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LA SORTEGA: OR, THE CHARMED RING.

In the province of Andalusia there lived a rich and noble cavalier, named Don Remigio de la Torre, who had to wife Donna Ines Pauda, the most beautiful woman in all the land. Long and happily they lived together; so that their felicity had become a by-word among their neighbors, and they were held up as an example to all young persons entering the blessed state of matrimony. Indeed neither tongue nor pen can describe how happily they were consorted.

One day, as they sat together in the lady's bower, their talk turned upon death. The thoughts of a possible separation made each feel melancholy, and they remained silent for some time. At last Donna Ines said,

"If you should die, I'm sure I should die too."

Don Remigio kissed her eyes, which were full of tears, and pressed her to his bosom.

"What should I do?" murmured he, half choked with his imaginary sorrow, "if you left me alone in this bleak world?"

They kissed and comforted each other; and soon the momentary melancholy they had experienced was absorbed in sentiments of increased affection. However, it was agreed between them that the survivor should watch nine successive nights in the sepulchre of the deceased, with the coffin opened and the face of the corpse uncovered; and that during that vigil which was to commence an hour before midnight, and terminate an hour before dawn, his or her eyes should never a moment be taken off the corpse.

Time fled, and a period was about to be put to their happiness. In one single week from the day on which this conversation occurred, Donna Ines was attacked with a deadly malady. Three days more, and she departed this life to the unspeakable sorrow of her agonized husband. Her funeral was celebrated with every possible pomp and magnificence. All the nobility and clergy of the neighboring country accompanied the body, which was deposited in an old vault, at a short distance from the castle of Don Remigio, and which had been used by his ancestors since the days of Pilayo. The concourse then departed to their several homes, and the disconsolate husband retired to his chamber.

An hour before midnight, according to his compact with the deceased, he entered the vault in which lay the earthly remains of all that he loved in the world. In pursuance of his plighted word, he proceeded to unfasten the coffin lid, and to uncover the face of his beloved Ines. This done, he fell on his knees beside her, and alternately kissing her cold lips, eyes, and cheeks, prayed aloud, in the most fervent strain, for the repose of her soul.

Midnight, which was announced by the giant bell, found him engaged in this occupation. Just as the last stroke of the bell reverberated in his ear, his attention was attracted by a sudden noise at the other side of the vault. He started back in momentary affright, as an enormous serpent with eyes like fire, and scales sparkling like polished steel, sprung forward to attack him. But his dismay was but momentary—he stepped aside instantly—the serpent shot past him, and before the reptile could again renew the attack, Remigio snote it with his trusty sword, and behold, in its place, he perceived a beautiful ring glittering with jewels, lying on a written scroll of paper, the letters inscribed on which were of burnished gold. Don Remigio approached and took the ring and the scroll; on the latter he read, in glowing characters, the following verse:

Take this ring and straight apply it
To the cors's lips, that lieth
In the sleep of death so quiet;
Quick to life you'll bring her by it,
In the blessed Trine's name try it.

While he read these lines the air seemed to resound with strains of wild harmonious music. When he had finished he did not delay a moment in trying the means for the recovery of his beloved wife from the grave, which had been so strangely revealed to him.

"In the name of the blessed Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit," said he, touching at the same time the cors's pale cold lips with the talisman, "arise and live once more."

Ines arose as if from a sleep.

"My beloved wife!"—My beloved husband!" They could say no more for some minutes, so absorbed were they with each other. At last tears came to their relief, and

they wept in joy until the day broke, and they left the sepulchre together.

Unconscious, in the fullness of their happiness, whither they went, they wandered unerringly the whole morning, until at noon they found themselves on a broad beach, the sands of which shone like diamonds in the sun; and the sea before them. They sat down at the water edge, and Don Remigio, exhausted from contending emotions, laid his head on his lady's lap, and took his siesta while she watched over him as a mother over her child.

But while he continued in his deep sleep a gallant barque, with all her sails set, neared the shore, the captain, a young man, of most comely presence, leaped from her deck, beside Donna Ines.

"Fair Lady," said he, enamored at the first glimpse of her extreme beauty, "what dost thou here in a place of such danger?—Know ye not that this cave is the resort of Moorish Zebeques; and that if they find you here they will carry you off to captivity?"

