

A CAST FOR A FORTUNE.

By CHRISTIAN REID, IN "LIPPINCOTT'S MAGAZINE."

CHAPTER III.

Seen first in the light of a sunset which filled the whole earth and sky with roseate flush, Guadalajara, with its slender towers and shining domes rising out of the wide, verdant plain, seemed to Derwent like a city of a dream,—as fair and white and graceful as if builded of marble and ivory instead of common bricks and mortar. "La Perla del Occidente," a friendly Mexican fellow-traveller told him it was called; and the poetical name suited its appearance well, as it lay steeped in sunset color, the spires of its cathedral rising against the pellucid sky, its Byzantine domes glowing with iridescent color, shaded avenues leading to its gates from all directions, and exquisite ranges of azure heights framing the beautiful expanse of the great valley which encompassed it.

"What a picture!" said Derwent to himself, as he craned his neck out of the window of the railway car to take it in more fully. "And what a country!" he added, as his glance swept from the pearly towers to the wide, luminous horizon, over miles of level plain covered with tender green and set with gleaming villages. "As beautiful as Europe, as picturesque and romantic as the East. I hadn't the faintest idea of what I should find here!" he ended, prosaically, as the train, slackening its speed, passed through a gap in the city walls and made its slow way to the station.

"You were inquiring for the Cosmopolita," said the conductor, as it finally stopped. "Here is the porter." And he pointed to a tall, slender Mexican, wearing a short, braided jacket, and the name of the hotel in large letters around the crown of his sombrero.

This dignified person took Derwent's valise, invited him by a gesture to follow, and threaded his way easily through the crowd toward the place of exit. Declining a carriage,—for the exquisite evening air made walking a delight,—Derwent followed his guide along a street which led past a beautiful old church with an elaborately-sculptured front of limestone, through a lovely plaza green with trees and fragrant with roses and violets, where a military band was playing and numbers of people were sitting and walking, up a crowded thoroughfare lined with handsome buildings, and finally into the courtyard of a large Spanish house, where at the head of the broad stone steps he was met by an English-speaking land lord, who relieved him of all further necessity to think for himself.

An hour later he was seated at one of the small tables placed invitingly around the gallery which overlooked the large inner patio, or court, with Senor Fernandez opposite him. The scene was altogether charming to eyes fresh from a more northern latitude. The polished tiles that formed the floor of the wide open space stretched to a stone balustrade. The scheme is for tropical plants were set in the best insurance through the great arches of the gallery, to puller the dark, and forth over the soft as a

st. Derwent to

but when you find one who is thoroughly Americanized it is generally safe to watch him."

This warning from a shrewd practical man had struck Derwent as rather an amusing commentary on the higher civilization which at another moment the speaker would have been ready enough to arrogate to himself and his people. But he remembered it when Morell said to him, "You'll find Fernandez speaks English perfectly—he lived sixteen years in California—and is thoroughly conversant with American habits. He's a capital partner for me. He manages the Mexicans and gets the mines, while I introduce them to the notice of inquiring investors like yourself. You'll like him, I know."

Derwent was doubtful on this point, and he still remained doubtful when he met Senor Fernandez. Yet there could be no question of that gentleman's agreeable qualities. As they dined together he proved a very pleasant companion,—waived the discussion of business, talked of the attractions of Guadalajara, lightly sketched its history, and deftly changed his tone when he found that Derwent had scant sympathy for the aggressions and tyrannies of the so-called "liberal" government. Senor Fernandez, it appeared, was one of those gentlemen who always find it convenient to uphold the existing order of things. He spoke familiarly of ministers and governors, shrugged his shoulders when Derwent denounced the wholesale robbery and persecution of the Church, was evidently too highly civilized to possess either religion or patriotism, and thought that the golden day of promise would dawn for Mexico when, giving up her "antiquated customs," she would be recreated according to the admirable pattern of her neighbor across the Rio Grande. He was somewhat astonished by Derwent's reply to this.

