

CAST FOR FORTUNE.

Don Maurizio. And, by the way, we have forgotten about the last prediction. Shall we not try it? You are a water-fowl on the beach. Let me see you knock it over.

GENERAL BUSINESS.

Senior Derwent, know pretty accurately, I think, what you can do.

"I wish I did," said Derwent, devoutly. "But I am like other mortals by vanity, I sometimes essay tasks beyond my strength and fail. I shall probably fail in making this sketch; but I mean to try. Fortunately, I have a sketching material with me; for I thought I would do something of the kind in Mexico. This will be my first attempt."

A few minutes later, with a portfolio under his arm and accompanied by the padre, he was on his way to the ravine, where he had spent many delightful hours since the day when he was first introduced to it. They tried various points of view, and it was finally decided that the sketch should be made from the pavilion. So Derwent settled himself, with the support of the railing for his back, and a roof overhead to keep away the intrusive rays of the sun.

As his slender, casocked figure went down the glen, Derwent watched it with an smile, saying to himself that if his picture was a success that figure should enter into it. "Donna Zarifa will like that," he thought, for he knew how dear the gentle priest was to every one at Miraflores. He had heard from Don Maurizio that he belonged to one of the proscribed religious orders, which, robbed, exiled, and defamed by the government, are yet quietly doing the work of God in poverty and obscurity all over Mexico.

"The young man was thinking of that figure, and of all the long line of such figures which had Christianized and civilized a savage people, as he worked with a facility that surprised himself. Perhaps the stimulus was the desire to gratify Dona Zarifa—for love can do wonderful things and develop powers almost undreamed of—or perhaps he possessed more talent than he had hitherto imagined. At all events, his sketch was growing in the most satisfactory manner, and he was so absorbed in its progress that he had almost forgotten to wonder if Dona Zarifa would appear according to her promise, when suddenly in such quick succession as to be almost simultaneous, two shots rang sharply on the air, the last—a rifle-ball—just grazing his ear, and then falling into the stone culman beside which he sat.

The book dropped from his hand, and the sheet of paper on which he was sketching was borne by a current of air over the railing and fastened unheeded into the current below, as with a violent start he looked up, to see Dona Zarifa standing on the path below, with a still smoking pistol in her uplifted hand.

"What chance had he by his side for instant told him that the shot had not been fired idly. "For God's sake, what is it?" he cried, gazing with astonishment at the pale, set face, the shining eyes, and the uplifted hand pointing so steadily without a tremor in the direction of the pavilion.

"There is a man, an assassin, behind yonder rock," she answered in a clear, vibrant tone, pointing to a low, round boulder, that crowned the hill which rose immediately in the rear of the pavilion. "I saw him about to shoot you, and I fired just as he had his finger on the trigger. His aim swerved, and he fell. I think I killed him."

"I will see," said Derwent, turning quickly; but she stopped him by a motion, and extended the pistol. "He may be merely wounded," she said. "Be cautious."

With no recollection of his weakness, he sprang forward and hastened up the steep ascent. Eighteen or twenty yards brought him to the boulder, and there on the ground behind it was the assassin, his rifle where it had fallen beside him. At the first glance Derwent thought he was dead, but on examination discovered that, though insensible, he was still breathing. Throwing open his loose white upper garment, the young man saw that the pistol-ball had entered his chest some little distance below the heart. A stream of dark blood was flowing from it, and Derwent's first act was to place his thumb on the bullet-hole. The next moment he heard a step, and turning his head, saw Zarifa standing beside him, looking down at the man's face with an expression of intense pain. But she asked, in a hushed tone:

"Is he dead?" "No; and I am not sure that the wound need be fatal, if we can get speedy help. Can you go for it?" "Yes, certainly," she answered, starting away impulsively. But before she had gone three steps she turned again, and picking up the man's weapon, carried it a short distance away. "Have you the pistol in your hand?" she said. "Be on your guard: some of these people are very treacherous. I will soon bring assistance and Padre Francisco. I left him at the hospital to see some poor woman who is wandering in her mind."

"Hence," she said, "I will die if I can!" "And I am going to try and sketch the comada. Will you come, padre mio, and see my failure?" "I will come for a little while and see your success," the padre answered, "for I do not think that you are likely to attempt anything in which you would fail."

"I should not wish to attempt what I know to be beyond my powers, certainly. But a man cannot always tell beforehand whether he will succeed in an effort, even when he thinks he may."

"If he has gauged his powers correctly, he can generally tell—at least in some degree. You children cry for

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