ROMANCE

BY JOSEPH CONRAD

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CHAPTER III.

ONE evening Carlos, after a silence of distress, had said, "There's nothing else for it. When the crisis comes, you must carry her off from this unhappiness and misery that hangs over her head. You must take her out of Cuba; there is no safety for her here."

This took my breath away. "But where are we to go, Carlos?" I asked, bending over him.

"To—to England," he whispered.

He was utterly worn out that evening by all the perplexities of his deathbed. He made a great effort, and murmured a few words more—about the Spanish ambassador in London being a near relation of the Riegos; then he gave it up and lay still under my amazed eyes. Father Antonio, sadly, signed me to withdraw.

Castro had not gone away yet; he greeted me in low tones outside the big door.

"Senor," he went on, "I make my report usually to his Senoria Don Carlos; only I have not been admitted today into his rooms at all. But what I have to say is for your ear, also. There has arrived a friar from a Havana convent amongst the Lugarenos of the bay. I have known him come like this before."

Castro shook his head. "Malediction on his green eyes! I wanted to tell you, senor, that this evening there is much talk in the villages of an evil-intentioned heretic that has introduced himself into this our town; of an Inglez hungry for men to hang—of you, in short."

"And what do you think of it, Castro?" I asked.

"I think that Domingo has his orders. Manuel has made a song already. And do you know its burden, senor? Killing is its burden. I would the devil had all the Improvisadores. They gape round him while he twangs and screeches, the wind-bag! And he knows what words to sing to them, too. He has talent. Maladetta!"

"Well, and what do you advise?"

"I advise the senor to keep, now, within the Casa. No songs can give that vermin the audacity to seek the senor here. The gate remains barred; the firearms are always loaded; and Cesar is a sagacious African. But methinks this moon would fall out of the heaven first before they would dare. * * * Keep to the Casa, I say—I, Tomas Castro."

He flung the corner of his cloak over his left shoulder, and preceded me to the door of my room; then, after a "God guard you, senor," continued along the colonnade.

I went to the window and leaned my forehead on the iron bar. There was no glass; the heavy shutter was thrown open; and, under the faint crescent of the moon I saw a small part of the beach, very white, the long streak of light lying mistily on the bay, and two black shapes, cloaked, moving and stopping all of a piece like pillars, their immensely long shadows running away from their feet, with the points of the hats touching the wall of the Casa Riego. Another, a shorter, thicker shape, appeared, walking with dignity. It was Castro. The other two had a movement of recoil, then took off their hats.

"Buenas noches, caballeros," his voice said, with grim politeness, "You are out late."

"So is your worship. Vaya, senor, con Dios. We are taking the air."

They walked away, while Castro remained looking after them. But I, from my elevation, noticed that they had suddenly crouched behind some scrubby bushes growing on the edge of the sand. Then Castro, too, passed out of my sight in the opposite direction, muttering angrily.

I forgot them all. Everything on earth was still, and I seemed to be looking through a casement out of an enchanted castle standing in the dreamland of romance. I breathed out the name of Seraphina into the moonlight in an increasing transport.

"Seraphina! Seraphina; Seraphina!" The repeated beauty of the sound intoxicated me.

"Seraphina!" I cried aloud, and stopped, astounded at myself. And the moonlight of romance seemed to whisper spitefully from below:

"Death to the traitor! Vengeance for our brothers dead on the English gallows!"

"Come away, Manuel."

"No. I am an artist. It is necessary for my soul."

"Be quiet!"

Their hissing ascended along the wall from under the window. The two Lugarenos had stolen up unnoticed by me. There was a stifled metallic ringing as of a guitar carried under a cloak.

"Vengeance on the heretic Inglez!"

"Come away! They may suddenly open the gate and fall upon us with sticks."

"My gentle spirit is roused to the accomplishment of great things. I feel in me a valiance, an inspiration. I am no vulgar seller of aguardiente, like Domingo. I was born to be the capataz of the Lugarenos."

"We shall be set upon and beaten, oh, thou Manuel. Come away!"

