

By Right of Love.

IN FOUR INSTALMENTS—PART III.

Yet enough of the Calzado spirit remained in her to make her admire him for not consenting to give her up when she hinted that freedom would be desirable.

In fact, this curious feminine mixture of Beadesert and Calzado—of gentlewoman and gipsy—was in a peculiar malleable frame of mind during the hours of that day of Tony Hanlan's death and his widow's threatened illness.

It was unfortunate for Zebra that Mona's influence was removed at that critical period of her life, and that Beadesert was too concerned about the woman he loved to take notice of anything or anyone else.

Late in the afternoon, the storm which had been gathering since early morning, broke with great violence.

Thunder, lightning, hail, and wind combined drove Zebra back to the castle in spite of her desire to linger on the common, where an incident had occurred which rendered her vaguely anxious on Jose's account, and which served to weigh down the scale of her varying moods yet once more on the side of her desperate cousin.

As she stood near the shed where she had made that memorable change of garments with the latter, a man sauntered past, his hands in his pockets, his pipe in his mouth—to all appearances the picture of leisure and indifference.

But the glance he shot at Zebra had nothing indifferent about it.

She saw that easily enough.

He recognized her as quickly as she recognized him.

For a moment her heart seemed to cease beating, and the color receded from her cheeks.

But she did not lose her presence of mind for so much as an instant.

He stopped at once, and touched his hat removing the pipe from his mouth.

'Beg pardon, miss; but you don't happen to have seen any more convicts wandering round about the neighborhood, I suppose?' he said significantly.

'Convicts?' she replied, with cleverly-assumed surprise; then, breaking into a little laugh, she added, 'Oh! I remember you now. You are one of the men who tried to make out that I was an escaped convict. Did you catch that poor fellow? I hope not.'

He looked keenly at her as he drily answered—

'No; we didn't catch him. He wasn't seen anywhere near the Demon's Pool, where, you may remember, miss, you directed us to look for him.'

But Zebra was not in the remotest degree disconcerted by either his words or his manner.

She was far too clever an actress to betray the slightest clue to the knowledge she possessed of Jose Calzado's whereabouts.

'You don't mean that you think he fell in and was drowned?' she exclaimed, in a startled voice.

'I don't fancy he went anywhere near enough to be in danger of losing his precious life that way,' replied the man. 'He's still alive. I haven't a doubt, and I did hear that he'd been seen leaving the castle late last night. That was what made me take the liberty of speaking to you on the subject.'

Words and tone were both suspicious.

Zebra saw that the man knew a great deal more than he was likely to admit, even if she dared question him.

It would not be safe to do so, she decided; so she shook her head carelessly as she laughed again, saying—

'I begin to think myself that the castle is haunted. One hears all sorts of mysterious sounds at night; but the ghosts don't take visible form and shape, not even that of escaped convicts.'

She walked away then, leaving the man looking after her with increased suspicion in his eyes.

CHAPTER XII.

It seemed as though the breaking of the storm was the signal for Mona Hanlan to awake to gradual consciousness of what was going on around her.

She opened her eyes and looked about her wonderingly.

She could not at first understand her position.

Her mind was in a haze.

Why was she in bed?

And why the nurse sitting there dozing in a chair by the bedside?

The sight of the nurse recalled Tony to her mind.

She ought to be with him, not here, she told herself.

Then, as her brain grew clearer, she remembered that Tony was dead—in a strange house, with none but strange hands about him.

The nurse—deprived of her anticipated rest that morning by the call to try and undo the mischief wrought by Emilio—was sleeping now far too soundly to be disturbed by Mona's light movements as she hurriedly dressed herself, anxious to get to the room where her husband lay in his last long sleep; anxious, also, to find Beadesert and tell him—what was it she had to tell him?

She could not at present call it to mind, strive as she would.

She would remember presently, perhaps when she had seen poor Tony.

It was growing dusk as she made her

way to the postern tower.

The darkness of the sky made it appear much latter than it actually was.

The wind howled about the old castle like a thousand furious demons, trying to find a way in, and enraged because they could not succeed in doing so.

The sound of the waves dashing against the cliffs was audible above the roar of the tempest and the lashing of the rain against the windows.

It was weather to make even a man, desirous of earning a large reward for recapturing an escaping convict, seek shelter in preference to remaining in the open on the very likely chance of gratifying his ambition.

It was weather to make Fernando Toro think of one or two of his past sins as he watched the storm from an upper window of the cottage above the old churchyard and realized the necessity of getting on board the Santa Eulalia some time that night, unless he was to forfeit the keen delight of a diabolical revenge he had prepared for the man who had connived at Tony Hanlan's escape.