Don Remigio slept on, and heard not a word of this discourse. Donna Ines imperceptibly shifted his head from her lap, until last she laid it on a large stone which was beside them.

"Leave your drowsy, ungallant companion," continued the captain, "and come with me on board his barque. A fair wind sprang up; the mariners bent on their oars,—the sails filled, and belied in the breeze, and in a very short period Ines and her new lover were out of sight of land.

When Don Remigio awoke and missed his wife, he stormed and raved like a man distract. Now he thought she might have been carried off by the Moors, and he cursed his untoward drowsiness; anon, he deemed that she had returned home, and left him to find his way as he best could; but his good opinion of himself did not suffer him to entertain this thought for more than a moment; and at last he imagined that it might be all nothing more than a dream. Filled with this idea he sped back to the sepulchre; but he found the door open, and only the cloths, of which he had divested the body of Ines in the coffin.—His wife was not there, and he was convinced. He then hastened home.

Arrived at the castle, he called to his servants and anxiously enquired whether his wife had returned? But the servants, astonished beyond measure, one and all answered in the negative.

"What does our master mean?" inquired the hoary Castellan. "I have nursed him on my knee when a child—I have shared in his sports when a boy—I have waited and watched for him, a man—and never before heard I such a question from him."

But Don Remigio, who had returned from an unsuccessful search in his lady's bower, under the impression that she might have entered the castle unheeded by his servants, explained to them the cause of his question; and they all stood aghast with horror and surprise at the strangeness of the tale.

"Moreover," said he, "I mean to leave my castle to-morrow, never perhaps to return again; so make speed for my departure. Stay you here, however, and never want support while my demesnes afford it. Before the dawn I shall depart, and let no one on his peril seek for me or speak of me after I shall have gone."

The menials bowed their heads; they were filled with grief, for he was a good and a kind master. They then went to their dinners and discuss his project, as far as they could conjecture its significance. The hoary Castellan was so sad that he retired to his ward-room, got intoxicated, and deranged his stomach, sprung forward to attack him. But his dismay was but momentary—he stepped aside instantly—the serpent shot past him, and before the reptile could again renew the attack, Remigio snote it with his trusty sword, and behold, in its place, he perceived a beautiful ring glittering with jewels, lying on a written scroll of paper, the letters inscribed on which were of burnished gold. Don Remigio approached and took the ring and the scroll; on the latter he read, in glowing characters, the following verse:

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Don Remigio proposed that they should join company, a proposal which the beggar most readily agreed to, since his partner renounced all claims to further share in the alms they received, that was absolutely necessary to his support; this done, they journeyed on together.

Many long days, and many weary miles did they wander on, they knew not whither. Many a kind heart did they meet in their course, many an unkind one—the kind hearts preponderated, and they were principally women. In the meanwhile, each had manifold opportunities of knowing the other. At length

they wept in joy until the day broke, and they left the sepulchre together.

One sultry afternoon, as they laid in the shade of a cork-tree, high in the Sierra Morena mountains, Remigio's companion earnestly inquired of him, whither he was going? Remigio moved by the poor fellow's sympathy told him all. This drew closer the bonds of friendship with which they had become inseparably attached to each other; and in reply to a suggestion of the former that he might leave him be he chose, he said he would follow him while he had life in his permission. When the air cooled they pursued their journey together.

Days and days, and leagues and leagues they wandered on, over mountains and rivers, through vallies and gardens, on—on, until they arrived at last at a great city, fatigued, foot-sore, and anxious for a little repose after their toils. Here they made up their minds to remain and rest for a week. It would seem as if this resolve were the inspiration of some protecting spirit. They had been there but two days, when going to mass on the third, which was Sunday, they learned from their brethren in misery, whom they had met with at the church doors in crowds, that the nuptials of a great lord of the land with a beautiful Andalusian lady were to take place the same day, and that an entertainment was to be given in the court-yard of his palace to all mendicants of the city and its vicinity. After mass was over, they joined company with their brother beggars, proceeded to the palace of the great lord, and placed themselves at one of the long tables which were laid out in the court yard, covered with wholesome and savoury food.

Seated behind the jalouses in her balcony, the Andalusian lady and her lord, saw with curiosity, the concourse of mendicants to the banquet provided for them. All of a sudden the lady started back, uttered a half-suppressed shriek, and she grew deadly pale.