There were no footsteps, only a noiseless flitting of two shadows, and a distant voice crying:

"Woe, woe, woe to the traitor!"

I had not needed Castro's warning to understand the meaning of this. O'Brien was setting his power to work, only this Manuel's restless vanity had taught me exactly how the thing was to be done.

I remained at the casement, lost in rather somber reflections. I was now a prisoner within the walls of the Casa. After all, it mattered little. I did not want to go away unless I could carry off Seraphina with me. What a dream! What an impossible dream! Alone, without friends, with no place to go to, without means of going; without, by heaven, the right of even as much as speaking of it to her. Carlos—Carlos dreamed a dream of his dying hours. England was so far, the enemy so near; and—Providence itself seemed to have forgotten me.

A sound of panting made me turn my head. Father Antonio was mopping his brow in the doorway.

"How did your reverence leave Don Carlos?" I asked.

"Very low," he said. "The disease is making terrible ravages, and my ministrations—— I thought to be used to the sight of human misery, but——" He raised his hands; a genuine emotion overpowered him; then, uncovering his face to stare at me, "He is lost, Don Juan," he exclaimed.

He made an effort. "My son," he said with decision, "I call you to follow me to the bedside of Don Carlos at this very hour of night. I, an humble priest, the unworthy instrument of God's grace, call upon you to bring him a peace which my ministrations cannot give. His time is near."

I rose up, startled by his solemnity, by the hint of hidden significance in these words.

"Is he dying now?" I cried.

"He ought to detach his thoughts from this earth; and if there is no other way——"

"What way? What am I expected to do?"

"My son, I had observed your emotion. We, the appointed confidants of men's frailties, are quick to discern the signs of their innermost feelings. Let me tell you that my cherished daughter in God, Senorita Dona Seraphina Riego, is with Don Carlos, the virtual head of the family, since his excellency, Don Balthasar is in a state of, I may say, infantile innocence."

"What do you mean, father?" I faltered.

"She is waiting for you with him," he pronounced, looking up. And as his solemnity seemed to have deprived me of my power to move, he added, with his ordinary simplicity, "Why, my son, she is, I may say, not wholly indifferent to your person."

I could not have dropped more suddenly into the chair had the good padre discharged a pistol into my breast. He went away; and when I leapt up, I saw a young man in black velvet and white ruffles staring at me out of the large mirror set frameless into the wall, like the apparition of a Spanish ghost with my own English face.

When I ran out the moon had sunk below the ridge of the roof; the whole quadrangle of the Casa had turned black under the stars, with only a yellow glimmer of light falling into the well of the court from the lamp under the vaulted gateway. Two tiny flames burned before Carlos' door at the end of the long vista, and two of Seraphina's maids shrank away from the great mahogany panels at my approach. The candlesticks trembled askew in their hands; the wax guttered down, and the taller of the two girls, with an uncovered long neck, gazed at me out of big sleepy eyes in a sort of dumb wonder. The teeth of the plump little one—La Chica—rattled violently like castanets. She moved aside with a hysterical little laugh, and glanced upwards at me.

I stopped as if I had intruded; of all the persons in the sick room, not one turned a head. The stilness of the lights, of things, of the air, seemed to have passed into Seraphina's face. She stood with a stiff carriage under the heavy hanging of the bed, looking very Spanish and romantic in her short black skirt, a black lace shawl enveloping her head, her shoulders, her arms as low as the waist. Her bare feet, thrust into high-heeled slippers, lent to her presence an air of flight, as if she had run into that room in distress or fear. Carlos, sitting up amongst the snowy pillows of eiderdown at his back, was not speaking to her. He had done; and the flush on his cheek, the eager luster of his eyes, gave him an appearance of animation, almost of joy, a sort of consuming, flame-like brilliance. They were waiting for me.

Seraphina's unstirring head was lighted strongly by a two-branched sconce on the wall; and when I stood by her side, not even the shadow of the eyelashes on her cheek trembled. Carlos' lips moved; his voice was almost extinct; but for all his emaciation, the profundity of his eyes, the sunken cheeks, the hollow temples, he remained attractive, with the charm of his gallant and romantic temper worn away to an almost unearthly fineness.

