



The King and the Artist

A STORY FOR CHILDREN :
FROM THE SPANISH.

BY MARIANA MONTEIRO.



HE Emperor Charles V., of Spain, having abdicated in favour of his son, had retired to the Monastery of Yuste, in order to enjoy in the cloister that peace and happiness which he had vainly sought for in a monarch's turbulent, though brilliant life.

Philip II. had therefore become, during his father's lifetime, the heir to the most splendid crown of Europe, nay, of the whole world. Nevertheless, he assumed the reins of government without any seeming satisfaction. He attended to the affairs of State with perseverance and assiduity, but with no manifest interest or enthusiasm, and with the air of one who performs an irksome duty.

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The only relaxation he allowed himself—and one he much enjoyed—was to clothe himself in a disguise, and to wander alone, and at night, through the streets of Brussels. Dressed in the national costume of the peasantry, and wrapped in a long cloak, Philip would traverse the most unfrequented streets, and visit the obscurest districts of the city, peering in through chinks of windows, and stopping to listen at doors ; by this means becoming informed of secrets of misfortune, which he was often able to relieve.

During these midnight rambles, two or three of his faithful guards, ever solicitous for his safety, were accustomed to watch his figure from a distance, and never let him out of sight.

One night when he went out as usual

to wander through the streets of Brussels, he found a young man sleeping on a bench, such as in those days stood beside the doors of nearly all the houses. He shook him by the shoulder and awoke him.

"Don't you know," he said in Dutch, "that it is forbidden to sleep out in the open air? The patrol will soon come round, and then you will be taken to prison!"

"And what's that to me?" replied the youth in Spanish, "I am going to conclude a piece of business at this very moment, which I intended to postpone until the dawn."

"A piece of business at this hour?"

"Yes, indeed! and one of some importance."

"Unless that business be to rob a neighbour, or to break into a house, I cannot think what can concern you at an hour when everyone is sleeping."

"Well," replied the youth, "in truth the idea of robbery had occurred to me, such as you are evidently well accustomed to, since you speak of it so freely; but I had repelled the evil thought, and had returned to my first scheme."

"And may I know what that scheme is," demanded the disguised King.

"I am not in the habit of making confidants of people whom I meet with in the streets at midnight. You can do me one favour, however. I am a stranger here. Will you direct me to the river?"

Philip acceded to the stranger's wish and allowed him to depart, but followed at a distance without losing sight of him.

The young man proceeded to the riverside, and climbed a rugged height which he discovered by the moonlight. There he fell upon his knees and repeated a short prayer. Then he arose, and was in the act of leaping into the water, when he felt a powerful hand grasp him by the collar and he was flung backwards on the ground.

It was the King.

"Do not force me to commit a crime before I die," exclaimed the Spaniard, as he drew a dagger. "I must choose between death or crime. Let me die, or I will stab you to the heart."

"Are you a Christian," cried the King, "and yet attempt to commit suicide?"

"It is singular that you assume to question and to judge me; and stranger still that I should answer you. But as fate has willed it, I will relate to you my history. I left Lisbon in the hope of finding a young lady whom I dearly love, but whose parents refuse their consent to our marriage. This young lady has left Brussels with her father. I have spent all my money. I cannot find a way to earn a single *maravediz*. What would you have me do? To follow your advice—to rob?"

"You wish to marry!" cried the King. "Are you thinking seriously of such a thing when you are in such poverty?"

"Oh, I should not have been so in Lisbon! Believe me, had the parents of Doña Luiza Reinaldo consented to our union, I should undoubtedly by this time

