

## THE ADVENTURE OF THE MASON

**T**HERE was once upon a time a poor mason or bricklayer in Granada, who kept all the Saints' days and holidays and Saint Monday into the bargain, and yet with all his devotion he grew poorer and poorer and could scarcely earn bread for his numerous family. One night he was roused from his first sleep by a knocking at his door. He opened it, and beheld before him a tall, meagre, cadaverous looking priest.

«Hark ye, honest friend!» said the stranger, «I have observed that you are a good Christian and one to be trusted; will you undertake a job this very night?»

«With all my heart, *señor padre*, on condition that I am paid accordingly.»

«That you shall be, but you must suffer yourself to be blindfolded.»

To this the mason made no objection. So, being hoodwinked, he was led by the priest through various rough lanes and winding passages, until they stopped before the portal of a house. The priest then applied a key, turned a creaking lock and opened what sounded like a ponderous door. They entered, the door was closed and bolted, and the mason was conducted through an echoing corridor and a spacious hall to an interior part of the building. Here the bandage was removed from his eyes and he found himself in a *patio* or court, dimly lighted by

a single lamp. In the centre was the dry basin of an old Moorish fountain, under which the priest requested him to form a small vault, bricks and mortar being at hand for the purpose. He accordingly worked all night, but without finishing the job. Just before daybreak, the priest put a piece of gold into his hand and having again blindfolded him, conducted him back to his dwelling.

«Are you willing» said he, «to return and complete your work?»

«Gladly, *señor Padre*, provided I am so well paid.»

«Well, then, tomorrow at midnight I will call again.»

He did so, and the vault was completed.

«Now», said the priest, «you must help me to bring forth the bodies that are to be buried in this vault.»

The poor mason's hair rose on his head at these words: he followed the priest with trembling steps into a retired chamber of the mansion, expecting to behold some ghastly spectacle of death, but was relieved on perceiving three or four portly jars standing in one corner. They were evidently full of money and it was with great labour that he and the priest carried them forth and consigned them to their tomb. The vault was then closed, the pavement replaced, and all traces of the work obliterated. The mason was again hoodwinked and led forth by a route different from that by which he had come. After they had wandered for a long time through a perplexed maze of lanes and alleys, they halted. The priest then put two pieces of gold into his hand: 'Wait here', said he, 'until you hear the cathedral bell toll for matins. If you presume to uncover your eyes before that time, evil will befall you'. So saying, he departed. The mason waited faithfully, amusing himself by weighing the gold pieces in his hand and clinking them against each other. The moment the cathedral bell rang its matin peal, he uncovered his eyes and

found himself on the banks of the Xenil, whence he made the best of his way home and revelled with his family for a whole fortnight on the profits of his two nights work, after which he was as poor as ever.

He continued to work a little and pray a good deal and keep saints' days and holidays, from year to year, while his family grew up as gaunt and ragged as a crew of gypsies. As he was seated one evening at the door of his hovel, he was accosted by a rich old curmudgeon who was noted for owning many houses and being a griping landlord. The man of money eyed him for a moment from beneath a pair of anxious shagged eyebrows.

«I am told, friend, that you are very poor.»

«There is no denying the fact, *señor*, it speaks for itself.»

«I presume then, that you will be glad of a job, and will work cheap.»

«As cheap, my master, as any mason in Granada.»

«That's what I want. I have an old house fallen into decay, that costs me more money than it is worth to keep it in repair, for nobody will live in it, so I must contrive to patch it up and keep it together at as small expense as possible.»

The mason was accordingly conducted to a large deserted house that seemed going to ruin. Passing through several empty halls and chambers, he entered an inner court, where his eye was caught by an old Moorish fountain. He paused for a moment, for a dreaming recollection of the place came over him.

«Pray», said he, «who occupied this house formerly?»

«A pest upon him!» cried the landlord, «it was an old miserly priest, who cared for nobody but himself». He was said to be immensely rich and, having no relations, it was thought he would leave all his treasures to the Church. He died suddenly and the priests and friars thronged to take possession of his wealth, but nothing could they find but a few ducats in a leathern purse.

The worst luck has fallen on me, for since his death the old fellow continues to occupy my house without paying rent and there is no taking the law of a dead man. The people pretend to hear the clinking of gold all night in the chamber where the old priest slept, as if he were counting over his money, and sometimes a groaning and moaning about the court. Whether true or false, these stories have brought a bad name on my house and not a tenant will remain in it.

«Enough» said the mason sturdily: «let me live in your house rent-free until some better tenant present and I will engage to put it in repair, and to quiet the troubled spirit that disturbs it. I am a good Christian and a poor man, and am not to be daunted by the Devil himself, even though he should come in the shape of a big bag of money!»

The offer of the honest mason was gladly accepted; he moved with his family into the house, and fulfilled all his engagements. By little and little he restored it to its former state; the clinking of gold was no more heard at night in the chamber of the defunct priest, but began to be heard by day in the pocket of the living mason. In a word, he increased rapidly in wealth, to the admiration of all his neighbours and became one of the richest men in Granada. He gave large sums to the Church, by way, no doubt, of satisfying his conscience and never revealed the secret of the vault until on his death-bed to his son and heir.

## LEGEND OF THE THREE BEAUTIFUL PRINCESSES

IN old times there reigned a Moorish king in Granada whose name was Mohamed, to which his subjects added the appellation of *El Hayzari* or «The Left-handed». Some say he was so called on account of his being really more expert with his sinister than his dexter hand; others because he was prone to take everything by the wrong end or in other words to mar wherever he meddled. Certain it is either through misfortune or mismanagement, he was continually in trouble; thrice was he driven from his throne and on one occasion barely escaped to Africa with his life in the disguise of a fisherman. Still he was as brave as he was blundering and, though left-handed, wielded his scimitar to such purpose that he each time reestablished himself upon his throne by dint of hard fighting. Instead, however, of learning wisdom from adversity, he hardened his neck and stiffened his left arm in wilfulness. The evils of a public nature which he thus brought upon himself and his kingdom may be learned by those who will delve into the Arabian annals of Granada; the present legend deals but with his domestic policy.

As this Mohamed was one day riding forth with a train of his courtiers by the foot of the mountain of Elvira, he met a band of horsemen returning from a foray into the land of the Christians. They were conducting a long string of mules laden with spoil and many captives of both sexes, among whom the monarch was

struck with the appearance of a beautiful damsel, richly attired, who sat weeping on a low palfrey and heeded not the consoling words of a *dueña* who rode beside her.

The monarch was struck with her beauty and, on inquiring of the captain of the troop, found that she was the daughter of the *alcaide* of a frontier fortress that had been surprised and sacked in the course of the foray. Mohamed claimed her as his royal share of the booty and had her conveyed to his harem in the Alhambra. There everything was devised to soothe her melancholy and the monarch, more and more enamoured, sought to make her his queen. The Spanish maid at first repulsed his addresses—he was an infidel; he was the open foe of her country; what was worse, he was stricken in years!

The monarch, finding his assiduities of no avail, determined to enlist in his favour the *dueña* who had been captured with the lady. She was an Andalusian by birth, whose Christian name is forgotten, being mentioned in Moorish legends by no other appellation than that of the discreet Kadiga, and discreet in truth she was, as her whole history makes evident. No sooner had the Moorish king held a little private conversation with her than she saw at once the cogency of his reasoning and undertook his cause with her young mistress.

«Go to, now!» cried, she «what is there in all this to weep and wail about? Is it not better to be mistress of this beautiful palace with all its gardens and fountains than to be shut up within your father's old frontier tower? As to this Mohamed being an infidel, what is that to the purpose? You marry him, not his religion; and if he is waxing a little old, the sooner will you be a widow and mistress of yourself. At any rate, you are in his power, and must either be a queen or a slave. When in the hands of a robber, it is better to sell one's merchandise for a fair price than to have it taken by main force».

The arguments of the discreet Kadiga prevailed. The Spanish lady dried her tears and became the spouse of Mohamed the Left-handed; she even conformed in appearance to the faith of her royal husband and her discreet *dueña* immediately became a zealous convert to the Moslem doctrines. It was then the latter received the Arabian name of Kadiga and was permitted to remain in the confidential employ of her mistress.

In due process of time the Moorish king was made the proud and happy father of three lovely daughters, all born at a birth; he could have wished they had been sons, but consoled himself with the idea that three daughters at a birth were pretty well for a man somewhat stricken in years and left-handed!

As usual with all Moslem monarchs, he summoned his astrologers on this happy event. They cast the nativities of the three princesses and shook their heads. «Daughters, O King» said they, «are always precarious property, but these will most need your watchfulness when they arrive at a marriageable age; at that time gather them under your wings, and trust them to no other guardianship».

Mohamed the Left-handed was acknowledged to be a wise king by his courtiers and was certainly so considered by himself. The prediction of the astrologers caused him but little disquiet, trusting to his ingenuity to guard his daughters and outwit the Fates.

The threefold birth was the last matrimonial trophy of the monarch; his queen bore him no more children and died within a few years, bequeathing her infant daughters to his love and to the fidelity of the discreet Kadiga.

Many years had yet to elapse before the princesses would arrive at that period of danger—the marriageable age. «It is good, however, to be cautious in time», said the shrewd Monarch; so he determined to have them reared in the royal Castle of Salo-

breña. This was a sumptuous palace incrusted, as it were, in a powerful Moorish fortress, on the summit of a hill that overlooks the Mediterranean sea. It was a royal retreat, in which the Moslem monarchs shut up such of their relations as might endanger their safety, allowing them all kinds of luxuries and amusements, in the midst of which they passed their lives in voluptuous indolence.

Here the princesses remained, immured from the world, but surrounded by enjoyments and attended by female slaves who anticipated their wishes. They had delightful gardens for their recreation, filled with the rarest fruits and flowers, with aromatic groves and perfumed baths. On three sides the castle looked down upon a rich valley, enamelled with all kinds of culture and bounded by the lofty Alpuxarra Mountains; on the other side it overlooked the broad sunny sea.

In this delicious abode, in a propitious climate and under a cloudless sky, the three princesses grew up into wondrous beauty, but, though all reared alike, they gave early tokens of diversity of character. Their names were Zayda, Zorayda and Zorahayda, and such was their order of seniority, for there had been precisely three minutes between their births.

Zayda, the eldest, was of an intrepid spirit and took the lead of her sisters in everything, as she had done in entering first into the world. She was curious and inquisitive and fond of getting at the bottom of things.

Zorayda had a great feeling for beauty, which was the reason, no doubt, of the delighting to regard her own image in a mirror or a fountain, and of her fondness for flowers and jewels and other tasteful ornaments.

As to Zorahayda, the youngest, she was soft and timid and extremely sensitive, with a vast deal of disposable tenderness, as was evident from her number of pet-flowers and pet-birds and

pet-animals, all of which she cherished with the fondest care. Her amusements, too, were of a gentle nature and mixed up with musing and reverie. She would sit for hours in a balcony, gazing on the sparkling stars of a summer's night or on the sea when lit up by the moon, and at such times the song of a fisherman, faintly heard from the beach or the notes of a Moorish flute from some gliding bark, sufficed to elevate her feelings into ecstasy. The least uproar of the elements, however, filled her with dismay, and a clap of thunder was enough to throw her into a swoon.

Years rolled on smoothly and serenely; the discreet Kadiga, to whom the princesses were confided, was faithful to her trust and attended them with unremitting care.

The Castle of Salobreña, as has been said, was built upon a hill on the sea-coast. One of the exterior walls straggled down the profile of the hill, until it reached a jutting rock overhanging the sea with a narrow sandy beach at its foot, laved by the rippling billows. A small watch-tower on this rock had been fitted up as a pavilion with latticed windows to admit the sea-breeze. Here the princesses used to pass the sultry hours of mid-day.

The curious Zayda was one day seated at one of the windows of the pavilion, as her sisters reclining on ottomans were taking the *siesta* or noontide slumber. Her attention had been attracted to a galley which came coasting along with measured strokes of the oar. As it drew near, she observed that it was filled with armed men. The galley anchored at the foot of the tower; a number of Moorish soldiers landed on the narrow beach, conducting several Christian prisoners. The curious Zayda awakened her sisters and all three peeped cautiously through the close jalousies of the lattice which screened them from sight. Among the prisoners were three Spanish cavaliers, richly dressed. They were in the flower of youth and of noble presence, and the lofty

manner in which they carried themselves, though loaded with chains and surrounded with enemies, bespoke the grandeur of their souls. The princesses gazed with intense and breathless interest. Cooped up as they had been in this castle among female attendants, seeing nothing of the male sex but black slaves or the rude fishermen of the sea-coast, it is not to be wondered at that the appearance of three gallant cavaliers in the pride of youth and manly beauty should produce some commotion in their bosoms.

«Did ever nobler being tread the earth than that cavalier in crimson?» cried Zayda, the eldest of the sisters. «See how proudly he bears himself, as though all around him were his slaves!»

«But notice that one in green!» exclaimed Zorayda. «What grace! what elegance! what spirit!»

The gentle Zorahayda said nothing, but she secretly gave preference to the cavalier in blue.

The princesses remained gazing until the prisoners were out of sight; then heaving long-drawn sighs, they turned round looked at each other for a moment and sat down, musing and pensive on their ottomans.

The discreet Kadiga found them in this situation; they related to her what they had seen, and even the withered heart of the *dueña* was warmed. «Poor youths!» exclaimed she, «I'll warrant their captivity makes many a fair and highborn lady's heart ache in their native land. Ah! my children, you have little idea of the life these cavaliers lead in their own country. Such pranking at tournaments! Such devotion to the ladies! Such courting and serenading!»

The curiosity of Zayda was fully aroused; she was insatiable in her inquiries and drew from the *dueña* the most animated pictures of the scenes of her youthful days and native land. The beautiful Zorayda bridled up and slyly regarded herself in a mir-

ror, when the theme turned upon the charms of the Spanish ladies; while Zorahayda suppressed a struggling sigh at the mention of moonlight serenades.

Every day the curious Zayda renewed her inquiries and every day the sage *dueña* repeated her stories, which were listened to with profound interest, though with frequent sighs, by her gentle auditors. The discreet old woman at length awakened to the mischief she might be doing. She had been accustomed to think of the princesses only as children, but they had imperceptibly ripened beneath her eye and now bloomed before her three lovely damsels of the marriageable age. «It is time, thought the *dueña*, to give notice to the king».

Mohamed the Left-handed was seated one morning on a divan in one of the cool halls of the Alhambra, when a slave arrived from the fortress of Salobreña with a message from the sage Kadiga, congratulating him on the anniversary of his daughters' birth-day. The slave at the same time presented a delicate little basket decorated with flowers within which on a couch of vine and fig-leaves lay a peach, an apricot and a nectarine with their bloom and down and dewy sweetness upon them, and all in the early stage of tempting ripeness. The monarch was versed in the Oriental language of fruit and flowers, and readily divined the meaning of this emblematical offering.

«So», said he, «the critical period pointed out by the astrologers is arrived; my daughters are at a marriageable age. What is to be done? They are shut up from the eyes of men; they are under the eyes of the discreet Kadiga—all very good—but still they are not under my own eye, as was prescribed by the astrologers; I must gather them under my wing and trust to no other guardianship».

So saying, he ordered that a tower of the Alhambra should be prepared for their reception, and departed at the head of his

guards for the fortress of Salobreña to conduct them home in person.

About three years had elapsed since Mohamed had beheld his daughters and he could scarcely credit his eyes at the wonderful change which that small space of time had made in their appearance. During the interval they had passed that wondrous boundary line in female life which separates the crude, uniformed and thoughtless girl from the blooming, blushing, meditative woman. It is like passing from the flat, bleak, uninteresting plain of La Mancha, to the voluptuous valleys and swelling hills of Andalusia.

Zayda was tall and finely formed with a lofty demeanour and a penetrating eye. She entered with a stately and decided step, and made a profound reverence to Mohamed, treating him more as her sovereign than her father. Zorayda was of the middle height with an alluring look and swimming gait, and a sparkling beauty heightened by the assistance of the toilette. She approached her father with a smile, kissed his hand and saluted him with several stanzas from a popular Arabian poet with which the monarch was delighted. Zorahayda was shy and timid, smaller than her sisters and with a beauty of that tender beseeching kind which looks for fondness and protection. She was little fitted to command like her elder sister or to dazzle like the second, but was rather formed to creep to the bosom of manly affection, to nestle within it and be content. She drew near her father with a timid and almost faltering step, and would have taken his hand to kiss, but on looking up into his face and seeing it beaming with a paternal smile, the tenderness of her nature broke forth and she threw herself upon his neck.

Mohamed the Left-handed surveyed his blooming daughters with mingled pride and perplexity, for while he exulted in their charms, he bethought himself of the prediction of the astrolo-

gers. «Three daughters! three daughters!» muttered he repeatedly to himself, «and all of a marriageable age! Here's tempting Hesperian fruit, that requires a dragon watch!»

He prepared for his return to Granada by sending heralds before him, commanding every one to keep out of the road by which he was to pass, and that all doors and windows should be closed at the approach of the princesses. This done, he set forth, escorted by a troop of black horsemen of hideous aspect and clad in shining armour.

The princesses rode beside the king closely veiled on beautiful white palfreys with velvet caparisons embroidered with gold and sweeping the ground; the bits and stirrups were of gold, and the silken bridles adorned with pearls and precious stones. The palfreys were covered with little silver bells that made the most musical tinkling as they ambled gently along. Woe to the unlucky wight, however, who lingered in the way when he heard the tinkling of these bells!—the guards were ordered to cut him down without mercy.

The cavalcade was drawing near to Granada, when it overtook, on the banks of the river Xenil, a small body of Moorish soldiers with a convoy of prisoners. It was too late for the soldiers to get out of the way, so they threw themselves on their faces on the earth, ordering their captives to do the like. Among the prisoners were the three identical cavaliers whom the princesses had seen from the pavilion. They either did not understand or were too haughty to obey the order and remained standing and gazing upon the cavalcade as it approached.

