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THE STORY OF A NAIL.

BY CHARLES V. CUSACHS.

I was on my way to Malaga, and the train was crowded. The only vacant seat in the coach was beside me, and I was in constant fear lest some unpleasant fellow traveler might choose to appropriate it. There were several such already quite close enough; among others, an old woman with asthma; a smoker of bad tobacco; little angels who incessantly may give it, his story ran as follows: cried, and one very respectable matron the coach. Like many men, I entertained apart, as one in sorrow or in trouble. side, and at that moment I ardently wished together might lengthen indefinitely. When my neighbor had had time to perceive I was not likely to prove disagree-

acquaintanceship. "You are on your way to Malaga,

able company I dared venture usual re-

presume ?" "Yes, sir."

" From Granada?"

" No, sir." "The night is very damp?"

" Very." Evidently she was not inclined to converse, so I relapsed into silence and reflection. The train on which we rode was the night, or rather early morning accommodation, and the dawn had begun to break before my meditations terminated. The appearance of the light seemed to bring new spirit to my friend, color to her cheeks and light to her eyes. My ef- her name-all my life. Every word, forts to form an acquaintance a little while every tone of her voice, thrilled me with ago were forgotton, or at least just recog-

"It will be a beautiful day !" she ex- proaching. I could not go without declaimed. "What lovely scenery !"

earnestly:

ness to me on this journey, and I beg you I had long sought. will not think me ungrateful if I do not disclose my name."

"But shall we not meet again?" TEA, by."

And with a parting clasp of the hand she stepped into the carriage which awaited ber, and was driven away through the Puerta del Mar. And yet I did see her again, and within six months,

Two o'clock on the evening of November 1st in this same year found me en route to Salto, an important town in the province of Cordova. My object was to pay a long-promised visit to an old classmate of mine, then judge of the criminal court at that place. The judge, Juan Giro, met me at the train, and we went at once to his house, a dwelling of some pretensions. I admired it, and offered congratulations upon his evident prosperity.

"What order and taste you have shown everywhere, Juan, in fitting it up! But then-how foolish of me !-you are married, of course ?"

"No," he answered; "not married, nor likely to be."

"That you are not," I answered, "it may be, else why had you not written me of it? But that you will not before long I cannot accept so readily."

He seemed peculiarly disturbed, I thought, by this trivial remark of mine. It was with much seriousness that he answered me.

"'Tis true enough, however-vou have my word for it-I shall never marry."

"If I have jested with you on a tender sulject, Juan, it was unintentional. I ask pardon."

"You shall hear my story, my dear fellow. I have indeed passed through an tremely miserable. But I must not burden you so soon after our reunion with a long history of my troubles. Later will in about a fortnight I was once more on be time enough,"

ward, when one morning Juan said at two days after my departure she had gone

"To-day is a sort of holiday. All the people of Salto must visit the cemetery, as the custom is, and it will not do for me to remain away. If you care to go along I think you will enjoy it. We pass bits of very pretty scenery quite suited to your æsthetic eye, and as I have promised to relate a little passage of my life which you don't know as yet, this will be a most splendid opportunity.