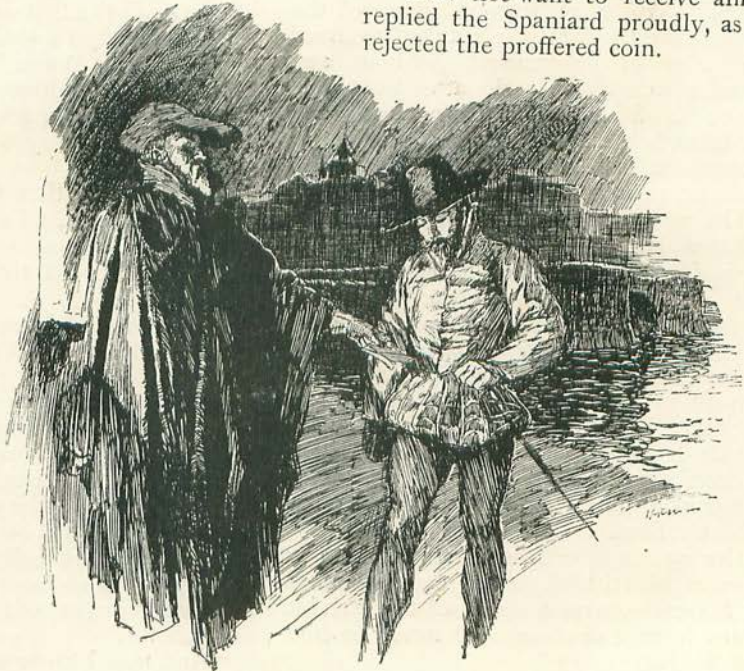
have been the painter of Doña Juana, the sister of your King Philip II.; but the grandees would not consent to having an artist for their son-in-law. They have, therefore, departed to the Low Countries, where her father has just concluded an important mission for the King. I would have followed them, for they have borne away my very life and heart; but as they travelled in a carriage and I on foot, they had already left when I arrived here, and I was unable to find out where they had gone. Yesterday I was famished. I had no money left. I besought an inn-keeper to allow me to paint his portrait for the price of a supper, but he kicked me out of doors. Leave me, then, to fling myself into the river, for the Evil One is putting thoughts of crime into my soul. Oh! misery is indeed a fearful counsellor!"

"Come, come, you must not so readily lose heart."

"But when one is hungry, what would you have him do? Not eat?"

"Come, come! You said just now that you offered to take a portrait for the value of a supper. I should greatly like to have mine taken, and I will give you twenty livres to gratify my whim. Take this gold coin; it is worth more than I have stated, but you can give me the change to-morrow."

"I do not want to receive alms," replied the Spaniard proudly, as he rejected the proffered coin.



"Remember, it is not given as an alms. It is the price of a portrait which you are to take of me. Take this," said the King, approaching the dim lamp placed before the shrine of the Madonna, which stood in a crevice of the wall.

Philip had drawn out his pocket-book, and on a fly-leaf written down as follows: "*I have received the price of a portrait, which I engage to take, of the bearer of this note.*" Now sign it."

The Spaniard did as he was bidden by the King (who all the while was muffled in his cloak) and signed the paper—*Sanchez Coello*. They were on the point of separating, when the artist called back his unknown friend.

"Where am I to find you? You know no more than I myself where I shall lodge to-night."

"Do not make yourself anxious about that. I shall find you," replied the King.

Sanchez Coello took up the satchel containing his brushes and colours, threw it over his shoulder, and proceeded to a hostelry, where he was admitted for the night.

On the following morning he was still sleeping soundly when a servant entered

"The King has sent for me?" exclaimed the other, in extreme surprise.

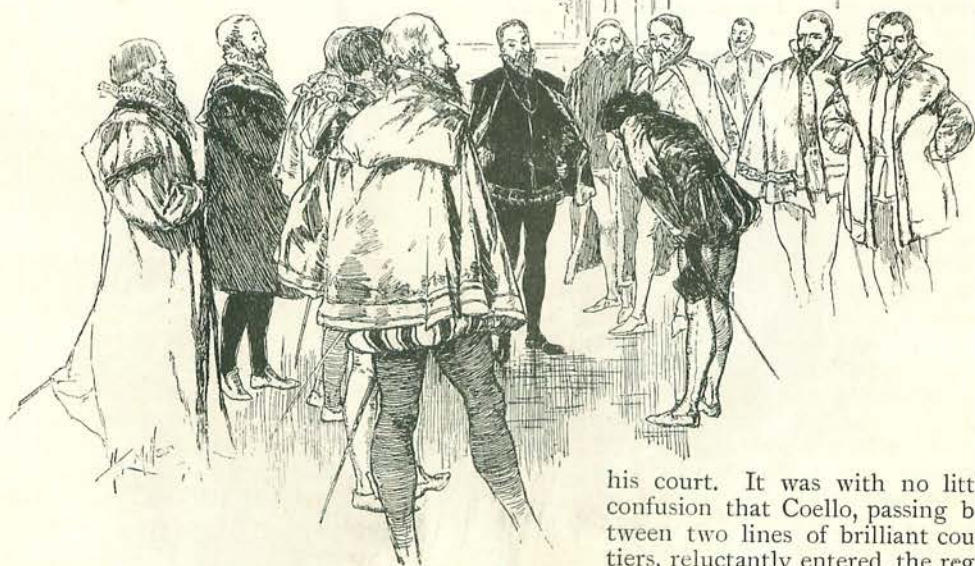
"Yes, his Majesty in person."

