

## Literature, &amp;c.

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THE CRUEL REVENGE.

## LEGEND OF THE HAUNTED CASTLE.

On the branch of the Gaudal quiver which loses itself among the heights of the Sierra Nevada, may be seen to this day, the remains of an old chateau, whose bare and blackened walls frown in grim majesty upon the silver waters, which now mirror only desolation. Thick moss has grown over and obscures the once valued memorials of an almost regal pride and magnificence. A hoary, matted mass of ivy covers, and partially supports, the decaying and crumbling tower which stands on the left side of the castle: its angle of inclination is so great, that the tottering old ruins seem momentarily on the point of falling, and will inevitably crush in its descent, the gay group of young orange trees, whose glossy leaves and gracefully wavings convey to an imaginative mind the idea, that they rejoice in being the only living things which dare to look cheerfully in a spot so melancholy and desolate. The prospect is even worse on entering the house. The only furniture of the large, dark and dismal hall, which is ornamented with grotesque carvings of saints and angels, consists of an antique, worm eaten picture, half fallen from its frame. It is a portrait; and the brilliancy of a few tints, which have bid defiance to time, testifies that the forgotten form the original was once clothed in gay and costly attire.

Crumbling balustrades and crazy staircases forbid the most inquisitive adventurer to pursue his investigations much farther; and the terror of the superstitious guides,—for there is no heart which does not quail in the vicinity of that terrible ruin,—urges the traveller to leave the bats and reptiles in undisturbed possession of their accustomed haunts.

For myself, I felt a strange and peculiar sentiment of enjoyment in lingering among the scattered and decayed monuments of ancient grandeur. These appear in the magnificent proportions of the buildings and surrounding grounds, though the hand of taste can no longer be discerned amid the desolate chambers of the house, or the gnarled and matted masses, which probably, in former days, ornamented the pleasure grounds and gardens; their dark and heavy luxuriance now makes the ruin more sombre and forbidding.

The opposite side of the river is equally desolate, although tradition tells us, that, the palmy days of splendor, when 'Castillo de las Torres' was the wonder and admiration of the country from Seville to Grenada, it was rendered scarce attractive, by a very lovely but unostentatious villa, whose former site is still pointed out.

These situations are remarkable, as having been, in by gone times, the witnesses of a most terrible domestic tragedy. The minutest particulars relating to it are treasured with care by the oldest of the neighboring peasantry, although they affect a certain air of mystery with regard to them, which caused me to inquire diligently before I arrived at the following particulars.

The Castle de las Torres, as I have said, was once the pride and glory of that portion of the country. Its master, a noble marquis, in spite of hereditary pride, was revered and almost idolized by the peasants, whose descendants describe him as the noblest and most exalted of men, perfect in the graces and accomplishments of a knight and gentleman, handsome, intelligent, brave, and generous to profusion. The lofty old walls which I have described so startlingly desolate, were accustomed in those days to resound with music and mirth. Glad and gallant cavaliers contended upon the now matted and weed grown lawn for the supreme beauty of their fair mistresses, whose flashing eyes and merry peals of laughter enlivened the halls, now made slimy and loathsome by the reptiles which creep over them.

The last noble Marquis de las Torres, while still in the estate of bachelorship, had so impaired his finances by profuse generosity, that he was fain to call to his aid his natural and acquired graces, in order to rescue him from his embarrassments. The reputation of these so won upon the heart of a wealthy and beautiful heiress, the Senora Isabel, whose years of discretion permitted her to dispose of her wealth and charms as she pleased, that he soon found himself a far richer if not a happier man, than he had ever been.

The lady, though no longer very

young, was singularly beautiful and fascinating; her manners having attained a perfection of polish, which is rarely or never in early youth. Her stately step and glorious black eyes were probably attractive as her vast fortune, to her admiring husband. Her temper, however, was violent, overbearing, and vindictive in the extreme; so much so, that she became the terror as well as the admiration of the country. Many a harsh and cruel deed is recorded of her, though none so shocking and unnatural as the one which follows.

It was soon whispered that her husband, of whom she was intensely jealous, was happier any where than in his stately and sumptuous home. Any domestic contentions were however carefully concealed, and the Marquis always appeared the most devoted of husbands.

Nearly opposite the castle, on the other side of the river, arose the white walls of a less costly but very beautiful residence, whose only occupants were an old man with a maiden sister, and a lovely young grand-daughter. This girl, whom they called Elena, attained her seventeenth birthday on the eve of the festival of Santa Catarina, which was to be celebrated with great magnificence at the castle. She was very lovely, so much so as to attract the attention of the Marquis' friends as they occasionally caught a glimpse of her graceful form on the front balcony which over hung the river. Many a sportive ject, connected with the fair neighbor, who smiled so sweetly whenever she saw the Marquis, had passed the lips of the guests, and rankled in the heart of the Marchioness. Apparently the Lord of las Torres either despised or neglected these hints, for he continued his frequent visits to the pretty rural villa, and often spoke of its fair and almost unprotected inmate, with the admiration and affection of a fond parent.