And so it was agreed. As briefly as I

"Two years ago, while fiscal promoter occupying about a seat and a half. While at Leon, I obtained a few weeks' vacation I sat thus musing over the chances of oc- and went to Seville. At the inn where I cupancy beside me the first step was made, had my rooms was a certain lady, who, and uncertainty was set at rest when the from the first, possessed a strong attraction door opened to admit a new passenger. for me. She was little known, and not in-A lady, young, elegant and beautiful, clined to mingle with the rest of us, in the dressed in black, and alone, stepped into parlor or elsewhere, but always remained my ideal of perfect womanly beauty—one had scarcely spoken to her, scarcely me: of those vague ideals in whose existence her, save once or twice in the halls or on one hardly believes, but sets up in the the streets, but her room was over mine. realm of the ideal more as a standard by I could often hear her sweet voice as in which to measure those of the sex with the evening she accompanied herself on whom we actually come in contact than the guitar. So for half a month I went with any hope of ultimate realization. on silently adoring, until at last fate-for But I had found mine. My cold fancy it seemed then nothing more-brought us picture seemed like Galatea changed to together. I have said our room; were on true. Juan was much agitated. "What flesh and blood. She seated herself at my different floors. Yet the two halls were crime have we discovered? One that may of the night before. I did, therefore, the similar in all respects. One evening, rethat the short fifty miles we had to travel turning from the theatre listlessly, I ascended one flight of stairs too many, and went, as I thought, to my own apartment. Imagine my surprise and confusion when, on opening the door, I found myself in the marks to establish a sort of traveling lady's room. Fortunately she was still reading at her table, and my extreme embarrassment explained the accident at once. With exquisite politeness she hastened to set me at ease, and as I hurriedly withdrew was kind enough to ask me to favor her some time with a friendly call. Thanking her, I promised to do so at the first opportunity, and retired. Three days passed before I confirmed my promise. They were days of delightful anticipation, for I was thoroughly in love. I went at last, and was warmly received. This was the beginning of a long association. How fast our friendship grew! Hers appeared to be, mine was beyond, friendship. It was as if I had known Blanche-that was

pleasure. Thus time flew for a season,

and at last I saw the end of my leave ap-

"'Blanche,' I said, 'to morrow we to Gabriela Zahara," etc. must part.' The news of my going seemed to startle her. I went on: 'To-morrow we returned. On the way Juan said to "Never! And do not regret it. Good- my time is up. I return to Leon. me: Blanche, is this to be the last evening of regard so warmly? It rests with you.'

"'How can it?' she murmured. I hasten back to Leon to have my leave Alfonso had been a few years before a wife. Blanche, it is no sudden fancy that | drid. In 1860 he returned from that place | to me !" has sprung up in my heart. I love you. having shortly before married a beautiful I know myself, and thus knowing, I know lady, Gabriela Zahara Four months bear as I do toward you? I know that life left home, and eight days after her return who met me at the inn-Blanche, my I wish to die." without you will be barren, but with you it was that the stroke of apoplexy over- love, my promised wife !" be shadowed with clouds. Say that you been in the family at the time, and who all?" not to go. Oh, say at least that I am not my friend. On the night of their master's of it is this: Blanche had to return to her from the struggle victorious—the man uoing wrong to offer you my love !'

"She was moved, but stood for a moment silent. Then, turning two eyes full hastening thither they found their mistress | ing me so long before the appointed time, of passion toward me, she said, softly:

but I cannot be yours, not even if being the wife of such a man were the highest happiness of my life. It is impossible.'

"'So be it-good-by.' "I held out my hand, though my heart was full to bursting. She gave a little

"'You would leave me thus angry! Oh, I do, do care for you!' Tears came; to her eyes. 'Must the short season o pleasure in life that has been mine since you came thus end forever? No, no. I agree to all. Return to Leon, arrange matters, and then come back in one month from now, and I promise to be your wife.'

"So it was settled. Believing in the woman I adored, I left for Leon that night. unhappy time since we met, and been ex- Arriving there, I made all preparations for her coming, obtained new leave, all in much shorter time than I expected, so that my way to Seville. Bah! The woman I heard no more until a day or so after- I had trusted had deceived me. Within al-o, leaving no trace behind. No one could give me the slightest information. I remained long enough to find there was no clew to be had, and then plunged into business again, vowing never more to be deceived by woman."

We reached the cemetery shortly before my friend had finished his story, and had by this time arrived at a somewhat unfre. quented spot, in the effort to keep away from the crowds wandering among the graves. Frequently as we went along in this retired corner of the graveyard struck against the whitened bones of some poor peasants dragged from their graves to make room for persons of higher birth. All at once we came upon the fragments of what had at some time been the frame of a man; nearly all the bones were there, and the fresh appearance of the grave near by showed whence it had but recently been taken. Thrusting it aside with some repulsion, I was passing on, when an exclamation from Juan arrested me. I turned and saw him bending over the bones as if studying the skull, to which what seemed a shred of black hair still clung.