He was going to have his desire because, on the threshold of his spiritual inheritance, he refused, or was unable, to turn his gaze away from this world. Father Antonio's business was to save this soul; and with a sort of simple and sacerdotal shrewdness, in which there was much love for his most noble penitent, he would try to appease its trouble by a romantic satisfaction. His voice, very grave and profound, addressed me:

"Approach, my son—nearer. We trust the naturel feelings of pity which are implanted in every human breast, the nobility of your extraction, the honor of your hidalguidad, and that inextinguishable courage which, as by the unwearied mercy of God, distinguishes the sons of your fortunate and unhappy nation." His bass voice, deepened in solemn utterance, vibrated huskily. There was a rustic dignity in his uncouth form, in his broad face, in the gesture of the raised hand. "You shall promise to respect the dictates of our conscience, guided by the authority of our faith; to defer to our scruples, and to the procedure of our church in matters which we believe touch the welfare of our souls. * * * You promise?"

He waited. Carlos' eyes burned darkly on my face. What were they asking of me? This was nothing. Of course I would respect her scruples—her scruples—if my heart should break. She had already all the devotion of my love and youth; the unreasoning and potent devotion, without a thought or hope of reward. I was almost ashamed to pronounce the words they expected.

"I promise."

And suddenly the meaning pervading this scene, something that was in my mind already, and that I had hardly dared to look at till now, became clear to me in its awful futility against the dangers, in all its remote consequences. It was a betrothal. The priest—Carlos, too—must have known that it had no binding power. To Carlos it was symbolic of his wishes. Father Antonio was thinking of the papal dispensation. I was a heretic. What if it were refused? But what was that risk to me, who had never dared to hope? Moreover, they had brought her there, had persuaded her; she had been influenced by her fears, impressed by Carlos. What could she care for me? And I repeated:

"I promise. I promise, even at the cost of suffering and unhappiness, never to demand anything from her against her conscience."

Carlos' voice sounded weak. "I answered for him, good father." Then he seemed to wander in a whisper, which we two caught faintly, "He resembles his sister. O Divine——"

And on this ghostly sigh, on this breath, with the feeble click of beads in the nun's hands, a silence fell upon the room.

Seraphina had given me a quick glance—the first glance—which I had rather felt than seen. Carlos made an effort, and, raising himself, put her hand in mine.

Father Antonio, trying to pronounce a short allocution, broke down, naive in his emotion, as he had been in his dignity. I could at first catch only the words, "Beloved child—Holy Father—poor priest. * * *" He had taken this upon himself; and he would attest the purity of our intentions, the necessity of the case, the assent of the head of the family, my excellent disposition. All the Englishmen had excellent dispositions. He would, personally, go to the foot of the holy see—on his knees, if necessary. Meantime, a dcument—he should at once prepare a justificative document. The archbishop, it is true, did not like him on account of the calumnies of that man O'Brien. But there was beyond the seas, the supreme authority of the church, unerring and inaccessible to calumnies.