"What ails you, my love?" asked the lord, in the utmost alarm.

"My husband—my own husband," she exclaimed, her straining eye-balls almost starting from her head. "You are mad," said her lord, half in anger and half in jest. "My husband!" she exclaimed. See, he is sitting at yon table disguised as a mendicant. Look, look; oh God! what shall I do?" The mendicant looked up, and saw her and fell backwards, for the Andalusian lady was poor Remigio's ungrateful wife.

The lord of the castle looked also, and seeing that Remigio was no common mendicant, believed what the Andalusian lady had spoken.

"Take your lady to her chamber," said he to her maiden, who had entered at his call, "and send Guzman to me."

Guzman came, and after conversing apart with his lord, received a purse of money and descended to the court-yard of the castle, while the bridegroom sought the chamber of his lady.

"Tis all arranged," said he, "he shall trouble us no longer." He then told her his scheme for getting rid of her husband without violence on his part, and with due observance of every form of law.

There was a statute in force in that city that visited with the punishment of death all those who stole the sum of ten ducats or any thing over it.

"I have sent Guzman," said he, "to conceal a purse to that amount on his person; Guzman will do the business dexterously I warrant you, for he was once a brigand, we shall then have the fool tried, and I will deal with him accordingly. That will not be our faults."

"No," said the Andalusian lady: "No, it will not be our faults, it will be all Guzman's—"

Guzman meanwhile had executed his commission; under the pretence of helping the mendicant from his swoon, he concealed the purse in the large sleeve of the beggar's garb. In a few minutes he made an outcry, said he was robbed of ten ducats in a purse, and commanded the castle gates to be shut. A search was immediately begun among the beggars.

It came to Remigio's turn to be searched last, when, just as they touched him, out fell the purse from his sleeve, where it had been hid by the treacherous Guzman.

This was all Guzman wanted. So they hurried poor Remigio before the lord of the castle for judgment. After a mock trial, which was secretly witnessed by his wife, concealed behind the judgment seat, Remigio was condemned to death. From the audience chamber he was quietly transferred to the castle chapel; and then left to prepare himself for eternity, while the gibbet on which he was to be hanged was getting ready.

Innocent of all guilt, and sad at the idea of such a fate, poor Remigio remained in the castle chapel during the period preceding the time appointed for his execution. However, the godly assistance of his confessor, reconciled him in some degree to death, and he resigned himself ultimately to his departure from a world where after all, he had latterly experienced nothing but misery and misfortune. The confessor shewed him and sained him; and then took his leave. At this juncture Remigio be思ought him of the talisman.

He made up his mind at once to the course he should pursue; and taking leave of his confessor, he prayed him as a final favor, that he would seek out his brother mendicant and send him to him without delay.

"Vulnus Dic, my son," said the confessor, "thy will be done."

The confessor departed, and in a short time the beggar arrived.

"Brother," said Remigio, "you have proved yourself a real friend, will you do me one favor after I die?"

The beggar replied that he would if it were in his power.

"Take this ring then," said Remigio, giving him the charmed circlet; "take also this purse, which contains all my money. When I am removed from the gallows, touch you at midnight my lips with the middle stone of the ring, in the name of the blessed Trinity, and keep the contents of the purse for yourself when you have done so."

The mendicant promised all that was required of him, and left the chapel, taking with him the ring and the purse.

In a few minutes afterwards the executioners came in, and took Remigio to the gibbet, where they hung him at once. When he was dead they cut him down and carried his corpse to the castle chapel; there, leaving it on the steps of the alter until morning, they departed.

At midnight, the mendicant, faithful to his promise, stole into the chapel on tip-toe, sadly frightened at the solemnity and singularity of the scene in which he was to perform a part.

"In the name of the Blessed Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit," said he, as with the charm, ed ring he touched the lips of the corpse.

That which was the corpse at once stood up, and the mendicant swooned from fear on the floor of the chapel.

"Fear nothing," said Don Remigio; "follow me; all is right."

They left the city together in the silence of the night; and left the city together rejoicing in the darkness. Days on days, and nights on nights they wandered on, until at last they came to the capital city of the kingdom. Just as they entered the gates they heard a herald proclaim the sore illness of the king, and offer of a third of the realm to whoever would cure him of his grievous malady.