The ire of the monarch was kindled at this flagrant defiance of his orders. Drawing his scimitar and pressing forward, he was about to deal a left-handed blow that would have been fatal to at least one of the gazers, when the princesses crowded round him and implored mercy for the prisoners; even the timid Zorayda

forgot her shyness and became eloquent on their behalf. Mohamed paused with uplifted scimitar, when the captain of the guard threw himself at his feet. «Let not your highness», said he, «do a deed that may cause great scandal throughout the kingdom. These are three brave and noble Spanish knights who have been taken in battle, fighting like lions; they are of high birth and may bring great ransoms». —«Enough!» said the king; «I will spare their lives, but punish their audacity—let them be taken to the Vermilion Towers and put to hard labour».

Mohamed was making one of his usual left-handed blunders. In the tumult and agitation of this blustering scene, the veils of the three princesses had been thrown back and the radiance of their beauty revealed, and in prolonging the parley, the king had given that beauty time to have its full effect. In those days people fell in love much more suddenly than at present, as all ancient stories make manifest; it is not a matter of wonder, therefore, that the hearts of the three cavaliers were completely captured, especially as gratitude was added to their admiration; it is a little singular, however, though no less certain, that each of them was enraptured with a several beauty. As to the princesses, they were more than ever struck with the noble demeanour of the captives and cherished in their breasts all that they had heard of their valour and noble lineage.

The cavalcade resumed its march; the three princesses rode pensively along on their tinkling palfreys, now and then stealing a glance behind in search of the Christian captives, and the latter were conducted to their allotted prison in the Vermilion Towers.

The residence provided for the princesses was one of the most dainty that fancy could devise. It was in a tower somewhat apart from the main palace of the Alhambra, though connected with it by the main wall that encircled the whole summit of the hill.

On one side it looked into the interior of the fortress, and had at its foot a small garden filled with the rarest flowers. On the other side it overlooked a deep embowered ravine that separated the grounds of the Alhambra from those of the Generalife. The interior of the tower was divided into small fairy apartments, beautifully ornamented in the light Arabian style, surrounding a lofty hall, the vaulted roof of which rose almost to the summit of the tower. The walls and ceiling of the hall were adorned with arabesques and fret-work, sparkling with gold and with brilliant pencilling. In the centre of the marble pavement was an alabaster fountain, set round with aromatic shrubs and flowers, and throwing up a jet of water that cooled the whole edifice and had a lulling sound. Round the hall were suspended cages of gold and silver wire, containing singing-birds of the finest plumage or sweetest note.

The princesses had been represented as always cheerful when in the Castle of Salobreña; the king had expected to see them enraptured with the Alhambra. To his surprise, however, they began to pine and grow melancholy and dissatisfied with everything around them. The flowers yielded them no fragrance, the song of the nightingale disturbed their night's rest, and they were out of all patience with the alabaster fountain with its eternal dropdrop and splash-splash from morning till night and from night till morning.

The king who was somewhat of a testy, tyrannical disposition took this at first in high dudgeon, but he reflected that his daughters had arrived at an age when the female mind expands and its desires augment. «They are no longer children», said he to himself «they are women grown, and require suitable objects to interest them». He put in requisition, therefore, all the dress-makers and the jewellers and the artificers in gold and silver throughout the Zacatín of Granada, and the princesses were

overwhelmed with robes of silk and of tissue and of brocade, cashmere shawls and necklaces of pearls and diamonds, rings and bracelets and anklets and all manner of precious things.

All, however, was of no avail; the princesses continued pale and languid in the midst of their finery, and looked like three blighted rose-buds, drooping from one stalk. The king was at his wits' end. He had in general a laudable confidence in his own judgment, and never took advice. «The whims and caprices of three marriageable damsels, however, are sufficient», said he, «to puzzle the shrewdest head». So for once in his life he called in the aid of counsel.

The person to whom he applied was the experienced *dueña*.

«Kadiga», said the king, «I know you to be one of the most discreet women in the whole world, as well as one of the most trustworthy; for these reasons I have always continued you about the persons of my daughters. Fathers cannot be too wary in whom they repose such confidence; I now wish you to find out the secret malady that is preying upon the princesses and to devise some means of restoring them to health and cheerfulness».

Kadiga promised implicit obedience. In fact she knew more of the malady of the princesses than they did themselves. Shutting herself up with them, however, she endeavoured to insinuate herself into their confidence.

«My dear children, what is the reason you are so dismal and downcast in so beautiful a place where you have everything that heart can wish?»

The princesses looked vacantly round the apartment and sighed.

«What more then would you have? Shall I get you the wonderful parrot that talks all languages and is the delight of Granada?»

«Odious!» exclaimed the princess Zayda. «A horrid, screaming bird that chatters words without ideas; one must be without brains to tolerate such a pest.»

«Shall I send for a monkey from the rock of Gibraltar to divert you with his antics?»

«A monkey, faugh!» cried Zorayda; «the detestable mimic of man. I hate the nauseous animal».

«What say you to the famous black singer Casern, from the royal harem in Morocco? They say he has a voice as fine as a woman's.»

«I am terrified at the sight of these black slaves», said the delicate Zorahayda, «besides, I have lost all relish for music.»

«Ah! my child, you would not say so», replied the old woman slyly, «had you heard the music I heard last evening from the three Spanish cavaliers, whom we met on our journey. But, bless me, children! what is the matter that you blush so and are in such a flutter?»

«Nothing, nothing, good mother; pray proceed.»

«Well, as I was passing by the Vermilion Towers last evening, I saw the three cavaliers resting after their day's labour. One was playing on the guitar, so gracefully, and the others sang by turns, and they did it in such style that the very guards seemed like statues or men enchanted. Allah forgive me! I could not help being moved at hearing the songs of my native country. And then to see three such noble and handsome youths in chains and slavery!»

Here the kind-hearted old woman could not restrain her tears.

«Perhaps, mother, you could manage to procure us a sight of these cavaliers», said Zayda.

«I think», said Zorayda, «a little music would be quite reviving».

The timid Zorahayda said nothing, but threw her arms round the neck of Kadiga.

«Mercy on me!» exclaimed the discreet old woman, «what are you talking of, my children? Your father would be the death of us all if he heard of such a thing. To be sure, these cavaliers are evidently well-bred and high-minded youths, but what of that? They are the enemies of our faith and you must not even think of them but with abhorrence».

There is an admirable intrepidity in the female will, particularly when about the marriageable age, which is not to be deterred by dangers and prohibitions. The princesses hung round their old *dueña* and coaxed and entreated and declared that a refusal would break their hearts.

What could she do?—She was certainly the most discreet old woman in the whole world and one of the most faithful servants to the king, but was she to see three beautiful princesses break their hearts for the mere tinkling of a guitar? Besides, though she had been so long among the Moors and changed her faith in imitation of her mistress, like a trusty follower, yet she was a Spaniard born and had the lingerings of Christianity in her heart. So she set about to contrive how the wish of the princesses might be gratified.

The Christian captives, confined in the Vermilion Towers, were under the charge of a big-whiskered broad-shouldered *renegado*, called Hussein Baba, who was reputed to have a most itching palm. She went to him privately and, slipping a broad piece of gold into his hand, «Hussein Baba», said she, «my mistresses, the three princesses who are shut up in the tower and in sad want of amusement have heard of the musical talents of the three Spanish cavaliers and are desirous of hearing a specimen of their skill. I am sure you are too kind-hearted to refuse them so innocent a gratification».

«What! and to have my head set grinning over the gate of my own tower! for that would be the reward, if the king should discover it.»

«No danger of anything of the kind; the affair may be managed so that the whim of the princesses may be gratified and their father be never the wiser. You know the deep ravine outside of the walls, that passes immediately below the tower. Put the three Christians to work there, and at the intervals of their labour let them play and sing, as if for their own recreation. In this way the princesses will be able to hear them from the windows of the tower and you may be sure of their paying well for your compliance.»

As the good old woman concluded her harangue, she kindly pressed the rough hand of the *renegado* and left within it another piece of gold.

Her eloquence was irresistible. The very next day the three cavaliers were put to work in the ravine. During the noontide heat when their fellow-labourers were sleeping in the shade and the guard nodding drowsily at his post, they seated themselves among the herbage at the foot of the tower and sang a Spanish roundelay to the accompaniment of the guitar.

The glen was deep, the tower was high, but their voices rose distinctly in the stillness of the summer noon. The princesses listened from their balcony; they had been taught the Spanish language by their *dueña* and were moved by the tenderness of the song. The discreet Kadiga, on the contrary, was terribly shocked. «Allah preserve us!» cried she, «they are singing a love ditty, addressed to yourselves. Did ever mortal hear of such audacity? I will run to the slave-master and have them soundly bastinadoed».

«What! bastinado such gallant cavaliers and for singing so charmingly!» The three beautiful princesses were filled with hor-

ror at the idea. With all her virtuous indignation the good old woman was of a placable nature and easily appeased. Besides, the music seemed to have a beneficial effect upon her young mistresses. A rosy bloom had already come to their cheeks and their eyes began to sparkle. She made no further objection therefore to the amorous ditty of the cavaliers.

When it was finished the princesses remained silent for a time; at length Zorayda took up a lute and with a sweet, though faint and trembling voice, warbled a little Arabian air, the burden of which was, «The rose is concealed among her leaves, but she listens with delight to the song of the nightingale».

From this time forward the cavaliers worked almost daily in the ravine. The considerate Hussein Baba became more and more indulgent, and daily more prone to sleep at his post. For some time a vague intercourse was kept up by popular songs and romances which in some measure responded to each other and breathed the feelings of the parties. By degrees the princesses showed themselves at the balcony, when they could do so without being perceived by the guards. They conversed with the cavaliers also by means of flowers, with the symbolical language of which they were mutually acquainted; the difficulties of their intercourse added to its charms and strengthened the passion they had so singularly conceived, for love delights to struggle with difficulties and thrives the most hardily on the scantiest soil.

The change effected in the looks and spirits of the princesses by this secret intercourse surprised and gratified the left-handed king, but no one was more elated than the discreet Kadiga who considered it all owing to her able management.

At length there was an interruption in this telegraphic correspondence; for several days the cavaliers ceased to make their appearance in the glen. The three beautiful princesses looked out from the tower in vain. In vain they stretched their swanlike

necks from the balcony. In vain they sang like captive nightingales in their cage. Nothing was to be seen of their Christian lovers; not a note responded from the groves. The discreet Kadiga sallied forth in quest of intelligence and soon returned with a face full of trouble. «Ah, my children!» cried she, «I saw what all this would come to, but you would have your way; you may now hang up your lutes on the willows. The Spanish cavaliers are now ransomed by their families; they are down in Granada and preparing to return to their native country».

The three beautiful princesses were in despair at the tidings. The fair Zayda was indignant at the slight put upon them in thus being deserted without a parting word. Zorayda wrung her hands and cried and looked in the glass and wiped away her tears and cried afresh. The gentle Zorahayda leaned over the balcony and wept in silence, and her tears fell drop by drop among the flowers of the bank where the faithless cavaliers had so often been seated.

The discreet Kadiga did all in her power to soothe their sorrow. «Take comfort, my children», said she, «this is nothing when you are used to it. This is the way of the world. Ah! when you are as old as I am, you will know how to value these men. I'll warrant these cavaliers have their loves among the Spanish beauties of Cordova and Seville, and will soon be serenading under their balconies and thinking no more of the Moorish beauties in the Alhambra. Take comfort therefore, my children, and drive them from your hearts».

The comforting words of the discreet Kadiga only redoubled the distress of the three princesses and for two days they continued inconsolable. On the morning of the third, the good old woman entered their apartment, all ruffling with indignation.

«Who would have believed such insolence in mortal man!» exclaimed she, as soon as she could find words to express herself, «but I am rightly served for having connived at this deception

of your worthy father. Never talk more to me of your Spanish cavaliers».

«Why, what has happened, good Kadiga?» exclaimed the princesses, in breathless anxiety.

«What has happened! Treason has happened! or, what is almost as bad, treason has been proposed, and to me, the most faithful of subjects, the trustiest of *dueñas*! Yes, my children, the Spanish cavaliers have dared to tamper with me, that I should persuade you to fly with them to Cordova and become their wives!»

Here the excellent old woman covered her face with her hands and gave way to a violent burst of grief and indignation. The three beautiful princesses turned pale and red, pale and red, and trembled and looked down and cast shy looks at each other, but said nothing. Meantime the old woman sat rocking backward and forward in violent agitation, and now and then breaking out into exclamations. «That ever I should live to be so insulted!—I, the most faithful of servants!»

At length the eldest princess who had most spirit and always took the lead approached her and laying her hand upon her shoulder, «Well, mother», said she, «supposing we were willing to fly with these Christian cavaliers, is such a thing possible?»

The good old woman paused suddenly in her grief, and looking up, «Possible!» echoed she, «to be sure, it is possible. Have not the cavaliers already bribed Hussein Baba, the *renegado*, captain of the guard, and arranged the whole plan? But, then, to think of deceiving your father, your father who has placed such confidence in me!» Here the worthy woman gave way to a fresh burst of grief and began again to rock backward and forward, and to wring her hands.

«But our father never placed any confidence in us», said the eldest princess, «but has trusted to bolts and bars, and treated us as captives».

«Why that is true enough», replied the old woman, again pausing in her grief; «he has indeed treated you most unreasonably, keeping you shut up here to waste your bloom in a moping old tower, like roses to wither in a flower-jar. But, then, to fly from your native land!»

«And is riot the land we fly to the native land of our mother where we shall live in freedom? And shall we not each have a youthful husband, in exchange for a severe old father?»

«Why, that again is all very true, and your father, I must confess, is rather tyrannical. But, what, then», relapsing into her grief, «would you leave me behind to bear the brunt of his vengeance?»

«By no means, my good Kadiga; cannot you fly with us?»

«Very true, my child, and, to tell the truth, when I talked the matter over with Hussein Baba, he promised to take care of me, if I would accompany you in your flight. But, then, bethink you, my children, are you willing to renounce the faith of your father?»

«The Christian faith was the original faith of our mother», said the eldest princess, «I am ready to embrace it, and so, I am sure, are my sisters».

«Right again!» exclaimed the old woman, brightening up, «it was the original faith of your mother, and bitterly did she lament on her death-bed that she had renounced it. I promised her then to take care of your souls, and I rejoice to see that they are now in a fair way to be saved. Yes, my children, I too was born a Christian and have remained a Christian in my heart, and am resolved to return to the faith. I have talked on the subject with Hussein Baba who is a Spaniard by birth and comes from a place not far from my native town. He is equally anxious to see his own country and to be reconciled to the Church, and the cavaliers have promised that, if we are disposed to become

man and wife, on returning to our native land, they will provide for us handsomely».

In a word, it appeared that this extremely discreet and provident old woman had consulted with the cavaliers and the *renegado*, and had concerted the whole plan of escape. The eldest princess immediately assented to it, and her example, as usual, determined the conduct of her sisters. It is true the youngest hesitated, for she was gentle and timid of soul, and there was a struggle in her bosom between filial feeling and youthful passion; the latter, however, as usual, gained the victory, and with silent tears and stifled sighs she prepared herself for flight.

The rugged hill on which the Alhambra is built, was in old times perforated with subterranean passages, cut through the rock, and leading from the fortress to various parts of the city and to distant sally-ports on the banks of the Darro and the Xenil. They had been constructed at different times by the Moorish Kings, as means of escape from sudden insurrections or of secretly issuing forth on private enterprises. Many of them are now entirely lost, while others remain, partly choked up with rubbish and partly walled up, monuments of the jealous precautions and warlike stratagems of the Moorish government. By one these passages, Hussein Baba had undertaken to conduct the princesses to a sally-port beyond the walls of the city, where the cavaliers were to be ready with fleet steeds to bear the whole party over the borders.

The appointed night arrived; the tower of the princesses had been locked up as usual and the Alhambra was buried in deep sleep. Towards midnight the discreet Kadiga listened from the balcony of a window that looked into the garden. Hussein Baba, the *renegado*, was already below and gave the appointed signal. The *dueña* fastened the end of a ladder of ropes to the balcony, lowered it into the garden and descended. The two eldest

princesses followed her with beating hearts; but when it came to the turn of the youngest princess, Zorahayda, she hesitated and trembled. Several times she ventured a delicate little foot upon the ladder and as often drew it back, while her poor little heart fluttered more and more the longer she delayed. She cast a wistful look back into the silken chamber; she had lived in it, to be sure, like a bird in a cage, but within it she was secure. Who could tell what dangers might beset her, should she flutter forth into the wide world! Now she bethought her of her gallant Christian lover and her little foot was instantly upon the ladder, and anon she thought of her father, and shrank back. But fruitless is the attempt to describe the conflict in the bosom of one so young and tender and loving, but so timid and so ignorant of the world.

In vain her sisters implored, the *dueña* scolded and the renegado blasphemed beneath the balcony; the gentle little Moorish maid stood doubting and wavering on the verge of elopement, tempted by the sweetness of the sin, but terrified at its perils.

Every moment increased the danger of discovery. A distant tramp was heard. «The patrols are walking the rounds», cried the *renegado*; «if we linger, we perish. Princess, descend instantly or we leave you».

Zorahayda was for a moment in fearful agitation; then loosening the ladder of ropes with desperate resolution she flung it from the balcony.

«It is decided!» cried she; «flight is now out of my power! Allah guide and bless ye, my dear sisters!»

The two eldest princesses were shocked at the thoughts of leaving her behind and would fain have lingered, but the patrol was advancing; the *renegado* was furious and they were hurried away to the subterraneous passage. They groped their way through a fearful labyrinth, cut through the heart of the moun-

tain, and succeeded in reaching undiscovered an iron gate that opened outside of the walls. The Spanish cavaliers were waiting to receive them, disguised as Moorish soldiers of the guard, commanded by the *renegado*.

The lover of Zorahayda was frantic when he learned that she had refused to leave the tower, but there was no time to waste in lamentations. The two princesses were placed behind their lovers, the discreet Kadiga mounted behind the *renegado*, and all set off at a round pace in the direction of the Pass of Lope which leads through the mountains towards Cordova.

