



The Watchful Servant

Charles Sellers

Portuguese

Advanced
6 min read

There was once a prince who was going to visit his lady-love, the only daughter of a neighbouring king; and as he required the services of an attendant, he sent for his barber, who was known in the town for his very good behaviour, as well as for his eccentric ways.

“Pablo,” said the prince, “I want you to go with me to Granada to assist me on my journey. I will reward you handsomely, and you shall lack for nothing in the way of food. But you must don my livery, salute me in the fashion of Spain, hold my stirrup when I mount, and do everything that is required of a servant. Above all, you must not let me oversleep myself, for otherwise I shall be late in arriving at Granada.”

“Sir,” answered the barber, “I will be as true to you as the dog was to St. Dominic. When you are sleeping I will be on guard, and when you are awake I will see that no harm approaches you; but I beg you not to be annoyed with me if, in trying to be of service to you, I do unwillingly cause you any annoyance.”

“Good Pablo,” continued the prince, “say no more, but return to your shop, pack up your linen, and come here as soon as you can this evening. If I am in bed when you arrive, you will know that it is because I must get up to-morrow morning by five o’clock, and see to it that you let me not sleep beyond that time.”

Pablo hurried home, packed up his few articles of underclothing, and then proceeded to the principal wine tavern to tell his friends of his good fortune. They were all so pleased to hear of Pablo’s good luck that they drank to his health, and he returned the compliment so often that at last the wine was beginning to tell on him,

so he bid his friends good-bye and left, saying to himself, "I must wake his highness at five o'clock." This he kept repeating so often that he had arrived at the large courtyard of the palace before he was aware of it.

The prince's bedroom looked into the courtyard, and Pablo saw by the dim light that was burning in the room that the prince had retired to rest.

Afraid lest the prince should think he had forgotten all about awaking him, and that he might therefore be keeping awake, Pablo seized a long cane, with which he tapped at the window of the prince, and kept on tapping until the prince appeared, and opened the window, shouting out—

"Who is there? Who wants me?"

"It is I," said Pablo. "I have not forgotten your orders; to-morrow morning I will wake your highness at five."

"Very good, Pablo; but let me sleep awhile, or else I shall be tired to-morrow."

As soon as the prince had disappeared Pablo commenced thinking over all the princes of whom he had heard, and he had become so interested in the subject that when he heard the cock crow, imagining it was daybreak, he again seized the cane and tapped loudly at the window.

The prince again lifted up the sash, and cried out—

"Who is it? What do you want? Let me sleep, or else I shall be tired to-morrow."

"Sir," exclaimed the barber, "the cock has already crowed, and it must be time to rise."

"You are mistaken," replied the prince, "for it is only half an hour ago since you woke me; but I am not annoyed with you."

Pablo was now sorely troubled in his mind because he thought he might give offence to the prince, and so he kept revolving in his mind all that his mother had told him about the anger of princes, and how much it was to be dreaded. This thought so perplexed him that he resolved on putting an end to the life of the cock that had caused the mistake. He therefore proceeded to the poultry-yard close by, and seeing the offender surrounded by the hens, he made a rush at him, which set all the fowls cackling as if a fox had broken in.

The prince, hearing the noise, hurried to the window, and in a loud voice inquired what the noise was all about.

“Sir,” said Pablo, “I was but trying to punish the disturber of your rest. I have got hold of him now, and your highness may go to sleep without further care, as I will not forget to waken you.”

“But,” continued the prince, “if you waken me again before it is time, I will most decidedly punish you.” Saying which he again retired to rest.

“Since the days when cocks crew in the Holy Land they have always brought sorrow into this world,” inwardly ejaculated Pablo. “His proper place is in the pan, and that is where he should go if I had my way.”

All at once Pablo commenced to feel very sleepy, so he walked up and down the yard to keep awake; but becoming drowsy he sank on the ground, and was soon so fast asleep that he dreamt a black prince was attacking him, which made him scream so terribly that it woke, not only the prince, but also all the dogs in the neighbourhood.

The prince again rushed to the window, and hearing Pablo scream out, “Don’t murder me, I will give you all!” hurried down into the yard, and seeing how matters stood bestowed such a hearty kick on Pablo that he jumped up.

The frightened barber beholding the prince near to him, took to his heels, and ran home as fast as he could.

When he had got into bed he began regretting that he had run away from the prince’s service, so he got up again, saying to himself, “The prince shall have a sharper spur than I could ever buckle on;” and, proceeding to the principal door of the palace, he wrote the following words with chalk, “Pablo has gone before your highness to court the Princess of Granada himself.”

This had the desired effect, for when the prince arose in the morning and was leaving the palace alone, he read the words, and they caused him to be so jealous that he performed the distance in half the time he would otherwise have taken.

Pablo after that used to say that “a jealous man on horseback is first cousin to a flash of lightning and to a true Spaniard.”

Read more fairy tales on Fairytalez.com