had been stolen from him. From the time that he had learned the news when he came in to his frugal midday meal, he had been as if stunned. His wife, Maria, was frightened at the stupor which seemed to come over him after hearing of his loss, and which prevented him from returning to his work. There he sat, staring into vacancy, his elbow on the table, and his chin resting on his hand. For an hour or more he remained there, never heeding anything that she said, although she constantly urged him to go to his work ; for she said, "It is no use crying after what is gone,—it would be better to make more money to take its place and forget it."

To this, however, he paid no attention until about two hours after Maria, looking at him with tears in her eyes, as he sat there gloomy and unhappy, said suddenly, "Why not go and see the Fraile Bartolome? He could counsel thee, and perhaps find the robbers and recover thy money."

Manuel looked at his wife in a dazed sort of way, and after she had repeated it several times he seemed to understand and grasp what she meant. For he said, "That is a good idea which the saints have put into thy head. Very likely something can be found out from the old man. But he is very old, and perhaps his wits are not very quick."

"All the more reason why thou shouldst make the most of his stay," was Maria's quick retort. "But thou must not go empty handed: I will prepare thee a little present for the good father."

In a few minutes after this conversation, Manuel started on his mission, laden with a basket full of good things. Maria had put in a cake which she had baked as a special feast for the Sunday following, which would be Manuel's birthday, a bottle of Val

de Peñas which had been a present from her father, and some grapes for the holy man, who she thought might help her husband in his need. She had done this rather against her wish, because of her feeling as to the people who had given them these delicacies; but she muttered to herself, as she packed them in the basket, "The more dainty the things are, perhaps the more he will help Manuel;" and so Manuel unconsciously trudged away to the rock-cave of Fraile Bartolomé with all his birthday surprises on his back.

The rain poured in torrents. The wind nearly blew poor Manuel over as he trudged along the lonely road outside Lodosa, which led to the cave of the Hermit of the Rock (as he was called).

Manuel was always the most simple and gentle of souls, and easily frightened, owing to his firm belief in superstitions. But, unhappy as he was through his misfortunes, he never noticed the whisperings around him as he passed up the road to the hermit's house.

Two or three times on the way he thought that he would turn back and go another time, when it was fine, and when the sun would cheer him on his errand. But he decided, after much wavering, that perhaps no sunny days would come for a month or more, and that if he waited for fine weather his anger and despair would have melted away, and he would not have the courage to try and find out who the robbers were that had ruined him and made his heart so heavy. So he pushed on as bravely as he could in spite of the storm.

To his surprise, when he had climbed the steep ascent to the hermit's cave, he could find no one. There was a small torch of lighted pine stuck as usual against the wall, in an iron ring fastened ingeniously into the rock. The crucifix and miserable bed were

there, and the pitcher, bread, and skull and crossbones, but no hermit. No human being was to be seen.

Manuel, wet to the skin, stood in the narrow doorway and stared about for the old man, to whom he was accustomed to confess all his sins and troubles. No one was there. He stepped inside and laid down his basket on the floor. He was thinking that the hermit must have been summoned away to some deathbed, when his eyes suddenly fell upon a snow-white beard and a white wig which had been thrown carelessly upon the straw bed in the corner. A sense of horror crept over poor simple Manuel. His mind was not capable of much reasoning, but he immediately guessed that something awful had happened to the lonely man who had been so good to others. He stood for a few minutes motionless, trying to imagine what had happened. Instead of being able to help himself in his trouble, Manuel thought the poor hermit had fallen a prey to robbers, perhaps the very same who had ruined him. And they had murdered him ruthlessly and barbarously, it would seem, for they had scalped him and torn off his beard. When he had recovered from the first sense of horror at the deed, a sense of his own danger came over him. The robbers who had done this brutal deed could not be very far off, he thought, and his life would not be safe for one minute if they should return and find him there.

He turned quickly, and was just flying out of the cave-door, regardless of the basket which he had left on the floor, when he heard a harsh loud voice say behind him, "What do you want here at this time of night?" and turning round he confronted a fierce-looking man, a little older than himself, with a clean-shaven face and a pair of angry flashing dark eyes which examined him from head to foot. In one hand

was a large dagger. Poor Manuel was so taken aback at this reception that for a moment or two he was speechless. But he soon recovered himself, and stammered out, while he pointed to the basket on the floor behind them :

“ I brought a few gifts to the padre, whom I hoped to find and to take counsel with on an important matter.”

Here his eyes fell upon the beard and hair in the corner, and filled with tears. His voice broke as he remembered the probable fate of the hermit.

“ Well, well, well,” said the fierce-looking man soothingly, “ the fraile is not here to-night, but he will be glad to find your presents when he returns. I will tell him about your kindness;” and with these words he fairly pushed Manuel out of the cave into the rain and darkness outside.

Manuel raced home as fast as his legs would carry him, and breathlessly told Maria all his adventures, and that he was sure the good brother had been murdered.

Now Maria was a wonderfully sharp-witted woman, and was not to be deceived by any story told after hasty judgment. At first she was much startled at Manuel's tale, and rather agreed with him that some misfortune had befallen the unhappy hermit, who, in his lonely cave, might be murdered at any moment and no one be any the wiser. But when she heard of the hair and beard left loose on the bed, she made up her mind that some trickery was being played up there in that lonely cave; and she determined to discover what the secret of the hermit was. That he had been murdered she no longer believed, and was more than ever confirmed in this opinion when she heard of the fierce-looking young man who had promised to give

the fraile those presents which she had been at so much pains to prepare and relinquish.

“But surely,” she said to her husband, “thou wast not stupid enough to leave the basket with that young man! He tell the reverendo of the presents and thy kindness! He will eat them himself, and never tell the fraile anything about them.”

