

"It was my mistake," he replied, smiling bitterly. "I've always been a builder of castles in the air."

Then he turned the little key by the mantelpiece, and the yellow bulbs shone about the room.

CHAPTER XII

THE SENOR RETURNS TO BAHIA

THOUGH Da Santo had appeared to be in his usual health at the little Christmas dinner, and afterwards had joined in the pastime of snapdragons with as much noise as either Ned Harrison or Vivia, he awoke on the following morning, to find himself feverish and full of dull aches.

This time Vivia had her way, and Dr. Smiley made his call. He took the distinguished Brazilian's temperature and felt his pulse. He asked several questions about the Senor's past life, and whether or not this was his first sojourn out of the tropics. The patient replied that he had been north before on several occasions. Then Smiley produced a gold-girdled fountain pen and wrote a prescription. After that he very affably lit one of the Brazilian's cigars, and chatted harmlessly for ten or fifteen minutes. He could not remain longer, though he found the Senor's company so immensely to his taste, for he was due at the hospital at eleven o'clock to cut out the appendix of an Archdeacon.

Smiley looked graver during his second visit, and brought his stethoscope into play.

"Your friend has a touch of pneumonia," he told Vivia. "I'm afraid this climate has proved too rigorous for him."

DA SANTO remained in bed a fortnight, though his condition was never really critical. Almost every afternoon during that time Beauchamp took Captain Morris for a long drive, thus giving the mother a chance to sit by the invalid's bedside. Sometimes she read to him; sometimes they talked; and sometimes he narrated scraps of his adventures; but always her hand was near his on the counterpane.

Ned Harrison made almost daily calls on his friend, and, after leaving the Beauchamps', usually looked in at the Robleys' on his way home. For a while Ned had worried about Da Santo—about his health, and the detected note of cynicism—and for a fleeting minute had caught the truth, wondered at it, and put it aside as improbable; but later his anxiety faded, for Da Santo seemed to have regained his old cheerfulness.

For his own part Ned was feeling remarkably high-spirited. His book was finished, and away trying its luck; a dignified magazine had published three of his sonnets in the one number; an editor had solicited a story from him; literary recognition was at his elbow—and might not the other dream come true!

ONE day he found Miss Robley alone.

"I have been reading your sonnets—again," she said; and he saw the magazine face down on the window-seat.

"Denton's have bought the serial rights of my novel," he told her, "and as soon as they are through with it I shall write a dedication and find a publisher."

She seemed as delighted as if she had written the story herself. She had always believed in it, and had read it,

piecemeal, from the very first chapter. They sat for a while in an intoxicating silence—she in the window and he in a low chair nearby.

"What about the dedication?" she asked, presently.

The man's heart gave an extra leap at that.

"To tell you the truth," he replied unsteadily, "I have already written it—and I have it in my pocket."

She turned her face away and looked out at the snow-buried garden.

"Please read it," she said.

He unfolded the single sheet with trembling fingers, and stumbled through the first line.

"I can't do it," he said, laughing uneasily. "What is it Mrs. Browning says, somewhere, about the chariot-wheels jarring in the gate?"—and he slipped the manuscript into her hand.

She read it through, with softly changing face. Then, for a moment—or was it a lifetime—her eyes met his in a frank, tender, and wondering regard. He dropped quickly on one knee and caught her hand in both of his.

"That is the dedication of—of everything that I may ever do—that is worth while," he whispered.

She did not withdraw her hand.

"Are you not afraid," she asked, softly, "lest the goddess you have built may prove to be of clay?"

A glad note of laughter sprang from him; but of that he was barely conscious.

"I did not build my goddess," he replied—"I found her;" and he pressed his lips to her hand.

SO the poet was garlanded; and later, as he drove home, he saw a sun more golden than the pavements of Heaven, wheel down to hills that were more purple than any inspiration of dream. For love's stage-settings never tarnish; like the northern springtide, he is a magician with thousand-year-old tricks, and yet his tent is ever full and his audience agape; though a million maidens give ear to his protestations, still are there a million more to listen, enraptured; and though scientists discover radium, at a billion dollars a pound, he is still the great alchemist, able, at a touch, to transmute any number of hearts—ay, even the whole world—into the rarest stuffs.

DA SANTO'S recovery was slow; but at last he was out of bed and able to walk about the house.

Smiley, after another examination, advised him to return to Brazil; for, only there, he said, could he completely throw off the cold. So he packed his boxes, kissed his mother and his sister, smiled manfully on his friends, and went away. From New York he wrote to Ned Harrison, enclosing a draft for the two hundred dollars that the poet had returned to him after the sale of the novel.

"As you're a lonely young devil," he wrote, "I suppose you'll be marrying the Right Girl one of these days—so here's a wedding present. But, seriously, my friend, may God bless you, and advance you in all your hopes; and if you make any objections about accepting this trifle, I'll turn you 'round and kick you next time we meet."

(Continued in December issue)

A SYNOPSIS of the foregoing chapters of "The Senor," and "Twas Fate, Dear," serial stories, now running in the magazine, will be found in the October number, which was the first issue after the amalgamation of THE NATIONAL MONTHLY AND CANADIAN HOME.