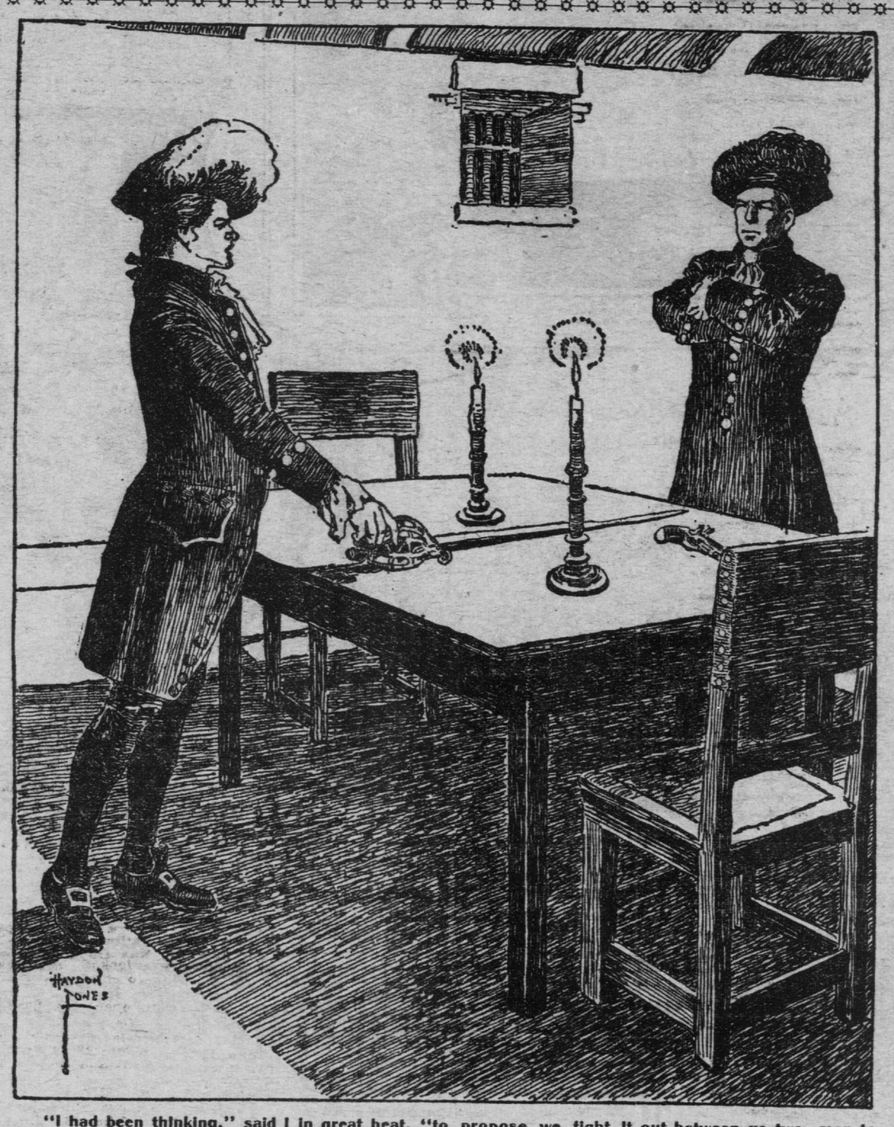
All that time Seraphina's hand was lying passive in my palm—warm, soft, living; all the life, all the world, all the happiness, the only desire—and I dared not close my grasp, afraid of the vanity of my hopes.

With a slow effort Carlos raised his arm and his eyelids. I made a movement to stoop over him, and the floor, the great bed, the whole room, seemed to heave and sway. I felt a slight, a fleeting pressure of Seraphina's hand before it slipped out of mine.

She passed out; and when I looked up there was O'Brien booted and spurred, but otherwise in his lawyer's black, inclining his dapper figure profoundly before her in the dim gallery. She had stopped short. The two maids, huddled together behind her, stared with terrified eyes.

I closed the door quietly. Carlos was done with the earth. This had become my affair; and the necessity of coming to an immediate decision almost deprived me of my power of thinking.

He stepped back, with a ceremonious bow for Seraphina. La Chica ran up close to her elbow. I heard her voice saying sadly, "You need fear nothing for yourself child;" and they moved away slowly. I remained facing



"I had been thinking," said I in great heat, "to propose we fight it out between us two, man to man, rebel and traitor as you have been."

He had thrown his arm over my neck; there was the calming austerity of death on his lips, that just touched my ear:

"Like an Englishman, Juan."

"On my honor, Carlos."

His arm, releasing my neck, fell stretched out on the coverlets. Father Antonio had mastered his emotion; with the trail of undried tears on his face, he had become a priest again, exalted above the reach of his earthly sorrow by the august concern of his sacerdoce.

"Don Carlos, my son, is your mind at ease now?"

Carlos closed his eyes slowly.

"Then turn all your thoughts to heaven." Father Antonio's bass voice rose, aloud, with an extraordinary authority. "You have done with the earth."