Manuel was accustomed to hearing sharp things from his wife when he had done anything exceedingly stupid, but he thought she was a little unjust in her present accusation, and exclaimed indignantly :

“But, Maria, you would have done just the same thing if you had looked into that man’s eyes and felt that at any moment your life was not worth a peseta. And he pushed me out, too—gave me a very sharp push, which sent me out of the door in a second. I was so pleased (and so would you have been) to find my head safe on my shoulders that I never gave the basket a thought till I reached home.”

“Well, there were all your birthday surprises in it,” retorted Maria, spitefully. “I thought the sacrifice worth while, so long as there was a chance of your getting back your lost money. But I never counted on your leaving the contents for strangers to eat, if the fraile is murdered as you say.”

Manuel now began inwardly to wish that he had brought his basket back again, but he would have died rather than allow anything of the kind to Maria, so he answered sharply :

“I would rather lose my presents than my life.”

And Maria, unaccustomed to have her husband answer back to any of her sharp sallies, was so astonished at this temerity that she held her tongue, and Manuel felt that for once he was master of the field.

But, though she did not refer to the subject again in Manuel's hearing, she hardly ever let this day's adventures out of her thoughts. Who was the fierce-looking man who had first threatened her husband and finally pushed him out on the road? And how did he come into the cave when there was no one there when Manuel had entered? There must be some connection between the different cave-houses which up to that time people had supposed were separated from each other by a wall of rock. That the hermit, who looked so good and holy with his white beard and his snowy hair, was no saint she was convinced. And she was also certain that he was still alive. She had noticed on one of the few occasions on which she had accompanied Manuel that the hands which he held out to them were not those of an old and feeble man just tottering on the brink of the grave, but rather like those of a young man in the full strength of manhood: the veins were blue and soft, not knotted and almost purple, and the knuckles flushed with young fresh red blood. She had said nothing to her husband, or indeed to anyone else, about her fancies. But she distrusted the hermit and all his ways, and, although she hardly dared to confess it to herself, she suspected that he had had a finger in many of the misfortunes, robberies, and murders which had been making the good villagers of Lodosa anxious and miserable for some time past. She hated herself for thinking such ill of a man who was much respected and revered. But the longer she struggled against the feeling the more it became conviction. All she could do under the circumstances was to caution her husband to hold his tongue about his adventures at the cave.

“For the love of the saints,” she said, “Manuel, for once be wise and be guided by me. Don't go

prating about in the village of thy losses and the accident up at the cave. I am quite sure that in a few days thou wilt see the fraile walking about the village as usual, and none the worse for having his beard and hair torn off. I have my ideas on this matter, which I cannot at present tell to thee; but in time I think I shall be able to recover the money that was stolen. For I am sure that I am on the right road. But all will depend upon thy entire silence. If thou failest me, I shall do nothing."

This was the first time that she had mentioned the subject to Manuel since the night of his adventure at the cave. Manuel looked at her in a rather frightened way as she made her speech, and after a moment's thought answered:

"Well, Maria, perhaps thou art right; and if thou canst do anything to recover the money, I shall be glad, and will hold my tongue so as not to impede thee."

Manuel had not arrived at believing in Maria's superior wisdom all of a sudden. The fact was that to his amazement he had actually met the Fraile Bartolomé walking about the village only a day after the supposed murder in the cave. He knew that his wife would renew the unpleasantly sharp talk of the night before, and he had determined in his own mind to say nothing about it to Maria, and to let her believe what she liked of that night-adventure until she should find the matter out for herself. When she besought his absolute silence on the subject, he naturally supposed that she had at last discovered that the fraile was still alive; but Maria had drawn her own conclusions, and was ignorant of the well-being of the fraile.

Manuel therefore had no difficulty in obeying his wife's injunctions.

A few days after Maria had begged Manuel to guard his tongue, she met the fraile face to face in the market, while she was buying her provisions for the week. Feeling confident, as she did, that Manuel had had some trick played upon him, and that the hermit was alive, she was not at all surprised at meeting him; nor at finding that, in spite of Manuel's belief in his murder, he still had his long white beard and flowing locks. The old fraile spoke to her, asked after her husband, and thanked her for her basket of good things in bland, soft tones, and passed on his way to see a sick and dying man.

About a month after Manuel's adventure at the cave, he was absent at a piece of work which was about twelve miles from Lodosa. Now was the time for Maria! No one would know anything about her actions, and with her husband away she had a clear field for carrying out her plan for discovering the secret of the supposed saintly hermit.

One fine moonlight night she sallied forth on her errand. She had no children, so after banking up her little bit of fire, and locking the door of the house, she started in the direction of the hermit's cave. The moon was at the full, and the road looked as clear and bright as at noontide. Not a soul did Maria meet. When she got to the cave, she found exactly what her husband had seen. The light was flaring up in its iron ring against the wall—but no hermit was there. She looked about her carefully. In the corner, on the rough straw bed, she perceived a white beard and a white wig. These she immediately thrust into her pocket, and listened intently for several minutes. But, hearing nothing, she began feel-

ing the inner walls, tapping and pushing them with the tips of her fingers. After much exertion and trouble, she was rewarded by finding that, at the corner opposite the entrance of the cave, the wall gave way and yielded to her pushing. A roughly made door swung back and revealed an inner cave. For a minute she stood irresolute. Should she go on, or not? Her heart beat so fast and so hard that she could hardly breathe freely. But the thought that her husband's whole future and the recovery of his money depended on her courage roused her to new energy. Without another doubt, she took a small end of candle out of her pocket, lit it at the torch, and plunged into the adjoining cave. This cave had an open door leading into another cave, and although she examined every corner and crevice, she could find nothing. She wandered through several caves, and though dreading every minute lest she should meet the man or men who were at work there somewhere (for of that she felt convinced), she kept on going forward and searching every place through which she passed. At last there was a faint murmur of voices in the distance. She stopped and listened eagerly. There were several voices, for she could distinguish the different tones. Blowing out her bit of candle she stole nearer and nearer to the sounds until she saw a light not very far from her. Towards this she crept on her hands and knees. Stealthily, and without any noise, and although the stone floor of the cave was deadly cold, she made her way to the corner of the cave nearest to the company, where through the open doorway she could see one half of the next cave.