"What is this?" he cried, with something of horror in his voice. "There is a nail driven through the skull!" It was never have been dreamed of by friends, by physicians or by the family of the dead, yet one which under the hand of all-seeing Providence has been thus disclosed to me. So long as I may have the power to pursue the thread whose end has been thus strangely given into my hand so long will my zeal be untiring, and my determination strong and unswerving, to bring the guilty to justice, to atone for a crime which is almost without a parallel."

Calling the sexton, he questioned him, and found that the bones had been disinterred the day previous, to give burial to an old citizen.

Judge: "Is it possible to find out the name of the person to whom these bores

Sexton: "Well, sir, I saved the plate of the coffin, which was all rotted away. There is something on that, but just what I took my leave.

I don't exactly recollect." The judge had the skull first carefully taken to his house, then we visited the sexton in order to learn the inscription on the plate. It was very simple, only three initials and the date, as here given: " A. G. R, 1863." Juan declared this more claring myself to Blanche openly. Why than enough for his needs, and was anxious een no further developments.

we were chatting quite familiarly. We ful. I had frequently dwelt on the quali- amination of the mortuary records of the the room with a note. My friend read it atience long." Juan sat like a man of reached Malaga. Now, thought I, my ties which I sought in the woman I loved. year given on the plate. Together we and showed it to me. There was only a stone. The courtroom was perfectly still companion will reveal herself. But I Could she fail to recognize herself in the examined the records page by page, and at line: "A lady wishes to speak with Don as she went on: "It was my fate to be reckoned without my host, for when I pictures I drew? No; she knew, and she last found the following entry: "From Giro at the Inn of the Lion." gave her my address in Malaga, she said, encouraged me. My time was up at last. the register of the Church of San Antonio The evening before I left we were to- -Mr. Alfonso Guy Romeral, on the 4th asked. "I give you many thanks for your kind- gether as usual; this was the opportunity of May, 1863, died of apoplexy. The deceased was at the time of his death married

Taking down a copy of this statement, mediately."

discover the hammer,"

"'Either I go away never to return, or additional facts were ascertained : Don voice was choked as he cried : death they were startled by the violent home in Madrid to hasten her own prepa. was crushed. ringing of the bell from his room. On rations for our marriage, and not expectdoctor declared that death had been in- me. So you see for my own foolish stantaneous, resulting from cerebral con- haste I have endured years of torment. gestion. The examination ended, the But now congratulate me." judge himself summed up the case:

was alone in the room with his wife; and whereas, this death, from its very nature, could not have been suicide; therefore, we declare that his wife, Gabriela Zahara, is the author of the deed, and for the capture of this woman every possible means shall be employed."

went by, and no Gabriela Zahara. At this An officer of the peace reported that the time I left Salto.

da. One night a ball was given by the to be no delay in dealing with the case. proached the scaffold, and there parted. Countess of X-, and I was present. It It had created too much of a sensation to At this moment there was a sudden was a brilliant affair, graced by many of be allowed to rest, now that the supposed outcry. I saw some one spring from a the beauties of Granada aristocracy. Whom should I recognize shortly after my arrival but my chance traveling ac- witnesses and getting everything in readi- Juan, haggard, dusty and travel-worn, quaintance of Malaga! My pleasure was unbounded, and I at once hastened to re- Meanwhile I made inquiries about the Gabriela's pardon. Accompanied by call myself to her memory. Put it was needless-the recognition was instan- I thought best not to communicate to my the scaffold. Gabriela was already several