On the eve of the festival of Santa Catarina, the young Elena de Castres was alone on the moonlit balcony. The song had faltered on her lips, and the strings of her guitar snapped one by one, as she endeavored to elicit their wonted melody. She gazed with tearful eyes on the water, almost beneath her feet, whose unceasing ripples broke the bright moonbeams into a thousand atoms. But neither the beauty of the mirroring water, nor the serenity of the sky, nor the snow capped chain of the Sierra Nevada losing itself in the distance and darkness, awoke any pleasing sensations in her bosom. She was thinking how very gay the castle would be on the following day, and how gracefully Don Luis de Mendoza would dance the fandango, and how very cruel her aunt was to consider her too young to go, and she almost wept.

A manly footstep broke the stillness. Elena sprang up, and flew to meet the Marquis with a degree of delight, which his fair lady would have very little approved.

'Oh, I am so thankful to you for coming,' said she. 'My aunt has said positively I shall not go to the castle to-morrow.'

'And wherefore, mi corazoncita? Is she afraid of you meeting Sanor Don Luis there?'

Elena blushed and answered, 'he will be there, and my aunt forbids me to go.'

'And you cannot succeed in softening the old lady's feelings towards your handsome young cavalier?'

'Not at all,' sighed Elena, 'her heart is like a flint—she calls Don Luis a dissipated boy, and me a silly child.'

'Hard, hard indeed,' laughed the visitor.'

'But in truth,' said the young lady, 'I believe a little intrigue is all she desires. She cannot bear that I should marry quietly, without at least half a dozen lovers to break their hearts on the occasion or get up some kind of domestic romance for her amusement.'

'The old lady thinks she will live over again her youth in your conquests. Is it not so?'

'It is: she thinks me the image of herself, making due allowance for the degeneracy of the age, and she is continually telling me of her scores of lovers. For myself, I am quite content with one.'

'And your grandfather?'

'Oh, he never interferes. He puts implicit faith in the old Spanish proverb, that 'the more a woman's will thwarted, the better she will be,' and therefore he leaves matters entirely in my aunt's hands to insure my being brought to perfection.'

'And it seems your lover and your-

self have determined to take the matter in your own hands, and elope in the confusion of to-morrow's festivities?'

'But there is no hope now, for she said positively that I should not go.'

'Well, let me arrange this little affair for you. Suppose you seem to submit quietly to your aunt's decree; I will take care to have her out of the way, by sending for her to the castle for the ostensible purpose of assisting in the preparations.'

At this juncture, although neither perceived it, a dark figure glided noiselessly up the river bank, and stood in a listening attitude behind a group of palmettos, which effectually screamed it from view. The demon jealousy had prompted La Senora Isabel to dog her husband's footsteps, to hear and judge for herself.

'And then,' continued the Marquis, 'you can come unobserved to the castle in the evening. You had better come masked, for to tell the truth, the Senora is a little tinctured with jealousy, and she is so violent that it would not be altogether prudent to meet her.'

'Yes, yes.'

'But meet me at the fountain of the Graces, near the western turret, and there shall this fair hand be disposed of, at least to our satisfaction.'

'Noble Marquis!'

'Nay, nay, there is no time for acknowledgements—I must hasten home, or my restless Senora may perchance send hither in search of me. Adieu mi vida. Wear this jewel to distinguish you to-morrow, in case there should be any difficulty; and placing on her hand a diamond of rare magnificence, he took his leave.

The young girl gazed after him, till he was out of sight; her head crowded with gay fancies, she entered the house.

With very different feelings did the Marchesa wend her way homeward. Her boatmen, who with their little barge lay concealed in the shadow of bank, were heard afterwards to say, that the appearance of their mistress as she bared her head to the moonbeams was that of a beautiful demon. Her eyes glistened like those of a serpent, and her delicately chiselled features assumed the livid rigidity of a corpse. Long cherished doubts had hitherto tortured her mind with jealousy, and the seeming confirmation of her suspicions now goaded her to madness.

Ere she reached the opposite bank of the sparkling river, her dark resolution had been formed. Wrapping the black mantilla around her head, she hastened to her chamber, and there, having secured herself from the intrusion of any living or moving object, save the flickering moonbeams which played upon the floor, and she brooded over, and arranged her scheme of vengeance, whose very horror served her resolution. 'Aye, aye, that fair hand shall indeed be disposed of, to the satisfaction of one whose interference they little dread.'

The possibility of her mistake never for a moment entered her imagination. The increasing coldness of the Marquis had long excited her indignation and she had ever been on the watch to discover its cause,—never for an instant suspecting that her own violent passions had alternated the affection of her husband whom she idolized.

