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THE DOUBLE CROSS

(Continued.)

"Yes, my father has never ceased to grieve and to wonder. He has repeatedly told me that there was a mystery on the night of my birth—a mystery, perhaps a crime, in that room. Not that he knows anything, but that he feels that something very terrible took place that night. What? Who knows? The nurse disappeared before the doctor came. And when the doctor at last arrived, my mother was dead. She died in my father's arms, unconscious, without a chance to say farewell. And the nurse was never seen again. Diligent search was made, but she could not be traced."

"What was the nurse's name?" I asked.

"They knew her only as Marie, a Frenchwoman. My mother may have known her other name—but no one else. All my father knows of her was that she was the niece of a Cardinal. Attached to a chain about her neck, she always wore a tiny iron cross—a double cross, her uncle having given it to her, it seems, when she was a little girl. The night she disappeared, she left that little cross lying on the table beside the bed in what is to be your room, senor. As everything in that room, even to the ornaments, stands just as my mother left it, you will yourself see the little iron cross."

And Felipa shuddered, as she had in the canon when I put my hand on her arm and mentioned the sign of the cross.

A bell began ringing—the silver-toned Angelus bell to which, also, Terry had compared Felipa's voice. I saw a mozo pulling at the knotted end of a rope hanging outside the little chapel, built of 'dobe in mission style of architecture, standing at the left of the wicket-gate between the garden and the patio.

"The hour of the Angelus," Felipa said. "Thrice daily—morning, noon and evening—you will hear it while you are here."

Many other bells (in the direction of La Luz, the town being half a mile farther up the mountain) were now ringing in unison with the chapel bell of the Hacienda de Gasteneda.

We had left the wicket open, and I could see the Aztecs in the patio standing motionless while they chanted the Ave Maria.

And Felipa, too, standing beside me, murmured:

"Angelus Domini nuntiavit Mariae."

To which I added—own:

"The Angel of the Lord said to Mary."

Whereupon Felipa paused in her prayer to say:

"You are of our faith, Senor John?"

"You know very well my faith," I answered. "You know everything about me. But—why do you ask?"

"Oh, I was thinking that—but it makes no difference."

"Do you remember, Felipa," I said, "what I told you on the steamer—of the hour of the Angelus? It is the hour at which I first met you. It is—the hour of love."

"Senor, why do you talk to me like that?" She spoke half as if really offended. "You, an acquaintance of—five hours!"

"Five years," I corrected. "And will you never stop acting?"

A cannon boomed in the distance. "The sunset gun at the camp of the Black Cavalry," Felipa explained.

We moved across the garden toward the house.

"You must account to the Aztecs for that kiss," she said.

"When?"

"Before that gun booms for another sunset. Look!"

She pointed through the wicket into the patio.

I looked—and I understood. I saw Valjejo, the watchman—the chief of the peons—passing from group to group among the Aztecs.

"Valjejo is performing what he conceives to be his duty—as a watchman," Felipa said.

"You mean he is telling the Aztecs of the kiss?"

"Yes. And before another sunset gun booms you must—"

"I must what?"

"Prove to the Aztecs that you do not deserve the fate of the kiss-stealer of the Hotel Silao."

We were standing now by the fountain, directly in front of the wicket, through which a great number of the Aztecs could see us. Without warning I caught Felipa to me, not savagely this time, but gently, lovingly, and I kissed her, a prolonged, won-

drous kiss.

Her bosom rose and fell, in agitation. Her eyes flashed fire. Her lips trembled against mine.

And—her perfume!—perfume that half intoxicated me. It thrilled me—as would sublim, chords of music. I recognized it—I had known its thrilling effect before. It was the perfume of the woman of the steamer.

I kissed her again and then again.

"Have the Aztecs now the proof of my right to that kiss in the canon?" I asked, still holding her in my arms and looking down into her great, lovely eyes.

"I was told," I added, "that you would certainly make sure of my love before—you know. Well—is this convincing?"

"It is something," she said, breathing quickly. "But it is not enough—for the Aztecs. They will not be satisfied."

"But neither am I—satisfied," I protested.

"Neither am I," she whispered, as she broke away from me and tripped toward her room at the end of the right wing.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE STRANGER IN THE BLACK MASK.

At eight o'clock we gathered around the Don's long, broad hospitable table in the great dining-room—nine of us.

Padre Aurelio, whose calm, smiling face bespoke the habit of kindness, sat at the Don's place at the head of the table. He had brought four other guests with him from La Luz—the Don's attorney, Ignacio de la Torre, and his wife and the Don's man of business, Senor Lopez, and the Senora Lopez.

Then there were the administrator of the estate, Senor Desague; and the Don's American mining engineer, a hunchback, named Sharon; and Felipa and myself.