For a moment she was dazzled by the splendour. In one corner, piled up in a great heap, were satins of richest colours, gold plate of all kinds, swords, jewels,

and everything which would naturally fall into the net of the robber. In the light of the torches which were placed in iron rings all round the walls of the cave, these treasures glittered and blazed into the eyes of the poor woman, who was watching outside in the cold cavern, till she felt faint and sick with mingled fear, curiosity, and covetousness.

She noticed, in spite of her anxiety and excitement, that the floor of the cave where the men sat was covered several inches deep with sand. From her position she could see three or four men seated on cushions round some object, whether a table or not she could not make out. She listened very carefully, and putting two and two together, what she saw with what she heard, in the distinct differences of intonation and voice, she concluded that ten men sat in the inner cave.

Opposite to her, at the head of the table, sat a man whose eyes she recognized at once, for they were those of the fraile to whom she had so often confessed.

“Ah! perfidious one!” she said in a whisper to herself, “to think that I should have confessed my small and insignificant sins to you, while you had deeper transgressions on your soul! Well, I have my revenge upon you now.” Here she put her hand in her pocket and felt the wig and beard of the supposed hermit, which she had secured.

The robbers were as merry as larks, and every now and then the man with the bright glassy eyes blew a peculiar note on an old horn which he kept close beside him. Every time that he sounded this horn, the company laughed long and loud. Maria had often heard this sound before, and wondered what it could be. Among the peasants of Lodosa she knew that there was a superstition existing, that these caves were

haunted because of this peculiar sound, which occurred only at night. And, now that she knew how it was produced, the whole thing was clear to her. In a flash she understood that these men were robbers, and that they had sounded the horn expressly to make people believe that the caves were haunted after dark. It answered their purpose admirably, and kept curious and timid people away.

“But, brothers, it is late, and dawn will soon break,” said the hermit. “We must make haste over the business that still remains to be done. I have had information that a rich man, with his family, will pass here to-morrow on his road to Calahorra. He is moving into a new place, and will therefore have all his transportable property with him. We will help to lighten his responsibility and care, and be on the road to greet him on his way. At midnight we will meet at the usual place to-morrow. Let us go, and adios.”

With this the others rose; two or three of the robbers went to the corner of the cave, opposite to where the booty was lying in a heap, and after scraping away all the sand for three or four inches square, Maria saw one of them pull up an iron ring in the floor, while the others gathered up the satins and jewels and bright glittering things and threw them down the trap-door. Then extinguishing all the torches except two, after a few minutes they separated. Maria trembled and shuddered, when she thought what her fate would be if she were discovered. She crept very quietly on hands and knees to the farthest and darkest corner of the cave. She was only just in time, for the hermit passed through on his way back, with a lighted torch in his hand. But the cold air met the flame and blew it nearly out, so that she was not seen in her distant corner.

To her surprise, no one else followed ; but she heard the tread of feet going the other way, and the voices of the other men dying away in the distance. She therefore concluded that there must be another door into the open air than that by which she had come. She was thankful for this, because her heart sank within her, now that the excitement was over, at the thought of how she could slip away unseen. If she had been obliged to go back the same way by which she had come, the hermit would not scruple to murder her—a defenceless woman. He would by that time have discovered the loss of his wig and beard, and would be pitiless. She took a flint and stone from her pocket and carefully relighted her little end of candle, and passed through into the next cave. All round the cave the walls were of stone, and apparently very strong and thick. But remembering her experience in the hermit's cave, and that she had found a door in even that apparently solid rock, she immediately felt and tapped the outer side of this cave, and after a few minutes (during which she trembled all over and her knees quaked, lest the hermit should return and find her there), she felt the wall move, and a door swung silently back, and she found herself, to her great joy and relief, out in the open road. She carefully pushed the door back into its place, and, still with the fear of the hermit's pursuit, she scrambled down the rough and rocky path, skirted on both sides by thick brushwood and small fir-bushes. She hid herself behind one of the latter, dreading to hear footsteps behind her. But after listening with a beating heart for several minutes, and hearing nothing, she crept noiselessly out from her hiding-place and got into the dusty highway.

At first Maria was much bewildered to discover

where she was. The country about did not look like any that she had seen before. The moon was still shining, but not as clearly as when she climbed the hill to the cave where the hermit lived. For great dark masses of cloud completely eclipsed the moon every few minutes, as she sailed calmly through the sky to her setting.

There are two small villages between Lodosa and Calahorra, the one, named Sartaguda, being perched up on a hill, and the second, Murillejo, being surrounded by olive woods. Between the glimpses of moonlight, Maria could see the white houses of a village on the top of a hill opposite, and realized at once that she was half-way to Calahorra. She was very tired after the excitement and fright which she had undergone. But she was a peasant, and brought up to hard work. She sat down beside the roadside, to think over what she should do. Her husband was away, and would be for some days. As far as she was concerned, she could as well postpone her journey to Calahorra till another day. But this robbery was to take place at midnight on the following night. So she had no time to lose if she wished to give information to the authorities at Calahorra and return to catch the robbers.