said I, "and did not seek you; but fortune my ears. A sudden, wild suspicion flashed paper toward her, understood its meaning has been kinder than you, in bringing us over me. What if Blanche and Gabrlela It was too late. With outstretched together again. I did not dream you should prove to be the same? Juan was arms she murmured, "God bless you!" would be here; perhaps if I had-you do too much absorbed in his work prelimi- and then, overcome with a mighty revulnot know how delicate my conscience is- nary to the assembling of the court to sion of feeling, sank fainting into the I might have remained away, to keep you learn these details, and perhaps my fear- arms of the priest. She never regained from erring in your dreadful prophecy ful conjecture would prove false. How consciousness. Her system, overstrained that we should never meet again. Or devoutly I hoped that it might! But by excitement, had given away, and she perhaps you forbid the renewal of acquain- the hour drew near which would decide died truly a victim to her own passions. tance!" She laughed pleasantly, assuring all Everything was ready. At one me that I need fear no such command. side of the well-lighted courtroom stood "May I still further presume to ask the a table on which was the box containing privilege of calling ?"

Before she had time to reply some one interrupted us, and we drifted apart. "Who is she?" I asked a friend, some

His reply was indefinite:

"Some strange American girl. Haven't

met her, but I believe her name is Alma." I found out later where she was stopping, and determined to call, although she had given no certain assent to my request enough, and even invited to remain for dinner. In some way conversation drifted about until it chanced on the subject of disappointment in love. I told the story of my friend, and Alma seemed much interested. When the story was ended

"Let this serve you as an example. Never allow yourself to love a woman until you know her. As for me, I shall never love anyone," she continued. "I avoid as much as possible meeting the same man twice."

"Do you mean that I must come no more ?"

"I mean that to-morrow I leave Granada, so that this will probably be our last meeting."

Saying this, she gave me her hand, and

Business called me to Salto. I found my friend as I had left him. Although I | ror. scarce liked to refer to his trouble, I case which we had worked up together, I yourself a murderess?" did make inquiries, and found there had

"Who brought the note?' the j dge

"He left no name, but went away im-

"A servant."

"From whom?"

Juan was already wrapping himself in his cloak, and lost no time in setting out In the examination which followed these arms about me in his happiness. Hi

extended and come again to make you my young and wealthy man residing in Ma- you could but guess the joy that has come blind they would have read that look of

"What has happened?" I exclaimed.

"Oh, I am the most fortunate of men!

wedding to come off?"

"Very soon; and you will have to act as best man—no one else will do." "With pleasure."

So we sat on until the small hours of assented. the morning. talking things over.

Early next day another stroke of good In spite of this. however, three months fortune, as it appeared, befell my friend. efforts of the law had been at last crowned him, when you see him, to forgive me. with success. The long-missing Gabriela Tell him I love him, though I die for Zahara was discovered, and even then in this love. Good-by." The following winter I spent in Grana- Salto, under lock and key. There was murderess was found, and from that in- horse and rush through the encircling start the judge was most busy, recalling crowd of people with a paper. It was

capture. The result of my investigations several officers, he hurried to the foot of friend. In listening to the police accounts steps up, but at the sudden commotion "I have been faithful to my promise," the names Lion Inn and Madrid [rang in paused, and seeing her lover holding the the skull that had betrayed the miserable woman. The judge, surrounded by the officers of the law, at length summoned the accused.

> "Let Gabriela Zahara, supposed murderess of her husband, now stand forth to answer the charge."

Great God! not only is this Gabriela traveller, the beautiful Alma! My head one would imitate them. whirls with conflicting emotions-surprise | Who is defrauded and who pockets the horror, incredulity-until I reel, grasping proceeds when a counterfeit coin is passed a chair to steady myself. The examina- upon your

"What is your name?"

"Gabriela Zahara Romeral," comes cle you need. back, in a sweet, composed voice.

