

# The Moor's Legacy

By Washington Irving

## 1.

Just within the fortress of the Alhambra, in front of the royal palace, is the little park of the cisterns where reservoirs of water, hidden from sight, have existed from the time of the Moors. At one corner 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. It is famous throughout Granada; and water-carriers, some bearing great water-jars on their shoulders, others driving donkeys laden with earthen vessels, ascend and descend the steep woody avenues of the Alhambra from early dawn until late at night.

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. He was a Gallego, or native of Galicia. Nature seems to have formed races of men as she has species of animals for different kinds of drudgery. In France the shoe-blacks are all Savoyards, the porters of hotels all Swiss. 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."

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 a stout shaggy-haired donkey. On each side of this, his long-eared helper, 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:

"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 Per pleasant word that caused a smile. Thus Peregil the Gallego was noted awe, throughout all Granada for being one of the pleasantest, 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 at 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 out-cries for food whenever he came home in the 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 in 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-a-bed, and, above all, a gossip of the first order; neglecting house, household and everything else, to loiter slip-shod in the houses of her gossipy neighbours.

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 slatternly 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, to take the whole litter with him, some in his arms, some tugging at his skirts, and some trudging at his heels, and to treat them to a gambol among the orchards of the Vega.

It was a late hour one summer night, and most of the water-carriers had stopped 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 good Sunday’s *puchero* for the little ones.”

So saying, he trudged rapidly up the steep avenue of the Alhambra, singing as he went.

Arriving at the well, he found it deserted by everyone 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 thee 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 shall 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 fright, 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, though 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 addressed 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 cloak, and showed a small box of sandalwood, strapped round his body.

"God grant, my friend," replied the worthy little Gallego, "that you may 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."

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 any thing 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 set out with it for the banks of the river.

## 2.

As ill luck would have it, there lived opposite to the water-carrier a barber, named Pedrillo Pedrugo, one of the most prying, tattling, mischief-making men of his gossipy 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 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 busybodies of Granada, and had more customers than all the rest of his fraternity.

This meddlesome barber heard Peregil arrive at an unusual hour of night, and the exclamation of his wife and children. His head was instantly popped out of a little window which served him as a lookout, and he saw his neighbour assist a man in a 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 loop-hole, 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 himself 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, or Mayor.

The Alcalde had 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 it 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.”

“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 related the robbing, murdering, and burying of the Moslem.

Now it so happened that this Alcalde was one of the most overbearing, and at the same time most gripping 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 by 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 police officer: 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 underclothes that set off his spare wiry form; 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 the latter 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 there had, the Alcalde would not have believed him. The water-carrier related the whole story of the dying Moor with the straightforward simplicity of truth, but it was all in vain.

“Wilst thou persist in saying,” 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 sandalwood, which he bequeathed to me in reward of my services.”

“A box of sandalwood! A box of sandalwood!” 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 police officer darted off and reappeared in an instant with the mysterious box of sandalwood. 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 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 sandalwood and its contents, as the well-merited reward of his humanity; but he retained his donkey in payment of cost and charges.

### 3.

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. “Ah, 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 upper-hand, having warned him not to commit the act of hospitality that had brought on him all these misfortunes, and like a knowing woman, she took every occasion to remind him of it. If ever her children lacked food, or needed a new garment, she would answer with a sneer, “Go to your father; he's heir to King Chico of Alhambra. Ask him to help you out of the Moor's strongbox.”

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, but his eye rested upon the box of sandalwood, which lay on a shelf with lid half open, as if laughing in mockery of his vexation. Seizing it up he dashed it with indignation on 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, 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 rock itself will yield before it.”

“Bali!” 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 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 darkling avenues. "What 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!"

That night he tumbled and tossed, and could scarcely get a wink of sleep for the thoughts that were bewildering his brain. In the morning, bright and early, he went 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 use."

"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 a yellow wax taper that he had found in the box of sandalwood. The Moor felt it, and smelt to 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 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 farther.

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 watchtower 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 armor, 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 hands full of broad yellow pieces of Moorish gold, or bracelets and ornaments of the same precious metal, while occasionally a necklace of oriental pearl 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 fear of 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 have no doubt you 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."

#### 4.

Never was promise more positive and sincere; but alas! what man can keep a secret from his wife? Certainly not such a 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 women that I am!" exclaimed she; "what will become of me! My house stripped and plundered by lawyers and police; my husband a do-no-good who no longer brings home bread for his family, but goes rambling about, day and night, with infidel Moors. Oh, 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. The poor woman stared with astonishment, and could not understanding 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.

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

The idea 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 dangling pendant 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 ear-rings, 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 to a jeweller’s shop 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 their 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 one all trimmed with gold lace, and a new lace mantilla. She threw out hints of her husband’s intention of leaving 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 so 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, an aigrette of diamonds on her head, sailed backwards and forwards in her slatternly 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 meddlesome 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 loop-hole, reconnoitring the slattern spouse of the water-carrier, decorated with the splendor 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 policeman 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 policeman, and the inquisitive barber listened with greedy ears to this Arabian tale of enchanted treasure. The policeman 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 look 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 all shall be produced; refuse, and the cave shall remain forever closed.”

The Alcalde consulted apart with his officer. 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 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 between us, and say nothing further of the matter; if you 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.

Toward midnight the Alcalde sallied forth secretly, attended by his officer 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 policeman, 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 burthen 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 between us.” So saying he descended the steps, followed, with trembling reluctance, by the policeman 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 inside.

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 have you done?” cried Peregil, as soon as he could recover his 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 shall come 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 toward 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 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 four 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 into Africa, to his native city of Tetuan, and the Gallego, with his wife, his children, and his donkey, made their way to Portugal. Here, under the admonition and tuition of his wife, he became a personage of some consequence, for she made the 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 the familiar appellation of Peregil, assume the more sonorous title of Don Pedro Gil. His progeny grew up a thriving and merry-hearted, though short and bandy-legged generation; while the Senora Gil, be-fringed, be-laced, and betasselled from her head to her heels, with glittering rings on every finger, became a model of slatternly 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 to the present day.