She therefore decided to go on and finish the work which she had undertaken. But, first, she gathered an armful of brushwood and placed it alongside of the road, and underneath the low-hanging branches of one of the fir-bushes opposite this pile she tied the red handkerchief from round her neck, so that she could mark the place where one of the entrances of the cave was to be found.

Then she walked quickly along the road to Calahorra. She met not a soul, and the loneliness and solitude frightened her. She was always dreading

lest any of the robbers should have been watching her movements, and should unexpectedly jump out upon her and murder her. No one would be the wiser.

At last the sun rose and streamed over hill and dale, and in the distance the poor tired Maria spied the walls and houses of Calahorra.

As soon as the court-house was open she went there, and told her story to the magistrate who happened to be listening to complaints that day. He looked rather incredulous at first; but as she went on and described the caves, her stay there all night, all that she had seen, and finally brought out the false beard and white wig, and told of the new violent robbery which was planned for that night at twelve, the magistrate's eyes glistened, and he said:

“Young woman, if you will conduct the party, and if your words are true, you shall be well rewarded. We have long been looking for the Hermit, as you call him, and although we suspected much evil of him, we have had no proof. Leave me these,” pointing to the beard and wig, “and at twilight you shall conduct a guard of soldiers to the place which you have described.”

“But, señor, a guard of soldiers will not be enough. For there are two entrances, and they may have agreed to meet elsewhere. The words were, ‘At the usual place,’ and that might be as far off as the village beyond Lodosa.”

“Never fear,” returned the magistrate; “all shall be provided for.”

And Maria was forced to be satisfied.

When she started at night, with a large guard, the officer commanding it said:

“Show us both the entrances—that is all you have to do. For the rest, I have my orders, and you have no responsibility.”

Maria felt much relieved by this assurance, and conducted the men until they came to the little heap of brushwood. Here they stopped and examined the bushes carefully. There she at last found her red handkerchief, and quietly led the way to the cave. Here a sufficient number of men were left on guard. The others then, with Maria, continued their way till they reached the ordinary path which led to the Hermit's Cave. Here the officer and Maria, with a large body of men, remained watching and hidden in the brushwood, while the rest went on to the village beyond Lodosa.

They waited until one o'clock struck from the bell-tower of the Lodosa church. They heard nothing in the shape of a vehicle coming towards Lodosa, and naturally concluded that their friends had met with a desperate resistance and that very likely both the occupants of the carriage and the soldiers were the victims of a disastrous fate.

An agreement had been made with the men who were left at the other entrance that a large bonfire should be made of brushwood, in the road, if any sound were made inside the cave. Then those at the Hermit's Cave were to enter and meet the others at the dining-room of the cave, and that a part should be told off to protect the trap-door of treasure, of which Maria had spoken to them.

While they were waiting, therefore, in great anxiety and perplexity, Maria saw the flaring light of the bonfire against the sky. She crept out of her hiding-place and called the men. She lit a torch and let them through the caves which she knew so well; and when they got to the last cave of all, they heard the murmur of voices. Evidently a consultation was going on as to what they should do next. Silently the soldiers filed into the cave, while the robbers stood confounded and uncertain, taken

so completely by surprise. Silently some covered the trap-door to which Maria led without a word. Quietly she went to the opposite corner of the cave, pushed open the door, and admitted the remainder of the guard.

The robbers, taken utterly by surprise, could do nothing. They saw that with such odds against them they could not hope to gain anything, and succumbed without resistance. Maria showed the soldiers the trick of the subterranean cave, in which they found plenty of booty, which they secured and carried back along with the prisoners to Calahorra. The Hermit, when he saw Maria, gave a cry of recognition.

“Is it possible,” he said, “that you, a mere woman, have found me out when for so many years I have deceived all the men?”

“When a woman with any wit about her has had her husband robbed, and that husband returns from a visit to his confessor, telling of a loose wig and beard and a young man in the fraile’s cave, naturally the wife puts two and two together and watches,” snapped Maria in reply; and the Hermit, to the marvel of all his followers, merely bowed his head and said not a word.

After collecting all the treasure that could be found, the prisoners were marched back to Calahorra between files of soldiers. Maria returned to her own home, and a few days after her husband returned.

When he came back, he found everyone discussing the fact that the fraile had for some time utterly disappeared from Lodosa. Where he had gone no one could say. But there had been a dreadful robbery committed beyond Lodosa, and since then he had not been heard of.

“He has been murdered at last,” thought simple Manuel, and, when he went home, retailed to Maria all

that he had gathered in the market-place. Maria did not say much, or seem much astonished, when he told her this (to him) extraordinary and inexplicable news.

“I always told you that the fraile was a fraud,” she said scornfully, “and that some time or other he would come to a bad end.”

And there the matter dropped between them. Not by a word or a gesture or a sign of any kind did Maria show that she knew anything more than her neighbours and her husband, *i.e.*, that the hermit had mysteriously disappeared; and not one of the many to whom Maria spoke of the affair suspected for a minute that she really knew more and could tell more than they, who thought that she heard the news for the first time. She thought a great deal over everything that had passed before her husband returned, and decided that until something more happened she would hold her tongue. That something else *would* happen before very long she felt quite sure, and therefore she waited. And she was not mistaken.

Manuel was much startled one day by a poor old man, who said he had come from the Calahorra prison and had a message for him from the Fraile Bartolomé. Would he come to see him at the prison in Calahorra, for he had something to tell him? Manuel, much alarmed and taken aback that his friend should be in prison after all, eagerly asked the messenger for particulars. But he, old and very deaf, could tell him nothing more than the message that had been entrusted to him. But Maria came up at this moment, and, touching Manuel on the shoulder, said:

“Wait till the man has gone, and I will tell thee all that has happened.”

After making him promise to tell no one until she gave him leave, Maria then explained to Manuel

everything that had occurred, and her share in the affair.

