

know the house above is let out to lodgers. I occupy the first floor with my mother and sister, and this is my parlour. I do my work in that severe room that fronts the street; here is where I play. A man must have something else in life than mere business. I find it less harmful and expensive to have my pleasure here."

Thatcher had sunk moodily in the embracing arms of an easy chair. He was thinking deeply; he was fond of books too, and, like all men who have fared hard and led wandering lives, he knew the value of cultivated repose. Like all men who have been obliged to sleep under blankets and in the open air, he appreciated the luxuries of linen sheets and a frescoed roof. It is, by the way, only your sick city clerk or your dyspeptic clergyman, who fancy that they have found in the bad bread, fried steaks and frowzy flannels of mountain picnicking the true art of living. And it is a somewhat notable fact that your true mountaineer or your gentleman who has been obliged to honestly "rough it," do not, as a general thing, write books about its advantages or implore their fellow-mortals to come and share their solitude and their discomforts.

Thoroughly appreciating the taste and comfort of Harlowe's library, yet half envious of its owner, and half suspicious that his own earnest life for the past few years might have been different, Thatcher suddenly started from his seat and walked towards a parlour easel, where stood a picture. It was Carmen de Haro's first sketch of the furnace and the Mine.

"I see you are taken with that picture," said Harlowe, pausing with the champagne bottle in his hand. "You show your good taste. It's been much admired. Observe how splendidly that freight plays over the sleeping face of that figure, yet brings out by very contrast its almost death-like repose. Those rocks are powerfully handled; what a suggestion of mystery in those shadows! You know the painter?"

Thatcher murmured, "Miss De Haro," with a new and rather odd self-consciousness in speaking her name.

"Yes. And you know the story of the picture, of course?"

Thatcher thought he didn't. Well, no, in fact, he did not remember.

"Why, this recumbent figure was an old Spanish lover of hers, whom she believed to have been murdered there. It's a ghastly fancy, isn't it?"

Two things annoyed Thatcher: first, the epithet "lover," as applied to Concho by another man; second, that the picture belonged to him; and what the d—! did she mean by—

"Yes," he broke out finally, "but how did you get it?"

"O, I bought it of her. I've been a sort of patron of hers ever since I found out how she stood towards us. As she was quite alone here in Washington, my mother and sister have taken her up, and have been doing the social thing."

"How long since?" asked Thatcher.

"O, not long. The day she telegraphed you she came here to know what she could do for us, and when I said nothing could be done except to keep Congress off—why she went and did it. For she, and she alone, got that speech out of the Senator. But," he added, a little mischievously, "you seem to know very little about her?"

"No!—I—that is—I've been very busy lately," returned Thatcher, staring at the picture; "does she come here often?"

"Yes, lately, quite often—she was here this

evening with mother! was here, I think, when you came."

Thatcher looked intently at Harlowe. But that gentleman's face betrayed no confusion. Thatcher refilled his glass a little awkwardly, tossed off the liquor at a draught and rose to his feet.

"Come, old fellow, you're not going now. I shan't permit it," said Harlowe, laying his hand kindly on his client's shoulder. "You're out of sorts! Stay here with me to-night. Our accommodations are not large, but are elastic. I can bestow you comfortably until morning. Wait here a moment while I give the necessary orders."

Thatcher was not sorry to be left alone. In the last half hour he had become convinced that his love for Carmen had been in some way most dreadfully abused. While he was hard at work in California, she was being introduced in Washington society by parties with eligible brothers who bought her paintings. It is a relief to the truly jealous mind to indulge in plurals. Thatcher liked to think that she was already beset by hundreds of brothers.

He still kept staring at the picture. By-and-bye it faded away in part, and a very vivid recollection of the misty, midnight, moonlit walk he had once taken with her came back and refilled the canvas with its magic. He saw the ruined furnace; the dark, overhanging masses of rock, the trembling intricacies of foliage, and, above all, the flash of dark eyes under a mantilla at his shoulder. What a fool he had been! Had he not really been as senseless and stupid as this very Concho, lying here like a log. And she had loved that man. What a fool she must have thought him that evening! What a snob she must think him now!

He was startled by a slight rustling in the passage, that ceased almost as he turned. Thatcher looked towards the door of the outer office, as if half-expecting that the Lord Chancellor, like the commander in Don Juan, might have accepted his thoughtless invitation. He listened again; everything was still. He was conscious of feeling ill at ease and a trifle nervous. What a long time Harlowe took to make his preparations. He would look out in the hall. To do this it was necessary to turn up the gas. He did so, and in his confusion turned it out!

Where were the matches? He remembered that there was a something on the table that, in the irony of modern decorative taste, might hold ashes or matches, or anything of an unpicturesque character. He knocked something over, evidently the ink, something else—this time a champagne glass. Becoming reckless, and now groping at random in the ruins, he overturned the bronze Mercury on the centre table, and then sat down hopelessly in his chair. And then a pair of velvet fingers slid into his with the matches, and this audible, musical statement:

"Is it a match you are seeking? Here is one of them."

Thatcher—flushed, embarrassed, nervous—feeling the ridiculousness of saying "Thank you," to a dark Somebody—struck the match, beheld by its brief, uncertain glimmer, Carmen de Haro beside him, burned his fingers, coughed, dropped the match and was cast again into outer darkness.

"Let me try!"

Carmen struck a match, jumped briskly on the chair, lit the gas, jumped lightly down again and said: "You do like to sit in the dark—eh? So do I—sometimes, alone."

"Miss de Haro," said Thatcher, with sudden earnestness, advancing with outstretched hands, "believe me I am sincerely delighted—"