

She had, however, quickly retreated as he approached, ensconcing herself behind the high back of a large antique chair, on the cushion of which she knelt. "I regret to add also that she slumped his outstretched fingers a little sharply with her inevitable black fan as he still advanced."

"We are not in California. It is Washington. It is after midnight. I am a poor girl, and I have to lose—what you call—a character. You shall sit over there," she pointed to the sofa, "and I shall sit here," she rested her boyish head on the top of the chair, "and we shall talk, for I have to speak to you—Don Royal."

Thatcher took the seat indicated, contritely, humbly, submissively. Carmen's little heart was touched. But she still went on over the back of the chair.

"Don Royal," she said, emphasizing each word with her fan at him, "before I saw you—ever knew of you—I was a child. Yes, I was but a child! I was a bold, bad child—and I was what you call—a forger!"

"A what?" asked Thatcher, hesitating between a smile and a sigh.

"A forger!" continued Carmen, demurely. "I did myself write the names of other peoples—when Carmen was excited she lost the control of the English tongue; "I did write just to please myself—it was my ownie—that did make of it money? you understand, eh? Shall you not speak? Must I again hit you?"

"Go on," said Thatcher, laughing. "I did find out, when I came to you at the Mine, that I had forged against you the name of Micheltorena. I to the lawyer went, and found that it was so—of a verity—so! so! all the time. Look at me now, Don Royal—it is a forgery 'your stare at."

"Carmen!" he said, "I have to hit you again? I did overlook all the papers. I found the application—it was written by me. There, she tossed over the back of her chair an envelope to Thatcher. He opened it, and you repossessed yourself of it!"

"What is that?" he asked, "are—possess?"

"Why?" Thatcher hesitated. "You got possession of this paper—this innocent forgery—again?"

"O you think me a thief as well as a forger. Go away! Get up! Get out!"

"My dear girl," she said, "look at the paper! Will you! O, you silly!"

Thatcher looked at the paper. In paper, handwriting, age and stamp it was identical with the formal, clerical application of Garcia for the grant. The endorsement of Micheltorena was unquestionably genuine. But the application was made for Royal Thatcher. And his own signature was imitated to the life. "I had but one letter of yours was your name," said Carmen, "and it was the best poor me could do."

"Why, you blessed little goose and angel," said Thatcher, with the best, mixed metaphor of amatory genius, "don't you see—"

"Ah, you don't like it—it is not good!"

"My darling!"

"Hoosh! There is an old cat up stairs. And now I have here a character. Will you sit down? Is it of a necessity that you and down you should walk and awaken the whole house? There!" she had given him a vicious dab with her fan as he passed. He sat down.

"And you have not seen me for written to me for a year!"

"Carmen!"

"Sit down, you bold, bad boy. Don't you see it is of business that you and I talk down here, and it is of business that other people up stairs are thinking. Eh?"

"D—business!"

"See here, Carmen, my darling, tell me—I regret to say he had by this time got hold of the back of Carmen's chair—"

"Tell me, my own little girl—about—that Senator. You remember what you said to him?"

"O, the old man? O, that was business. And you say of business?"

"Carmen!"

"Don Royal!"

Although Miss Carmen had recourse to her fan frequently during this interview, the air must have been chilly. For a moment later, on his way down stairs, poor Harlowe, a sufferer from bronchitis, was attacked with a violent fit of coughing, which troubled him all the way down.

"Well," he said, as he entered the room, "I see you have found Mr. Thatcher and shown those papers. I trust you have, for you've certainly had time enough. I am sent by mother to dismiss you all to bed."

Carmen still in the arm-chair, covered with her mantle, did not speak.

"I suppose you are by this time lawyer enough to know," continued Harlowe, "that Miss De Haro's papers, though ingenious, are not legally available, unless—"

"I choose to make her a witness. Harlowe! you're a good fellow! I don't mind saying to you that these are papers I prefer that my wife should not use. We'll leave it for the present—"

Unfinished Business. They did. But one evening our hero brought Mrs. Royal Thatcher a paper containing a touching and beautiful tribute to the dead Senator.

"There, Carmen, love, read that. Don't you feel a little ashamed of your—your—your—loving?"

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