It is exceedingly probable that the lady might have other causes for her jealousy than that here narrated; but this is the only one whose remembrance has survived.

The following morning rose bright and clear upon the gilded turrets and crystal fountains which sparkled in the sunbeams as they fell upon the magnificent Castello. The festival of Santa Catarina was to be celebrated with unusual splendor, less in honor of the Saint herself, than of the Knights of Saint Catherine, who were sojourning at the Castle.

Preparation for the religious and military festival were made with all the magnificence customary in the age and nation, where personal prowess was the strongest claim to admiration, and the chief attributes of religion, pride and pomp.

Thus the day wore on until the hour of siesta arrived: when every one, wearied with the heat and fatigue of the morning, sought rest and repose. Silence prevailed throughout the mansion; the Marchioness again wrapped the mantilla around her stately person, and descended to the boat. The drowsy boatmen, who were following the example of their masters in yielding to the intense heat, were much to their annoyance, aroused; and again the lady ap-

proached the enchanting villa of Las Chastres.

She ascended the sloping bank softly, and met no one to interrupt her progress. She entered the house, and without being observed gained the chamber of Elena. The room was small, but fitted up with an exquisite degree of taste and neatness, emblematical of the innocence and virgin purity of its occupant. On every side were seen the simple but elegant preparations for the festivities of the evening. The gala dress lay upon the bed, and the choicest perfumes were on the table.

A wreath of orange flowers for the hair, and a gold rosary with its sparkling cross were placed on a small marble table near the bed, and even the delicately embroidered slippers were ready for use. The fair mistress of the chamber breathed in softly quiet and child like sleep. The lady paused; bending over her, for a while the rare and almost infantile loveliness of the sleeper,—strangely contrasted with the turbulent feelings and violent which marred her own magnificent beauty. Apparently pleasant fancies occupied the mind of the unconscious girl, for a smile at that moment a spark of light from a diamond of singular beauty gleamed upon her sight. She recognized her husband's ring on the delicately beautiful hand which hung so carelessly in its unconscious grace. This steeled her heart, and sealed the fate of her victim. With an unflinching hand she dropped a portion of the contents of a small vial on the half open lips. This vial contained poison collected from the fangs of the Cobra de Capello. A few moments sufficed for it to take effect.

The rich red blood quickly retreated from the cheeks, giving place to large black spots—the white bosom heaved violently for a short time then became perfectly still—and the form of the loveliest maiden of Andalusia rapidly changed to that of a livid and blackened corpse. But the work was not even then completed. Death itself did not satisfy the vindictive woman. She drew from its silver sheath a sharp stiletto, and without quailing, without even shuddering, she severed the hand from the delicately rounded arm of the unfortunate girl. She then re-arranged the drapery in the most life like manner possible, drew else the curtains, and withdrew from that dark and deathly chamber, with no other emotions than those of gratified revenge, and triumph.

\* \* \* \* \* Noblemen, bishops, knights, and ladies—the beautiful and the gay—ecclesiastics, and laymen, the wise and the foolish—the young and the old crowded around the extensive tables, which groaned under all the splendor that wealth and taste could heap upon them.—The pillars were garlanded with gayest wreaths. Lights flashed around the columns, and along the verandahs, and throughout the trelliced walks. Light everywhere—and jewels of priceless value blazed, and were eclipsed by brighter eyes. Loud peals of laughter and loud and merry jests resounded through the lofty halls. Wine circulated freely, and the songs were repeated with accompaniments of trumpets, drums and fifes—and brave knights loudly proclaimed the beauty of their mistresses, and challenged the world to produce their equals. The ladies stretched forth their swanlike necks, and encouraged their champions with bright smiles and grateful applause. The Marchioness moved conspicuous among all these; for her noble bearing and magnificent beauty, coupled with the grace and affability which won all hearts, had never showed more remarkable than on this memorable evening.

'A gift,' proclaimed the heralds, 'a gift from La Senora Dona Isabel to her noble lord on his installation as Knight of the holy order of Santa Catarina—a badge to distinguish his person, and a talisman to preserve his courage.'

'Me thinks your Marquis is a loving lord,' said the young Knight Don Luis de Mendoza, 'he wears no colors save those of his lady wife, and places his lance in rest for no other beauty.'

Every eye was turned on her with admiration, and the Marchesa smiled haughtily.

The page, at that moment, approached his Lord, bearing the gift, supposed to be a scarf embroidered with his lady's hair, or lettered with her name and motto. It was enclosed in a small box of embossed gold, on which was inscribed with precious stones the following motto: 'A talisman to stir up the heart of the most noble and valiant, the Marquis de las Torres.' With a flashing eye and lip wreathed with smiles, the nobleman prepared to adorn his shield with the gift of his transcendently beautiful wife. He carefully unwrapped