

The Family Circle

THE BOY WHO TRIES

The boy who wins is sure of praise,
And yet, I somehow prize
Through stress of dark and cloudy days
The gallant boy who tries.

Not once nor twice nor thrice he lifts
His sturdy hand, ere life
Shows bright and clear, the blue that rifts
With peace the sky of strife.

The lad whose valor holds its own
In presence of defeat,
Who falls and rises, makes no moan
In dust, or cold, or heat.

I find it in my very soul
To bless the stubborn stuff
That takes of poverty its toll,
And makes that dole enough.

A thousand praise the boy who wins,
But twice ten thousand rise
Beyond this world of clamorous dins
To praise the boy who tries.

—Exchange.

A SPANISH FOLK TALE

In a certain place in Spain there once lived a hard-working charcoal burner, or carbonero; but he was married and had six very young children with great appetites. So all he earned they together ate; not always in peace and the grace of God, for the poor man sometimes found himself at night very weary and supperless.

One day the carbonero said to himself: 'When I can double my day's earnings and have sufficient money, I am going to eat an entire hen by myself alone.'

That day so much wished for arrived. The man collected his double wages, bought a hen and put it to cook in a puchero in the depths of a forest.

Soon a gentleman rode up, dressed in garments resplendent with gold and precious stones.

'God keep the carbonero,' he said.

'God be with the caballero,' responded the man.

'Wilt thou give me a bit of the hen thou art cooking?'

'Diantre! How didst know of it?'

'I am Fortune, and I go all over the world; take advantage of this opportunity.'

'Thou art Fortune? Well, thou shalt not eat of my hen, for I hate thee. Thou art unjust. To some thou givest all, and from others takest all away. Go, and God be with thee.'

The rider spurred his fiery mare and disappeared.

In a little while there came an old man with wrinkled face, dressed in black and mounted on a poor horse covered with scars.

'God keep the carbonero,' he said.

'God be with the gentleman,' replied the charcoal burner.

'Wilt thou give me a little of the hen which thou art cooking?'

'The devil! All the world knows that I am cooking a hen, and yet I could swear I have told it to no one. Who art thou?'

'I am Death.'

'Death, art thou? Well, you shall eat of my hen, for you are Justice herself. Dismount and dine with me.'

The old man dismounted, seated himself on the ground with the carbonero, and ate of the hen, the two conversing amiably together. When they had finished, Death said to the charcoal burner:

'Ask of me what thou wishest and it will be granted thee for thy good treatment of me.'

'What I need is money.'

'Ask for what thou wishest.'

'Give me my house full of gold money.'

'Granted,' said Death.

With a lightness no one would have suspected in the old man, he mounted his nag and disappeared.

The charcoal burner went home; the door was tightly closed, his wife and children being away. He tried to enter, but could not, for the house was full of golden money.

He remained on guard at the door, and when his wife and children returned he gave them money enough to go and buy the richest clothing they could find for him and themselves. He ordered also a palace to be built, and spent much money in coaches and servants.

One day when the charcoal burner was leaving his palace he met the old man with wrinkled face, who said to him:

'Dost know me still?'

'Perfectly; thou art Death. What dost thou wish of me?'

'To notify thee that thy money will soon give out, and it would be well for thee to take some position.'

'What position could I take? I can neither read nor write, and am too old to learn.'

'Take that of a doctor.'

'A doctor? Poor me, who can neither read nor write!'

'Yes, a doctor; and I will tell thee how to manage. When thou goest to see one sick, if thou seest me sitting at the head of the bed, give him up for dead; all the resources of human knowledge will be in vain. In this way thou wilt come to thy fortune. Thou canst predict the cure of many whom the most famous physicians will have given over.'

The old man disappeared.

So the old charcoal burner offered himself to the public as a great doctor, and soon became universally famous. When he was called, he examined the patient and at once pronounced sentence. He seemed to carry with him health or death.

His wealth increased, for all the high dignitaries of the kingdom and the princes called him in for consultation.

One day he was sent for in great haste to go to the house of a great man who had suffered an attack of apoplexy when his family least expected it, and the unhappy man was dying, leaving his wife and sons in profound sorrow, greatly increased by the fact of his affairs being in complete disorder.

On entering the house of the patient, his eldest son called the charcoal burner apart, saying:

'Senor doctor, thou art welcome; give my father health and thou shalt have nothing to complain of from me.'

'We shall see, we shall see,' was all the old carbonero would say.

Then he went to the sick room, where, seeing the old man with the wrinkled face at the head of the bed, he at once shook his head and murmured:

'There is no help for him.'

All the family wept, but the eldest son, more composed than the rest, took the doctor by the arm and, conducting him to his office, said:

'Thy word, according to fame, is a sentence. But make my father well and ask what thou desirest.'

'It cannot be; his hour has come.'

'We will give thee half of our fortune, which is immense, if thou wilt cure my father.'

That proposition made the old carbonero reflect, and in a few moments an idea occurred to him.

'If thou wilt do what I command, it seems to me thy father may yet be saved,' he said.

'Speak; as thou sayest, so shall it be done.'

'Place two strong men servants at the head of the bed and two at the foot, and when I make them a sign they must change the bed around so that the foot will be where the head is now.'

'Nothing more?'

'Nothing. It only needs that we reach the room in time.'

Re-entering the sick room, where all was as they left it, the doctor's orders were carried out in haste, and in a few moments the old man with the wrinkled face was at the foot of the bed. Then the doctor hastened to say:

'I assure you the sick man will not die of this illness.'

All present embraced the old carbonero with expressions of sincere gratitude, and he smiled, full of satisfaction. In the meantime the wrinkled old man slowly left the room, murmuring in his ear:

'Thou art the only one who has deceived Death, and I deserve it, because I trusted in the loyalty of the charcoal burner.'

It is true he could not deceive him again, for another time the hour came for the carbonero, who left a brilliant fortune to his wife and children.

ART AND GEOGRAPHY

Among the visitors at an art exhibition were two old ladies from the country. They were examining