"But I cannot possibly appear before a monarch in these old shabby garments."

"You must obey instantly; his Majesty does not like to be kept waiting. Come with me at once, never mind your dress!"

Sanchez Coello arose, and, hastily dressing himself, prepared to be conducted to the Palace. The poor fellow wondered what Philip II. could possibly require of him, and how in the world the great and powerful king of Spain had so much as become aware of his existence, far less that he had come to Brussels.

Philip II. was, as usual, dressed in black, and surrounded by the principal officials of



"HE RELUCTANTLY ENTERED THE REGAL CHAMBER."

his room. "Señor!" he said, "for several days I have been seeking you throughout the city. You must appear immediately before his Majesty Philip II., who has sent for you."

his court. It was with no little confusion that Coello, passing between two lines of brilliant courtiers, reluctantly entered the regal chamber in his travel-worn clothes.

"Señor Alonso Sanchez Coello," said the King, "our well beloved sister has informed us that you were in Brussels, and she earnestly recommends you to us as her favourite painter.

"We desire to possess a mark of your

talent, and therefore we commission you to execute a painting representing some passages in the life of our blessed patron, St. Philip. This picture is destined for the Church of St. Ursula, and must be ready for the feast of St. Philip, which occurs within a month."

"The term assigned is very short," replied the artist, "but in token of my gratitude for your Majesty's protection, I will engage to conclude the painting by St. Philip's eve."

"I accept your word. In my palace you will find a room assigned to you, and an assistant. Our staff of servants will be at your orders, and our treasurer will supply you with what sums you may require."

Sanchez Coello thought that he was dreaming, but his dream was a reality. He was soon installed in an apartment almost regal, while a bevy of servants ready to obey his smallest wish were in attendance. An easel stood before him, with a large canvas ready for his work. He at once began to sketch the picture demanded by the King.

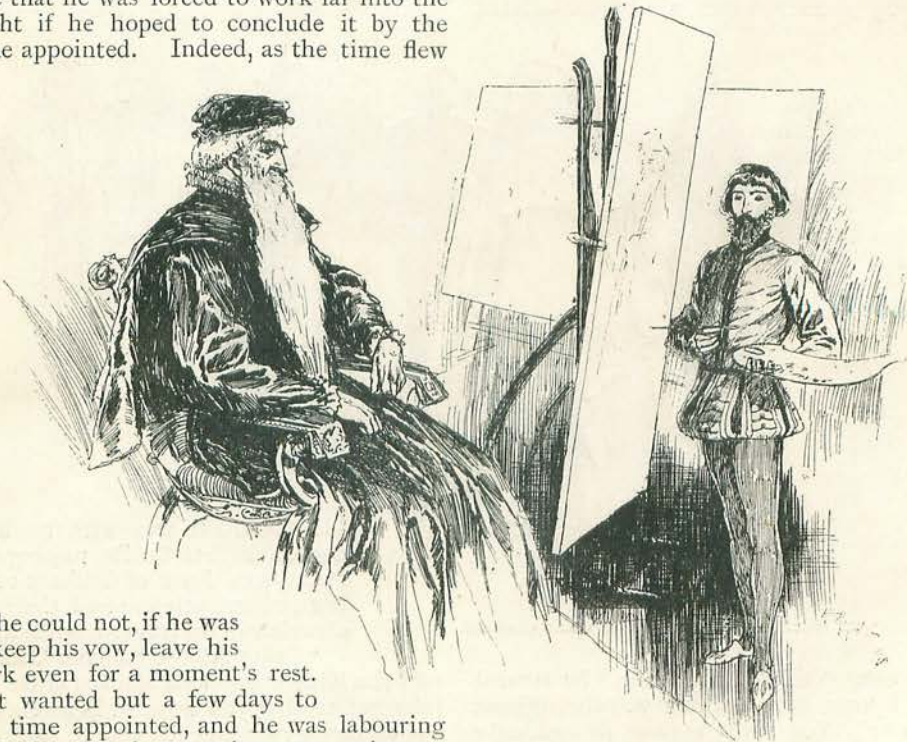
In spite of the industry and perseverance of Coello, the picture was of such colossal size that he was forced to work far into the night if he hoped to conclude it by the time appointed. Indeed, as the time flew

"At last I have found you!" cried the stranger. "What trouble I have had, to be sure! But how could I imagine that the man who meant to drown himself, and who was starving, should be lodged in the King's palace, with a crowd of servants to attend him! Well, to business! My wife is named Philippa, and you owe me the portrait for which I paid you in advance. I want you to take my portrait instantly, so that I may present it to her on the feast of St. Philip."