"Come," said Remigio, who had resumed possession of the talisman, to his mendicant companion, "I'll go and cure the king."

His companion, who now of course, nothing doubted his ability, did as he desired. They proceeded together to the royal palace. After considerable difficulty, they obtained access to the monarch; and Remigio at once proposed to make him whole again. The king wished him to try the experiment in the presence of his council; but this he would not consent to. The chamber was accordingly cleared of all but the patient and his new physician. After a few words of good cheer to the dying monarch, Remigio touched his lips with the ring; and bade him to be healed in the name of the Blessed Trinity. He arose at once, sound in mind, and body, from the couch in which he had lain in sorrow and pain for many long years. The gratitude of the monarch had no bounds. At the end of the five days he summoned Remigio before him; and in the presence of his council he proceeded to partition his kingdom according to the proclamation made by the royal herald. But Remigio, who had been lodged in the palace during that period, would not hear of this, and he simply asked to be made commandant and governor of the city in which he had, through the instrumentality of his wife and her gallant, suffered so much in mind and body. This the king ceded to at once, and entertained him sumptuously till his departure.

Accompanied by a magnificent cavalcade, and followed by a sumptuous retinue, he set out for this city. After some days pleasant travel he reached it in safety. Arrived there, he immediately convoked the nobility and gentry, and invited their wives and daughters to accompany them to a great entertainment to be given in his palace. They all hastened to the scene of festivity. Among them, the causes of his misery, were the most illustrious persons in the land. The king ceded to at once, and entertained him sumptuously till his departure.

What must have been his feelings at seeing his wife and her lover, may be better guessed than described. However, he made great show of kindness to them, and especially singled out his wife, to whom he was completely unknown, as the object of his particular attention. He seated her and her lord beside him, and induced her by degrees to relate to him her whole history. She omitted, however, those portions of it which reflected on her own character, and threw all the blame of her former husband's death on her lord. At last he discovered himself to her.

"Do you know me?" cried he, in a voice like thunder. "Look, I am your much injured husband!"

She fell down in a swoon, the whole company was in consternation, for no one knew the cause. At last Remigio cleared up the mystery by calling in his guards; and after ordering them to carry the two delinquents off to prison, related to his nobles the nature of their offence, and the whole of his own history. Every one pitied him, and approved of his proceedings.

Next day they were put on their trial, and condemned to be hanged first, and to be beheaded afterwards. Guzman was the principal witness against them. At the time appointed they

were accordingly executed, and you may be sure Remigio did not apply the ring to the mouth of either. Guzman was sent to the quicksilver mines. Their heads were set on the principal gates of the city, where they remained at the time that the story was written.

WONDERS OF THE MICROSCOPE.

Upon examining the edge of a very keen razor by the microscope, it appears as broad as the back part of a very thick knife; rough, uneven, full of notches and furrows, and so far from any thing like sharpness, that an instrument so blunt as this seemed to be, would not serve even to cleave wood.

An exceedingly small needle being also examined, the point thereof appeared above a quarter of an inch in breadth, not round nor flat, but irregular and unequal, and the surface, though extremely smooth and bright to the naked eye, seemed full of ruggedness, holes and scratches. In short, it resembles an iron bar out of a smith's forge.

But the sting of a bee, viewed through the same instrument, showed every where a polish amazingly beautiful, without the least flaw, blemish, or inequality, and ended in a point too fine to be discerned.

A small piece of exceedingly fine lawn appeared, from the large distances of the holes between its threads, somewhat like a hurdle or lattice; and the threads themselves seemed somewhat coarser than yarn wherewith ropes are made for anchors.

Some Brussels lace, worth 5*l.* a yard, looked as if it were made of a thick, rough, uneven, hair line, fastened or collected together in a very inertial manner.

But a silkworm's web being examined, appeared perfectly smooth and shining, every where equal, and as much finer than any thread the finest spinners in the world could make, as the smallest twine is finer than the thickest cable. A pod of this silk being wound off, was found to contain nine hundred and thirty yards; but it is proper to take notice, that as two threads are glued together by the worm through its whole length, it makes double the above number, or eighteen hundred yards; which being weighed with the utmost exactness, were found no heavier than two grains and a half. What an exquisite fineness was here! and yet this is nothing when compared to a web of a small spider, or even with the silk that issues from the mouth of this very worm when newly hatched from the egg.