They had not proceeded far when they heard the noise of drums and trumpets from the battlements of the Alhambra.

«Our flight is discovered», said the *renegado*.

«We have fleet steeds, the night is dark and we may distance all pursuit», replied the cavaliers.

They put spurs to their horses and scoured across the Vega. They attained to the foot of the mountain of Elvira which stretches like a promontory into the plain. The *renegado* paused and listened.

«As yet», said he, «there is no one on our traces, we shall make good our escape to the mountains». While he spoke, a pale fire sprang up in a light blaze on the top of the watch-tower of the Alhambra.

«Confusion!» cried the *renegado*, «that fire will put all the guards of the passes on the alert. Away! away! Spur like mad; there is no time to be lost!»

Away they dashed. The clattering of their horses' hoofs echoed from rock to rock, as they swept along the road that skirts the rocky mountain of Elvira. As they galloped on, they beheld that the pale fire of the Alhambra was answered in every direction; light after light blazed on the *atalayas* or watch-towers of the mountains.

«Forward! forward!» cried the *renegado* with many an oath, «to the bridge, to the bridge, before the alarm has reached there!»

They doubled the promontory of the mountains and arrived in sight of the famous Puente de Pinos that crosses a rushing stream often dyed with Christian and Moslem blood. To their confusion, the tower on the bridge blazed with lights and glittered with armed men. The *renegado* pulled up his steed, rose in his stirrups and looked about him for a moment; then beckoning to the cavaliers, he struck off from the road, skirted the river for some distance and dashed into its waters. The cavaliers called upon the princesses to cling to them and did the same. They were borne for some distance down the rapid current; the surges roared round them, but the beautiful princesses clung to their Christian knights and never uttered a complaint. The cavaliers attained the opposite bank in safety, and were conducted by the *renegado* by rude and unfrequented paths and wild *barrancos* through the heart of the mountains, so as to avoid all the regular passes. In a word, they succeeded in reaching the ancient city of Cordova where their restoration to their country and friends was celebrated with great rejoicing, for they were of the noblest families. The beautiful princesses were forthwith received into the bosom of the Church and after being in all due form made regular Christians, were rendered happy wives.

In our hurry to make good the escape of the princesses across the river and up the mountains, we forgot to mention the fate of the discreet Kadiga. She had clung like a cat to Hussein Baba in the scamper across the Vega, screaming at every bound and drawing many an oath from the whiskered *renegado*; but when he prepared to plunge his steed into the river, her terror knew no bounds. «Grasp me not so tightly», cried Hussein Baba, «hold on by my belt and fear nothing». She held firmly with both

hands by the leathern belt that girded the broad-backed *renegado*, but when he halted with the cavaliers to take breath on the mountain summit, the *dueña* was no longer to be seen.

«What has become of Kadiga?» cried the princesses in alarm.

«Allah alone knows!» replied the *renegado*, «my belt came loose when in the midst of the river and Kadiga was swept with it down the stream. The will of Allah be done! But it was an embroidered belt and of great price».

There was no time to waste in idle regrets, yet bitterly did the princesses bewail the loss of their discreet counsellor. That excellent old woman, however, did not lose more than half of her nine lives in the stream. A fisherman who was drawing his nets some distance down the stream brought her to land and was not a little astonished at his miraculous draught. What further became of the discreet Kadiga, the legend does not mention; certain it is that she evinced her discretion in never venturing within the reach of Mohamed the Lefthanded.

Almost as little is known of the conduct of that sagacious monarch when he discovered the escape of his daughters and the deceit practised upon him by the most faithful of servants. It was the only instance in which he had called in the aid of counsel and he was never afterwards known to be guilty of a similar weakness. He took good care, however, to guard his remaining daughter who had no disposition to elope. It is thought indeed that she secretly repented having remained behind. Now and then she was seen leaning on the battlements of the tower and looking mournfully towards the mountains in the direction of Cordova, and sometimes the notes of her lute were heard accompanying plaintive ditties, in which she was said to lament the loss of her sisters and her lover, and to bewail her solitary life. She died young and, according to popular rumour, was buried

in a vault beneath the tower, and her untimely fate has given rise to more than one traditionary fable.

## LEGEND OF PRINCE AHMED AL KAMEL OR THE PILGRIM OF LOVE

THERE was once a Moorish king of Granada, who had but one son whom he named Ahmed, to which his courtiers added the surname of *al Kamel* or the Perfect from the indubitable signs of superexcellence which they perceived in him in his very infancy. The astrologers countenanced them in their foresight, predicting everything in his favour that could make a perfect prince and a prosperous sovereign. One cloud only rested upon his destiny, and even that was of a roseate hue. He would be of an amorous temperament and run great perils from the tender passion. If, however, he could be kept from the allurements of love until of mature age, these dangers would be averted and his life thereafter be one uninterrupted course of felicity.

To prevent all danger of the kind, the king wisely determined to rear the prince in a seclusion where he should never see a female face nor hear even the name of love. For this purpose he built a beautiful palace on the brow of the hill above the Alhambra in the midst of delightful gardens, but surrounded by lofty walls, being, in fact, the palace known at the present day by the name of the Generalife. In this palace the youthful prince was shut up and entrusted to the guardianship and instruction of Eben Bonabben, one of the wisest and driest of Arabian sages, who had passed the greatest part of his life in Egypt, studying

hieroglyphics and making researches among the tombs and pyramids and who saw more charms in an Egyptian mummy than in the most tempting of living beauties. The sage was ordered to instruct the prince in all kinds of knowledge but one. He was to be kept utterly ignorant of love. «Use every precaution for the purpose you may think proper», said the king, «but remember, O Eben Bonabben, if my son learns aught of that forbidden knowledge while under your care, your head shall answer for it». A withered smile came over the dry visage of the wise Bonabben at the menace. «Let your majesty's heart be as easy about your son, as mine is about my head. Am I a man likely to give lessons in the idle passion?»

Under the vigilant care of the philosopher, the prince grew up in the seclusion of the palace and its gardens. He had black slaves to attend upon him—hideous mutes who knew nothing of love or, if they did, had not words to communicate it. His mental endowments were the peculiar care of Eben Bonabben who sought to initiate him into the abstruse lore of Egypt, but in this the prince made little progress, and it was soon evident that he had no turn for philosophy.

He was, however, amazingly ductile for a youthful prince, ready to follow any advice and always guided by the last counsellor. He suppressed his yawns and listened patiently to the long and learned discourses of Eben Bonabben, from which he imbibed a smattering of various kinds of knowledge, and thus happily attained his twentieth year, a miracle of princely wisdom—but totally ignorant of love.

About this time, however, a change came over the conduct of the prince. He completely abandoned his studies and took to strolling about the gardens and musing by the side of the fountains. He had been taught a little music among his various accomplishments; it now engrossed a great part of his time and a

turn for poetry became apparent. The sage Eben Bonabben took the alarm and endeavoured to work these idle humours out of him by a severe course of algebra, but the prince turned from it with distaste. «I cannot endure algebra», said he, «it is an abomination to me. I want something that speaks more to the heart.»

The sage Eben Bonabben shook his dry head at the words. «Here is an end to philosophy», thought he. «The prince has discovered he has a heart!» He now kept anxious watch upon his pupil and saw that the latent tenderness of his nature was in activity and only wanted an object. He wandered about the gardens of the Generalife in an intoxication of feelings of which he knew not the cause. Sometimes he would sit plunged in a delicious reverie; then he would seize his lute and draw from it the most touching notes, and then throw it aside and break forth into sighs and ejaculations.

By degrees this loving disposition began to extend to inanimate objects; he had his favourite flowers which he cherished with tender assiduity; then he became attached to various trees, and there was one in particular of a graceful form and drooping foliage, on which he lavished his amorous devotion, carving his name on its bark, hanging garlands on its branches and singing couplets in its praise to the accompaniment of his lute.

The sage Eben Bonabben was alarmed at this excited state of his pupil. He saw him on the very brink of forbidden knowledge—the least hint might reveal to him the fatal secret. Trembling for the safety of the prince and the security of his own head, he hastened to draw him from the seductions of the garden and shut him up in the highest tower of the Generalife. It contained beautiful apartments and commanded an almost boundless prospect, but was elevated far above that atmosphere of sweets and those witching bowers so dangerous to the feelings of the too susceptible Ahmed.

What was to be done, however, to reconcile him to this restraint and to beguile the tedious hours? He had exhausted almost all kinds of agreeable knowledge, and algebra was not to be mentioned. Fortunately Eben Bonabben had been instructed, when in Egypt, in the language of birds by a Jewish rabbin who had received it in lineal transmission from Solomon the Wise who had been taught it by the Queen of Sheba. At the very mention of such a study, the eyes of the prince sparkled with animation, and he applied himself to it with such avidity that he soon became as great an adept as his master.

The tower of the Generalife was no longer a solitude; he had companions at hand with whom he could converse. The first acquaintance he formed was with a hawk who built his nest in a crevice of the lofty battlements, from whence he soared far and wide in quest of prey. The prince, however, found little to like or esteem in him. He was a mere pirate of the air, swaggering and boastful, whose talk was all about rapine and courage and desperate exploits.

His next acquaintance was an owl, a mighty wise-looking bird, with a huge head and staring eyes, who sat blinking and goggling all day in a hole in the wall, but roamed forth at night. He had great pretensions to wisdom, talked something of astrology and the moon, and hinted at the dark sciences, but he was grievously given to metaphysics, and the prince found his prosings even more ponderous than those of the sage Eben Bonabben.

Then there was a bat that hung all day by his heels in the dark corner of a vault, but sallied out in a slipshod style at twilight. He, however, had but twilight ideas on all subjects, derided things of which he had taken but an imperfect view and seemed to take delight in nothing.

Besides these there was a swallow, with whom the prince was at first much taken. He was a smart talker, but restless, bustling

and for ever on the wing; seldom remaining long enough for any continued conversation. He turned out in the end to be a mere smatterer who did but skim over the surface of things, pretending to know everything, but knowing nothing thoroughly.

These were the only feathered associates with whom the prince had any opportunity of exercising his newly acquired language; the tower was too high for any other birds to frequent it. He soon grew weary of his new acquaintances, whose conversation spoke so little to the head and nothing to the heart; and gradually relapsed into his loneliness. A winter passed away, spring opened with all its bloom and verdure and breathing sweetness and the happy time arrived for birds to pair and build their nests. Suddenly, as it were, a universal burst of song and melody broke forth from the groves and gardens of the Generalife, and reached the prince in the solitude of his tower. From every side he heard the same universal theme—love—love—love—chanted forth and responded to in every variety of note and tone. The prince listened in silence and perplexity. «What can be this love», thought he, «of which the world seems so full and of which I know nothing?» He applied for information to his friend the hawk. The ruffian bird answered in a tone of scorn: «You must apply», said he, «to the vulgar peaceable birds of earth, who are made for the prey of us princes of the air. My trade is war and fighting my delight. In a word, I am a warrior and know nothing of this thing called love».

The prince turned from him with disgust and sought the owl in his retreat. «This is a bird», said he, «of peaceful habits, and may be able to solve my question». So he asked the owl to tell him what was this love about which all the birds in the groves below were singing.

Upon this, the owl put on a look of offended dignity. «My nights», said he, «are taken up in study and research, and my

days in ruminating in my cell upon all that I have learnt. As to these singing birds of whom you talk, I never listen to them—I despise them and their themes. Allah be praised, I cannot sing; I am a philosopher and know nothing of this thing called love».

The prince now repaired to the vault, where his friend the bat was hanging by the heels and propounded the same question. The bat wrinkled up his nose into a most snappish expression. «Why do you disturb me in my morning's nap with such an idle question?» said he peevishly. «I only fly by twilight, when all birds are asleep, and never trouble myself with their concerns. I am neither bird nor beast, and I thank heaven for it. I have found out the villany of the whole of them and hate them one and all. In a word, I am a misanthrope, and know nothing of this thing called love.»

As a last resort, the prince now sought the swallow and stopped him just as he was circling about the summit of the tower. The swallow, as usual, was in a prodigious hurry and had scarce time to make a reply. «Upon my word», said he, «I have so much public business to attend to and so many pursuits to follow that I have had no time to think on the subject. I have every day a thousand visits to pay, a thousand affairs of importance to examine into, that leave me not a moment of leisure for these little sing song matters. In a word, I am a citizen of the world. I know nothing of this thing called love». So saying, the swallow dived into the valley and was out of sight in a moment.

The prince remained disappointed and perplexed, but with curiosity still more piqued by the difficulty of gratifying it. While in this mood, his ancient guardian entered the tower. The prince advanced eagerly to meet him. «O sage Eben Bonabben», cried he, «thou hast revealed to me much of the wisdom of the earth, but there is one thing of which I remain in utter ignorance and would fain be informed».

«My prince has but to make the inquiry and everything within the limited range of his servant's intellect is at his command».

«Tell me then, O most profound of sages, what is the nature of this thing called love?»

The sage Eben Bonabben was struck as with a thunderbolt. He trembled and turned pale, and felt as if head sat but loosely on his shoulders.

«What could suggest such a question to my prince, where could he have learnt so idle a word?»

The prince led him to the window of the tower. «Listen, O Eben Bonabben», said he. The sage listened. The nightingale sat in a thicket below the tower, singing to his paramour the rose; from every blossomed spray and tufted grove arose a strain of melody, and love—love—love—was still the unvarying strain.

«*Allah Akbar!* God is great!» exclaimed the wise Bonabben. «Who shall pretend to keep this secret from the heart of man, when even the birds of the air conspire to betray it?»

Then turning to Ahmed, «O my prince», cried he, «shut thine ears to these seductive strains. Close thy mind against this dangerous knowledge. Know that this love is the cause of half the ills of wretched mortality. It is this which produces bitterness and strife between brethren and friends, which causes treacherous murder and desolating war. Care and sorrow, weary days and sleepless nights are its attendants. It withers the bloom and blights the joys of youth and brings on the ills and griefs of premature old age. Allah preserve thee, my prince, in total ignorance of this thing called love!»

The sage Eben Bonabben hastily retired, leaving the prince plunged in still deeper perplexity. It was in vain he attempted to dismiss the subject from his mind; it still continued upper

most in his thoughts, and teased and exhausted him with vain conjectures.

«Surely» said he to himself, as he listened to the tuneful strains of the birds, «there is no sorrow in those notes; everything seems tenderness and joy. If love be a cause of such wretchedness and strife, why are not these birds drooping in solitude or tearing each other in pieces, instead of fluttering cheerfully about the groves or sporting with each other among flowers?»

He lay one morning on his couch meditating on this inexplicable matter. The window of his chamber was open to admit the soft morning breeze which came laden with the perfume of orange-blossoms from the valley of the Darro. The voice of the nightingale was faintly heard, still chanting the wonted theme. As the prince was listening and sighing, there was a sudden rushing noise in the air; a beautiful dove, pursued by a hawk, darted in at the window and fell panting on the floor, while the pursuer, balked of his prey, soared off to the mountains.

The prince took up the gasping bird, smoothed its feathers and nestled it in his bosom. When he had soothed it by his caresses, he put it in a golden cage and offered it with his own hands the whitest and finest of wheat and the purest of water. The bird, however, refused food and sat drooping and pining, and uttering piteous moans.

«What aileth thee?» said Ahmed. «Hast thou not everything thy heart can wish?»

«Alas, no!» replied the dove; «am I not separated from the partner of my heart, and that too in the happy spring-time, the very season of love!»

«Of love!» echoed Ahmed; «I pray thee, my pretty bird, canst thou then tell me what is love?»

«Too well can I, my prince. It is the torment of one, the felicity of two, the strife and enmity of three. It is a charm which

draws two beings together and unites them by delicious sympathies, making it happiness to be with each other, but misery to be apart. Is there no being to whom you are drawn by these ties of tender affection?»

«I like my old teacher Eben Bonabben better than any other being, but he is often tedious and I occasionally feel myself happier without his society.»

«That is not the sympathy I mean. I speak of love, the great mystery and principle of life, the intoxicating revel of youth, the sober delight of age. Look forth, my prince, and behold how at this blest season all nature is full of love. Every created being has its mate; the most insignificant bird sings to its paramour; the very beetle woos its lady-beetle in the dust, and yon butterflies which you see fluttering high above the tower and toying in the air are happy in each other's loves. Alas, my prince! hast thou spent so many of the precious days of youth without knowing anything of love? Is there no gentle being of another sex, no beautiful princess or lovely damsel who has ensnared your heart, and filled your bosom with a soft tumult of pleasing pains and tender wishes?»

«I begin to understand», said the prince, sighing, «such a tumult I have more than once experienced without knowing the cause—and where should I seek for an object, such as you describe, in this dismal solitude?»

A little further conversation ensued and the first amatory lesson of the prince was complete.

«Alas!» said he, «if love be indeed such a delight, and its interruption such a misery, Allah forbid that I should mar the joy of any of its votaries!» He opened the cage, took out the dove and, having fondly kissed it, carried it to the window. «Go, happy bird», said he, «rejoice with the partner of thy heart in the days of youth and spring-time. Why should I make thee a

fellow-prisoner in this dreary tower where love can never enter?»

The dove flapped its wings in rapture, gave one vault into the air and then swooped downward on whistling wings to the blooming bowers of the Darro.

The prince followed him with his eyes and then gave way to bitter repining. The singing of the birds which once delighted him, now added to his bitterness. Love! love! love! Alas, poor youth! he now understood the strain.

His eyes flashed fire when next he beheld the sage Bonabben. «Why hast thou kept me in this abject ignorance?» cried he. «Why has the great mystery and principle of life been withheld from me, in which I find the meanest insect is so learned? Behold all nature is in a revel of delight. Every created being rejoices with its mate. This, this is the love about which I have sought instruction. Why am I alone debarred its enjoyment? Why has so much of my youth been wasted without a knowledge of its raptures?»

