

1937

## Folk Tales from the Spanish

Dolores Huning

Irene Fisher

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmq>

---

### Recommended Citation

Huning, Dolores and Irene Fisher. "Folk Tales from the Spanish." *New Mexico Quarterly* 7, 2 (1937).  
<https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmq/vol7/iss2/12>

This Contents is brought to you for free and open access by the University of New Mexico Press at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in New Mexico Quarterly by an authorized editor of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact [disc@unm.edu](mailto:disc@unm.edu).

## Folk Tales from the Spanish

By DOLORES HUNING AND IRENE FISHER

### BLANCA FLOR

THERE WAS once a youth who went out to fish, and on his way home he intended to stop at a friend's house. However, he fished so late that it was dark when he started home and he lost his way. Instead of his friend's house he came to the House of Many Demons.

He knocked at the door and a beautiful girl answered his knock. When he saw her, the youth thought he would like to stay; so he asked for work. Blanca Flor or White Flower, the girl, told him to go into the house and ask her father. Her father said he would give the boy work, and he gave him a box filled with all different kinds of seeds: there were lentils, peas, wheat, corn, beans, and many other kinds.

He told the youth that he must sort these seeds in one day and if he did not finish them he would be killed. The young man told White Flower what her father had commanded him to do. She said for him not to be afraid, for she would help him if he would promise to take her away when the work was finished. The boy promised.

The next morning they started to work and separated the seeds in one day, because White Flower helped him. The youth went to tell White Flower's father and mother that he had completed the task. The girl's mother said that he could not have sorted the seeds in one day, and that White Flower must have done the work, but the father said,

"You always wish to think ill of my daughter. The boy knows how to work. That's what it is."

Then the *patrón* commanded the boy to plant the wheat seeds that he had separated from the others. He said the wheat must grow, be harvested, ground into flour, and made into bread, and all had to be done in one day. The boy went

122 ] *The* NEW MEXICO QUARTERLY

---

to White Flower in despair, but she said, "Tell him you will do it." The father did not believe he could.

When the boy returned to White Flower the task was already completed. At the end of the day he went to the father and showed him the bread. The mother said,

"All the work that *peon* is supposed to do is being done by White Flower."

The *patrón*, however, told her no, that the boy knew how to work and that was all there was to it, and he said to the boy, "Now you must go to the mountains and bring back a young bull which is so fierce that he shoots flames of fire from his eyes."

The boy said he would do it, but he was afraid. White Flower told him not to fear, and to saddle the best horse in the stable.

"The horse is my brother, the saddle my mother, the stirrups my father, and I am the Quirt."

She got on the horse and went into the mountains, lassoed the bull and brought him back. The boy quickly went to the *patrón* and told him the bull was in the corral. The man and his wife became so ill from the shock of the boy's success that they had to go to bed. Then the man said it was all right, and now the next piece of work was to tame a very wild mare. The boy saddled her, and after it was tamed, the mother said again that it was White Flower's work. When he had finished, the *patrón* told him to take some little monkeys to the river and bathe them.

These little monkeys were some little devils and these little devils were the girl's brothers. The old man cautioned the boy that if these monkeys escaped he would be killed. When the boy took the little monkeys to the river and bathed them, he kept them from escaping by beating them severely, which White Flower had told him to do. After bathing them he took the little monkeys back to the *patrón* and said, "Here are your monkeys." The little monkeys told their father that the *peon* would not let them play. The *patrón* said that was all right.

## FOLK TALES FROM THE SPANISH [ 123

The boy now wanted his pay, and said he did not wish to work any more with him and that he wanted to go to his own country. The *patrón* paid him and bade him "A Dios." When he left, White Flower told him to take a mirror, a comb, and a brush. The boy did as she said.

"Now take the best horse and start. I shall catch up with you in a few minutes."

She went into the *zaguan* adjoining the room where her parents were, and spit upon the floor. Then she spit upon the kitchen floor and upon the ground in the patio. She ran out and caught up with the boy who had just started.

She had no sooner left when her mother called her. The saliva in the *zaguan* answered, "*Si, Senora.*" The mother called White Flower again and the saliva in the kitchen answered, but softly. The third time the mother called, the saliva in the patio replied more softly. The mother was very angry and said to the father, "These are White Flower's doings and I know she has left with the *peon*."

The father would not believe her and said she only wanted to talk about his daughter, but she started after the young people and followed them until she had almost reached them. White Flower told the boy to throw the comb down. The boy threw it and it turned into a high mountain with knives on the top of the mountain. The woman could not pass; so she was forced to turn back. Then the father started in pursuit and had almost caught up with them when the boy threw down the brush. It turned into a river of blood that the man could not cross. When he returned, the son, White Flower's brother, said he could bring them back. He started and when he got within a short distance of them, the boy threw down the mirror and it turned into a high, sheer cliff of rock. When the brother saw this he knew it was impossible to climb over it and he turned back home.

The young people soon arrived at the boy's home and the boy said, "We are almost at my house. Do you want to stop with us?" The girl, however, would not go in, and

124] *The* NEW MEXICO QUARTERLY

---

said she would build herself a little house of her own for a few days.