Which sin haunted him most of the long list laid to his account?

Was it an old, half forgotten crime? Or a more recent piece of evil doing—such as the poisoning of the unsuspecting man whom, in his priestly past, he had bound in wedlock to the traitress who had helped him in his devilish task?

Or was it the fate of his cousin and namesake, who, only two days before, had sunk to the bottom of the Channel with a gaping wound in his throat—doomed to this horrible end of a scarcely less horrible imprisonment on account of his rashly spoken threat to expose his cousin's villainies at the first opportunity.

'Curse the storm!' he thought.

The words were Emilio's, but they found an echo in the elder ruffian's heart, though he turned sneeringly to the youth.

'You'd like weather made on purpose for you no doubt! What has brought you here? Is it not enough that you have upset all our plans—that you have sacrificed a future worthy of a prince—for the sake of a woman's face? A woman who moreover, cares not the snuff of a candle for you.'

'What's gone wrong with you, Toro?' answered Emilio, with a laugh. 'Ah! I can play at that game.'

'Emilio! For shame!' a harsh feminine voice cried out.

Mercedes had entered the room, to find the man and the boy covering each other with pistols.

She sprang forward between the two, who sullenly returned their deadly weapons to their pockets.

Mercedes turned to her son, with the eager question—

'What has brought you here this afternoon, Emilio?'

He shrugged his shoulders as he answered carelessly—

'This wretched storm. I wanted to know if you would start in spite of it. I mean to go! She may be out of my reach tomorrow. She's recovered consciousness, and I heard her just now telling Beadesert that she should take Hanlan's body away as soon as possible, and bury it in town somewhere.'

'You had better give up this mad plan, Emilio; it may prove the ruin of us all,' Mercedes warned.

'I'll take my chance of ruin, mother. If the rest of you care to give up your share in what I shall have with me by way of personal luggage you can do so, and I'll get a boat of my own, and Mona and I will manage it together.'

Toro turned on the boastful lad with a savage laugh.

'You do well not to fear starting in the storm. Rest assured, young braggart, that your destiny is not drowning. But are you going to endanger the life of the woman you profess to love?'

'Yes; rather than leave her for Beadesert I think I hate her more than I love her,' Emilio answered.

'Quite possible. I never yet knew you love anyone but yourself.'

It was Mercedes who gave utterance to these words.

She spoke bitterly.

She had sacrificed so much for this son of hers, and he was repaying her by rendering it all so utterly useless—all the sin, and anxiety, and suffering of mind and body.

'What about Zebra?' she asked, after a few moments' silence.

Emilio laughed.

'Haven't seen her for hours. You must go to Jose for information in that quarter. He'll look after her all right.'

'And I'll look after him,' said Toro to himself, as he noted, with satisfaction, signs of abatement in the storm.

He, who had mercilessly sent so many others to their death, was strangely afraid himself of dying.

Every man has his weakness.

Few people would have guessed this finely-built man, with his dark, inscrutable face, to have been the plaything of a tormenting spectre, whose name was Cowardice.

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Mona felt sufficiently well to dine with the rest that evening.

She was very pale, but quite composed, and able to enter into conversation with the countess.

Beadesert, watching her with the eyes of love, said to himself that she was not yet wholly awake—some part of her inner consciousness still slumbered.

And he was right, for she had not yet remembered what it was she had so greatly wished to tell him.

Emilio was absent, and no one mentioned him.

In his ignorance of the young villain's real character, Beadesert regarded the episode of that morning as having been intended for a practical joke of the worst possible taste, which had unfortunately led to a tragic result.

That the boy absented himself in miserable penitence for what he had done, Beadesert tried hard to believe; but he suspected it was rather in sullen resentment that Fate had treated him so roughly.

Zebra was at the dinner table, but she made a poor pretence of dining.

She was wondering how she could warn Jose not to approach the castle, and was uneasily conscious that if she succeeded in warning him he would only think it a ruse on her part to keep him away, bearing in mind the nature of their last interview.

The countess retired, when dinner was over, to her own apartments.

This was her invariable custom.

This evening she asked Mona to go with her for a few minutes' chat.

The kind old lady wished to offer her sympathy and condolence to the young widow with more thoroughness than she had been able to do with more thoroughness than she had been able to do with others present.

Zebra, thankful for the continued lull in the storm, dressed herself for walking, and went into the grounds to try and get rid of her increasing restlessness.