The sage Bonabben saw that all further reserve was useless, for the prince had acquired the dangerous and forbidden knowledge. He revealed to him, therefore, the predictions of the astrologers and the precautions that had been taken in his education to avert the threatened evil. «And now, my prince», added he, «my life is in your hands. Let the king your father discover that you have learned the passion of love while under my guardianship and my head must answer for it».

The prince was as reasonable as most young men of his age and easily listened to the remonstrances of his tutor, since nothing pleaded against them. Besides, he really was attached to the sage Bonabben, and being as yet but theoretically acquainted with the passion of love, he consented to confine the knowledge of it to his own bosom, rather than endanger the head of the philosopher.

His discretion was doomed, however, to be put to still further proofs. A few mornings afterwards, as he was ruminating on the battlements of the tower, the dove which had been released by him came hovering in the air and alighted fearlessly upon his shoulder.

The prince fondled it to his heart. «Happy bird!» said he, «who can fly, as it were, with the wings of the morning to the uttermost parts of the earth. Where hast thou been since we parted?»

«In a far country, my prince, from whence I bring you tidings in reward for my liberty. In the wild compass of my flight which extends over plain and mountain, as I was soaring in the air, I beheld below me a delightful garden with all kinds of fruits and flowers. It was in a green meadow, on the banks of a wandering stream, and in the centre of the garden was a stately palace. I alighted in one of the bowers to repose after my weary flight. On the green bank below me was a youthful princess in the very sweetness and bloom of her years. She was surrounded by female attendants, young like herself, who decked her with garlands and coronets of flowers, but no flower of field or garden could compare with her for loveliness. Here, however, she bloomed in secret, for the garden was surrounded by high walls and no mortal man was permitted to enter. When I beheld this beauteous maid, thus young and innocent and unspotted by the world, I thought, here is the being formed by Heaven to inspire my prince with love».

The description was a spark of fire to the combustible heart of Ahmed; all the latent amorousness of his temperament had at once found an object and he conceived an immeasurable passion for the princess. He wrote a letter, couched in the most impassioned language, breathing his fervent devotion, but bewailing the unhappy thralldom of his person, which prevented him from

seeking her out and throwing himself at her feet. He added couplets of the most tender and moving eloquence, for he was a poet by nature and inspired by love. He addressed his letter—«To the unknown beauty, from the captive Prince Ahmed»; then perfuming it with musk and roses, he gave it to the dove.

«Away, trustiest of messengers!» said he. «Fly over mountain and valley and river and plain; rest not in bower nor set foot on earth, until thou hast given this letter to the mistress of my heart.»

The dove soared high in air and, taking his course, darted away in one undeviating direction. The prince followed him with his eye until he was a mere speck on a cloud and gradually disappeared behind a mountain.

Day after day he watched for the return of the messenger of love, but he watched in vain. He began to accuse him of forgetfulness, when towards sunset one evening the faithful bird fluttered into his apartment and falling at his feet, expired. The arrow of some wanton archer had pierced his breast, yet he had struggled with the lingerings of life to execute his mission. As the prince bent with grief over this gentle martyr to fidelity, he beheld a chain of pearls round his neck, attached to which beneath his wing was a small enamelled picture. It represented a lovely princess in the very flower of her years. It was doubtless the unknown beauty of the garden, but who and where was she? How had she received his letter, and was this picture sent as a token of her approval of his passion? Unfortunately the death of the faithful dove left everything in mystery and doubt.

The prince gazed on the picture till his eyes swam with tears. He pressed it to his lips and to his heart; he sat for hours contemplating it, almost in an agony of tenderness. «Beautiful image!» said he, «alas, thou art but an image! Yet thy dewy eyes beam tenderly upon me; those rosy lips look as though they would

«speak encouragement. Vain fancies! Have they not looked the same on some more happy rival? But where in this wide world shall I hope to find the original? Who knows what mountains, what realms may separate us, what adverse chances may intervene? Perhaps now, even now, lovers may be crowding around her, while I sit here a prisoner in a tower, wasting my time in adoration of a painted shadow».

The resolution of Prince Ahmed was taken. «I will fly from this palace», said he, «which has become an odious prison and, a pilgrim of love, will seek this unknown princess throughout the world». To escape from the tower in the day, when every one was awake might be a difficult matter but at night the palace was slightly guarded, for no one apprehended any attempt of the kind from the prince who had always been so passive in his captivity. How was he to guide himself, however, in his darkling flight, being ignorant of the country? He bethought him of the owl who was accustomed to roam at night and must know every by-lane and secret pass. Seeking him in his hermitage, he questioned him touching his knowledge of the land. Upon this the owl put on a mighty self-important look. «You must know, O prince», said he, «that we owls are of a very ancient and extensive family, though rather fallen to decay, and possess ruinous castles and palaces in all parts of Spain. There is scarcely a tower of the mountains or a fortress of the plains or an old citadel of a city, but has some brother, or uncle, or cousin quartered in it, and in going the rounds to visit this my numerous kindred, I have pried into every nook and corner and made myself acquainted with every secret of the land». The prince was overjoyed to find the owl so deeply versed in topography and now informed him in confidence of his tender passion and his intended elopement, urging him to be his companion and counsellor.

«Go to!» said the owl with a look of displeasure, «am I a bird to engage in a love-affair? I, whose whole time is devoted to meditation and the moon?»

«Be not offended, most solemn owl», replied the prince; «abstract thyself for a time from meditation and the moon, and aid me in my flight, and thou shalt have whatever heart can wish».

«I have that already», said the owl, «a few mice are sufficient for my frugal table, and this hole in the wall is spacious enough for my studies; and what more does a philosopher like myself desire?»

«Bethink thee, most wise owl, that while moping in thy cell and gazing at the moon, all thy talents are lost to the world. I shall one day be a sovereign prince and may advance thee to some post of honour and dignity.»

The owl, though a philosopher and above the ordinary wants of life, was not above ambition, so he was finally prevailed on to elope with the prince and be his guide and mentor in his pilgrimage.

The plans of a lover are promptly executed. The prince collected all his jewels and concealed them about his person as travelling funds. That very night he lowered himself by his scarf from a balcony of the tower, clambered over the outer walls of the Generalife and, guided by the owl, made good his escape before morning to the mountains.

He now held a council with his mentor as to his future course.

«Might I advise», said the owl, «I would recommend you to repair to Seville. You must know, that many years since I was on a visit to an uncle, an owl of great dignity and power, who lived in a ruined wing of the Alcázar of that place. In my hoverings at night over the city, I frequently remarked a light burning in a lonely tower. At length I lighted on the battlements and found

it to proceed from the lamp of an Arabian magician; he was surrounded by his magic books and on his shoulder was perched his familiar, an ancient raven who had come with him from Egypt. I am acquainted with that raven and owe to him a great part of the knowledge I possess. The magician is since dead, but the raven still inhabits the tower for these birds are of wonderful long life. I would advise you, O prince, to seek that raven, for he is a soothsayer and a conjuror, and deals in the black art, for which all ravens, and especially those of Egypt, are renowned».

The prince was struck with the wisdom of this advice and accordingly bent his course towards Seville. He travelled only in the night to accommodate his companion, and lay by during the day in some dark cavern or mouldering watch-tower, for the owl knew every hiding hole of the kind and had a most antiquarian taste for ruins.

At length, one morning at daybreak they reached the city of Seville, where the owl who hated the glare and bustle of crowded streets halted without the gate and took up his quarters in a hollow tree.

The prince entered the gate and readily found the magic tower which rose above the houses of the city, as a palm-tree rises above the shrubs of the desert; it was in fact the same tower that is standing at the present day and known as the Giralda, the famous Moorish tower of Seville.

The prince ascended by a great winding staircase to the summit of the tower, where he found the cabalistic raven, an old, mysterious, grey-headed bird, ragged in feather, with a film over one eye that gave him the glare of a spectre. He was perched on one leg, with his head turned on one side, poring with his remaining eye on a diagram described on the pavement.

The prince approached him with the awe and reverence naturally inspired by his venerable appearance and supernatu-

ral wisdom. «Pardon me, most ancient and darkly wise raven», exclaimed he, «if for a moment I interrupt those studies which are the wonder of the world. You behold before you a votary of love, who would fain seek your counsel how to obtain the object of his passion»

«In other words», said the raven with a significant look, «you seek to try my skill in palmistry. Come, show me your hand and let me decipher the mysterious lines of fortune».

«Excuse me», said the prince, «I come not to pry into the decrees of fate, which are hidden by Allah from the eyes of mortals; I am a pilgrim of love and seek but to find a clue to the object of my pilgrimage».

«And can you be at any loss for an object in amorous Andalusia?» said the old raven, leering upon him with his single eye, «above all, can you be at a loss in wanton Seville, where black-eyed damsels dance the *zambra* under every orange grove?»

The prince blushed and was somewhat shocked at hearing an old bird with one claw in the grave talk thus loosely. «Believe me», said he gravely, «I am on none such light and vagrant errand as thou dost insinuate. The black-eyed damsers of Andalusia who dance among the orange groves of the Guadalquivir are as nought to me. I seek one unknown but immaculate beauty, the original of this picture, and I beseech thee, most potent raven, if it be within the scope of thy knowledge or the reach of thy art, inform me where she may be found».

The grey-headed raven was rebuked by the gravity of the prince.

«What know I», replied he drily, «of youth and beauty? My visits are to the old and withered, not the fresh and fair. The harbinger of fate am I who croak bodings of death from the chimney top, and flap my wings at the sick man's window. You must seek elsewhere for tidings of your unknown beauty».

«And where can I seek, if not among the sons of wisdom, versed in the book of destiny? A royal prince am I, fated by the stars, and sent on a mysterious enterprise, on which may hang the destiny of empires.»

When the raven heard that it was a matter of vast moment, in which the stars took interest, he changed his tone and manner, and listened with profound attention to the story of the prince. When it was concluded, he replied, «Touching this princess, I can give thee no information of myself, for my flight is not among gardens or around ladies' bowers, but hie thee to Cordova, seek the palm-tree of the great Abderahman, which stands in the court of the principal mosque; at the foot of it thou wilt find a great traveller who has visited all countries and courts, and been a favorite with queens and princesses. He will give thee tidings of the object of thy search».

«Many thanks for this precious information», said the prince. «Farewell, most venerable conjuror».

«Farewell, pilgrim of love», said the raven drily and again fell to pondering on the diagram.

The prince sallied forth from Seville, sought his fellow-traveller, the owl, who was still dozing in the hollow tree and set off for Cordova.

He approached it along hanging gardens and orange and citron groves, overlooking the fair valley of the Guadalquivir. When he arrived at its gates the owl flew up to a dark hole in the wall, and the prince proceeded in quest of the palm-tree planted in days of yore by the Great Abderahman. It stood in the midst of the great court of the Mosque, towering from amidst orange and cypress trees. Dervishes and faquirs were seated in groups under the cloisters of the court, and many of the faithful were performing their ablutions at the fountains before entering the Mosque.

At the foot of the palm-tree was a crowd listening to the words of one who appeared to be talking with great volubility. «This», said the prince to himself, «must be the great traveller who is to give me tidings of the unknown princess». He mingled in the crowd, but was astonished to perceive that they were all listening to a parrot who with his bright green coat, pragmatical eye and consequential top-knot, had the air of a bird on excellent terms with himself.

«How is this», said the prince to one of the by-standers, «that so many grave persons can be delighted with the garrulity of a chattering bird?»

«You know not whom you speak of», said the other, «this parrot is a descendant of the famous parrot of Persia, renowned for his story-telling talent. He has all the learning of the East at the tip of his tongue and can quote poetry as fast as he can talk. He has visited various foreign courts, where he has been considered an oracle of erudition. He has been a universal favourite also with the fair sex who have an vast admiration for erudite parrots that can quote poetry».

«Enough», said the prince. «I will have some private talk with this distinguished traveller».

He sought a private interview and expounded the nature of his errand. He had scarcely mentioned it when the parrot burst into a fit of dry rickety laughter, that absolutely brought tears in his eyes. «Excuse my merriment», said he, «but the mere mention of love always sets me laughing».

The prince was shocked at this ill-timed merriment. «Is not love», said he, «the great mystery of nature, the secret principle of life, the universal bond of sympathy?»

«A fig's end!» cried the parrot, interrupting him, «prithee where hast thou learnt this sentimental jargon? Trust me, love is quite out of vogue; one never hears of it in the company of wits and people of refinement».

The prince sighed as he recalled the different language of his friend the dove. But this parrot, thought he, has lived about the court; he affects the wit and the fine gentleman; he knows nothing of the thing called love. Unwilling to provoke any more ridicule of the sentiment which filled his heart, he now directed his inquiries to the immediate purport of his visit.

«Tell me», said he, «most accomplished parrot, thou who hast everywhere been admitted to the most secret bowers of beauty, hast thou in the course of thy travels met with the original of this portrait?»

The parrot took the picture in his claw, turned his head from side to side and examined it curiously with either eye «Upon my honour», said he, «a very pretty face, very pretty, but then one sees so many pretty women in one's travels that one can hardly—but hold—bless me! Now I look at it again—sure enough this is the Princess Aldegonda. How could I forget one that is so prodigious a favourite with me?»

«The Princess Aldegonda!» echoed the prince, «and where is she to be found?»

«Softly, softly», said the parrot, «easier to be found than gained. She is the only daughter of the Christian king who reigns at Toledo and is shut up from the world until her seventeenth birthday, on account of some prediction of those meddling fellows the astrologers. You'll not get a sight of her; no mortal man can see her. I was admitted to her presence to entertain her, and I assure you on the word of a parrot who has seen the world, I have conversed with much sillier princesses in my time».

«A word in confidence, my dear parrot», said the prince; «I am heir to a kingdom, and shall one day sit upon a throne. I see that you are a bird of parts and understand the world. Help me to gain possession of this princess, and I will advance you to some distinguished place about court».

«With all my heart», said the parrot: «but let it be a sinecure, if possible, for we wits have a great dislike of labour».

Arrangements were promptly made; the prince sallied forth from Cordova through the same gate by which he had entered, called the owl down from the hole in the wall, introduced him to his new travelling companion, as a brother savant, and away they set off on their journey.

They travelled much more slowly than accorded with the impatience of the prince, but the parrot was accustomed to high life and did not like to be disturbed early in the morning. The owl, on the other hand, was for sleeping at mid-day and lost a great deal of time by his long *siestas*. His antiquarian taste also was in the way, for he insisted on pausing and inspecting every ruin, and had long legendary tales to tell about every old tower and castle in the country. The prince had supposed that he and the parrot, being both birds of learning, would delight in each other's society, but never had he been more mistaken. They were eternally bickering. The one was a wit, the other a philosopher. The parrot quoted poetry, was critical on new readings and eloquent on small points of erudition; the owl treated all such knowledge as trifling and relished nothing but metaphysics. Then the parrot would sing songs and repeat *bons mots* and crack jokes upon his solemn neighbour and laugh outrageously at his own wit, all which proceedings the owl considered as a grievous invasion of his dignity, and would scowl and sulk and swell and be silent for a whole day together.

The prince heeded not the wranglings of his companions, being wrapped up in the dreams of his own fancy and the contemplation of the portrait of the beautiful princess. In this way they journeyed through the stern passes of the Sierra Morena, across the sunburnt plains of La Mancha and Castile, and along the banks of the «Golden Tagus», which winds its wizard mazes

over one half of Spain and Portugal. At length they came in sight of a strong city with walls and towers, built on a rocky promontory, round the foot of which the Tagus circled with brawling violence.

«Behold», exclaimed the owl, «the ancient and renowned city of Toledo, a city famous for its antiquities. Behold those venerable domes and towers, hoary with time and clothed with legendary grandeur, in which so many of my ancestors have meditated».

«Pish!» cried the parrot, interrupting his solemn antiquarian rapture, «what have we to do with antiquities and legends and your ancestry? Behold what is more to the purpose—behold the abode of youth and beauty—behold at length, O prince, the abode of your long-sought princess».

The prince looked in the direction indicated by the parrot and beheld in a delightful green meadow on the banks of the Tagus a stately palace rising from amidst the bowers of a delicious garden. It was just such a place as had been described by the dove as the original of the picture. He gazed at it with a throbbing heart. «Perhaps at this moment», thought he, «the beautiful princess is sporting beneath those shady bowers, or pacing with delicate step those stately terraces or reposing beneath those lofty roofs!» As he looked more narrowly, he perceived that the walls of the garden were of great height, so as to defy access, while numbers of armed guards patrolled around them.

The prince turned to the parrot. «O most accomplished of birds», said he, «thou hast the gift of human speech. Hie thee to yon garden, seek the idol of my soul and tell her that Prince Ahmed, a pilgrim of love, and guided by the stars, has arrived in quest of her on the flowery banks of the Tagus».

The parrot, proud of his embassy, flew away to the garden, mounted above its lofty walls and after soaring for a time over

the lawns and groves, alighted on the balcony of a pavilion that overhung the river. Here, looking in at the casement, he beheld the princess reclining on a couch with her eyes fixed on a paper while tears gently stole after each other down her pallid cheek.

Pluming his wings for a moment, adjusting his bright green coat and elevating his top-knot, the parrot perched himself beside her with a gallant air; then assuming a tenderness of tone, «Dry thy tears, most beautiful of princesses», said he, «I come to bring solace to thy heart».

The princess was startled on hearing a voice, but turning and seeing nothing but a little green-coated bird bobbing and bowing before her; «Alas! what solace canst thou yield», said she, «seeing thou art but a parrot?»

The parrot was nettled at the question. «I have consoled many beautiful ladies in my time», said he, «but let that pass. At present I come ambassador from a royal prince. Know that Ahmed, the prince of Granada, has arrived in quest of thee, and is encamped even now on the flowery banks of the Tagus».