"Go now to your house," she told him, "but do not let any member of your family embrace you. If you do you will forget me."

The boy promised and left her. He went to his house and each member of his family wanted to embrace him, but he would not let them. After a while, being tired out, he lay down to take a nap. After he fell asleep his mother went to him and put her arms around him. He forgot about White Flower.

White Flower knew what had happened so she bought two pigeons, a male and a female, and taught them how to talk in order to make the boy remember her. They learned how to converse with each other about the past events in White Flower's house and on the journey.

Then the pigeons flew to the boy's house and while he was sitting in the *patio*, the birds lighted near him.

The female pigeon said to the male pigeon, "Do you remember when I helped you sort the seeds and plant the wheat?"

"Coo-róo-coo-cóo, I don't remember," answered the other.

"Do you remember when I helped you bring that fierce young bull from the mountains?"

"Coo-róo-coo-cóo, I don't remember."

"Do you remember when I helped you tame that wild mare?"

"Coo-róo-coo-cóo, I don't remember."

"Do you remember when you took my brothers, the little monkeys, down to the river?"

"Coo-róo-coo-cóo, I don't remember."

"Do you remember when you asked my father to pay you, that you wanted to go to your house, and I told you to take the comb, brush, and mirror from the table?"

"Coo-róo-coo-cóo, I don't remember."

"Then," said the female pigeon, "do you remember when we started out and after awhile we saw my mother following us, and I told you to throw away the comb, and a high mountain with sharp knives on the rim appeared?"

"I seem to remember," said the male pigeon.

"Then you remember after we had gone a little farther we saw my father following us. I told you to throw the brush away, and an impassable river of blood appeared and my father turned back."

"I seem to remember," said the other pigeon.

"Do you remember when my brother followed us and you threw away the mirror and a very high and very stony cliff sprang up in his path?"

"I seem to remember."

"You remember also, little pigeon, as we were nearing your home, I told you not to let anyone embrace you? Then as you were taking a nap your mother put her arms around you and you forgot all about me."

"Coo-roó-coo-cóo, yes, I remember."

Then the pigeons flew away.

The boy listened to all this conversation and gradually the events of the past few days came back to him. He jumped up and ran to White Flower's house and begged her forgiveness. Soon afterward they were married, and that is all.

## CONRADO PIMPUM AND THE CRANES

CONRADO PIMPUN, after having passed some years away from his pueblo, in the army, returned to the village of his birth, accompanied by some remembrances of his marches and some money that he had saved. He had the sorrow of finding his mother near death. He received her last kiss and hearkened to her counsels that he should be pious, good, and honorable. She said that she would pray for his well-being, when she reached heaven. Conrado wept

bitterly and, after the burial, retired to his home where he stayed three months without going out.

The youth of the village were very considerate and respected his grief, but at the end of three months two of them decided to go to his house and take him out. They took him to a tavern where they gave him a great deal to drink. They then reminded him that before he left for the wars he had a *novia* in the neighboring pueblo, and they suggested going to see her that evening.

These two friends were bad men who had heard that Conrado had brought home a great deal of money from the wars, and the journey to the neighboring pueblo was a pretext to rob poor Conrado on the way. They had known for a long time that the girl had become tired of waiting for Conrado to return and had married and lived in a distant pueblo.

Conrado started out with his false friends toward the neighboring pueblo. They had traveled half an hour when they came to a thick wood. The two treacherous friends fell upon poor Conrado, threw him to the ground, and beat him. He made such a struggle against them that they injured him seriously. They also put out his eyes.

They tied his hands and feet and took him to the middle of the forest. They placed him on a piece of wood that was in the form of a cross and tied him to it. Believing that he was dead, they took all his money and hastily left the place.

The coolness of the night revived the poor soldier. He was not dead, but had been made unconscious from the terrible blows he had received. As Conrado knew the country very well, he realized where he was, even though he was now blind, and exclaimed, "Dios Mio! in spite of my misfortunes those fiends have remembered that I am a good Christian and have brought me to die on the cross. The Lord and His Holy Mother will come to my assistance."

He struggled for a while and finally untied himself. He knelt at the foot of the cross as best he could and prayed fervently. Having fulfilled this duty, he sat down on the ground because he was too weak to walk, and waited with resignation the conclusion of his sad adventure.

As the clock of the village struck twelve he heard loud flappings of wings close to his head. He was badly frightened and crouched down at the foot of the cross. A few moments later he again heard the beating of wings, only much louder this time. He heard three large birds light on an arm of the cross, one at a time. They were three cranes who began to talk. Conrado listened closely to what they were saying, and the first one said, "What news have you this week, sisters?"

The second one answered, "I know a great deal. The daughter of the king in the adjoining kingdom is gravely ill. She is between life and death. All the doctors who have seen her do not know how to cure her."

"And you know how to do that?" asked the third crane.

"Yes, sister, I do. There lives in that pond in the next meadow a green frog that should be caught and burned. If the sick princess could be given these ashes mixed with wine, she would recover her health. The king will give her hand in marriage to him who does this."