Blanche, whom he thought to marry, has label with red band. never lived. It steadies him. In clear penetrating tones he orders the box to be new Pills from any druggist or dealer in opened. The sexton places it in her Canada at 50cis. a box, or by mail from hands; her eyes fall upon its contents; the Dodd's Medicine Co, Toronto, Ont. and then, with a piercing cry of terror, she gasps out "Alfonso!" and sinks fainting into a seat.

Guilty! Everyone in that crowded room knew it. I thought my friend were almost harsh.

band?"

earned enough to know that Blanche had the acknowledgment of your guilt ?-that however, those from which sewing thread never been heard from. Regarding the with your own lips you have branded is usually made, run from ten to fifty

she cried, passionately. "I do not wis to 50 in accordance.

My replies were more extensive than not? Never by word or sign had she to hasten at once with the search. The The evening after my arrival I was with a live any longer, but before I die let me hers had been, so that ere breakfast time shown that my regard would be distaste- next thing to be accomplished was the ex- Juan in his office, when an officer entered say a few words. I shall not ask complished was the exhe daughter of stern exacting parental and I was forced to marry a man I detest d. Perhaps our life together might have been endurable had not my husband known, even before our marriage, that I lid not love nim. New when I was powerless he became insolent, finally bru. tal. I could bear it no longer, and left home to escape his insults. While away "We have the nail which caused this When he returned his whole manner I met one whom I really loved, and would the companionship which we have come to stroke of apoplexy. It remains for us to showed the greatest excitement, but it have married, but was not free to do so. was the excitement of joy. He threw his Again 1 returned home, to the sneers and mockery of my husband. Then he died -died for the man I loved." She looked "Ah if you only knew, my friend !-if at Juan. Ah! were the audience not adoration, My friend was about to denounce himself, but she stopped him, "To free myself I had my husband killed, that never toward any woman shall I feel fore the death of Don Alfonso his wife Blanche it was who sent the note; she For this crime God must punish me alone,

Her tears choked her speech. At a -with you as my own-the sun will al- took her husband. Further particulars "But you told me she had deceived sign from the judge the jailor led her aways shine, though every speck of heaven | were gleaned from the servants who had you. Has sight of her made you forget | way. The details of the sentence I shall not give. Enough to say in this case, as care for me if ever so little—say for me were sought with infinite perseverance by "Blanche does care for me. The truth in the foregoing scenes, the judge came

It was the day set for the execution, in the greatest excitement, rushing fran- had not thought to leave her address at and a throng was awaiting the departure "'No. Juan, you are not doing wrong; tically about, crying that her husband had the hotel. When I found her gone every- of the doomed woman from the jail. been attacked with apoplexy and implor- thing was thrown out of my mind-dates Juan had gone away immediately after ing for a doctor in the greatest haste. The | -all save the fact that she had deserted her condemnation, asking me to remain on hand in case she desired anything.

> She came at last. I could scarcely recognize the woman I had known, so "I do with my whole heart, my dear changed had she become in the few day "Whereas, at the time of his death he fellow. And when is this long-deferred of confinement. As she passed I drew close and asked if there was anything I might do. She turned her faded eyes, and recognizing me, asked leave of the confessor to speak to me a moment. He

"Where is he?" she asked, softly. "Juan has been gon . twenty days, but where I do not know."

"May God make him happy! Ask

She was weeping. Together we ap-

ness for the closing scenes of the trial. but bearing with him a precious document

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Why and How Thread is Numbered The question "Why is spool cotton

numbered as it is, and why are the figures not used in regular order !" is often asked says the Boston Journal of Commerce. would be overcome, but his next words The explanation is this. The numbers on the spools express the number of " hanks " "You recognize the skull of your hus- which are required to wind a pound. The very finest spinning rarely exceeds 300 "Yes," she said in a tone full of hor- hanks to the pound, while in the very coarsest there is about a half pound in "Do you know that this recognition is each hank. The more common qualities hanks to the pound, and the spools on "Oh, why should I seek to deny it ?" | which it is wound are numbered from 10