The arm of the nun touched the cords of the curtains, and the massive folds shook and fell expanded, hiding from us the priest and the penitent.

CHAPTER IV.

Seraphina and I moved toward the door sadly.

"Senorita," I said low, with my hand on the wrought bronze of the door-handle, "Don Carlos might have died in full trust of my devotion to you—without this."

"I know it," she answered, hanging her head.

"It was his wish," I said. "And I deferred."

"It was his wish," she repeated.

"Remember he had asked you for no promise."

"Yes, it is you only he has asked. You have remembered it very well, senor. And you—you ask for nothing."

"No," I said; "I owe you gratitude for having condescended to stand with your hand in mine—if only for a moment—if only to bring peace to a dying man; for this wonderful instant, that, all my life, I shall remember as those who are suddenly stricken blind remember the great glory of the sun. And I promise never to mention it to you again."

Her lips were slightly parted, her eyes remained downcast, her head drooped as if in extreme attention.

"I asked for no promise," she murmured coldly.

My heart was heavy. "Thank you for that proof of your confidence," I said. "I am yours without any promises. Wholly yours. But what can I offer? What help? What refuge? What protection? What can I do? I can only die for you. Ah, but this was cruel of Carlos; when he knew that I had nothing else but my poor life to give."

"I accept that," she said, unexpectedly.

"Senorita, it is generous of you to accept so worthless a gift—a life I value not at all save for one unique memory which I owe to you."

I knew she was looking at me while I swung open the door with a low bow. I did not trust myself to look at her. I felt an almost angry desire to seize her in my arms—to go back to my dream. If I had looked at her then, I believe I could not have controlled myself.

I said; "only he need not have demanded this from you. Of course, I understood perfectly. * * * I hope you understand, too, that I—"

"Senor, my cousin," she flashed out suddenly, "do you think that I would have consented only from my affection for him?"

"Senorita," I cried, "I am poor, homeless, in a foreign land. How can I believe? How can I dare to dream?—unless your own voice—"

"Then you are permitted to ask. Ask, Don Juan."

I dropped on one knee, and, suddenly extending her arm, she pressed her hand to my lips. A minute passed I could hear her rapid breathing above, and I stood up before her, holding both her hands.

"How very few days have we been together," she whispered. "Juan, I am ashamed."

"I did not count the days. I have known you always. I have dreamed of you since I can remember—for days, for months, a year, all my life."

The crash of a heavy door flung to, exploded, filling the galleries all round the patio with the sonorous reminder of our peril.

"Ah! We had forgotten."

I heard her voice, and felt her form in my arms. Her lips at my ear pronounced:

"Remember, Juan. Two lives, but one death only."

O'Brien, with a vague notion of protecting their retreat.

He said, "Won't you give me that light?"

And I understood he demanded a surrender.

"I would see you die first where you stand," was my answer.

He lifted his head; the light twinkled in his eyes. "Oh, I won't die," he said, with that bizarre suggestion of humor in his face, in his subdued voice. "But it is a small thing; and you are young; it may be worth your while to try and please me—this time."

Before I could answer, Seraphina, from some little distance, called out hurriedly:

"Don Juan, your arm."

Her voice, sounding a little unsteady, made me forget O'Brien, and, turning my back upon him, I ran up to her. She needed my support; and before us La Chica tottered and stumbled along with the light, moaning:

"Madre de Dios! What will become of us now! Oh, what will become of us now!"

"You know what he had asked me to let him do," Seraphina talked rapidly. "I made answer, 'No; give the light to my cousin.' Then he said, 'Do you really wish it, senorita? I am the older friend.' I repeated, 'Give the light to my cousin, senor.' He, then, cruelly, 'For the young man's own sake, reflect, senorita.' And he waited before he asked me again, 'Shall I surrender to him?' I felt death upon my heart, and all my fear for you—there." She touched her beautiful throat with a swift movement of a hand that disappeared at once under the lace. "And because I could not speak, I—— Don Juan, you have just offered me your life—I—— Misericordia! What else was possible? I made with my head the sign 'Yes.'"