"Well, I," said the first crane, "also know something noteworthy. Men would pay a big price in gold if they could know it."

"What is it?" the other two asked.

"It is, my sisters, that tonight and tomorrow night there will fall a marvelous dew. The blind man who will wash his eyes with this dew will instantly recover his sight."

"Well, I," said the third crane, "know that the adjoining kingdom is disappearing because of lack of water, and the king has promised his daughter's hand to him who will remedy the situation. A spring must be discovered that will quench the thirst of all his subjects, and water all the land."

"Now you see that your two discoveries are not so useful as mine. The frog is useful only for the king's daughter; the dew is useful only to the blind, but my discovery would serve to save a whole kingdom that otherwise will die of thirst, and to fertilize barren fields."



"How can this be accomplished?" asked the other two cranes.

"Nothing more easy, sisters. In the middle of the plaza of the pueblo there is a white stone. Beneath it at the depth of three meters, there is a rich spring that, whenever it is discovered, will be like a living well. There will come out a jet of pure sparkling water fifteen thousand liters per minute."

After this conversation, the cranes bade each other farewell until the following Saturday, when they were to meet again in the same place.

As soon as they flew away, Conrado gathered some weeds and washed his eyes with the dew that was on them. He instantly recovered his sight. He saw the moon and the stars. He knelt down and thanked the Lord for the benefit that he had received. Then he went to the pond and lifted the flood gates and let the water run out. He saw the frog and before he could go to his hole Conrado caught him and killed him. He made a fire with dry twigs and tinder and his flint, which he always carried with him, and burned the frog. He wrapped the ashes in a leaf and put them in his pocket.

He then went toward the capital where the king had his palace. He presented himself at the gates and asked to see the king. The porters and the guards wanted to prevent his entrance, but Conrado caused such a commotion that the king heard him. He ordered the man brought before him.

"What do you want?" asked the king in a displeased tone.

Señor," answered Conrado, "in my pueblo I learned, through the proclamations, about the illness of the princess, and the reward offered to the one who cures her. Because of that I beg permission of your majesty to see her and twenty-four hours in which to cure her."

"Because you are a simple citizen," said the king, "I will let you try to cure my daughter."

## FOLK TALES FROM THE SPANISH [ 129 ]

The king accompanied Conrado to the bedroom of the princess, where she lay in a high fever. The youth asked for some wine. Placing the ashes of the green frog in the cup he mixed them with some wine and gave it to the princess. As soon as the princess had taken the wine she fell into a profound sleep, and in six hours her illness had entirely left her.

Filled with joy, the king offered Conrado a bag of money.

"Here you have a prize for the service you have rendered," he said.

But Conrado said to him, "Señor, I have not come in search of gold. I have come for the princess and will accept no other reward. Your Majesty offered that the one who should cure the princess would marry her, and I expect the fulfillment of that promise."

The king was much perturbed at the thought of giving his daughter to a humble workman, for he did not know Conrado had been a soldier. His word was given, but he sought a subterfuge in order not to keep it. After meditating for a time, he said with a show of interest,

"True, you have complied with the first part of the proclamation, but you should know that it contained two parts. The first one is complete. The second is missing. It is necessary that you furnish the pueblo with water to drink and the lands with water to make them fertile."

"Tomorrow," answered Conrado, "the pueblo will have water and the fields will be irrigated."

That night he cured a great many blind persons with the miraculous dew. There was not a single person in the pueblo who could not now see. The following day he directed an excavation in the plaza, the work of which was done by these people who had regained their eyesight. They showed their gratitude this way. At noon the depth of three meters was reached and the rich spring was discovered. The dry fields were abundantly irrigated and the people of the pueblo had all the water they wanted.

The king was obliged to keep his word and he allowed the princess to marry Conrado, having first made him a prince. The new marriage was happy.

A short while afterwards, while Conrado was passing through the fields, he encountered the two bad men who had mistreated him. They did not recognize him in his princely clothes, but he spoke to them, saying,

"I am your old friend whom you punished in such an infamous way, but God has permitted that the horrible crime committed against me should be the origin of my happiness."

They were frightened and fell on their knees before the prince, asking his pardon. He was generous and forgave them. He took them with him to the palace, gave them some food and some clothes. He related to them his adventures and how he had come to be the son-in-law to the king.

At evening the two bad men left him to return home and no sooner were they out of sight of the palace than they proposed to each other to pass the night beneath the cross in the hope of hearing something that would make them happy. They went to the cross and it was not long before they heard the cranes circling overhead. One of them said to the others,

"Listen, sisters, it must be that someone has overheard our conversation. The king's daughter is cured, the frog has disappeared from the pond, many blind have recovered their sight, and the adjoining pueblo has water in abundance for its people and its lands. Let us search for that curious one and perhaps we will find him."

They then flew down and saw two men who did not have time to escape. They threw themselves on the men, picked out their eyes and pecked them all over until they were dead. Some days afterwards, the prince, seeing they did not return to see him, and suspecting what they had done, sent someone in search of them. Only the bones were found near the cross.

This story shows us that goodness and piety have their reward and that badness and perversity suffer punishment early or late in life and above all after death.