

A DAUGHTER OF THE SIERRA

BY CHRISTIAN REID

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CHAPTER V—CONTINUED

"I know well that it is not, I have never yet asked hospitality in the Sierra and had it refused."

"There was a moment's pause; for Lloyd, who might have answered easily had he been ignorant of what special deed of ill requital was in her mind, felt all power of answer taken from him by his knowledge."

"This was the report which he made a little later to Armistead."

"If I were in your place," he added, "I would go back to Trafford and tell him to come and do his own contemptible work if he wanted it done."

"It is certainly necessary to choose between failure and carrying out the instructions of your employers. If I were foolish enough to go back to Trafford as you advise, do you know what would be the result?"

"I shouldn't care."

"Probably not," but the result would simply be that Trafford would send some other man to carry out his instructions with regard to this matter, and that I should lose a very valuable connection without doing any good to anybody."

"Except to yourself. A man does good to himself when he keeps his hands out of such work."

ward by one of these wild gorges, has tracked its rushing river to its source high in the everlasting hills, he finds himself in the vast Alpine world of mountains and valleys, of hanging woods and singing waters, of abounding freshness, greenness and delight, which forms the crest of the mighty Mother-Range. In these solitudes the homes of men are few: but now and then the hills open and on some uplifted plain are Arcadian breadths of productive fields, and cattle in pastoral idyl, set in the frame of the surrounding mountains.

It was such a picture that Lloyd and Armistead saw before them as they drew up their horses on a hillside, which they were descending along a winding trail; and, at a point where the wooded steep fell sharply away, looked out between the tall stems of giant trees, and through their great crowns of verdure, at a wide, cultivated valley, on either side of which bold, green hills rolled up; while a crystal stream, shining just now with sunset reflections, flowed through the levels. In the distance a cluster of buildings stood embowered in shade, and the whole scene breathed an air of exquisite tranquillity.

"This," said Lloyd, "is Las Joyas."

"Las Joyas?" Armistead replied. "I thought it was Santa Cruz."

"The Santa Cruz Mine is two or three leagues distant, among the hills," Lloyd answered. "This is the Calderon hacienda, which is older than the mine and bears a different name."

"It is a very prosperous-looking place," said Armistead, taking in with sweeping glance the far-stretching fields and the stone walls, miles in length, which enclosed them. "I suppose that it was here Trafford found the—lady of whom we are now in search."

"No doubt," Lloyd responded dryly, "since it was her father's property. He was what we would call a self-made man, coming from some small ranch among these mountains; but he must have had uncommon abilities, for he died owning a principality in land."

"If it all in the Sierra, it can't be very valuable."

or end. In the west, on a sky of pellucid aquamarine, a few clouds of pure, intense gold were floating; and above them the evening-star gleamed like a diamond. The crystal lilt of the atmosphere, with its inexpressible coolness and freshness, gave the sense of great elevation and every breath taken into the lungs was laden with the balmy odors of the surrounding forests.

After a ride of about a mile they reached the gates of the hacienda, from which a broad road led across the verdant expanse to where the white arches of the dwelling shone under tall trees. On this road their figures were of course marks for observation from the time they entered the gates; so when they finally drew up before the corridor that ran across the front of the long house they were not surprised to find Don Mariano awaiting them there, a wonderfully dignified and picturesque figure, with his bronzed eagle face and gray hair.

He greeted them with the courtesy which never fails any stranger at the door of a Mexican house, making them welcome with a hospitality which was not apparently lessened by the knowledge that they came on the errand of one who could only be regarded as an enemy. Then, while their horses were lead away, he bowed them through a great doorway—the massive, nail-studded doors of which might have served for a fortress,—into an inner court, surrounded by a corridor, or gallery, on which the apartments of the house opened.

From this it was evident that there had lately been an exodus. A group of chairs near a table were not only empty, but one lay overturned as if from the hasty flight of some one who had occupied it; and there were traces of feminine presence in a work-basket filled with materials for sewing, which had been left on the brick-paved floor of the corridor.

"No doubt," Armistead observed, "since it was her father's property. He was what we would call a self-made man, coming from some small ranch among these mountains; but he must have had uncommon abilities, for he died owning a principality in land."

"Man wants but little here below," I should judge, whether he wants that little gold or not," said Armistead as they rode on. "But, now that we have reached here, the question is how shall we be received?"

"Better than we deserve, I haven't the least doubt," Lloyd replied. "I spoke to Don Mariano frankly when we parted at Canelas, and told him that you had business to transact with Dona Beatriz on behalf of her husband."

"Her husband! Trafford was never divorced from her for at least fifteen years."

the lack of setting and adornment. As she approached the two men, who rose to their feet, she held out a slender, sunburnt hand, and gave the tips of her fingers for an instant to each.

"Scientific studies," she said, with a queenly gesture; and as they seated themselves again, she also sat down and regarded them with her dark, proud eyes. "We learn from Don Mariano, senora, that you wish to see my mother."

"Yes, senorita," Lloyd replied. "Mr. Armistead is charged with a matter of business to present to the consideration of the Senora your mother."

"She requests that he will present it to me, senor."

Lloyd glanced at Armistead, who, comprehending the words, shook his head.

"I never do business except with principals—if it can possibly be avoided," he replied. "Say to Dona Victoria that it is necessary I should deliver my communication to her mother, but that I will very willingly wait until it is quite convenient for Dona Beatriz to see me."

Victoria frowned slightly when this was repeated to her.

"It is not a question of convenience," she said, with a note of anger in her voice. "It is that I wish to spare my mother something which can not be so painful to her."

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FROM COUNTRY LANES

By Ellen E. McPartlin in Rosary Magazine

"In the dull city there's none that I know—not one," sighed old Dinny Garry, rocking to and fro in the sun-parlor of his fine new home on the fashionable avenue. He was lonesome for the farm he had recently sold, for the old friends, and the familiar sights and sounds of the country. Wistfully he gazed down the beautiful elm shaded boulevard, reviewing in thought the years of the past.

A poor immigrant, he had settled in the penurious farming community known to its inhabitants as Tyrone Valley; there, with Bridget his wife, he had toiled through many hard years, wrestling a living from the soil. Times had grown easier as the years went by, and the Garritys had been able to give their children a fine education, even sending them away to colleges in the city. The young people were bright and industrious, and had done well, but he had become widely scattered, too, slipping at last into homes of their own in far away places. When Bridget's death left Dinny alone, his children had begged him to sell the farm and make his home with some one of them, but he clung tenaciously to the place you held memories so dear to him. Then Anne, the only unmarried daughter, had given up the brilliant musical career that was open to her to keep her father company. She had tried to give up her ambitions and adapt herself to rural surroundings, but her father could see that she still yearned for a different life from the one she was living; and so, after a few years, he consented to sell and move to the city.

The fertile valley acres sold for a great price, and Dinny Garry was a rich man. He rewarded his daughter's loyalty by allowing her the choice of the home, and Anne had promptly chosen a beautiful home in the neighborhood where lived several of her old college acquaintances;

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