Beadesert, left to himself, wandered from room to room, wondering if he should see anything more of Mona that night.

Suddenly a wild shriek rang out on the silence; then another, and another.

They seemed to come from the direction of the postern door, and thither rushed Beadesert.

He was just in time to Mona stagger, and fall, a helpless prisoner, into Emilio's arms, a sickly smell of chloroform tainting the air.

Emilio had been less skillful than Calzado's emissaries, or else Mona had started shrieking at the mere sight of him.

Beadesert was unarmed; but he was prepared for Emilio's pistol, which was levelled at him directly he attempted to take Mona from her unscrupulous captor.

Before the trigger was pressed the pistol pointed harmlessly upward, and the shot only damaged the ceiling a little.

Another quick touch, and the weapon changed hands.

'Now,' said Beadesert, sternly, 'out of this, you young ruffian, or, earl though you may be, you shall go to goal for attempted murder.'

He had gained possession of Mona's unconscious form by this time, and he clasped her to him with his left arm, while his right hand held the threatening pistol within a few inches of the youth's enraged and beflled face.

There appeared to be no choice between flight and death, for Beadesert was a desperate man, prepared to go any lengths to avenge the woman he loved.

Emilio turned and fled, cursing horribly in his native Spanish.

Still carrying Mona, Beadesert followed to the postern door, which he made fast against possible intruders.

Then he gave his whole attention to his darling, who was already recovering from the effects of chloroform.

Her eyes opened, and met his anxious look.

She drew a deep breath, and glanced around in a stupefied fashion.

Then memory began to return, and she clung nervously to Beadesert.

'Emilio! Was it my fancy? Was he here?'

'He has gone, Mona; he shall not annoy you again.'

'Then I did not dream it, after all! I wanted to tell you—to warn you—but there was no opportunity, and then I forgot. It was the night before poor Tony died, you remember? I saw them come in, Emilio, his mother, and Jose Calzado. He went in search of Zebra, but the others locked themselves in a room.'

'They talked until they quarrelled—it was about me. Emilio said he would give up the earldom but not me. His mother told him he might have both, for, if she were an earl, any woman would marry him.'

'Then he said he was tired of pretending to be Lord Darkhaven, and now that they had all the jewels, he should go back to the old life and throw in his luck with the Calzados.'

'His mother was very angry, telling him he was ungrateful and wicked to upset her plans in such a manner.'

'I am the Countess of Darkhaven, she said, "and, as my son, you are, of course, the earl."

'Emilio laughed savagely and told her he had known, all the time, she had married a man called Emilio Diaz when Lord Darkhaven cast her off, and that that was that man's son and no other's, and not that he had all he wanted he meant to enjoy himself, which he could never do as an English lord.'

'And now, come with me, and I will see if he has taken the gems he bid so carefully. All those nights when he and his mother were here so often they were busy unsetting the stones from your mother's jewels, Lord Darkhaven—how do you like your title? It is yours, you know, and has been all the time I have been calling you Mr. Beadesert.'

He was incapable of reply.

As a man walking in his sleep he followed her to the room where she said the gems were hidden.

When she saw they were gone, she laughed, and, bidding him follow her still she led the way to her own sitting room where, unlocking a cabinet, she took from it a tiny bag made of one of her own pocket-handkerchiefs.

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This she opened, and poured the contents on the table, saying—

'There! They are all here, I fancy! You will have to get them reset, that is all I filled their bags with little stones, I was busy that night. And now I am very tired. Please take the jewels and go.'

'But I haven't said a word of thanks. I haven't—'

'Won't it wait until tomorrow? I am so tired. Hark! The wind is rising again. I am so glad. I love the wind. It will rock me to sleep.'

It rocked others to a still sounder sleep.

When the tide went back next morning, the bodies of Zebra Beadesert and Jose Calzado were found in a pool under the rocks, and later, those of Emilio and his mother.

They must have decided to trust themselves to the treacherous sea rather than await what might happen on land when the Darkhaven jewels were found to be missing.

Apparently they never knew that these had been saved by Mona Hanlan.

Toro, too, was drowned in his endeavor to rejoin the Santa Eulalia.

That the vessel itself perished with all on board seemed evident, for portions of a craft of her size and build came ashore day after day for the next week, and one day the name floated in under the cliffs, thus setting at rest all doubts as to her fate.

It could not be otherwise than a relief to the new earl to reflect that he was free forever from the hated Calzados, much as he would have liked an explanation of some of their doings, such as the presence of the Santa Eulalia in the Channel just then, and the intentions of Mercedes—or possibly Toro—with regard to Tony Hanlan's wife.

