

and there he found a page that had to be entirely rewritten. The fire burned cheerfully; the cigar that Da Santo had given him was of a flavor above criticism; his friend had praised his work; his heart promised him other praise and a greater reward than fame—and yet he felt disturbed and unhappy. He could not keep his thoughts from his friend, and it worried him to picture the big fellow plodding cheerlessly through the snow.

"I believe he is hipped," he mused.

"Lately there's been a hint of the cynic in his talk. Perhaps he's feeling blue because he can't prove his innocence in that matter of the five thousand, or perhaps he has heard bad news of his Brazilian property."

IN the meantime Da Santo was plodding along, heedless of the road, with his chin sunk in his fur collar and his pipe cold between his teeth; and still the grey flakes circled down, soft and noiseless and all-obliterating.

Vivia looked at the library clock. It marked half-past seven.

"Evidently he has decided to stay all night with Ned. So we may as well have dinner," she said.

Dick was nothing loath. They had hardly tasted the soup when the maid hurried in.

"The Senor has just come in, and has gone right up to his room," she said. "He would like a hot drink, and thinks he'll not come down to dinner, Ma'am."

"Is he ill?" cried Vivia, pushing back her chair.

"He looks bad, Ma'am, and is soaking with the snow," replied the girl.

"I'll run up and see that he doesn't go to bed with his wet things on," said Vivia to Dick, "and you mix something hot."

"I'll do that," said Beauchamp. "Ann, bring me a lemon and some boiling water, will you?"

In ten minutes Da Santo was snug in bed, with a bottle of hot water at his trembling feet and a great glass of steaming punch under his nose.

Dick held the punch.

"Come now, down it like a man," he begged, with his most encouraging smile. "If it's a trifle warm it'll do you all the more good."

"It's hotter than—; it's too hot—it'll skin my insides," chattered the invalid.

"Just try a nip, there's a good chap," said Vivia, "or Dick will gulp it himself."

Da Santo grinned feebly and essayed a taste of the mixture. Then he sipped again. Then he took the glass in his own hand and drained it to the bottom; after that he leaned back among the pillows. "Ah, Dick, but you're the master-hand—for mixing—medicine," he sighed.

The stout young Englishman blushed at the compliment.

"Not half bad. Just let that soak through you for ten minutes, and I'll make another," he said.

"Nonsense," exclaimed Vivia. "You will have him quite-intoxicated."

"Well, isn't that the idea," retorted Dick. "In some book or other I once read that when a man is drunk he can have nothing else the matter with him."

"Instead of practicing from your wide research in medicine, you'll kindly go downstairs and telephone for Doctor Smiley," said Vivia.

Da Santo objected peevishly.

"I don't want a doctor! Hang it all, can't a man have a decent chill—in his sister's house—without—medical advice."

So the order was countermanded.

ON the following morning, after an uneasy night, Da Santo breakfasted in bed. Before noon he dressed, and though he assured Vivia and Beauchamp that he felt very well, his looks belied his words.

"I was tired out and a bit chilly," he explained. "I got off the road a few times and walked a mile or so out of my way. By another twelve hours I'll be feeling perfectly well again."

The storm had ceased during the morning, and now the snow-plows were at work along the streets. Captain Morris struggled over before noon with a parcel of Christmas gifts, and a story to the effect that not in the last thirty years had so much snow been on the ground for Christmas.

"I predicted last night's storm," he told them; and seemed immensely pleased with himself. The fact is, that the five thousand dollars had cheered him more than anything for years, and had, in some illogical way, convinced him that his son Herbert was the victim of a blackguardly plot. Had Da Santo brought him the story of his son's innocence minus the money I doubt if his mission would have resulted so charitably. But as it was, what better proof could be shown of any man's respectability than five thousand dollars?—unless, perhaps, it were thrice the amount.

The old man drew Da Santo aside. "I've been looking for a solution to that mystery," he whispered, "but I fear I'm no Sherlock Holmes. Personally, however, I'm quite convinced of my son's innocence."

"I'm glad of that, sir," said the young man.

"But we must keep our eyes open," said the Captain, "for it would be a fine thing to show the world its mistake." He blinked at Da Santo, and Da Santo smiled unpleasantly.

"One would hardly designate Westrock as the world," he said, "and I'm quite sure Herbert Morris does not do so. In fact, I have heard him say that so long as his mother never doubted him the rest of the place could believe what they damned well pleased."

"And what about me, sir?" cried the Captain. "Had he no care for my feelings, and no wish for my good opinion?"

"He felt quite sure, sir, that the return of the money would fully prove his honesty to you," replied Da Santo, coldly.

"Right! Right!" exclaimed the old gentleman; but he pondered over the conversation for some time, and felt that he had missed the core of it, after all.

"That Da Santo is a sly fellow—a clever fellow"—he mused, "and I'm glad Herbert has him for a friend instead of an enemy."

LATE in the afternoon, when twilight was gathering in the library, Da Santo closed the book he had been reading and lay back in his chair. He was still feeling sore and heavy from his experience of the night before. Vivia and Dick were both out, and the house was very quiet. He stared moodily at the fire. He was dimly conscious of some one passing along the hall and of the opening of the front door. Then he heard a voice that set his pulse in a flurry, and Mary Robley entered the library. He stood up. She came straight to him without speaking, and shyly held out her hand. He pressed it lightly.

"Am I forgiven?" she asked softly.

"Yes," he said.

"And will you think kindly of me—always?"

"I shall try not to think of you—always."

"Bert, I am more sorry than I can say. Why was I made to hurt you whom I admire so greatly."