

repose, his personal presence always agreeable. "If only my mother could think it," reflected Felipe, "it would be the best thing all round to have Alessandro stay here as overseer of the place, and then they might be married. Perhaps before the summer is over she will come to see it so."

And the delicious, languid, semi-tropic summer came hovering over the valley. The apricots turned golden, the peaches glowed, the grapes filled and hardened, like opaque emeralds hung thick under the canopied vines. The garden was a shade brown, and the roses had all fallen; but there were lilies, and orange blossoms, and poppies, and carnations, and geraniums in the pots, and musk—oh, yes, ever and always musk. It was like an enchanter's spell the knock the Senora had of forever keeping relays of musk to bloom all the year; and it was still like an enchanter's spell that Felipe would never confess that he hated it. But the bees liked it, and the humming-birds—the butterflies also; and the air was full of them. The veranda was a quieter place now as the season's noon grew near. The linnets were all nesting, and the finches and the canaries too; and the Senora spent hours every day, tirelessly feeding the mothers. The vines had all grown and spread out to their thickest; no need any longer of the gay blanket Alessandro had pinned up that first morning to keep the sun off Felipe's head.

What was the odds between a to-day and a to-morrow in such a spot as this? "To-morrow," said Felipe, "I will speak to my mother," and "to-morrow," and "to-morrow," but he did not.

There was one close observer of these pleasant veranda days that Felipe knew nothing about. That was Margarita. As the girl came and went about her household tasks she was always on the watch for Alessandro, on the watch for Ramona. She was bidding her time. Just what shape her revenge was going to take she did not know. It was no use plotting. It must be as it fell out; but that the hour and the way for her revenge would come she never doubted.

When she saw the group on the veranda, as she often did, all listening to Alessandro's violin, or to his singing, Alessandro himself now at his ease and free in the circle, as if he had been there always, her anger was almost beyond bounds.

"Oh, ho! like a member of the family; quite so!" she sneered. "It is new times when a head shepherd spends his time with the ladies of the house, and sits in their presence like a guest who is invited! We shall see; we shall see what comes of all this!" And she knew not which she hated the more, Alessandro or Ramona.

Since the day of the scene at the artichoke-field she had never spoken to Alessandro, and had avoided, so far as was possible, seeing him. At first Alessandro was sorry for this, and tried to be friendly with her. As soon as he felt assured that the incident had not hurt him at all in the esteem of Ramona he began to be sorry for Margarita. "A man should not be rude to any maiden," he thought; and he hated to remember how he had pushed Margarita from him, and snatched his hand away, when he had in the outset made no objection to her taking it. But Margarita's resentment was not to be appeased. She understood only too clearly how little Alessandro's gentle advances meant, and she would none of them. "Let him go to his Senorita," she said, bitterly, mocking the reverential tone in which she had overheard him pronounce the word. "She is fond enough of him, if only the fool had eyes to see it. She'll be ready to throw herself at his head before long, if this kind of thing keeps up. 'It is not well to speak thus freely of young men, Margarita!' Ha, ha! Little I

thought that day which way the wind set in my mistress's temper! I'll wager she reproves me no more, under this roof or any other! Curse her! What did she want of Alessandro, except to turn his head, and then bid him go his way!"

To do Margarita justice, she never once dreamed of the possibility of Ramona's wedding Alessandro. A clandestine affair, an intrigue of more or less intensity, such as she herself might have carried on with any one of the shepherds—this was the utmost stretch of Margarita's angry imaginations in regard to her young mistress's liking for Alessandro. There was not, in her way of looking at things, any impossibility of such a thing as that. But marriage! It might be questioned whether that idea would have been any more startling to the Senora herself than to Margarita.

Little had passed between Alessandro and Ramona which Margarita did not know. The girl was always like a sprite—here, there, everywhere, in an hour; and with eyes which, as her mother often told her, saw on all sides of her head. Now, fired by her new purpose, new passion, she moved swifter than ever, and saw and heard even more. There were few hours of any day when she did not know to a certainty where both Alessandro and Ramona were; and there had been few meetings between them which she had not either seen or surmised.

In the simple life of such a household as the Senora's, it was not strange that this was possible; nevertheless, it argued and involved untiring vigilance on Margarita's part. Even Felipe, who thought himself, from his vantage-point of observation on the veranda, and from his familiar relation with Ramona, well informed of most that happened, would have been astonished to hear all that Margarita could have told him. In the first days Ramona herself had guilelessly told him much—had told him how Alessandro, seeing her trying to sprinkle and bathe and keep alive the green ferns with which she had decorated the chapel for Father Salvador's coming, had said: "Oh, Senorita, they are dead! Do not take trouble with them! I will bring you fresh ones;" the next morning she had found, lying at the chapel door, a pile of such ferns as she had never before seen; tall ones, like ostrich plumes, six and eight feet high; and the feathery maiden-hair, and the gold fern, and the silver, twice as large as she ever had found them. The chapel was beautiful, like a conservatory, after she had arranged them in vases and around the high candlesticks.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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