He, timid soul, was more frightened than ever, and fell back upon his wife for advice as to what he should do about accepting the fraile's invitation to visit him.

"I will go with thee," she replied promptly, "for I am also summoned by the authorities to come to Calahorra and receive the reward which was promised to me, if I conducted the party in safety, and if what I said was true. As it has all turned out as I believed and expected, there will be no difficulty. But when thou goest to the Hermit, I will go with thee. As thou knowest, every piece of cloth will not make a sail; and I trust him not. Having injured thee once, I feel sure that he will revenge himself upon thee."

Manuel was so stupefied at all that Maria had told him, that he thankfully accepted the offer of her company. They therefore started together on their journey to Calahorra, especially as Maria had said there would be no difficulty about the reward due to her; and after receiving this she accompanied her husband to the prison.

The cell in which the hermit-robber had been placed was very small; it was lighted by a window at the very top of the wall, by which they saw the Hermit chained hand and foot to a stone bench, against the wall. His eyes were as bright and as restless as ever, and when he caught sight of Maria and Manuel a smile of satisfaction came over his face, and Manuel recognised in him, to his amazement, the young man whom he had met in the cave.

The Hermit broke the silence by saying, "So you have come at last!"

"Yes," answered Manuel, "I am here as you see. What is it you want of me?"

For a long time the Hermit said no more ; he sat as if he were thinking over things very quietly to himself ; then he said :

“ As I helped to rob you, I wish to tell you where you will find something that will repay you. All my comrades in the robbery were hung this morning, and I, as their leader, shall not have many hours to live. Not another human being knows what I am going to tell you. In the end cave, which your wife knows, you will find in the floor a trap-door with an iron ring. Maria knows well where to look for it ; but she does not know that by going down a flight of steps she will find a larger cave, with the same sort of swing-door in the wall as in the place above. This door leads into a small room, and whatever treasure you find there is yours. There is no more to be said. Go ! ”

Manuel and Maria followed the instructions given, and on becoming possessed of the treasure determined to quit the poor village of Lodosa, and went to live at Valencia, where they bought a farm and grew prosperous and wealthy.

The robber-chief was executed very shortly after, but he is still spoken of in Lodosa as the “ Hermit of the Rock.”

XXX.

THE GOLDEN PITCHER.

I.

THE province of Soria is, next to that of Granada, famous in Spain for picturesque legends. It is one of the smallest and most arid of the Peninsula, and the climate is the coldest imaginable in the sunny south. Chains of mountains encircle deep valleys, picturesque in their form, but unattractive from their sterility. In certain parts the vegetation is strong and rich, and here and there rise great stretches of pine and oak forests. In other parts lie immense pasture grounds, formerly overspread by flocks of sheep; but the greater part of the country consists of nothing but bare mountains which are covered with snow for a great part of the year. The huge masses of granite tower above on each side of the pathway, and every here and there deep ravines and cascades supply the springs, in which the water is supposed to be extraordinarily good. The children of the inhabitants near these springs are employed to fetch the water for the household, and there is a superstition existing among them that those of the little ones who are the best and the purest will one day come upon a treasure hidden in the mountain.

Carmenita Todega was the daughter of a well-to-do farmer of Soria; her mother had died when she was born, and thus ended a contention which had lasted

all through her married life ; for Miguel Todega had married, to please himself, a sweet and pretty woman, but she was poor, and so had not satisfied his old mother's ambition. The latter died soon after her daughter-in-law, and Carmenita was brought up by an aunt who detested her for her mother's sake, for not only did she resemble her in mind and spirit, but also in face and figure. One would have thought that a little baby like that might have softened the heart of even a stone ; but Juana Todega had no heart, and she said she had no time for sentimentality of that kind. She herself had worked hard in her youth, and she meant that Carmenita should do the same. She was a grasping, mischievous, hard-featured woman, with a sour temper and a sharp tongue, and all little Carmenita's peccadilloes were treated with the utmost harshness.

If Miguel Todega had been much at home he would have seen how his child was treated, but he was constantly absent on business, and Carmenita never complained. She adored her father, who loved her passionately, not only because she was his only daughter, but because she resembled so much the beloved Carmen, the love of his youth, whom he had lost.

The little child obeyed her aunt's orders, and did her work well ; but sometimes there was a weary and pathetic look on her face, which plainly said that her tasks were beyond her strength. But she never murmured or showed any temper, so people took no notice, and thought that all was right in that household.

Every morning and evening, Carmenita was sent by her aunt with two heavy copper jars to a spring about half a mile from the house. There was a large black mountain which reared its huge mass behind the little spring in the valley, and which was fed by the cascades and mountain torrents. The mountain was called by

the peasants "El Diablo," because it was dark and forbidding-looking, because it wore a curious cap whenever a storm was coming on, and therefore must have dealings and understandings with the Evil One, and because strange and uncanny noises were constantly heard near it after dark. Almost everyone feared to go to this particular spring after nightfall, because of these noises. But Juana Todega scorned the idea of superstitions, and insisted that the little Carmen should go and get water at the spring of El Diablo. And though the child was sometimes awed by the grandeur and loneliness of the mountains near by, she preferred going there to staying at home and being scolded and beaten by her aunt.

Carmenita was a great favourite among the other children of the village, and when she could have a little leisure from her usual dreary tasks, she was always as welcome as the flowers. But there were times (if her aunt had been unusually severe, and if, unable to bear the accumulation of misery poured upon her, she had cried until her eyes were all red and swollen) when she preferred to be alone. Then she would take her bit of knitting and retire to the spring of El Diablo to think over her trouble, and calm her wounded spirit to bear whatever else was in store for her.