Sanchez was endeavouring to recognise the voice and the features of the man who had saved him from death, but he could not do so. Yet he spoke of the singular adventure of that night—a circumstance unknown to anyone; and moreover he displayed the very note which he himself had signed under the lamp of the shrine.

"I am willing to fulfil my contract," replied Coello, "but not for the feast of St. Philip. I have to finish a picture for the King, and it will be hard work to have it ready by the day appointed. I have not a moment to lose."

"That is nothing to me. I ordered my portrait and paid for it before the King



by he could not, if he was to keep his vow, leave his work even for a moment's rest.

It wanted but a few days to the time appointed, and he was labouring with feverish haste, when an unknown individual entered his studio.

"COELLO BEGAN TO TAKE HIS PORTRAIT."

ordered his picture. I now claim it, and you must paint it, unless you wish to be considered as a man whose word is worthless. Moreover, you would not be in the King's palace but for me. Bear that in mind."

"You are quite right," replied Sanchez. "I shall have to risk my future. To be wanting to my pledged word to the King is to lose everything; but sit down, and I will take your portrait, even if I be disgraced in the King's eyes."

The stranger sat down, and Coello began to take his portrait. He was a man of fine physique, with a face full of intelligence and nobility. He watched Coello at his work with a singular curiosity, and manifested himself somewhat of a critic, as the artist gathered from the observations which involuntarily escaped him.

After six hours' assiduous work the portrait had progressed considerably, and would require but a short time more to finish it. Sanchez threw himself in an armchair, and appointed an early hour the next day for his sitter to return, when he hoped to conclude the portrait.

It was the eve of the feast of St. Philip. Sanchez had concluded the portrait; but though he sat up the whole of that night at work, he was unable to finish the King's picture, and in the early morning, worn out by fatigue, he was still holding the palette and brush, when Philip entered his studio.

On perceiving that the picture was

unfinished, the countenance of the King became clouded by displeasure.

"You have been wanting to your word," he cried in a severe voice.

Sanchez hung his head without replying. The King glanced round, and his eyes fell on the portrait of the stranger.

"By St. Philip!" he exclaimed, "you have been amusing yourself by taking the portrait of a private individual, instead of working at my picture! Through your failure I am now unable to present the picture I commissioned you to paint, and the ceremony will have to be postponed. This is a serious business, Señor Coello!"

So speaking, the King turned, and left the studio, leaving the artist in the direst dismay.

Half an hour later Coello was summoned to present himself immediately before the King. He obeyed in terror.

"Señor Alonso Sanchez Coello," said the King, "you have been wanting to your pledged word; but, on the other hand, you have fulfilled a promise which you had formerly made to me."

The Spaniard looked at Philip in speechless surprise.

"Yes," continued the King, "the stranger whom you en-

countered on the night of your despair, and the King, are one and the same person; with the sole difference that I sent in my place, to have his portrait taken, Ottovenius, the most celebrated Professor of Antwerp. You may now conclude the painting of St. Philip at your convenience;



"THE KING TURNED, AND LEFT THE STUDIO."

all the more as we are now about to celebrate a wedding."

Taking a silver whistle, which hung from his waist, the King blew a note upon it; and in a few moments Sanchez Coello saw Professor Ottovenius enter the apartment, leading Doña Luiza by the hand, and followed by Don Reinaldo and his wife. Sanchez Coello fell on his knee before the King.

The marriage of the artist and Doña Luiza was soon after solemnised in the Royal Chapel.

King Philip manifested feelings of deep friendship towards Sanchez Coello. On his

return to Spain, he brought with him his favourite artist, who, moreover, accompanied him in most of his military expeditions.

Sanchez Coello several times took the portrait of Philip II., on horseback and on foot. He was covered with honours and distinctions by the most powerful crowned heads in the world, by Popes, Dukes, and Cardinals. At his table sat Grandees of Spain, and his house was the resort of the highest dignitaries of the Church and State, so that often two extensive courtyards of his residence were filled with litters, carriages, and sedan chairs. He became the most famous artist of his time, and amassed a princely fortune.

