

## THE NEW WOMAN—YEARS AGO.

ADAPTED FROM THE SPANISH.



**I**N an empire whose name history has failed to record, there lived in a miserable stable a poor laborer and his wife. Juan and Ramona were their names, though Juan was better known by the nickname "Under present circumstances," which they gave him because in season or out of season that phrase was continually dropping from his lips. "We are badly enough off in a stable," said Juan, "but we ought to conform ourselves with our lot, since under present circumstances God, though he was God, lived in a stable when he became man."

"You are right," replied Ramona.

One day Juan was working in a kitchen garden near the road, when far away he saw the carriage of the emperor coming at a rate almost equal to that of a soul that the devil was trying to carry off.

"I'll bet you," said Juan, "that the horses have escaped from his majesty, and some misfortune is going to happen!"

Juan was not mistaken. The emperor's horses had escaped, and the emperor was shouting:

"God take pity on me! I'm going to break my neck over one of those precipices! To whoever throws himself at the head of these confounded horses, I'll give whatever he asks."

But no one dared to throw himself at the horses' heads; Juan, enraged at the other workmen, threw himself at the horses' heads and succeeded in stopping the coach.

"Ask whatever you like," said the emperor to him, "for nothing appears to me small as a recompense to the man

who has rendered me so signal a service."

"Sire!" said Juan to him, "I, under present circumstances, am a poor laborer, and the day that I don't gain a couple of pesetas, my wife and I have to fast. So if your majesty will only assure me my day's labor whether it rains or whether it is fine weather, my wife and I will sing our lives away in happiness, for we are people content with very little."

"That's pretty clear. Well, go along, it's granted. The day that you have nothing to do anywhere else, go to one of my palaces, whichever you like, and occupy yourself there in whatever way you please."

"Thank you sire!"

The emperor went on his road happy enough, and Juan went on his, thinking of the great joy he was about to give his wife when he returned home at night, and told her that he had his day's work secured for the rest of his life whether it rained or was fine weather.

"Do you know what I have been thinking of the whole night long, Juan?" said Ramona, the following morning.

"What?"

"That yesterday you were a fool to ask so little of the emperor."

"Indeed! What more had I to ask?"

"That he would give us a little house to live in, something more suitable and decent than this wretched stable."

"You are right, woman; but now there is no help for it."

"Perhaps there may be,"

"How?"

"Look here; go and see the emperor and ask him."

Juan set out for the palace of the emperor.