She had often heard the curious superstition attached to the mountains about the Soria, but she never thought much about the possible treasure to be found, because she was not, she felt quite sure, good enough for such fortune.

Her father's return home was always an unmixed delight, for besides the pleasure of seeing him and being with him, Juana Todega was then more merciful to her. She knew from experience how angry Miguel could get if he were once roused, and she did not dare to scold

or maltreat his daughter before his very eyes. So Carmenita always had a respite from her aunt's tongue and evil temper while her father remained at home.

And so matters continued until Carmenita was seventeen. She was very like her mother, and made her father sigh as he looked at her. Graceful and shapely, with sweet deep grey eyes and a fresh clear voice, she made many a man's heart turn within him, as she passed on her way to El Diablo with her water-jars, and answered to his greeting with her sunny smile and a few pleasant words.

It was St. John's Eve, and there was to be a dance on the village green to finish the day. Carmenita danced well, with a step as light as a fairy's; and all the youths of the neighbourhood vied with each other in securing her as a partner for at least two dances. She enjoyed these fête-days, when she was free from her duties and drudgery, and could unbend in mere enjoyment and delight, sure that her aunt would not be near to scold and find fault, according to her usual wont. For Doña Juana did not approve of anything like holiday-making. In *her* day, she used to say, no one thought of dancing and frolicking about like lambs and goats. A quiet walk and mass in the morning, with a few friends to chat with in the evening, was all the fête that was necessary for a young, well-conducted peasant-girl like Carmenita, when *she* was young. So she always declined accompanying Carmenita to any of these little merry-makings, but deputed a neighbour—an elderly and respectable peasant woman, with daughters of her own, to take her under her care. The neighbour was nothing loath, for her son Carlos was much smitten with Carmenita's charms, and everyone said that they would make a match of it. In

truth they were a handsome pair, and each and all had nothing to say but good of either of them. Old Doña Ursula therefore considered Carmenita already as another daughter, and was, if possible, prouder of her than of her own girls.

On this particular St. John's Eve, Carmenita dressed herself with especial care. In a few weeks, when her father returned, her betrothal to Carlos would take place, and this would be the last time that she would be free to dance with whom she liked, and be her own mistress. She knew that she should see Carlos there, and she felt a pride in making herself as pretty as she could, knowing that her lover would be doubly proud of her.

Just as she was ready to start for Doña Ursula's house, her Aunt Juana called to her, and said :

"It is not nearly dark yet, and there will be no dancing for an hour or more. We have not a drop of water in the house, and there will be plenty of time for you to go and get the water and return."

Carmenita looked ready to cry, as she listened to her aunt's words.

"Is it absolutely necessary for me to go, Tia Juana?" she said, "for I have put on my Sunday clothes, and I shall get them splashed at the spring."

"You never have been splashed before, and if you are careful you need not be now," was Juana's answer. "But have the water we must; for it is hot weather, and we need it."

"But for once could you not get it yourself?" pleaded Carmenita. "I do so want to go to the Plaza; and Carlos will be waiting for me."

Whereupon Juana burst out upon poor Carmenita with a torrent of abuse mingled with curses. For a moment Carmenita stood speechless, and as though she had

been stunned. She had been accustomed to her aunt's unseemly language from her childhood, and she did not mind the words and oaths which she used; but the disappointment was very great, almost more than she could bear, and her eyes filled with tears, which she kept from brimming over by sheer force of will.

Without another word she took up her jars and departed on her errand. Doña Ursula lived quite at the other end of the village from her, and so she could not stop and give her warning that she might be late. But she hoped that she might, if she hurried, get to the Plaza in time to keep her appointment with Carlos.

But the hours slipped by, and still Carmenita did not appear. Doña Ursula and her daughters waited until the daylight faded away, and the stars came out one by one. But still no Carmenita. At last they could wait no longer, and went on to the Plaza, thinking that perhaps she would be there. But she was nowhere to be seen, although Carlos wandered about like a lost spirit, and searched among the many groups of peasants who had come for the festival and the dancing.

At first he was angry with Carmenita, thinking that she had deceived him; but as the evening came to an end he became alarmed, and went to Miguel Todega's house in the hope of finding her. But he found Juana instead, frightened, as it seemed, nearly out of her wits, and walking up and down the kitchen wringing her hands and tearing her hair.

"Oh, Carlos, I cannot find her!" cried she, when she saw him standing in the doorway. "I was cruel and cross, and, in spite of her entreaties to go to the dance in the Plaza, I sent her to fetch water at El Diablo; and she went without a murmur, although I know that she thought me hard. But when in an hour she did not return, I was fearful of what I had done,

and went to find her. At the best of times, as you know, El Diablo is not a cheerful place, and the loneliness and desolation along that road was awful. When I got to the spring, I found the jars beside it on the brink, but no Carmenita. I called and whistled, and walked up and down, shrieking her name with all my might. No one could I see, and not a sound could I hear. All of a sudden I heard the tramp of horses' feet, and on looking in the direction of the sound I saw a procession of horses mounted by the stillest and palest of men, who turned their heads neither to the right nor to the left, but continued straight along in a stately march on the high-road. They wore curious twisted handkerchiefs on their heads, and were not dressed like anyone I ever saw before. They did not see me, for I was hidden behind a rock. After they had passed, I called and called to Carmenita, but she did not come; so I came home again. If those ghostly-looking men saw her, no one knows what her fate might be. And it is all my fault. Kill me if you like, Carlos; for what shall I say to Miguel when he returns?—I, who have been the cause of some harm to Carmenita!" And she sobbed and cried and wrung her hands as if no one were present.

