

"Hello, Juan!" said his majesty.  
 "What brings you this way, man?"

"Sire!" replied Juan, "my wife, under present circumstances, is as good as gold; but, you see, the stable that we live in is gone to rack and ruin, and we wish to get it out of our sight. 'If your majesty, who is so kind, would only give us a little house, something better than the one we have, who dare sneeze at us then?'"

"Does your wife want nothing more than that? Well, it's granted. Go into the dining-room, and take a mouthful and a drop of something; and, instead of going afterwards to the stable, go to the little white house, and there you will find your wife already installed."

Juan returned thanks to the emperor and passing on to the dining-room, filled himself with ham and wine.

Our friend commenced his journey home, and, when he arrived at the white house, his wife rushed out to receive him with tears of joy.

But Ramona began to find fault the very next day.

"Woman, what the devil bothers you?" asked Juan.

"What bothers me? Your stupidity in asking the emperor so little bothers me."

"Say what you like about it, there is no help for it now."

"Perhaps there may be."

"And how, I should like to know?"

"Going back and seeing his majesty, and telling him to give us a larger house, of course."

"Go to Jericho, woman. You don't catch me going on an errand of that kind!"

"Well, go you shall, then; or we'll see who is master here. All you have to do is to run along to the palace as fast as you can, if you care to have a quiet time of it."

Juan, who did not possess an ounce of will of his own, set out once more on his road towards the palace of the emperor.

So soon as he sought an audience with his majesty, it was granted, and the emperor asked him, with a smiling face:

"How goes it at the little white house?"

"Not badly, sire!"

"And your wife, how does she find herself there?"

"Not badly, sire, but your majesty knows what the women are. Give 'em an inch, they'll take an ell."

"You are right. So she wants, of course, a house a little larger?"

"You've just hit it, sire!"

"Well turn into the dining room till they give you a snack of something: and, instead of returning to the white house, go to the Azure palace, where you will find your wife installed with the attendance befitting those who live in a palace."

Juan returned the emperor thanks for his great goodness, and, after stuffing himself till he looked like a ball, in the dining-room, off he set, as happy as could be to the Azure palace, which was one of those that the emperor had in that district.

A servant in livery received Juan at the door and conducted him to the apartment of the lady. The lady was Ramona, whom her maid had just finished dressing in one of the beautiful robes which she found in her new dwelling. Juan could do nothing but open his mouth and stare in amazement at seeing his wife in such majestic attire, and waited on by four servants; namely, a coachman, a footman, a maid, and a cook.

"Take off that clown's dress," said Ramona to Juan, "Aren't you ashamed to show yourself in such a trim before our own servants?"

"This is a new start," said Juan, astonished at the sally of his wife. "So I, who, under present circumstances, have passed all my life in digging the earth, and things even worse than that, must feel ashamed of the clothes I have worn all my life long!"

"But, you stupid head," replied Ramona, "If you have costume corresponding to your rank, why didn't you put it on?"

"My rank! . . . Come, this woman's head is turned."

"Juan, go to your apartment and change your things, and don't try my patience so much, for you know already that my temper will not stand too great a trial. Juan gave up the dispute and entering the room which she had pointed out as his, found therein a wardrobe with a quantity of fine changes, befitting a gentleman, and came out again transformed into a milord.