In the stress, hurry and rapture encompassing my immense gratitude, I pressed her hand to my side familiarly, as if we had been two lovers walking in a lane on a serene evening.

"If you had not made that sign, it would have been worse than death—in my heart," I said. "He had asked me, too, to renounce my trust, my light."

We walked on slowly, accompanied in our sudden silence by the plash of the fountain at the bottom of the great square of darkness on our left, and by the moans of the Chica.

"That is what he meant," said the enchanting voice by my side. "And you refused. That is your valor."

We stopped. La Chica, silent, as if exhausted, drooped lamentably, with her shoulder against the wall, by Seraphina's door.

"Poor Don Carlos!" she said. "I had a great affection for him. I was afraid they would want me to marry him. He loved your sister."

"He never told her," I mumured. "I wonder if she ever guessed."

"He was poor, homeless, ill already, in a foreign land."

"We all loved him at home," I said.

"He never asked her," she breathed out. "And, perhaps—but he never asked her."

"You have been very good to him," I said; "only he need not have demanded this from you. Of course, I understood perfectly. * * * I hope you understand, too, that I—"

"Senor, my cousin," she flashed out suddenly, "do you think that I would have consented only from my affection for him?"

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The crash of a heavy door flung to, exploded, filling the galleries all round the patio with the sonorous reminder of our peril.

"Ah! We had forgotten."

I heard her voice, and felt her form in my arms. Her lips at my ear pronounced:

"Remember, Juan. Two lives, but one death only."

And she was gone so quickly that it was as if she had passed through the wood of the massive panels.

The Chica crouched on her knees.

"What do you fear from him?" I asked.

She looked up; moved nearer to me on her knees.

"I don't know."

She did not know. Like myself! Was there anything in the way of our undoing which it was not in his power to achieve?

I went to my room, walking upon air, upon tempestuous air, in a feeling of insecurity and exultation.

I stood two candlesticks on a table. I left the door of my room open on purpose, so that he should know I was back there, and ready for him. I took down a long, straight blade, like a rapier, with a basket hilt. It was a cumbrous weapon, and with a blunt edge; still, it had a point, and I was ready to thrust and parry against the world.

Somebody was coming towards me along the silent galleries. It was he; I knew it. He was coming nearer and nearer. In the profound, tomb-like stillness of the great house, I heard the sound of his footsteps on the tessalated pavement from afar. Now he had turned the corner, and the calm, strolling pace of his approach was enough to strike awe into an adversary's heart. It never hesitated, not once; never hurried; never slowed till they stopped.

I suppose, in that big room, by the light of two candles, I must have presented an impressive picture of a menacing youth all in black, with a tense face, and holding a naked, long rapier in his hand. At any rate, he stood still, eyeing me from the doorway, the picture of a dapper Spanish lawyer in a lofty frame; all in black, also, with a fair head and well turned leg advanced in a black silk stocking. There was no weapon in his hand, or at his side.

I lowered the point, and, seeing he remained on the doorstep, as if not willing to trust himself within, I said disdainfully:

"You don't suppose I would murder a defenseless man?"

"Am I defenseless?" He had a slight lift of the eyebrows. "That is news, indeed. It is you who are supposing. I have been a very certain man for this many a year."

"How can you know how an English gentleman would feel and act? I am neither a murderer nor yet an intriguer."

He walked right in rapidly, and, getting round to the other side of the table, drew a small pistol out of his breeches pocket.

"You see—I am not trusting too much to your English generosity."

He laid the pistol negligently on the table. I had turned about on my heels. As we stood, by lunging between the two candlesticks, I should have been able to run him through the body before he could cry out.

I laid the sword on the table.

