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By the Author of Dora Thorne.

(Continued.) CHAPTER XLVI.

THE exile was over, the two years had passed, and Lord Rylestone stood once more on English soil. How long that journey over the sea had seemed to him! There were whole days when he never left the deck of the ship, feeling inclined to count the minutes as they passed by, blessing each one because it brought him nearcr to her whom his soul loved best.

He smiled to himself as he wondered how he had borne parting from her. It was over now, thank Heaven-there would be no more parting for them. From the beautiful darkeyed wife with her face of wondrous Southern loveliness he should never absent himself again. He knew she was well and happy-her letters said so; but of late he had fancied there was something more sad than usual in them, a pathetic undercurrent he could not tell of what. It would be all over soon. His dark-eyed

darling, who was so unwilling to part with him, who was so troubled at losing him, would be all his own soon. He remembered the flower-wreathed window and the darkly-beautiful, tender face that smiled at him from it. There would be no flowers on his return ; they would be dead, and the long, bare stalks would be drooping. But the longed-for face

would be there-the red lips with their radiant smile, the dark eyes with their passion of welcome. How slowly the vessel seemed to make her way! If he could but fly to Margaritaif he could but cleave through the air and find himself by her side! He gave a great longing sigh, and then controlled himself and thought of the window where Margarita's face, bright as a star, would be awaiting him.

He telegraphed to Marpeth as soon as he landed-' I am in London, and shall be with you in twelve hours.'

him and to greet him light and swift as a bird, because he had asked her to be at the window. and he knew she would be there.

'Patience !' he said to his beating heart. In one more minute he would see the windowthose loving, eager eyes that pierced the chill November mist, that would almost pierce the clouds if she were beyond them. A sharp cry of pain and fear came from his lips. She was not there !

The shock of the disappointment made him grow faint He seemed to lose sight and hearing.

' My darling !' he cried, stretching out his hands to the empty window-' where is she?' The chill mist grew denser. The wind wailed with a complaining murmur. The great branches of the trees swayed helplessly to and fro. A foreboding that had in it the bitterness of death came to him, and then he roused himself, and went forward quietly. He rapped loudly at the door, a warm, sweet hope flushing his face and making his heart beat. She would open it, beautiful, dark-eyed Margarita! No-it was opened slowly by some woman who looked hesitatingly out into the night. Lord Rylestone recognised her as one of the servants who had been there when he left his home, and at the same moment the girl recognised him.

'Mr. Estcourt!' she exclaimed. 'I am very sorry, sir. I did not know you at first. 'But you expected me?' he interrogated. ' No, sir,' she replied, holding the door open for him to pass; ' I did not expect you; but I am glad you are come.'

He was standing in the hall then, looking round with a blanched face and trembling lips. There was no Margarita-no wife. He spoke slowly.

'Where is your mistress?' he asked ; and the girl raised a frightened face to his. 'Do you not know, sir?' she said. 'My mistress is not here. She went away very soon after you left home, and she has never returned.'

He did not cry out. A great dumb passionate sorrow seemed to have overtaken him. There was a chair near, and he sat down upon it, echoing the words slowly-



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