The eyes of the beautiful princess sparkled at these words even brighter than the diamonds in her coronet. «O sweetest of parrots» cried she, «joyful indeed are thy tidings, for I was faint and weary and sick almost unto death with doubt of the constancy of Ahmed. Hie thee back and tell him that the words of his letter are engraven in my heart and his poetry has been the food of my soul. Tell him, however, that he must prepare to prove his love by force of arms; tomorrow is my seventeenth birthday, when the king my father holds a great tournament; several princes are to enter the lists and my hand is to be the prize of the victor».

The parrot again took wing and rustling through the groves, flew back to where the prince awaited his return. The rapture of Ahmed on finding the original of his adored portrait and find-

ing her kind and true can only be conceived by those favoured mortals who have had the good fortune to realise day-dreams and turn a shadow into substance. Still there was one thing that alloyed his transport—this impending tournament. In fact, the banks of the Tagus were already glittering with arms and resounding with trumpets of the various knights who with proud retinues were prancing on towards Toledo to attend the ceremonial. The same star that had controlled the destiny of the prince had governed that of the princess and until her seventeenth birthday she had been shut up from the world to guard her from the tender passion. The fame of her charms, however, had been enhanced rather than obscured by this seclusion. Several powerful princes had contended for her alliance, and her father who was a king of wondrous shrewdness, to avoid making enemies by showing partiality had referred them to the arbitrement of arms. Among the rival candidates were several renowned for strength and prowess. What a predicament for the unfortunate Ahmed, unprovided as he was with weapons, and unskilled in the exercises of chivalry! «Luckless prince that I am», said he, «to have been brought up in seclusion under the eye of a philosopher! Of what avail are algebra and philosophy in affairs of love? Alas, Eben Bonabben! why hast thou neglected to instruct me in the management of arms?» Upon this the owl broke silence, precluding his harangue with a pious ejaculation, for he was a devout Mussulman.

«*Allah Akbar!* God is great» exclaimed he; «in his hands are all secret things. He alone governs the destiny of princes! Know, O prince, that this land is full of mysteries, hidden from all but those who like myself can grope after knowledge in the dark. Know that in the neighbouring mountains there is a cave, and in that cave there is an iron table, and on that table there lies a suit of magic armour, and beside that table there stands a spell-

bound steed which has been shut up there for many generations».

The prince stared with wonder, while the owl, blinking his huge round eyes and erecting his horns, proceeded.

«Many years since I accompanied my father to these parts on a tour of his estates, and we sojourned in that cave, and thus became I acquainted with the mystery. It is a tradition in our family which I have heard from my grandfather, when I was yet but a very little owlet, that this armour belonged to a Moorish magician who took refuge in this cavern when Toledo was captured by the Christians and died here, leaving his steed and weapons under a mystic spell, never to be used but by a Moslem and by him only from sunrise to mid-day. In that interval, whoever uses them will overthrow every opponent.»

«Enough; let us seek this cave!» exclaimed Ahmed.

Guided by his legendary mentor, the prince found the cavern which was in one of the wildest recesses of those rocky cliffs which rise around Toledo; none but the mousing eye of an owl or an antiquary could have discovered the entrance to it. A sepulchral lamp of everlasting oil shed a solemn light through the place. On an iron table in the centre of the cavern lay the magic armour; against it leaned the lance and beside it stood an Arabian steed, caparisoned for the field, but motionless as a statue. The armour was bright and unsullied as it had gleamed in days of old; the steed in as good condition as if just from the pasture, and when Ahmed laid his hand upon his neck, he pawed the ground and gave a loud neigh of joy that shook the walls of the cavern. Thus amply provided with «horse to ride and weapon to wear», the prince determined to defy the field in the impending tourney.

The eventful morning arrived. The lists for the combat were prepared in the *Vega* or plain, just below the cliff-built walls of

Toledo, where stages and galleries were erected for the spectators, covered with rich tapestry and sheltered from the sun by silken awnings. All the beauties of the land were assembled in those galleries, while below pranced plumed knights with their pages and esquires, among whom figured conspicuously the princes who were to contend in the tourney. All the beauties of the land, however, were eclipsed when the princess Aldegonda appeared in the royal pavilion and for the first time broke forth upon the gaze of an admiring world. A murmur of wonder ran through the crowd at her transcendent loveliness, and the princes who were candidates for her hand merely on the faith of her reported charms now felt tenfold ardour for the conflict.

The princess, however, had a troubled look. The colour came and went from her cheek and her eye wandered with a restless and unsatisfied expression over the plumed throng of knights. The trumpets were about sounding for the encounter, when the herald announced the arrival of a stranger knight, and Ahmed rode into the field. A steel helmet studded with gems rose above his turban; his cuirass was embossed with gold; his scimitar and dagger were of the workmanship of Fez and flamed with precious stones. A round shield was at his shoulder and in his hand he bore the lance of charmed virtue. The caparison of his Arabian steed was richly embroidered and swept the ground, and the proud animal pranced and snuffed the air and neighed with joy at once more beholding the array of arms. The lofty and graceful demeanour of the prince struck every eye, and when his appellation was announced, «The Pilgrim of Love», an universal flutter and agitation prevailed among the fair dames in the galleries.

When Ahmed presented himself at the lists, however, they were closed against him: none but princes, he was told, were admitted to the contest. He declared his name and rank. «Still

worse!»—he was a Moslem and could not engage in a tourney where the hand of a Christian princess was the prize.

The rival princes surrounded him with haughty and menacing aspects; and one of insolent demeanour and herculean frame sneered at his light and youthful form and scoffed at his amorous appellation. The ire of the prince was roused. He defied his rival to the encounter. They took distance, wheeled and charged, and at the first touch of the magic lance, the brawny scoffer was tilted from his saddle. Here the prince would have paused, but alas! he had to deal with a demoniac horse and armour—once in action nothing could control them. The Arabian steed charged into the thickest of the throng; the lance overturned everything that presented; the gentle prince was carried pell-mell about the field, strewing it with high and low, gentle and simple, and grieving at his own involuntary exploit. The king stormed and raged at this outrage on his subjects and his guests. He ordered out all his guards—they were unhorsed as fast as they came up. The king threw off his robes, grasped buckler and lance, and rode forth to awe the stranger with the presence of majesty itself. Alas! majesty fared no better than the vulgar—the Steed and lance were no respecters of persons; to the dismay of Ahmed, he was borne full tilt against the king, and in a moment the royal heels were in the air and the crown was rolling in the dust.

At this moment the sun reached the meridian; the magic spell resumed its power. The Arabian steed scoured across the plain, leaped the barrier, plunged into the Tagus, swam its raging current, bore the prince breathless and amazed to the cavern, and resumed his station like a statue beside the iron table. The prince dismounted right gladly and replaced the armour to abide the further decrees of fate. Then seating himself in the cavern, he ruminated on the desperate state to which this demoniac steed and armour had reduced him. Never should he dare

to show his face at Toledo after inflicting such disgrace upon its chivalry, and such an outrage on its king. What, too, would the princess think of so rude and riotous an achievement? Full of anxiety, he sent forth his winged messengers to gather tidings. The parrot resorted to all the public places and crowded resorts of the city, and soon returned with a world of gossip. All Toledo was in consternation. The princess had been borne off senseless to the palace; the tournament had ended in confusion; every one was talking of the sudden apparition, prodigious exploits and strange disappearance of the Moslem knight. Some pronounced him a Moorish magician; others thought him a demon who had assumed a human shape, while others related traditions of enchanted warriors hidden in the caves of the mountains and thought it might be one of these, who had made a sudden irruption from his den. All agreed that no mere ordinary mortal could have wrought such wonders or unhorsed such accomplished and stalwart Christian warriors.

The owl flew forth at night and hovered about the dusky city, perching on the roofs and chimneys. He then wheeled his flight up to the royal palace which stood on the rocky summit of Toledo and went prowling about its terraces and battlements, eaves-dropping at every cranny and glaring in with his big goggling eyes at every window where there was a light, so as to throw two or three maids of honour into fits. It was not until the grey dawn began to peer above the mountains that he returned from his mousing expedition and related to the prince what he had seen.

«As I was prying about one of the loftiest towers of the palace», said he, «I beheld through a casement a beautiful princess. She was reclining on a couch with attendants and physicians around her, but she would have none of their ministry and relief. When they retired, I beheld her draw forth a letter from

her bosom and read and kiss it, and give way to loud lamentations, at which, philosopher as I am, I could not but be greatly moved».

The tender heart of Ahmed was distressed at these tidings. «Too true were thy words, O sage Eben Bonabben», cried he, «care and sorrow and sleepless nights are the lot of lovers. Allah preserve the princess from the blighting influence of this thing called love!»

Further intelligence from Toledo corroborated the report of the owl. The city was a prey to uneasiness and alarm. The princess was conveyed to the highest tower of the palace, every avenue to which was strongly guarded. In the meantime a devouring melancholy had seized upon her, of which no one could divine the cause. She refused food and turned a deaf ear to every consolation. The most skilful physicians had essayed their art in vain; it was thought some magic spell had been practised upon her, and the king made proclamation, declaring that whoever should effect her cure should receive the richest jewel in the royal treasury.

When the owl, who was dozing in a corner, heard of this proclamation, he rolled his large eyes and looked more mysterious than ever.

«*Allah Akbar!*» exclaimed he, «happy the man that shall effect that cure, should he but know what to choose from the royal treasury».

«What mean you, most reverend owl?», said Ahmed.

«Hearken, O prince, to what I shall relate. We owls, you must know, are a learned body and much given to dark and dusty research. During my late prowling at night about the domes and turrets of Toledo, I discovered a college of antiquarian owls who hold their meeting in a great vaulted tower where the royal treasury is deposited. Here they were discussing the

forms and inscriptions and designs of ancient gems and jewels, and of golden and silver vessels, heaped up in the treasury, the fashion of every country and age, but mostly they were interested about certain relics and talismans that have remained in the treasury since the time of Roderick the Goth. Among these was a box of sandal-wood secured by bands of steel of Oriental workmanship and inscribed with mystic characters known only to the learned few. This box and its inscription had occupied the college for several sessions, and had caused much long and grave dispute. At the time of my visit a very ancient owl who had recently arrived from Egypt was seated on the lid of the box lecturing upon the inscription, and he proved from it that the coffer contained the silken carpet of the throne of Solomon the Wise, which doubtless had been brought to Toledo by the Jews who took refuge there after the downfall of Jerusalem.»

When the owl had concluded his antiquarian harangue, the prince remained for a time absorbed in thought. «I have heard», said he, «from the sage Eben Bonabben of the wonderful properties of that talisman which disappeared at the fall of Jerusalem and was supposed to be lost to mankind. Doubtless it remains a sealed mystery to the Christians of Toledo. If I can get possession of that carpet, my fortune is secure».

The next day the prince laid aside his rich attire, and arrayed himself in the simple garb of an Arab of the desert. He dyed his complexion to a tawny hue, and no one could have recognised in him the splendid warrior who had caused such admiration and dismay at the tournament. With staff in hand and scrip by his side and a small pastoral reed, he repaired to Toledo and, presenting himself at the gate of the royal palace, announced himself as a candidate for the reward offered for the cure of the princess. The guards would have driven him away with blows. «What can a vagrant Arab like thyself pretend to do», said they,

«in a case where the most learned of the land have failed?» The king, however, overheard the tumult and ordered the Arab to be brought into his presence.

«Most potent king», said Ahmed, «you behold before you a Bedouin Arab, the greater part of whose life has been passed in the solitudes of the desert. These solitudes, it is well known, are the haunts of demons and evil spirits who beset us poor shepherds in our lonely watching, enter into and possess our flocks and herds, and sometimes render even the patient camel furious; against these our counter-charm is music and we have legendary airs handed down from generation to generation, that we chant and pipe to cast forth these evil spirits. I am of a gifted line and possess this power in its fullest force. If it be any evil influence of the kind that holds a spell over thy daughter, I pledge my head to free her from its sway».

The king who was a man of understanding and knew the wonderful secrets possessed by the Arabs was inspired with hope by the confident language of the prince. He conducted him immediately to the lofty tower, secured by several doors, in the summit of which was the chamber of the princess. The window opened upon a terrace with balustrades, commanding a view over Toledo and all the surrounding country. The windows were darkened, for the princess lay within, a prey to a devouring grief that refused all alleviation.

The prince seated himself on the terrace and performed several wild Arabian airs on his pastoral pipe, which he had learnt from his attendants in the Generalife at Granada. The princess continued insensible, and the doctors who were present shook their heads and smiled with incredulity and contempt. At length the prince laid aside the reed and to a simple melody chanted the amatory verses of the letter which had declared his passion.

The princess recognized the strain; a fluttering joy stole to her heart, she raised her head and listened, tears rushed to her eyes and streamed down her cheeks, her bosom rose and fell with a tumult of emotions. She would have asked for the minstrel to be brought into her presence but maiden coyness held her silent. The king read her wishes and at his command Ahmed was conducted into the chamber. The lovers were discreet; they but exchanged glances, yet those glances spoke volumes. Never was triumph of music more complete. The rose had returned to the soft cheek of the princess, the freshness to her lip and the dewy light to her languishing eyes.

All the physicians present stared at each other with astonishment. The king regarded the Arab minstrel with admiration mixed with awe. «Wonderful youth!» exclaimed he «thou shalt henceforth be the first physician of my court, and no other prescription will I take but thy melody. For the present receive thy reward, the most precious jewel in my treasury».

«O king», replied Ahmed, «I care not for silver or gold or precious stones. One relic hast thou in thy treasury, handed down from the Moslems who once owned Toledo—a box of sandal-wood containing a silken carpet. Give me that box and I am content».

All present were surprised at the moderation of the Arab, and still more when the box of sandal-wood was brought and the carpet drawn forth. It was of fine green silk, covered with Hebrew and Chaldaic characters. The court physicians looked at each other and shrugged their shoulders and smiled at the simplicity of this new practitioner who could be content with so paltry a fee.

«This carpet», said the prince, «once covered the throne of Solomon the Wise; it is worthy of being placed beneath the feet of beauty».

So saying, he spread it on the terrace beneath an ottoman that had been brought forth for the princess, then seating himself at her feet.

«Who», said he, «shall counteract what is written in the book of fate? Behold the prediction of the astrologers verified. Know, O king, that your daughter and I have long loved each other in secret. Behold in me the Pilgrim of Love!»

These words were scarcely from his lips when the carpet rose in the air, bearing off the prince and princess. The king and the physicians gazed after it with open mouths and straining eyes, until it became a little speck on the white bosom of a cloud and then disappeared in the blue vault of heaven

The king in a rage summoned his treasurer. «How is this», said he, «that thou hast suffered an infidel to get possession of such a talisman?»

«Alas, sire, we knew not its nature nor could we decipher the inscription of the box. If it be indeed the carpet of the throne of the wise Solomon, it is possessed of magic power and can transport its owner from place to place through the air».

The king assembled a mighty army and set off for Granada in pursuit of the fugitives. His march was long and toilsome. Encamping in the Vega, he sent a herald to demand restitution of his daughter. The king himself came forth with all his court to meet him. In the king he beheld the real minstrel, for Ahmed had succeeded to the throne on the death of his father and the beautiful Aldegonde was his sultana.

The Christian king was easily pacified when he found that his daughter was suffered to continue in her faith—not that he was particularly pious, but religion is always a point of pride and etiquette with princes. Instead of bloody battles, there was a succession of feasts and rejoicings after which the king returned

well pleased to Toledo, and the youthful couple continued to reign as happily as wisely in the Alhambra.

It is proper to add, that the owl and the parrot had severally followed the prince by easy stages to Granada, the former travelling by night and stopping at the various hereditary possessions of his family, the latter figuring in gay circles of every town and city on his route.

Ahmed gratefully requited the services which they had rendered on his pilgrimage. He appointed the owl his prime minister, the parrot his master of ceremonies. It is needless to say that never was a realm more sagely administered or a court conducted with more exact punctilio.

## LEGEND OF THE MOOR'S LEGACY

JUST within the fortress of the Alhambra in front of the royal palace is a broad open esplanade called the Place or Square of the Cisterns (*la Plaza de los Aljibes*), so called from being undermined by reservoirs of water, hidden from sight, and which have existed from the time of the Moors. At one corner of this esplanade is a Moorish well, cut through the living rock to a great depth, the water of which is cold as ice and clear as crystal. The wells made by the Moors are always in repute, for it is well known what pains they took to penetrate to the purest and sweetest springs and fountains. The one of which we now speak is famous throughout Granada insomuch that the water-carriers, some bearing great water-jars on their shoulders, others driving asses before them laden with earthen vessels, are ascending and descending the steep woody avenues of the Alhambra from early dawn until a late hour of the night.

Fountains and wells, ever since the scriptural days, have been noted gossiping places in hot climates, and, at the well in question, there is a kind of perpetual club kept up during the live-long day by the invalids, old women and other curious do-nothing folk of the fortress who sit here on the stone benches under an awning spread over the well to shelter the toll-gatherer from the sun and dawdle over the gossip of the fortress and question every water-carrier that arrives about the news of the city and

make long comments on everything they hear and see. Not an hour of the day but loitering housewives and idle maid-servants may be seen, lingering with pitcher on head or in hand, to hear the last of the endless tattle of these worthies.

Among the water-carriers who once resorted to this well, there was a sturdy, strong backed, bandy-legged little fellow, named Pedro Gil, but called Peregil for shortness. Being a water-carrier, he was a *gallego*, or native of Galicia, of course. Nature seems to have formed races of men, as she has of animals, for different kinds of drudgery. In France the shoe-blacks are all Savoyards, the porters of hotels all Swiss, and in the days of hoops and hairpowder in England, no man could give the regular swing to a sedan-chair but a bog-trotting Irishman. So in Spain, the carriers of water and bearers of burdens are all sturdy little natives of Galicia. No man says, «Get me a porter» but, «Call a *gallego*».