Felipa now wore a gown of the color of the wild rose; over her rounded figure, outlined by the clinging, silken folds of the gown, my eyes roved in admiration. In her hair, a red rose has caught, Spanish fashion—one of the roses which she had herself raised in that desert place, the fruit of infinite care.

"Your hair, Felipa mia," I said, "is so wondrously thick that, when unbound—I'd love to see it thus—it must reach to your very feet—feet, by the way, judging from those little rose-colored slippers—feet that would make even a Mandarin's daughter envious."

"Your speech is a comb of honey, Senor Juan. Better reserve the dulces (sweets), however, for later. You may need them—for appearances' sake, if for nothing else."

From her expressive eyes she threw me a look—a singularly mirthful look it thrilled me. She seemed much excited—appeared to be enjoying the game she was playing with me.

"What does that look mean?" I asked.

"Me plan," she answered. "I am thinking it out."

We nine sat at one end of the huge table, at which there was room for at least thirty persons. And way down at the lower end of the board was laid a single, isolated cover—knife, fork, spoon, plate, napkin and so on, where stood a vacant chair, too, as if some one were expected.

That extra cover and extra chair aroused my curiosity.

"What's it for?" I asked Felipa, who sat opposite me, by the side of Ignacio de la Torre.

"You evidently have not before been at a country house in Mexico," she replied. "That extra place is always set, every meal—for the stranger."

"What stranger?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Quien sabe? It is the custom of the country," she went on. "Nearly every hacendado sets such a place in sign of hospitality, the welcome for one more."

(To Be Continued.)

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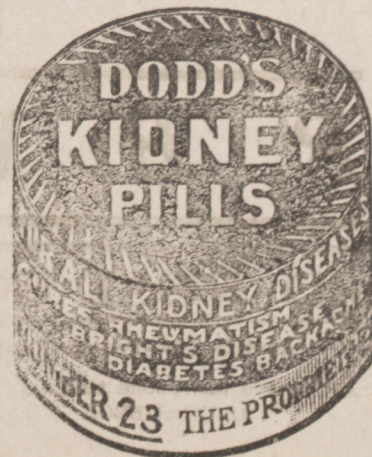
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NEGROES MEET IN WASHINGTON

Washington, D. C., Aug. 26—The seventh annual convention of the National Colored Men's Hotel Club and Liquor Dealer's Association began in the 'capital today and will continue until Monday. Walter E. Thomas, of Columbus, Ohio, is the presiding officer at the convention.

Wm. A. Brady has acquired the American rights to "The Gods of the Mountain," a sensational short play running at the Haymarket Theatre, London, for six months.

Mrs. Annie Pixley and the late Annie Pixley died at her home in New York the other day, of old age. In the days when Annie Pixley appeared in "M'liss," her mother made it a rule never to miss a performance.



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ARRIVALS.

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6.20 a.m.—Express for St. John, Portland, Boston, Woodstock, etc.
9.20 a.m.—Mixed for Woodstock, and points north. Leaves St. Mary's at 9.35.
9.45 a.m.—Express for St. John and points east.
4.10 p.m.—Mixed for Woodstock, via Gibson branch. Leaves St. Mary's 4.40.
5.50 p.m.—Express for Montreal, Boston, Woodstock, St. Stephen, etc.
9.05 p.m.—Express for St. John, and points east.

ARRIVALS.

9.10 a.m.—Express from St. John and points east.
12.30 a.m.—Mixed from Woodstock, via Gibson branch, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.
11.35 a.m.—Express from Montreal, Boston, etc.
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10.50 p.m.—Express from Boston, Portland, Woodstock, St. Stephen, etc.

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Steamer Elaine leaves for St. John every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday at 8 a.m. Arrives on alternate days at 4 p.m.

Steamer Hampstead leaves Fredericton every week day for Gagetown at 4 p.m. Arrives from Gagetown at 10.30 a.m.

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The steamer Majestic leaves for St. John every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday at 8 a.m. Arrives on alternate days at 4.30 p.m.

MINNESOTA TEMPERANCE RALLY

Faribault, Minn., Aug. 22—Temperance workers from every section of the State, among them many noted temperance speakers and lecturers, are gathered here to attend the Minnesota State convention of the women's Christian Temperance Union, which opened here today for a session of four days. Nearly two hundred delegates are present.

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A SIGN OF THE TIMES

New Brunswick boys driven from home by the high tariff policy of the Tories, are beginning to return. Two of them have been in Fredericton this week looking for a chance to buy farms. Reprocity and the larger market is already getting in its work. A policy that will bring back our sons and daughters from foreign lands and fill up the vacant farms ought to be satisfactory to the people of York County.