Carlos had listened to Juana's long speech with wonderment. It was the longest harangue that he had ever heard her make, for she was usually a singularly taciturn person with her neighbours. But when she mentioned the procession of ghostly people whom she had seen, his cheek turned pale and he staggered into a chair; for he remembered that it was the Eve of St. John, and the night when all good Moors, wherever buried, rise from their resting-places and go to do homage to their king in Granada. What if they had taken Carmenita along with them?

For some time he stared at her in silence, but his anger at last overcame him, and he overwhelmed Juana with reproaches.

“Accursed woman !” he cried, “you have been the torment and slave-driver of my poor girl. All her life you have made her miserable when her father was not near to see how you treated her. And now, on this night, when you knew, as all Spaniards do know, that the spirits of the dead are free to go about the earth as on the night of All Hallowe’en, you forced her to go to the spring of El Diablo for your own caprice, and because you wished to curtail her innocent pleasure, in which you can take no part. If anything happens to Carmenita, I shall hold you responsible, and shall charge you publicly with her death.”

With these words he rushed out of the house, leaving Juana pale as a ghost, wringing her hands and speechless with terror.

Carlos meanwhile made his way towards the spring of El Diablo. The moon was sailing through an unclouded sky. Every rock and tuft of grass were as clearly seen as if it were noontide. He looked along the road anxiously to see whether his beloved Carmenita were in sight ; but not a soul could be seen along the bright, straight, dusty highway. When he reached the spring to which Carmenita was in the habit of going, he could see by the moonlight the water-jars which she had brought, filled to the very brim, and standing just where she had placed them ready to take home. In vain he wandered about in search of her in the defiles and paths of the mountain, calling her name. The echoes alone answered him, and no one appeared, and he could find no traces of his beloved Carmenita.

After searching for some hours alone near the dreadful mountain, hearing the trampling of horses’ feet, and

groans all about him, but seeing nothing, he returned home. On his way, however, he stopped and told Juana Todega of what he had heard, and of his ill-success. She seemed to be almost a mad creature, and sprang at him when he entered, caught him by the wrist and shoulder and shook him, her eyes glaring at him like a she-bear deprived of her young.

“Well—have you found her? Where is she?” she cried. And when he made no answer she shook him again. “Speak!” she almost shrieked. “Have you found her—or is she dead? Speak! or I will be the death of you as you stand.”

Carlos was so weak from anxiety and misery that he could only shake his head, yet with such a fierce expression in his eyes that involuntarily Juana let go her hold of him and recoiled into the farthest corner of the room, standing at bay as if she were afraid of him.

But, in less time than it takes to tell it, he had lifted the latch of the door and had gone away from her.

Meanwhile Carmenita was in no danger, although she had missed the fête, and had caused all this alarm to her aunt and lover.

She had gone as usual to the spring of El Diablo, had filled her jars, and was preparing to return home, when she heard a sound of horses' feet, and she saw a long procession of horses with riders upon them dressed in curious costumes and trappings, who passed her in solemn and stately dignity. For a few minutes she was astonished, and looked on in childlike delight. But as the procession of pallid, stately faces came near her and passed her, she suddenly felt cold and paralyzed with fear. What for, she knew not, and could not understand, but she trembled in every limb, and her teeth chattered even on that warm June evening. After the procession had passed she came to herself, and

was preparing to take up her jars and start for home, the Plaza, and Carlos, when she felt a hand laid on her arm, and on turning round saw a beautiful woman, with a lovely fair face and golden hair, and the most enchanting blue eyes that she had ever beheld. She was very pale, and stood looking earnestly at her for several minutes after their eyes met. At last she said, in a low sweet voice :

“ I have been looking for you a long time. Will you come and help me in a very serious difficulty ? It will not take you very long, and I have waited for years for you. For *you* the few minutes will be nothing, but for me they will be an eternity.”

Carmenita was much disturbed in her mind when she heard these words, and thought to herself :

“ I am fated not to get to the Plaza and to Carlos to-night ; but if I can help this poor soul, who has waited so long for me, I have not the heart to refuse.”

“ Carlos can wait,” replied the fair woman, answering her thoughts. And when Carmenita started at finding the inward workings of her mind so well known to her companion, and turned towards her, the beautiful blue eyes were fixed upon her, sad with the sadness of death. “ Do not refuse me,” she said, in a faint whisper, “ but come with me.”

And without a word Carmenita followed her, leaving the water-jars at the brink of the stream.

They walked for nearly a mile without saying a word, the fair woman walking, or rather gliding in front, and Carmenita following. Where she was going, or what she was to do when she got to her destination, never troubled her mind. She felt that she could be of use to this fair proud woman, so strange and distant in her manner, who knew all about Carlos, and had assured her that he could wait. That surely meant that she

would be safe, and return to him in a little while. Suddenly her guide turned. The rocks opened at her touch, and she walked into a large cave, black as night.

“Shut your eyes and give me your hand,” said her companion, “and rest assured that no harm of any kind shall befall you.”

Carmenita felt so sure that her guide would keep her word, that without a doubt she shut her eyes and put her hand in that of the beautiful lady. She noticed that it was as cold as ice, but the clasp was firm, almost like a vice, and hurt her a little.

They seemed to go through several large rooms, and at last her companion stopped short.

“Open your eyes now,” she said; “we are in a place where we can speak without being overheard.

Carmenita looked about her, and saw with astonishment that the walls glittered like ice, and that every here and there there seemed a tinge of gold mixed with it.