He remained for some time with his eyes fixed on the table, and when he looked up at me it was with a sort of amused incredulity. His tone was not resentful. He spoke in a business like manner, a little contemptuously. I had only Don Carlos to thank for the position in which I found myself. What the "poor devil over there" expected from me, he, O'Brien, would not inquire. It was a ridiculous boy and girl affair. If these two—meaning Carlos and Seraphina—had not been so mighty clever, I should have been safe now in Jamaica jail, on a charge of treasonable practices. He seemed to find the idea funny. Well, anyhow, he had meant no worse by me than my own dear countrymen, When he, O'Brien, had found how absurdly he had been hoodwinked by Don Carlos—the poor devil—and misled by Ramon—he would make him smart for it, yet—all he had intended to do was to lodge me in Havana jail. On his word of honor. * * *

"Me in jail!" I cried angrily. "You—you would dare! On what charge? You could not. * * *"

"You don't know what Pat O'Brien can do in Cuba." The little country solicitor came out in a flash from under the Spanish lawyer. Then he frowned slightly at me. "You being an Englishman, I would have had you taken up on a charge of stealing."

Blood rushed to my face. I lost control over myself. "Mr. O'Brien," I said, "I dare say you could have trumped up anything against me. You are a very great scoundrel."

"Why? Because I don't lie about my motives, as you all do? I would wish you to know that I would scorn to lie either to myself or to you."

I touched the haft of the sword on the table. It was lying with the point his way.

"I had been thinking," said I, in great heat, "to propose to you that we should fight it out between us two, man to man, rebel and traitor as you have been."

"The devil you have!" he muttered.

"But really you are too much of a Picaroon. I think the gallows should be your end."

"It may be your lot, yet," he said.

I burst into a nervous laugh. For a moment I could not stop myself.

"I won't murder you," I cried.

To this he said astonishingly, "Will you go to Mexico?"

It sounded like a joke. He was very serious. "I shall send one of the schooners there on a little affair of mine. I can make use of you. I give you this chance.

It was as if he had thrown a bucketful of water over me. I became cool. It was his turn now to let himself go.

It was a matter of delivering certain papers to the Spanish commandant in Timaulipas. There would be some employment found for me with the royal troops. I was a relation of the Riegos. And there came upon his voice a strange ardor; a swiftness into his utterance. He walked away from the table; came back, and gazed into my face in a marked, expectant manner. He was not prompted by any love for me, he said, and had an uncertain laugh.

He walked away from the table trying to snap his fingers, and, suddenly, he reeled; he reeled, as if he had been overcome by the poison of his jealousy—as if a thought had stabbed him to the heart. There was an instant when the sight of the man moved me more than anything I had seen of passionate suffering before (and that was nothing) or have seen since. He longed to kill me—I felt it in the very air of the room; and he loved her too much to dare. He laughed at me across the table. I had ridiculously misunderstood a very proper and natural kindness of a girl with not much worldly experience. He had known her from the earliest childhood.

"Take my word for it," he stammered.

It seemed to me that there were tears in his eyes. A stiff smile was parting his lips. He took up the pistol, and evidently not knowing anything about it, looked with an air of curiosity into the barrel.

It was time to think of making my career. That's what I ought to be thinking of at my age. "At your age—at your age," he repeated aimlessly. I was an Englishman. He hated me—and it was easy to believe this, though he neither glared nor grimaced. He smiled. He smiled continuously and rather pitifully. But his devotion to a—a—person who. * * * His devotion was great enough to overcome even that, even that. Did I understand? I owed it to the lady's regard, which, for the rest, I had misunderstood—stupidly misunderstood.

"Well, at your age it's excusable!" he mumbled. "A career that * * *"

"I see," I said slowly. Young as I was, it was impossible to mistake his motives. Only a man of mature years, and really possessed by a great passion—by a passion that had grown slowly, till it was exactly as big as his soul—could have acted like this—with that profound simplicity, with such resignation, with such horrible moderation. But I wanted to find out more. "And when would you want me to go?" I asked, with a dissimulation of which I would not have suspected myself capable a moment before. I was maturing in the fire of love, of danger; in the light of life piercing through my youthful innocence.

"Ah," he said, banging the pistol onto the table hurriedly. "At once. Tonight. Now."

"Without seeing anybody?"

"Without seeing * * * Oh, of course. In your own interest."