To return from this digression, Peregil the *gallego* had begun business with merely a great earthen jar which he carried upon his shoulder; by degrees he rose in the world and was enabled to purchase an assistant of a corresponding class of animals—being a stout shaggy-haired donkey. On each side of this his long-eared aide-de-camp in a kind of pannier were slung his water-jars, covered with fig-leaves to protect them from the sun. There was not a more industrious water-carrier in all Granada, nor one more merry withal. The streets rang with his cheerful voice, as he trudged after his donkey, singing forth the usual summer note that resounds through the Spanish towns: «¿Quién quiere agua, agua más fría que la nieve?» «Who wants water, water colder than snow? Who wants water from the well of the Alhambra, cold as ice and clear as crystal?» When he served a customer with a sparkling glass, it was always with a pleasant word that caused a smile, and if, perchance, it was a comely dame or dimpling damsel, it was always with a sly leer and a compliment to her

beauty that was irresistible. Thus Peregil, the *gallego*, was noted throughout all Granada for being one of the civilest, pleasanter and happiest of mortals. Yet it is not he who sings loudest and jokes most that has the lightest heart. Under all this air of merriment honest Peregil had his cares and troubles. He had a large family of ragged children to support, who were hungry and clamorous as a nest of young swallows and beset him with their outcries for food whenever he came home of an evening. He had a helpmate too, who was anything but a help to him. She had been a village beauty before marriage, noted for her skill at dancing the *bolero* and rattling the castanets, and she still retained her early propensities, spending the hard earnings of honest Peregil in frippery and laying the very donkey under requisition for junketing parties into the country on Sundays and saints' days and those innumerable holidays which are rather more numerous in Spain than the days of the week. With all this she was a little of a slattern, something more of a lie-abed, and above all a gossip of the first water, neglecting house, household and everything else, to loiter slipshod in the houses of her gossip neighbours.

He, however, who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb accommodates the yoke of matrimony to the submissive neck. Peregil bore all the heavy dispensations of wife and children with as meek a spirit as his donkey bore the water-jars and, however he might shake his ears in private, never ventured to question the household virtues of his slattern spouse.

He loved his children, too, even as an owl loves its owlets, seeing in them his own image multiplied and perpetuated, for they were a sturdy, long-backed, bandy-legged little brood. The great pleasure of honest Peregil was whenever he could afford himself a scanty holiday and had a handful of *maravedies* to take the whole litter forth with him—some in his arms, some tugging at his skirts and some trudging at his heels—and to treat

then to a gambol among the orchards of the Vega, while his wife was dancing with her holiday friends in the *angosturas* of the Darro.

It was a late hour one summer night and most of the water-carriers had desisted from their toils. The day had been uncommonly sultry; the night was one of those delicious moonlights which tempt the inhabitants of those southern climes to indemnify themselves for the heat and inaction of the day, by lingering in the open air and enjoying its tempered sweetness until after midnight. Customers for water were therefore still abroad. Peregil, like a considerate, painstaking little father, thought of his hungry children. «One more journey to the well», said he to himself, «to earn a Sunday's *puchero* for the little ones». So saying, he trudged manfully up the steep avenue of the Alhambra, singing as he went, and now and then bestowing a hearty thwack with a cudgel on the flanks of his donkey, either by way of cadence to the song or refreshment to the animal, for dry blows serve in lieu of provender in Spain for all beasts of burden.

When he arrived at the well, he found it deserted by every one except a solitary stranger in Moorish garb, seated on the stone bench in the moonlight. Peregil paused at first and regarded him with surprise, not unmixed with awe, but the Moor feebly beckoned him to approach. «I am faint and ill», said he, «aid me to return to the city and I will pay the double what thou couldst gain by thy jars of water».

The honest heart of the little water-carrier was touched with compassion at the appeal of the stranger. «God forbid», said he, «that I should ask fee or reward for doing a common act of humanity». He accordingly helped the Moor on his donkey and set off slowly for Granada, the poor Moslem being so weak that it was necessary to hold him on the animal to keep him from falling to the earth.

When they entered the city, the water-carrier demanded whither he should conduct him. «Alas!» said the Moor faintly, «I have neither home nor habitation, I am a stranger in the land. Suffer me to lay my head this night beneath thy roof and thou shalt be amply repaid».

Honest Peregil thus saw himself unexpectedly saddled with an infidel guest, but he was too humane to refuse a night's shelter to a fellow-being in so forlorn a plight, so he conducted the Moor to his dwelling. The children who had sallied forth open-mouthed as usual on hearing the tramp of the donkey, ran back with affright when they beheld the turbaned stranger and hid themselves behind their mother. The latter stepped forth intrepidly, like a ruffling hen before her brood when a vagrant dog approaches.

«What infidel companion», cried she, «is this you have brought home at this late hour to draw upon us the eyes of the Inquisition?»

«Be quiet, wife», replied the *gallego*, «here is a poor sick stranger, without friend or home; wouldst thou turn him forth to perish in the streets?»

The wife would still have remonstrated, for although she lived in a hovel, she was a furious stickler for the credit of her house; the little water-carrier, however, for once was stiff-necked and refused to bend beneath the yoke. He assisted the poor Moslem to alight and spread a mat and a sheepskin for him on the ground in the coolest part of the house, being the only kind of bed that his poverty afforded.

In a little while the Moor was seized with violent convulsions which defied all the ministering skill of the simple water-carrier. The eye of the poor patient acknowledged his kindness. During an interval of his fits he called him to his side and addressing him in a low voice, «My end», said he, «I fear is at hand. If I die,

I bequeath you this box as a reward for your charity». So saying, he opened his *albornoz* or cloak and showed a small box of sandal-wood, strapped round his body. «God grant, my friend», replied the worthy little *gallego*, «that you may live many years to enjoy your treasure, whatever it may be». The Moor shook his head; he laid his hand upon the box and would have said something more concerning it, but his convulsions returned with increased violence and in a little while he expired.

The water-carrier's wife was now as one distracted. «This comes», said she, «of your foolish good-nature, always running into scrapes to oblige others. What will become of us when this corpse is found in our house? We shall be sent to prison as murderers and, if we escape with our lives, shall be ruined by notaries and *alguaciles*».

Poor Peregil was in equal tribulation and almost repented himself of having done a good deed. At length a thought struck him. «It is not yet day», said he, «I can convey the dead body out of the city and bury it in the sands on the banks of the Xenil. No one saw the Moor enter our dwelling and no one will know anything of his death».

So said, so done. The wife aided him; they rolled the body of the unfortunate Moslem in the mat on which he had expired, laid it across the ass and Peregil set out with it for the banks of the river.

As ill luck would have it, there lived opposite to the water-carrier a barber named Pedrillo Pedrugo, one of the most prying, tattling and mischief-making of his gossip tribe. He was a weasel-faced spider-legged varlet, supple and insinuating; the famous barber of Seville could not surpass him for his universal knowledge of the affairs of others and he had no more power of retention than a sieve. It was said that he slept but with one eye at a time and kept one ear uncovered, so that even in his sleep

he might see and hear all that was going on. Certain it is, he was a sort of scandalous chronicle for the quidnuncs of Granada and had more customers than all the rest of his fraternity.

This meddlesome barber heard Peregil arrive at an unusual hour at night, and the exclamations of his wife and children. His head was instantly popped out of a little window which served him as a look-out and he saw his neighbour assist a man in Moorish garb into his dwelling. This was so strange an occurrence that Pedrillo Pedrugo slept not a wink that night. Every five minutes he was at his loophole, watching the lights that gleamed through the chinks of his neighbour's door and before daylight he beheld Peregil sally forth with his donkey unusually laden.

The inquisitive barber was in a fidget; he slipped on his clothes and, stealing forth silently, followed the water-carrier at a distance, until he saw him dig a hole in the sandy bank of the Xenil and bury something that had the appearance of a dead body.

The barber hied him home and fidgeted about his shop, setting everything upside down, until sunrise. He then took a basin under his arm and sallied forth to the house of his daily customer the *alcalde*.

The *alcalde* was just risen. Pedrillo Pedrugo seated him in a chair, threw a napkin round his neck, put a basin of hot water under his chin and began to mollify his beard with his fingers.

«Strange doings!» said Pedrugo, who played barber and newsmonger at the same time—«Strange doings! Robbery and murder and burial, all in one night!»

«Hey!—how— what is that you say?» cried the *alcalde*.

«I say», replied the barber, rubbing a piece of soap over the nose and mouth of the dignitary, for a Spanish barber disdains to employ a brush—«I say that Peregil the *gallego* has robbed

and murdered a Moorish Mussulman and buried him this blessed night. *Maldita sea la noche*—accursed be the night for the same!»

«But how do you know all this?» demanded the *alcalde*.

«Be patient, *señor*, and you shall hear all about it», replied Pedrillo, taking him by the nose and sliding a razor over his cheek. He then recounted all that he had seen, going through both operations at the same time, shaving his beard, washing his chin and wiping him dry with a dirty napkin, while he was robbing, murdering and burying the Moslem.

Now it so happened that this *alcalde* was one of the most overbearing, and at the same time most griping and corrupt curmudgeons in all Granada. It could not be denied, however, that he set a high value upon justice, for he sold it at its weight in gold. He presumed the case in point to be one of murder and robbery; doubtless there must be rich spoil. How was it to be secured into the legitimate hands of the law? For as to merely entrapping the delinquent—that would be feeding the gallows, but entrapping the booty—that would be enriching the judge, and such according to his creed was the great end of justice. So thinking, he summoned to his presence his trustiest *alguacil*, a gaunt, hungry-looking varlet, clad according to the custom of his order in the ancient Spanish garb, a broad black beaver turned up at the sides, a quaint ruff, a small black cloak dangling from his shoulders, rusty black under-clothes that set off his spare wiry frame, while in his hand he bore a slender white wand, the dreaded insignia of his office. Such was the legal bloodhound of the ancient Spanish breed that he put upon the traces of the unlucky water-carrier, and such was his speed and certainty, that he was upon the haunches of poor Peregil before he had returned to his dwelling, and brought both him and his donkey before the dispenser of justice.

The *alcalde* bent upon him one of his most terrific frowns. «Hark ye, culprit!» roared he, in a voice that made the knees of the little *gallego* smite together—«hark ye, culprit! there is no need of denying thy guilt, everything is known to me. A gallows is the proper reward for the crime thou hast committed, but I am merciful and readily listen to reason. The man that has been murdered in thy house was a Moor, an infidel, the enemy of our faith. It was doubtless in a fit of religious zeal that thou hast slain him. I will be indulgent, therefore; render up the property of which thou hast robbed him and we will hush the matter up».

The poor water-carrier called upon all the saints to witness his innocence. Alas! not one of them appeared, and if they had, the *alcalde* would have disbelieved the whole calendar. The water-carrier related the whole story of the dying Moor with the straightforward simplicity of truth, but it was all in vain. «Wilt thou persist in saving», demanded the judge, «that this Moslem had neither gold nor jewels which were the object of thy cupidity?»

«As I hope to be saved, your worship», replied the water-carrier, «he had nothing but a small box of sandal-wood, which he bequeathed to me in reward for my services».

«A box of sandal-wood! a box of sandal-wood!» exclaimed the *alcalde*, his eyes sparkling at the idea of precious jewels. «And where is this box? Where have you concealed it?»

«An' it please your grace», replied the water-carrier, «it is in one of the panniers of my mule, and heartily at the service of your worship».

He had hardly spoken the words, when the keen *alguacil* darted off and reappeared in an instant with the mysterious box of sandal-wood. The *alcalde* opened it with an eager and trembling hand; all pressed forward to gaze upon the treasures it was expected to contain, when to their disappointment nothing

appeared within, but a parchment scroll, covered with Arabic characters and an end of a waxen taper.

When there is nothing to be gained by the conviction of a prisoner, justice even in Spain is apt to be impartial. The *alcalde* having recovered from his disappointment and found that there was really no booty in the case, now listened dispassionately to the explanation of the water-carrier, which was corroborated by the testimony of his wife. Being convinced, therefore, of his innocence, he discharged him from arrest; nay more, he permitted him to carry off the Moor's legacy, the box of sandal-wood and its contents as the well-merited reward of his humanity, but he retained his donkey in payment of costs and charges.

Behold the unfortunate little *gallego* reduced once more to the necessity of being his own water-carrier and trudging up to the well of the Alhambra with a great earthen jar upon his shoulder.

As he toiled up the hill in the heat of a summer noon, his usual good humour forsook him. «Dog of an *alcalde*!» would he cry, «to rob a poor man of the means of his subsistence, of the best friend he had in the world!» And then, at the remembrance of the beloved companion of his labours, all the kindness of his nature would break forth. «An, donkey of my heart!» would he exclaim, resting his burden on a stone and wiping the sweat from his brow—«Ah, donkey of my heart! I warrant me thou thinkest of thy old master! I warrant me thou missest the water-jars, poor beast!»

To add to his afflictions, his wife received him, on his return home, with whimperings and repinings; she had clearly the vantage-ground of him, having warned him not to commit the egregious act of hospitality that had brought on him all these misfortunes, and like a knowing woman, she took every occasion to throw her superior sagacity in his teeth. If ever her chil-

dren lacked food or needed a new garment, she could answer with a sneer. «Go to your father, he is heir to king Chico of the Alhambra; ask him to help you out of the Moor's strong-box!»

Was ever poor mortal so soundly punished for having done a good action? The unlucky Peregil was grieved in flesh and spirit, but still he bore meekly with the railings of his spouse. At length one evening when after a hot day's toil she taunted him in the usual manner, he lost all patience. He did not venture to retort upon her, but his eye rested upon the box of sandal-wood, which lay on a shelf with the lid half open, as if laughing in mockery at his vexation. Seizing it, he dashed it with indignation to the floor: —«Unlucky was the day that I ever set eyes on thee», he cried, «or sheltered thy master beneath my roof!»

As the box struck the floor, the lid flew wide open and the parchment scroll rolled forth. Peregil sat regarding the scroll for some time in moody silence. At length rallying his ideas —«Who knows», thought he, «but this writing may be of some importance, as the Moor seems to have guarded it with such care?» Picking it up therefore he put it in his bosom, and the next morning, as he was crying water through the streets, he stopped at the shop of a Moor, a native of Tangiers, who sold trinkets and perfumery in the Zacatín, and asked him to explain the contents.

The Moor read the scroll attentively, then stroked his beard and smiled. «This manuscript» said he, «is a form of incantation for the recovery of hidden treasure that is under the power of enchantment. It is said to have such virtue that the strongest bolts and bars, nay the adamantine rock itself, will yield before it!»

«Bah!» cried the little *gallego*, «what is all that to me? I am no enchanter and know nothing of buried treasure». So saying, he shouldered his water-jar, left the scroll in the hands of the Moor and trudged forward on his daily rounds.

That evening, however, as he rested himself about twilight at the well of the Alhambra, he found a number of gossips assembled at the place, and their conversation, as is not unusual at that shadowy hour, turned upon old tales and traditions of a supernatural nature. Being all poor as rats, they dwelt with peculiar fondness upon the popular theme of enchanted riches left by the Moors in various parts of the Alhambra. Above all, they concurred in the belief that there were great treasures buried deep in the earth under the tower of the Seven Floors.

These stories made an unusual impression on the mind of honest Peregil, and they sank deeper and deeper into his thoughts as he returned alone down the darkening avenues. «If, after all, there should be treasure hid beneath that tower, and if the scroll I left with the Moor should enable me to get at it!» In the sudden ecstasy of the thought, he had well-nigh let fall his water-jar.

That night he tumbled and tossed, and could scarcely get a wink of sleep for the thoughts that were bewildering his brain. Bright and early, he repaired to the shop of the Moor and told him all that was passing in his mind. «You can read Arabic», said he, «suppose we go together to the tower and try the effect of the charm; if it fails, we are no worse off than before, but if it succeeds, we will share equally all the treasure we may discover».

«Hold», replied the Moslem; «this writing is not sufficient of itself; it must be read at midnight by the light of a taper singularly compounded and prepared, the ingredients of which are not within my reach. Without such a taper the scroll is of no avail»

«Say no more!» cried the little *gallego*, «I have such a taper at hand and will bring it here in a moment». So saying, he hastened home and soon returned with the end of yellow wax taper that he had found in the box of sandal-wood.

The Moor felt it and smelt it. «Here are rare and costly perfumes», said he, «combined with this yellow wax. This is the kind of taper specified in the scroll. While this burns, the strongest walls and most secret caverns will remain open. Woe to him, however, who lingers within until it be extinguished. He will remain enchanted with the treasure».

It was now agreed between them to try the charm that very night. At a late hour, therefore, when nothing was stirring but bats and owls, they ascended the woody hill of the Alhambra and approached that awful tower, shrouded by trees and rendered formidable by so many traditionary tales. By the light of a lantern, they groped their way through bushes and over fallen stones to the door of a vault beneath the tower. With fear and trembling they descended a flight of steps cut into the rock. It led to an empty chamber, damp and drear, from which another flight of steps led to a deeper vault. In this way they descended four several flights, leading into as many vaults, one below the other, but the floor of the fourth was solid; and though, according to tradition, there remained three vaults still below, it was said to be impossible to penetrate further, the residue being shut up by strong enchantment. The air of this vault was damp and chilly, and had an earthy smell, and the light scarce cast forth any rays. They paused here for a time in breathless suspense until they faintly heard the clock of the watch-tower strike midnight; upon this they lit the waxen taper which diffused an odour of myrrh and frankincense and storax.

The Moor began to read in a hurried voice. He had scarce finished when there was a noise as of subterraneous thunder. The earth shook and the floor, yawning open, disclosed a flight of steps. Trembling with awe, they descended and by the light of the lantern found themselves in another vault, covered with Arabic inscriptions. In the centre stood a great chest, secured

with seven bands of steel, at each end of which sat an enchanted Moor in armour, but motionless as a statue, being controlled by the power of the incantation. Before the chest were several jars filled with gold and silver and precious stones. In the largest of these they thrust their arms up to the elbow and at every dip hauled forth handfuls of broad yellow pieces of Moorish gold or bracelets and ornaments of the same precious metal, while occasionally a necklace of Oriental pearls would stick to their fingers. Still they trembled and breathed short while cramming their pockets with the spoils, and cast many a fearful glance at the two enchanted Moors who sat grim and motionless, glaring upon them with unwinking eyes. At length, struck with a sudden panic at some fancied noise, they both rushed up the staircase, tumbled over one another into the upper apartment, overturned and extinguished the waxen taper, and the pavement again closed with a thundering sound.