“Sit down here near me,” said her new friend, “and I will tell you what you can do for me. You can free me from my dreadful bondage. Centuries ago I lived in the flesh. I am Moorish, and was taken prisoner by the Christians in the wars with the Moors. I loved my Christian master, and cheerfully left my own people for his sake, following him to his country and repudiating my ancestors and their religion. My father cursed me with his last breath, and wished that I might never find rest for my soul till some pure young guileless maiden should on St. John’s Eve willingly kiss my lips, and of her own sweet charity free my wandering and unhappy spirit. Are you willing to do this for me? Remember that I shall have to take various forms before my spirit will be liberated, but pray be faithful and stand by me to the end. Nothing can harm you, if you

keep repeating your prayers. But do not for one minute stop or be afraid. So many have promised, but I have been disappointed hitherto, and still remain under this accursed spell. Hold this pitcher in your left hand, tight, and don't let it go. It will bring you fortune; but never cease your prayers for one minute, nor be frightened at anything you may hear or see. And, above all, do not answer to any question, or cry out, lest you may not hear. Remember that my life is in your hands, and be faithful."

"I will," said Carmenita, grasping the curious dark bronze-looking pitcher in her left hand, and beginning her prayers.

Suddenly her companion changed into a black ape, and sat beside her. The cave was filled full with other large black apes, who chattered and grinned at her and at each other. This lasted about five minutes: to Carmenita they seemed five hours. But she grasped her pitcher tightly in her left hand, and repeated her prayers as earnestly and fervently as she could. She tried to shut out the grinning, ugly faces, but to her horror she found that she *could* not shut her eyes. She was obliged to see everything that happened that night.

Suddenly she heard the tramp of horses' feet, but she could see nothing; but every now and then there would be a call of "Mona" (monkey), followed by peals of laughter and shouts of derision. Then for a time everything was quiet, excepting that the apes still grinned and chattered at her. Suddenly she heard her own name called, in Carlos' voice: "Carmenita, Carmenita!" it cried; "where are you, my love? I am looking for you, and am wild with terror."

She started up eagerly, but still grasped the pitcher in her left hand. In an instant more she would have

answered Carlos, had she not felt a hand on her arm, and caught sight of the piteous and beseeching look in the eyes of the poor ape sitting beside her. "Carlos can wait!" came into her mind; she said her prayers out loud, as fast as she could, so that she might not hear that dear voice calling her in vain. Again after a time all was still. She turned round to look at her friend, when to her horror she found that instead of a monkey's shape sitting beside her, there was that of a devil, and lo and behold the cave was filled with devils, all dancing and laughing and jeering at her.

"Indeed I have fallen into strange quarters," was the thought that crossed her mind as she continued her prayers; but somehow, though she tried to speak fast, her tongue seemed tied. She still managed to articulate, however, and grasped the pitcher in her left hand all the more tightly. The little devil at her side suddenly burst out into flames, and through the fire Carmenita could see her beautiful guide taking human shape again.

"Kiss me on the lips now," whispered a faint voice at her side.

"Gloria in excelsis Deo!" cried Carmenita, as she stooped forward, and in spite of the heat of the flames she kissed the poor creature who had wandered so long upon earth under a curse. The sound echoed through the cave; a sudden darkness came over Carmenita, and an irresistible sleepiness overpowered her. When she awoke, she was lying on the brink of the spring of El Diablo, her two water-jars by her side, but grasping in her left hand a golden pitcher, of antique shape and exquisite Oriental workmanship.

The dawn was breaking, and the birds were beginning their morning song, when Carmenita turned her face homewards.

On the road she met Carlos, looking dishevelled and unhappy. She smiled at him, but at first he could hardly believe his senses. Then he caught her in his arms ; he kissed her, and laughed, and cried over her by turns.

“O mi amor, mi corazon, where have you been? The spirits have been merciful and sent you back to me, for they knew that I should die without shriving if you were not with me to make me as pure and good as yourself.”

Carmenita then told him all that had happened to her. When she showed him the golden pitcher, lo ! it was full of gold coins. In his eagerness he put his hand into the pitcher to grasp the money, and brought out pebbles. But when Carmenita put hers inside, she drew out a handful of gold pieces.

“Ah,” cried Carlos, “only the pure in heart can touch it and keep the pitcher bright. I have learned my lesson ;” and he kissed Carmenita more tenderly and reverently than ever before, knowing that he had won a rare treasure for his wife.

She, simple child, wondered but said nothing. On reaching home she found her aunt Juana in great distress of mind, wringing her hands and tearing her hair, rocking herself from side to side, wondering how she should dare to face Miguel and tell him that through her fault harm had come to Carmenita, and that she was lost to them for ever. There was great rejoicing in the household, as may be imagined, when Carlos led Carmenita triumphantly into the house. In her own mind Juana Todega made splendid resolutions that she would never be unkind or cross again. The pitcher was placed in a niche where everyone could see it. Of course the whole village crowded to see this wonderful

relic, and everyone said with all his heart that no one deserved such good fortune as Carmenita.

Miguel's return home was still delayed. All went on in the usual routine, and the adventure at El Diablo gradually became an old story. Carmenita took her water-jars to the spring every day, and went through her usual drudgery.

One day, when Carmenita was out at El Diablo, the devil entered into Juana's heart. She was all alone in the house, and no one would know what she was doing, she thought. She did not know the secret of the pitcher, but had noticed that when Carmenita wanted any money she only went and put her hand in and drew out what she wanted. So, tempted by the demon, she went to the pitcher, which looked of a dull bronze colour, and put her hand in. She drew it out very quickly with a loud cry, and found her hand covered with red ants, which had bit and stung her sharply before she could get to the pail of water and drown them. For days she went about with her hand bound up, swollen to twice its usual size. But she was warned by this experience, and never tampered with Carmenita's golden pitcher again.

In the course of time Miguel returned to his house, and a few weeks after Carmenita and her faithful Carlos were married. They went to Barcelona to live, and Carlos in course of time bought a large silk manufactory there. One of the most conspicuous things in their house is the Golden Pitcher, which is said not to have lost all its virtues.

THE END.



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