He was very quiet now. "I thought you looked intelligent enough," he said appearing suddenly very tired. "I am glad to see your position. You shall go far in the royal service, on the faith of Pat O'Brien, English as you are. I will make it my own business for the sake of—the Riego family. There is only one little condition."

He pulled out of his pocket a piece of paper, a pen, a traveling inkstand. He looked the lawyer to the life; the Spanish family lawyer grafted on an Irish attorney.

"You can see nobody. But you ought to write. Dona Seraphina naturally would be interested. A cousin and * * * I shall explain to Don Balthasar, of course. * * * I will dictate: 'Out of regard for your future, and the desire for active life, of my own free will, I accept eagerly Senor O'Brien's proposition.' She'll understand."

"Oh, yes, she'll understand," I said.

"Yes. And that you will write of your safe arrival in Timaulipas. You must promise to write. Your word * * *."

"By heavens, Senor O'Brien!" I burst out with inexpressible scorn. "I thought you meant your villains to cut my throat on the passage. I should have deserved no better fate."

He started. I shook with rage. A change had come upon both of us as sudden as if we had been awakened by a violent noise. For a time we did not speak a word. One look at me was enough for him. He passed his hand over his forehead.

"What the devil's in you, boy? he said. "I seem to make nothing but mistakes."

He went to the loohpole window, and, advancing his head, cried out:

"The schooner does not call tonight."

He had some of his cut-throats posted under the window. I could not make out the reply he got; but after a while he said distinctly, so as to be heard below:

"I give up that spy to you." Then he came back, put the pistol in his pocket, and said to me, "Fool! I'll make you long for death yet."

"You've given yourself away pretty well," I said. Some day I shall unmask you. It will be my revenge on you for daring to propose to me * * *"

"What?" he interrupted, over his shoulder. "You Not you—and I'll tell you why. It's because dead men tell no tales."

He passed through the door—a back view of a dapper Spanish lawyer, all in black, in a lofty frame. The calm, strolling footsteps went away along the gallery. He turned the corner, The tapping of his heels echoed in the patio, into whose blackness filtered the first suggestion of the dawn.

(To be Continued.)

dissipators and fiends

Come to a time when the cigarette must go—when the weakness must be overcome. Every man owes it to himself, to his futurity to be strong, vigorous, lusty. Now you have broken the laws of nature, broken the rules of health, lain violent hands on the powerful organs of the body, yes, you must expect to be weak. You smoke tobacco beyond the dictates of prudence, burn your candle at both ends, and even in the middle, then you become a poor, miserable man. You have sown the seeds of violence, you must reap the harvest of weakness

THERE IS A CHANCE for you; just one chance. You can overcome your follies, you can stop the losses of night and day, you can be made well and big—by the use of **CUPIDENE**. There is only one and one only **CUPIDENE**. It is the ***weak man's*** remedy. **CUPIDENE** cures prematureness, varicocele, hydrocele, knotted veins. **CUPIDENE** cures the mind that is frail, the body that is weak; cures the bleary eye, the all-gone man. **CUPIDENE** lifts you out of the rut. Puts vim and life into your entire system.

note the symptoms:

CUPIDENE cures dizziness, mental incapacity, fits of weakness, despondency, rush of blood to the head, giddiness, loss of sleep, emissions, lack of blood to parts, purility, hypochondria, lack of power, knocking knees, irritability, night sweats, hot and cold flashes, kidney and bladder disorders, swelling under eyes, puffiness of eyes, wasted conditions of parts of the body, poor circulation of the blood, numbness, semenal emissions, enlargement of the semenal ducts. ***Oupidene*** cures just as certain as you are a weak man. Give ***Oupidene*** a fair, impartial trial. Don't trifle with yourself any more. ***Oupidene*** is sold under a guarantee. ***Oupidene*** is O. K. Try this man's remedy. 20 years' of use, 20 years' of testimonials. ***Oupidene*** is sold for just $1.00 per package. Six packages $5. Send for free circulars. Book of ***Oupidene*** cures free. Write privately **DAVOL MEDICINE CO.**, 40 Ellis Street, San Francisco, Cal.

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