Filled with dismay, they did not pause until they had groped their way out of the tower and beheld the stars shining through the trees. Then seating themselves upon the grass, they divided the spoil, determining to content themselves for the present with this mere skimming of the jars, but to return on some future night and drain them to the bottom. To make sure of each other's good faith also, they divided the talismans between them, one retaining the scroll and the other the taper; this done, they set off with light hearts and well-lined pockets for Granada.

As they wended their way down the hill, the shrewd Moor whispered a word of counsel in the ear of the simple little water-carrier.

«Friend Peregil», said he, «all this affair must be kept a profound secret, until we have secured the treasure and conveyed it out of harm's way. If a whisper of it gets to the ear of the *alcalde*, we are undone!»

«Certainly!» replied the *gallego*, «nothing can be more true».

«Friend Peregil», said the Moor, «you are a discreet man, and I make no doubt can keep a secret, but you have a wife».

«She shall not know a word of it», replied the little water-carrier sturdily.

«Enough», said the Moor; «I depend upon thy discretion and thy promise».

Never was promise more positive and sincere, but, alas! what man can keep a secret from his wife? Certainly not such an one as Peregil the water-carrier who was one of the most loving and tractable of husbands. On his return home, he found his wife moping in a corner. «Mighty well», cried she as he entered, «you've come at last after rambling about until this hour of the night. I wonder you have not brought home another Moor as a housemate» Then bursting into tears, she began to wring her hands and smite her breast: «Unhappy woman that I am!» exclaimed she, «what will become of me? My house stripped and plundered by lawyers and *alguaciles*; my husband a do-no-good that no longer brings home bread for his family, but goes rambling about day and night with infidel Moors! O my children! my children! what will become of us? We shall all have to beg in the streets!»

Honest Peregil was so moved by the distress of his spouse, that he could not help whimpering also. His heart was as full as his pocket and not to be restrained. Thrusting his hand into the latter, he hauled forth three or four broad gold pieces, and slipped them into her bosom. The poor woman stared with astonishment and could not understand the meaning of this golden shower. Before she could recover her surprise, the little *gallego* drew forth a chain of gold and dangled it before her, capering with exultation, his mouth distended from ear to ear.

«Holy Virgin protect us!» exclaimed the wife. «What hast thou been doing, Peregil? Surely thou hast not been committing murder and robbery!»

The idea had scarce entered the brain of the poor woman than it became a certainty with her. She saw a prison and a gallows in the distance, and a little bandy-legged *gallego* hanging pendent from it, and, overcome by the horrors conjured up by her imagination, fell into violent hysterics.

What could the poor man do? He had no other means of pacifying his wife and dispelling the phantoms of her fancy than by relating the whole story of his good fortune. This, however, he did not do until he had exacted from her the most solemn promise to keep it a profound secret from every living being.

To describe her joy would be impossible. She flung her arms round the neck of her husband and almost strangled him with her caresses. «Now, wife», exclaimed the little man with honest exultation, «what say you now to the Moor's legacy? Henceforth never abuse me for helping a fellow creature in distress».

The honest *gallego* retired to his sheepskin mat and slept as soundly as if on a bed of down. Not so his wife; she emptied the whole contents of his pockets upon the mat and sat all night counting gold pieces of Arabic coin, trying on necklaces and earrings and fancying the figure she should one day make when permitted to enjoy her riches.

On the following morning the honest *gallego* took a broad golden coin, and repaired with it to a jeweller's shop in the Zacaín to offer it for sale, pretending to have found it among the ruins of the Alhambra. The jeweller saw that it had an Arabic inscription and was of the purest gold; he offered, however, but a third of its value, with which the water-carrier was perfectly content. Peregil now bought new clothes for his little flock and all kinds of toys, together with ample provisions for a hearty

meal, and returning to his dwelling, set all his children dancing around him, while he capered in the midst, the happiest of fathers.

The wife of the water-carrier kept her promise of secrecy with surprising strictness. For a whole day and a half she went about with a look of mystery and a heart swelling almost to bursting, yet she held her peace, though surrounded by her gossips. It is true, she could not help giving herself a few airs, apologized for her ragged dress, and talked of ordering a new *basquiña* all trimmed with gold lace and bugles, and a new lace *mantilla*. She threw out hints of her husband's intention of leaving off his trade of water-carrying, as it did not altogether agree with his health. In fact she thought they should all retire to the country for the summer, that the children might have the benefit of the mountain air, for there was no living in the city in this sultry season.

The neighbours stared at each other and thought the poor woman had lost her wits, and her airs and graces and elegant pretensions were the theme of universal scoffing and merriment among her friends the moment her back was turned.

If she restrained herself abroad, however, she indemnified herself at home, and putting a string of rich Oriental pearls round her neck, Moorish bracelets on her arms and an aigrette of diamonds on her head, sailed backwards and forwards in her slattern rags about the room, now and then stopping to admire herself in a piece of broken mirror. Nay, in the impulse of her simple vanity, she could not resist, on one occasion, showing herself at the window, to enjoy the effect of her finery on the passers-by.

As the fates would have it, Pedrillo Pedrugo, the meddling barber, was at this moment sitting idly in his shop on the opposite side of the street, when his ever-watchful eye caught

the sparkle of a diamond. In an instant he was at his loophole reconnoitring the slattern spouse of the water-carrier, decorated with the splendour of an Eastern bride. No sooner had he taken an accurate inventory of her ornaments, than he posted off with all speed to the *alcalde*. In a little while the hungry *alguacil* was again on the scent, and before the day was over, the unfortunate Peregil was again dragged into the presence of the judge.

«How is this, villain», cried the *alcalde*, in a furious voice. «You told me that the infidel who died in your house left nothing behind but an empty coffer, and now I hear of your wife flaunting in her rags decked out with pearls and diamonds. Wretch that thou art! prepare to render up the spoils of thy miserable victim and to swing on the gallows that is already tired of waiting for thee.»

The terrified water-carrier fell on his knees and made a full relation of the marvellous manner in which he had gained his wealth. The *alcalde*, the *alguacil* and the inquisitive barber listened with greedy ears to this Arabian tale of enchanted treasure. The *alguacil* was dispatched to bring the Moor who had assisted in the incantation. The Moslem entered, half frightened out of his wits at finding himself in the hands of the harpies of the law. When he beheld the water-carrier standing with sheepish looks and downcast countenance, he comprehended the whole matter. «Miserable animal», said he, as he passed near him, «did I not warn thee against babbling to thy wife?»

The story of the Moor coincided exactly with that of his colleague, but the *alcalde* affected to be slow of belief and threw out menaces of imprisonment and rigorous investigation.

«Softly, good *señor alcalde*», said the Mussulman who by this time had recovered his usual shrewdness and self-possession. «Let us not mar fortune's favours in the scramble for them. Nobody knows anything of this matter but ourselves; let us keep

the secret. There is wealth enough in the cave to enrich us all. Promise a fair division and hall shall be produced; refuse, and the cave shall remain forever closed.»

The *alcalde* consulted apart with the *alguacil*. The latter was an old fox in his profession. «Promise anything», said he, «until you get possession of the treasure. You may then seize upon the whole and, if he and his accomplice dare to murmur, threaten them with the faggot and the stake as infidels and sorcerers.»

The *alcalde* relished the advice. Smoothing his brow and turning to the Moor, «This is a strange story», said he, «and may be true, but I must have ocular proof of it. This very night you must repeat the incantation in my presence. If there be really such treasure we will share it amicably among us and say nothing further of the matter; if ye have deceived me, expect no mercy at my hands. In the meantime you must remain in custody.»

The Moor and the water-carrier cheerfully agreed to these conditions, satisfied that the event would prove the truth of their words.

Towards midnight the *alcalde* sallied forth secretly attended by the *alguacil* and the meddling barber, all strongly armed. They conducted the Moor and the water-carrier as prisoners, and were provided with the stout donkey of the latter to bear off the expected treasure. They arrived at the tower without being observed and, tying the donkey to a fig-tree, descended into the fourth vault of the tower.

The scroll was produced, the yellow waxen taper lighted, and the Moor read the form of incantation. The earth trembled as before and the pavement opened with a thundering sound, disclosing the narrow flight of steps. The *alcalde*, the *alguacil* and the barber were struck aghast and could not summon courage to descend. The Moor and the water-carrier entered the lower

vault and found the two Moors seated as before, silent and motionless. They removed two of the great jars, filled with golden coin and precious stones. The water-carrier bore them up one by one upon his shoulders, but though a strong-backed little man and accustomed to carry burdens, he staggered beneath their weight and found, when slung on each side of his donkey, they were as much as the animal could bear.

«Let us be content for the present», said the Moor, «here is as much treasure as we can carry off without being perceived and enough to make us all wealthy to our heart's desire».

«Is there more treasure remaining behind?» demanded the *alcalde*.

«The greatest prize of all», said the Moor, «a huge coffer bound with bands of steel and filled with pearls and precious stones».

«Let us have up the coffer, by all means», cried the grasping *alcalde*.

«I will descend for no more», said the Moor, doggedly, «enough is enough for a reasonable man; more is superfluous».

«And I», said the water-carrier, «will bring up no further burden to break the back of my poor donkey».

Finding commands, threats and entreaties equally vain, the *alcalde* turned to his two adherents. «Aid me», said he, «to bring up the coffer and its contents shall be divided among us». So saying, he descended the steps, followed with trembling reluctance by the *alguacil* and the barber.

No sooner did the Moor behold them fairly earthed, than he extinguished the yellow taper; the pavement closed with its usual crash and the three worthies remained buried in its womb.

He then hastened up the different flights of steps nor stopped until in the open air. The little water-carrier followed him as fast as his short legs would permit.

«What hast thou done?» cried Peregil, as soon as he could recover breath. «The *alcalde* and the other two are shut up in the vault.»

«It is the will of Allah!» said the Moor devoutly.

«And will you not release them?», demanded the *gallego*.

«Allah forbid!» replied the Moor, smoothing his beard. «It is written in the book of fate that they shall remain enchanted, until some future adventurer arrive to break the charm. The will of God be done!» So saying, he hurled the end of the waxen taper far among the gloomy thickets of the glen.

There was now no remedy; so the Moor and the water-carrier proceeded with the richly-laden donkey towards the city, nor could honest Peregil refrain from hugging and kissing his long-eared fellow-labourer thus restored to him from the clutches of the law, and, in fact, it is doubtful which gave the simple-hearted little man most joy at the moment, the gaining of the treasure or the recovery of the donkey.

The two partners in good luck divided their spoil amicably and fairly, except that the Moor who had a little taste for trinketry made out to get into his heap the most of the pearls and precious stones and other baubles, but then he always gave the water-carrier in lieu magnificent jewels of massy gold, of five times the size, with which the latter was heartily content. They took care not to linger within reach of accidents, but made off to enjoy their wealth undisturbed in other countries. The Moor returned to Africa to his native city of Tangiers, and the *gallego* with his wife, his children and his donkey made the best of his way to Portugal. Here, under the admonition and tuition of his wife, he became a personage of some consequence, for she made the worthy little man array his long body and short legs in doublet and hose with a feather in his hat and a sword by his side, and laying aside his familiar appellation of Peregil, assumed

the more sonorous title of *Don Pedro Gil*. His progeny grew up a thriving and merry-hearted, though short and bandy-legged generation, while *Señora Gil*, befringed, belaced and betasselled from her head to her heels with glittering rings on every finger became a model of slattern fashion and finery.

As to the *alcalde* and his adjuncts, they remained shut up under the great tower of the Seven Floors, and there they remain spell-bound at the present day. Whenever there shall be a lack in Spain of pimping barbers, sharking *alguaciles* and corrupt *alcaldes*, they may be sought after, but if they have to wait until such time for their deliverance, there is danger of their enchantment enduring until doomsday.

## LEGEND OF THE ROSE OF THE ALHAMBRA OR THE PAGE AND THE GER-FALCON

FOR some time after the surrender of Granada by the Moors, that delightful city was a frequent and favourite residence of the Spanish sovereigns, until they were frightened away by successive shocks of earthquakes which toppled down various houses, and made the old Moslem towers rock to their foundations.

Many, many years then rolled away, during which Granada was rarely honoured by a royal guest. The palaces of the nobility remained silent and shut up, and the Alhambra, like a slighted beauty, sat in mournful desolation among her neglected gardens. The Tower of the *Infantas*, once the residence of the three beautiful Moorish princesses, partook of the general desolation; the spider spun her web athwart the gilded vault, and bats and owls nestled in those chambers that had been graced by the presence of Zayda, Zorayda and Zorahayda. The neglect of this tower may partly have been owing to some superstitious notions of the neighbours. It was rumoured that the spirit of the youthful Zorahayda who had perished in that tower was often seen by moonlight seated beside the fountain in the hall or moaning about the battlements, and that the notes of her silver lute could be heard at midnight by wayfarers passing along the glen.

At length the city of Granada was once more welcomed by the royal presence. All the world knows that Philip V. was the

first Bourbon that swayed the Spanish sceptre. All the world knows that he married in second nuptials Elizabetta or Isabella (for they are the same), the beautiful Princess of Parma, and all the world knows that by this chain of contingencies a French prince and an Italian princess were seated together on the Spanish throne. For the reception of this illustrious pair, the Alhambra was repaired and fitted up with all possible expedition. The arrival of the court changed the whole aspect of the lately deserted palace. The clangour of drum and trumpet, the tramp of steeds about the avenues and outer court, the glitter of arms and display of banners about barbican and battlement recalled the ancient and warlike glories of the fortress. A softer spirit, however, reigned within the royal palace. There was the rustling of robes and the cautious tread and murmuring voice of reverential courtiers about the antechambers; a loitering of pages and maids of honour about the gardens and the sound of music stealing from open casements.

Among those who attended in the train of the monarchs was a favourite page of the queen, named Ruiz de Alarcón. To say that he was a favourite page of the queen was at once to speak his eulogium, for every one in the suite of the stately Elizabetta was chosen for grace and beauty and accomplishments. He was just turned of eighteen, light and lithe of form and graceful as a young Antinous. To the queen he was all deference and respect, yet he was at heart a roguish stripling, petted and spoiled by the ladies about the court and experienced in the ways of women far beyond his years.

This loitering page was one morning rambling about the groves of the Generalife, which overlook the grounds of the Alhambra. He had taken with him for his amusement a favourite ger-falcon of the queen. In the course of his rambles, seeing a bird rising from a thicket, he unhooded the hawk and let him fly.

The falcon towered high in the air, made a swoop at his quarry, but missing it, soared away, regardless of the calls of the page. The latter followed the truant bird with his eye in its capricious flight, until he saw it alight upon the battlements of a remote and lonely tower in the outer wall of the Alhambra, built on the edge of a ravine that separated the royal fortress from the grounds of the Generalife. It was in fact the «Tower of the Princesses».

The page descended into the ravine and approached the tower, but it had no entrance from the glen, and its lofty height rendered any attempt to scale it fruitless. Seeking one of the gates of the fortress, therefore, he made a wide circuit to that side of the tower facing within the walls.

A small garden, enclosed by a trellis-work of reeds overhung with myrtle, lay before the tower. Opening a wicket, the page passed between beds of flowers and thickets of roses to the door. It was closed and bolted. A crevice in the door gave him a peep into the interior. There was a small Moorish hall with fretted walls, light marble columns and an alabaster fountain surrounded with flowers. In the centre hung a gilt cage containing a singing-bird; beneath it on a chair lay a tortoise-shell cat among reels of silk and other articles of female labour, and a guitar decorated with ribbons leaned against the fountain.

Ruiz de Alarcón was struck with these traces of female taste and elegance in a lonely and, as he had supposed, deserted tower. They reminded him of the tales of enchanted halls current in the Alhambra, and the tortoise-shell cat might be some spell-bound princess.

He knocked gently at the door. A beautiful face peeped out from a little window above but was instantly withdrawn. He waited, expecting that the door would be opened, but he waited in vain; no footstep was to be heard within—all was silent. Had his senses deceived him or was this beautiful apparition the

fairy of the tower? He knocked again and more loudly. After a little while the beaming face once more peeped forth; it was that of a blooming damsel of fifteen.

The page immediately doffed his plumed bonnet, and entreated in the most courteous accents to be permitted to ascend the tower in pursuit of his falcon.

«I dare not open the door, *señor*», replied the little damsel blushing, «my aunt has forbidden it».

«I do beseech you, fair maid; it is the favourite falcon of the queen. I dare not return to the palace without it».

«Are you then one of the cavaliers of the court?»

«I am, fair maid, but I shall lose the queen's favour and my place, if I lose this hawk.»

«¡*Santa María!* It is against you cavaliers of the court my aunt has charged me especially to bar the door.»

«Against wicked cavaliers doubtless, but I am none of these, but a simple harmless page who will be ruined and undone if you deny me this small request».

The heart of the little damsel was touched by the distress of the page. It was a thousand pities he should be ruined for the want of so trifling a boon. Surely too he could not be one of those dangerous beings whom her aunt had described as a species of cannibal, ever on the prowl to make prey of thoughtless damsels; he was gentle and modest, and stood so entreatingly with cap in hand and looked so charming!

The sly page saw that the garrison began to waver and redoubled his entreaties in such moving terms that it was not in the nature of mortal maiden to deny him, so the blushing little warden of the tower descended and opened the door with a trembling hand. If the page had been charmed by a mere glimpse of her countenance from the window, he was ravished by the full-length portrait now revealed to him.

Her Andalusian bodice and trim *basquiña* set off the round but delicate symmetry of her form which was as yet scarce verging into womanhood. Her glossy hair was parted on her forehead with scrupulous exactness and decorated with a fresh-plucked rose, according to the universal custom of the country. It is true her complexion was tinged by the ardour of a southern sun, but it served to give richness to the mantling bloom of her cheek and to heighten the lustre of her melting eyes.