Was Mona's freedom to depend on her husband's attitude towards the man who had robbed him, should he—Tony—succeed in escaping, and continue his prosecution, in England, of the arch defrauder?

This and other points of interest must now remain for ever a secret; one of the many mysteries buried beneath the heaving waters.

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'When am I to have that kiss, Mona?'

Mona had been a widow for six months, during which she travelled with Lady Fortescue, scarcely seeing Lord Darkhaven at all.

But when she returned to England he became a frequent visitor; and she had felt for some days past that he was anxious to be her accepted lover.

For answer she raised her face, smiling into his eyes, and whispering—

'My lips belonged to poor Tony then; they were his by right of purchase.'

'And now?' he murmured, with his mouth on hers.

'Now they are yours—by right of love,' she answered.

MEXICAN BUSINESS WAYS.

Some Experiences of Americans in Dealing With the Natives.

'The visitor to Mexico encounters many strange sights and curious customs and methods of doing business,' said an American business man. 'A great deal of mining and agricultural machinery has been brought into Mexico, and the Mexican ranchero, if not instructed in handling the new-fashioned farm machinery, is sometimes at a loss to get things at work. The loss of a screw, a nut or bolt sometimes completely blocks all his efforts to get things in motion. Not long ago I went out with a gentleman from the States on a trip through the country selling ploughs, and during our travels in the State of Michoacan stopped at a very large hacienda. The owner was very polite and kind, but when it came to the point of buying a plough he did not seem to be in the humor to trade. He said:

'Why, I have bought several different kinds of tools and implements from the States, but must confess I have had bad luck with them. Not long ago I received a mowing machine from a well-known manufacturer, and it won't work, and I'm getting tired of being swindled.'

'We thought it very queer that a new machine would not work, and requested that he get it out and let us look it over, which of course, he gladly did. We looked it all over very carefully, and could see

nothing wrong with it, so had some of the farm laborers take hold and haul it around the yard, the owner in the meantime following along with us and very much interested in the proceedings. After satisfying myself that everything was in good working order I reached over and threw the knives into gear, and she worked like a charm. You should have seen the look of astonishment on that ranchero's face. He could not believe his eyes, and felt pretty cheap when he saw what the difficulty had been with the mowing machine. They did not know enough to throw it into gear. This will explain why a good deal of trouble is had in this country in selling improved machinery.

A good deal of comment has been made on the native methods of doing business. A friend of mine wanted to buy a certain grade of native made wax matches. One day he came across a stand where an old woman had the identical kind he was looking for. She had some two dozen boxes and he insisted upon buying them all. But evidently she did not understand dealing in a wholesale way, and would not consent to dispose of more than three boxes at a time, which he very reluctantly was compelled to take. After walking away a few steps he decided that this opportunity might not occur again to get these matches and he returned and bought three more boxes and when he found that the retail plan of selling prevailed, he kept marching back and forth and every time he passed the old woman's stand he bought three more boxes until he had the whole two dozen.

Last year I spent several months in a small town in the State of Guerrero, and having some stock to feed decided to buy enough corn to last me two or three months. So visiting the marketplace on the next Sunday I looked up a native who was selling a sackful of corn by the quart, or small measure used by them. I inquired the price of a carga of corn, which was \$5, and asked him how much more he had at home for sale. He told me had fifteen cargas and would sell it all. I decided this was just the opportunity I was looking for and told him I would take the whole lot if he would deliver it the coming week. The native proceeded to scratch his head and look me over and hem and haw, and finally he decided that he could not sell. To the untutored not familiar with the Mexican way of doing business this might seem strange. I pressed him for his reason.

'Well, I tell you,' he said, 'I raise nothing but corn, one crop each year. Now if I sell this corn all at once I will be sure to spend the money, but if I sell a little at a time I will have money every week until the new crop.' And according to his business views he was right and we did not trade.'

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Change Is Best.

Employer (to Pat, who has come with two pails of water from the barn)—What made you so long, Pat?

Pat—Sure, sur, Oi had to stop an change pails once in awhile to rist myself.

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'What! oatmeal again?' cried the boarder who was three months in arrears. 'I'd rather eat sawdust.'

The landlady smiled grimly.

'Well, Mr. Slopoy,' she said in her chilliest tones, 'it seems to me that I'm doing all that can be expected when I furnish you your board without recompense, and I certainly must decline to turn that board into sawdust.'

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