

he noticed that his wife was not perfectly happy, because he found her every day more capricious.

One morning she said to him: "Now tell me, Juan, is an emperor greater than a king?"

"Why shouldn't he be?"

"That is to say, that emperors can make kings?"

"I think so. For instance, suppose his majesty the emperor wish to say to us, 'Ha, my good friends the Marquis and Marchioness of Marville, I convert the province of Micomican, which belongs to me, into a kingdom, and I make you the monarchs of my new kingdom,' I believe nobody could hinder it."

"Very well, then; I wish his majesty to say and do this at your petition."

"Well, well, now; it is clear that you have lost your wits altogether!"

"What you are going to lose, since you have no wits, is your teeth, with a slap in the face, if you don't make haste and hurry off to the court."

"I'd lose my head before I'd commit such an absurdity. There. I've given way enough already."

"Indeed! Then from this day forward know that you have no longer a wife. This is my room, and you shall never set foot in it again, nor I in yours."

"But, woman!"

"No, no; remember we are but strangers to each other."

"Come, don't be obstinate, my own Ramonita."

"Don't I tell, you sir, that all is over between us?"

"Now, look here pigeon."

"Stop your prate!"

"The dev —! Well, come, you shall be satisfied; I will go and see his majesty, and tell him that you want to be queen, though I know he will shoot me on the spot."

Contrary to his expectations, the emperor hastened to grant him an audience, and received him with the accustomed smile.

"Well, marquis, what is it?" he asked.

"What ought it to be, sire? A fresh impertinence."

"Come, out with it, man, and don't be bashful! Something concerning the marchioness, eh?"

"You've hit it again, sire. These foolish women are never content."

"Well, what does yours want."

"Nothing, sire, She says, would it please your majesty to make her queen?"

"Queen! Nothing more than that? Well, she is queen already, then. Now, go into the dining-room and see if there is anything there you can destroy; and instead of returning to the palace of Marville, go to the palace of the crown, where you will find your wife installed as becomes the Queen of Micomican."

On his arrival at the palace of the crown, a salvo of artillery announced his coming. The King and Queen of Micomican amused themselves mightily during the first weeks of their reign. But so soon as the festivals passed, the queen, Dona Ramona, began to grow sad and weary.

The king summoned the chief physician of the court, and held a deep consultation with him. "Man alive," said he to him, "I have summoned you in order to see what the devil you have to say to me touching the sorrow and evil state in which I have noticed my august spouse to be for some time past."

"Well, sire, in the first place, we must please her in everything and by everything."

"I agree with you there, man; but there are things beyond human power. If it rains, she is put out because it rains; if it blows she is put out because it blows; if we are in winter, she is put out because the spring has not come, and her mind is so turned that she cries out: 'I command it not to rain'; 'I command it not to blow'; 'I command the spring to come at once.' Now, you see that it is only by being God one can secure obedience of orders like these."

But months and months passed, and the queen grew every day sadder and more capricious.

One day the king decided on interrogating very seriously the queen herself, to see if he might draw from her the secret of her sadness and capriciousness.

"Well, let us know, now, what is the matter with you," he said, "that you neither sleep nor let me sleep?"

"I am very unhappy," answered the queen, beginning to weep.

"You unhappy? — You who lived in a