Ruiz de Alarcón beheld all this with a single glance, for it became him not to tarry; he merely murmured his acknowledgements and then bounded lightly up the spiral staircase in quest of his falcon.

He soon returned with the truant bird upon his fist. The damsel in the meantime had seated herself by the fountain in the hall and was winding silk, but in her agitation she let fall the reel upon the pavement. The page sprang and picked it up, then dropping gracefully on one knee, presented it to her; but, seizing the hand extended to receive it, imprinted on it a kiss more fervent and devout than he had ever imprinted on the fair hand of his sovereign.

«*Ave María, señor!*» exclaimed the damsel, blushing still deeper with confusion and surprise, for never before had she received such a salutation.

The modest page made a thousand apologies, assuring her it was the way at court of expressing the most profound homage and respect.

Her anger, if anger she felt, was easily pacified, but her agitation and embarrassment continued, and she sat blushing deeper and deeper with her eyes cast down upon her work, entangling the silk which she attempted to wind.

The cunning page saw the confusion in the opposite camp and would fain have profited by it, but the fine speeches he

would have uttered died upon his lips; his attempts at gallantry were awkward and ineffectual, and to his surprise, the adroit page who had figured with such grace and effrontery among the most knowing and experienced ladies of the court found himself awed and abashed in the presence of a simple damsel of fifteen.

In fact, the artless maiden in her own modesty and innocence had guardians more effectual than the bolts and bars prescribed by her vigilant aunt. Still, where is the female bosom proof against the first whisperings of love? The little damsel with all her artlessness instinctively comprehended all that the faltering tongue of the page failed to express, and her heart was flattered at beholding for the first time a lover at her feet— and such a lover!

The diffidence of the page, though genuine, was short-lived, and he was recovering his usual ease and confidence, when a shrill voice was heard at a distance.

«My aunt is returning from mass!» cried the damsel in affright, «I pray you, *señor*, depart».

«Not until you grant me that rose from your hair as a remembrance.»

She hastily untwisted the rose from her raven locks. «Take it», cried she, agitated and blushing, «but pray begone».

The page took the rose and at the same time covered with kisses the fair hand that gave it. Then, placing the flower in his bonnet and taking the falcon upon his fist, he bounded off through the garden, bearing away with him the heart of the gentle Jacinta.

When the vigilant aunt arrived at the tower, she remarked the agitation of her niece and an air of confusion in the hall, but a word of explanation sufficed. «A ger-falcon had pursued his prey into the hall.»

«Mercy on us! To think of a falcon flying into the tower. Did ever one hear of so saucy a hawk? Why, the very bird in the cage is not safe!»

The vigilant Fredegonda was one of the most wary of ancient spinsters. She had a becoming terror and distrust of what she denominated «the opposite sex», which had gradually increased through a long life of celibacy. Not that the good lady had ever suffered from their wiles, Nature having set up a safeguard in her face, that forbade all trespass upon her premises, but ladies who have least cause to fear for themselves are most ready to keep a watch over their more tempting neighbours.

The niece was the orphan of an officer who had fallen in the wars. She had been educated in a convent and had recently been transferred from her sacred asylum to the immediate guardianship of her aunt, under whose overshadowing care she vegetated in obscurity, like an opening rose blooming beneath a briar. Nor indeed is this comparison entirely accidental, for to tell the truth her fresh and dawning beauty had caught the public eye, even in her seclusion and, with that poetical turn common to the people of Andalusia, the peasantry of the neighbourhood had given her the appellation of «the Rose of the Alhambra».

The wary aunt continued to keep a faithful watch over her tempting little niece as long as the court continued at Granada and flattered herself that her vigilance had been successful. It is true the good lady was now and then discomposed by the tinkling of guitars and chanting of love ditties from the moonlit groves beneath the tower, but she would exhort her niece to shut her ears against such idle minstrelsy, assuring her that it was one of the arts of the opposite sex, by which simple maids were often lured to their undoing. Alas! What chance with a simple maid has a dry lecture against a moonlight serenade?

At length king Philip cut short his sojourn at Granada and suddenly departed with all his train. The vigilant Fredegonda watched the royal pageant as it issued forth from the Gate of Justice and descended the great avenue leading to the city. When the last banner disappeared from her sight, she returned exulting to her tower for all her cares were over. To her surprise a light Arabian steed pawed the ground at the wicket-gate of the garden. To her horror she saw through the thickets of roses a youth in gaily embroidered dress at the feet of her niece. At the sound of her footsteps he gave a tender adieu, bounded lightly over the barrier of reeds and myrtles; sprang upon his horse and was out of sight in an instant.

The tender Jacinta in the agony of her grief lost all thought of her aunt's displeasure. Throwing herself into her arms, she broke forth into sobs and tears.

«*Ay de mí!*» cried she, «he's gone! He's gone! He's gone! and I shall never see him more!»

«Gone! Who is gone? What youth is that I saw at your feet?»

«A queen's page, aunt, who came to bid me farewell.»

«A queen's page, child!» echoed the vigilant Fredegonda, faintly, «and when did you become acquainted with a queen's page?»

«The morning that the ger-falcon came into the tower. It was the queen's ger-falcon and he came in pursuit of it.»

«Ah, silly, silly girl! know that there are no ger-falcons half so dangerous as these young pranking pages and it is precisely such simple birds as thee that they pounce upon.»

The aunt was at first indignant at learning that, in despite of her boasted vigilance, a tender intercourse had been carried on by the youthful lovers almost beneath her eye, but when she found that her simple-hearted niece, though thus exposed with-

out the protection of bolt or bar to all the machinations of the opposite sex, had come forth unsinged from the fiery ordeal, she consoled herself with the persuasion that it was owing to the chaste and cautious maxims in which she had, as it were, steeped her to the very lips.

While the aunt laid this soothing unction to her pride, the niece treasured up the oft-repeated vows of fidelity of the page. But what is the love of restless, roving man? A vagrant stream that dallies for a time with each flower upon its bank, then passes on and leaves them all in tears.

Days, weeks, months elapsed and nothing more was heard of the page. The pomegranate ripened, the vine yielded up its fruit, the autumnal rains descended in torrents from the mountains, the Sierra Nevada became covered with a snowy mantle and wintry blasts howled through the halls of the Alhambra—still he came not. The winter passed away. Again the genial spring burst forth with song and blossom and balmy zephyr; the snows melted from the mountains, until none remained but on the lofty summit of Nevada, glistening through the sultry summer air. Still nothing was heard of the forgetful page.

In the meantime the poor little Jacinta grew pale and thoughtful. Her former occupations and amusements were abandoned, her silk lay entangled, her guitar unstrung, her flowers were neglected, the notes of her bird unheeded and her eyes, once so bright, were dimmed with secret weeping. If any solitude could be devised to foster the passion of a love-lorn damsel, it would be such a place as the Alhambra, where everything seems disposed to produce tender and romantic reveries. It is a very paradise for lovers. How hard then to be alone in such a paradise—and not merely alone, but forsaken!

«Alas, silly child!» would the staid and immaculate Fredegonda say, when she found her niece in one of her desponding

moods, «did I not warn thee against the wiles and deceptions of these men? What couldst thou expect, too, from one of a haughty and aspiring family—thou an orphan, the descendant of a fallen and impoverished line? Be assured, if the youth were true, his father who is one of the proudest nobles about the court, would prohibit his union with one so humble and portionless as thou. Pluck up thy resolution therefore and drive these idle notions from thy mind».

The words of the immaculate Fredegonda only served to increase the melancholy of her niece, but she sought to indulge it in private. At a late hour one midsummer night, after her aunt had retired to rest, she remained alone in the hall of the tower, seated beside the alabaster fountain. It was here that the faithless page had first knelt and kissed her hand: it was here that he had often vowed eternal fidelity. The poor little damsel's heart was overladen with sad and tender recollections, her tears began to flow and slowly fell drop by drop into the fountain. By degrees the crystal water became agitated and—bubble—bubble—bubble—boiled up and was tossed about until a female figure, richly clad in Moorish robes, slowly rose to view.

Jacinta was so frightened that she fled from the hall and did not venture to return. The next morning she related what she had seen to her aunt, but the good lady treated it as a phantasy of her troubled mind or supposed she had fallen asleep and dreamt beside the fountain. «Thou hast been thinking of the story of the three Moorish princesses that once inhabited this tower», continued she, «and it has entered into thy dreams».

«What story, aunt? I know nothing of it.»

«Thou hast certainly heard of the three princesses, Zayda, Zorayda and Zorahayda who were confined in this tower by the king their father and agreed to fly with three Christian cavaliers. The two first accomplished their escape but

the third failed in her resolution and, it is said, died in this tower.»

«I now recollect to have heard of it», said Jacinta, «and to have wept over the fate of the gentle Zorahayda.»

«Thou mayest well weep over her fate», continued the aunt, «for the lover of Zorahayda was thy ancestor. He long bemoaned his Moorish love, but time cured him of his grief and he married a Spanish lady, from whom thou art descended».

Jacinta ruminated upon these words. «That what I have seen is no phantasy of the brain», said she to herself. «I am confident. If indeed it be the spirit of the gentle Zorahayda, which I have heard lingers about this tower, of what should I be afraid? I'll watch by the fountain tonight; perhaps the visit will be repeated».

Towards midnight, when everything was quiet, she again took her seat in the hall. As the bell in the distant watch-tower of the Alhambra struck the midnight hour, the fountain was again agitated, and bubble—bubble—bubble—it tossed about the waters until the Moorish female again rose to view. She was young and beautiful, her dress was rich with jewels and in her hand she held a silver lute. Jacinta trembled and was faint, but was reassured by the soft and plaintive voice of the apparition and the sweet expression of her pale, melancholy countenance.

«Daughter of mortality», said she, «what aileth thee? Why do thy tears trouble my fountain and thy sighs and plaints disturb the quiet watches of the night?»

«I weep because of the faithlessness of man, and I bemoan my solitary and forsaken state.»

«Take comfort; thy sorrows may yet have an end. Thou beholdest a Moorish princess who like thee was unhappy in her love. A Christian knight, thy ancestor, won my heart and would have borne me to his native land and to the bosom of his church.

I was a convert in my heart, but I lacked courage equal to my faith and lingered till too late. For this the evil genii are permitted to have power over me, and I remain enchanted in this tower until some pure Christian will deign to break the magic spell. Wilt thou undertake the task?»

«I will», replied the damsel, trembling.

«Come hither then and fear not; dip thy hand in the fountain, sprinkle the water over me and baptize me after the manner of thy faith; so shall the enchantment be dispelled and my troubled spirit have repose.»

The damsel advanced with faltering steps, dipped her hand in the fountain, collected water in the palm and sprinkled it over the pale face of the phantom.

The latter smiled with ineffable benignity. She dropped her silver lute at the feet of Jacinta, crossed her white arms upon her bosom and melted from sight, so that it seemed merely as if a shower of dewdrops had fallen into the fountain.

Jacinta retired from the hall filled with awe and wonder. She scarcely closed her eyes that night, but when she awoke at daybreak out of a troubled slumber, the whole appeared to her like a distempered dream. On descending into the hall, however, the truth of the vision was established, for beside the fountain she beheld the silver lute glittering in the morning sunshine.

She hastened to her aunt to relate all that had befallen her and called her to behold the lute as a testimonial of the reality of her story. If the good lady had any lingering doubts, they were removed when Jacinta touched the instrument, for she drew forth such ravishing tones as to thaw even the frigid bosom of the immaculate Fredegonda, that region of eternal winter, into a genial flow. Nothing but supernatural melody could have produced such an effect.

The extraordinary power of the lute became every day more and more apparent. The wayfarer passing by the tower was detained and, as it were, spellbound in breathless ecstasy. The very birds gathered in the neighbouring trees and, hushing their own strains, listened in charmed silence.

Rumour soon spread the news abroad. The inhabitants of Granada thronged to the Alhambra to catch a few notes of the transcendent music that floated about the tower of Las Infantas.

The lovely little minstrel was at length drawn forth from her retreat. The rich and powerful of the land contended who should entertain and do honour to her, or rather who should secure the charms of her lute to draw fashionable throngs to their saloons. Wherever she went, her vigilant aunt kept a dragon watch at her elbow, awing the throngs of impassioned admirers, who hung in raptures on her strains. The report of her wonderful powers spread from city to city. Malaga, Seville, Cordova, all became successively mad on the theme; nothing was talked of throughout Andalusia but the beautiful minstrel of the Alhambra. How could it be otherwise among a people so musical and gallant as the Andalusians, when the lute was magical in its powers, and the minstrel inspired by love?

While all Andalusia was thus music mad, a different mood prevailed at the court of Spain. Philip V, as is well known, was a miserable hypochondriac and subject to all kinds of fancies. Sometimes he would keep to his bed for weeks together, groaning under imaginary complaints. At other times he would insist upon abdicating his throne, to the great annoyance of his royal spouse who had a strong relish for the splendours of a court and the glories of a crown, and guided the sceptre of her imbecile lord with an expert and steady hand.

Nothing was found to be so efficacious in dispelling the royal megrims as the powers of music; the queen took care therefore

to have the best performers, both vocal and instrumental, at hand and retained the famous Italian singer Farinelli about the court as a kind of royal physician.

At the moment we treat of, however, a freak had come over the mind of this sapient and illustrious Bourbon, that surpassed all former vagaries. After a long spell of imaginary illness which set all the strains of Farinelli and the consultations of a whole orchestra of court fiddlers at defiance, the monarch fairly in idea gave up the ghost and considered himself absolutely dead.

This would have been harmless enough and even convenient both to his queen and courtiers, had he been content to remain in the quietude befitting a dead man, but to their annoyance he insisted upon having the funeral ceremonies performed over him and to their inexpressible perplexity began to grow impatient and to revile bitterly at them for negligence and disrespect in leaving him unburied. What was to be done? To disobey the king's positive commands was monstrous in the eyes of the obsequious courtiers of a punctilious court, but to obey him and bury him alive would be downright regicide!

In the midst of this fearful dilemma a rumour reached the court of the female minstrel who was turning the brains of all Andalusia. The queen dispatched missions in all haste to summon her to St. Ildefonso where the court at that time resided.

Within a few days, as the queen with her maids of honour was walking in those stately gardens, intended with their avenues and terraces and fountains to eclipse the glories of Versailles, the far-famed minstrel was conducted into her presence. The imperial Elizabetta gazed with surprise at the youthful and unpretending appearance of the little being that had set the world madding. She was in her picturesque Andalusian dress, her silver lute was in her hand and she stood with modest and downcast

eyes, but with a simplicity, and freshness of beauty that still bespoke her «the Rose of the Alhambra».

As usual, she was accompanied by the ever-vigilant Fredegonda who gave the whole history of her parentage and descent to the inquiring queen. If the stately Elizabetta had been interested by the appearance of Jacinta she was still more pleased when she learnt that she was of a meritorious through impoverished line and that her father had briefly fallen in the service of the crown. «If thy powers equal their renown», said she, «and thou canst cast forth this evil spirit that possesses thy sovereign, thy fortunes shall henceforth be my care and honours and wealth attend thee».

Impatient to make trial of her skill, she led the way at once to the apartment of the moody monarch.

Jacinta followed with downcast eyes, through files of guards and crowds of courtiers. They arrived at length at a great chamber hung with black. The windows were closed to exclude the light of day, a number of yellow wax tapers in silver sconces diffused a lugubrious light and dimly revealed the figures of mutes in mourning dresses and courtiers who glided about with noiseless step and woe-begone visage. On the midst of a funeral bed or bier, his hands folded on his breast and the tip of his nose just visible, lay extended this would-be-buried monarch.

The queen entered the chamber in silence and pointing to a footstool in an obscure corner beckoned to Jacinta to sit down and commence.

At first she touched her lute with a faltering hand, but gathering confidence and animation as she proceeded, drew forth such soft aerial harmony that all present could scarce believe it mortal. As to the monarch who had already considered himself in the world of spirits, he set it down for some angelic melody or the music of the spheres. By degrees the theme was varied

and the voice of the minstrel accompanied the instrument. She poured forth one of the legendary ballads treating of the ancient glories of the Alhambra and the achievements of the Moors. Her whole soul entered into the theme, for with the recollections of the Alhambra was associated the story of her love. The funeral chamber resounded with the animating strain. It entered into the gloomy heart of the monarch. He raised his head and gazed around; he sat up on his couch, his eye began to kindle. At length, leaping upon the floor, he called for sword and buckler.

The triumph of music or rather of the enchanted lute was complete; the demon of melancholy was cast forth and, as it were, a dead man brought to life. The windows of the apartment were thrown open; the glorious effulgence of Spanish sunshine burst into the late lugubrious chamber. All eyes sought the lovely enchantress, but the lute had fallen from her hand; she had sunk upon the earth and the next moment was clasped to the bosom of Ruiz de Alarcón.

The nuptials of the happy couple were shortly after celebrated with great splendour, but hold—I hear the reader ask, how did Ruiz de Alarcón account for his long neglect? Oh, that was all owing to the opposition of a proud, pragmatistical old father. Besides, young people who really like one another soon come to an amicable understanding and bury all past grievances when once they meet.

But how was the proud, pragmatistical old father reconciled to the match?

Oh, his scruples were easily overcome by a word or two from the queen, especially as dignities and rewards were showered upon the blooming favourite of royalty. Besides, the lute of Jacinta, you know, possessed a magic power and could control the most stubborn head and hardest breast.

And what came of the enchanted lute?

Oh, that is the most curious matter of all and plainly proves the truth of all this story. That lute remained for some time in the family, but was purloined and carried off, as was supposed, by the great singer Farinelli in pure jealousy. At his death it passed into other hands in Italy, who were ignorant of its mystic powers and, melting down the silver, transferred the strings to an old Cremona fiddle. The strings still retain something of their magic virtues. A word in the reader's ear, but let it go no further. That fiddle is now bewitching the whole world—it is the fiddle of Paganini!