"When that day comes if it ever does," said the young man, "your country will cease to be worth caring for. She will lose her individuality and become a feeble copy of a civilization altogether alien to that which has made her what she is. All that renders her most attractive to those who have any cultured appreciation will disappear,—the foreign charm of her beautiful old cities, the exquisite manners of her people, the decorum of her women, the respectful obedience of her children, the grace of her picturesque, unhurried life: but, more than that, the things in the civilization she desires to imitate. There can be no doubt that 'sharp' American practices will be among the first improvements that American admirers will import into Mexico."

Senor Fernandez smiled, but it was in a somewhat disconcerted manner, as he bowed over his glass of claret. "I am delighted to find that you have so high an opinion of Mexico," he said. "Most Americans think that we have much to learn, and that we cannot do better than copy their more fortunate country."

"Most Americans—like their English kinsmen—are too narrow-minded to understand that patent Anglo-Saxon methods of civilization don't suit every people," said Derwent. "God knows, they had better reform themselves before setting out to reform the world. But you take nothing more, senor: may I offer you a cigar?"

It was accepted and lighted, the table cleared, and then the two men looked each other with a glance of mutual inter-

est. "We've got to business now," Derwent said. "You have heard from Morell, and you know that I am here to extract from you what you and he are offering me. Now we go to work."

"If you like," the other will take the dil-

the Buena

Oh, yes," said Senor Fernandez, in

realized from the Buena Esperanza; but now the water is troublesome, the cars have grown rebellious, the present owners are too poor to handle the property, and so they sell. It is a wonderful mine to go for such a price, Mr. Derwent. You will say that when you see it."

"If so, the price will be promptly paid," said Derwent. "But what is that Morell was telling me about a difference of opinion among the owners with regard to the sale?"

"Oh, there is one of them who is dissatisfied,—thinks the mine ought to bring more, doesn't want to sell at all in fact, and regrets having joined in the bond. But the others brought pressure to bear on him and made him sign: so you need not fear about the title."

This was explicit enough, and sufficiently plausible; but the same instinct of distrust which he had been conscious of at first made Derwent say to himself that there was something in the transaction which might not perhaps reflect credit upon Senor Fernandez if known. It plainly did not concern him, however, to take up the vaguely-suspected grievance of an unknown Mexican. That must be settled between the parties concerned. All that he had to do was to look at the mine, and, if assured of its value, pay the price asked, in case a good title could be given him. It was settled that they would start the next morning, and, since nothing could be determined until this journey was made, Derwent, who heard seductive strains of music near by, proposed that they should finish their cigars in the open air.

"We will go to the plaza," said Senor Fernandez. "Every one is there to-night. You will see some very pretty women. Guadalajara is famous for its beauty."

"There are very pretty women in Mexico," observed the young man. "In fact, I think that one face which I saw in the Alameda last Sunday morning is the most beautiful I ever saw anywhere."

"Oh Mexico, being the capital gathers its beauty from all parts of the country, and of course it has more fashion, more style," replied Fernandez. "But it is hard to surpass Guadalajara for lovely girls. Come and judge for yourself."

They passed out into the soft, tropic night. The plaza from which the music proceeded was only a block distant, and when they gained it Derwent thought that he had seen nothing more handsome and imposing even in the city of Mexico than the surroundings of the beautiful garden which occupied the center of the large hollow square, the old Plaza de Armas, that was always the scene of tumult and fighting whenever revolution arose or war invaded the city. To-night, however, it was difficult to imagine that it had ever witnessed such scenes. In the middle of the garden rose a light Moorish pavilion, from which a military band was pouring forth music. Orange-trees that filled the air with the fragrance of their blossoms lined a broad walk surrounding the parterres of turf and flowers and fountains, where between opposite rows of well filled benches two streams of promenaders were walking, all the ladies in one direction, all the men in another, thus passing and repassing each other as often as the circuit of the square was made. Electric lights shed their white radiance over the scene, people were coming and going constantly, joining the ranks or dropping out of them, sitting down to talk with their friends, or passing from group to group. There was animated movement, but not the least disorder, for the perfect manners of the people were never more fully displayed than in these large open-air gatherings, where the same courtesy and decorum reign which would distinguish a private company in the most exclusive drawing room.

Derwent sat down with his companion on the first bench where vacant seats presented themselves, and looked at the setting of this attractive scene. One side of the square was faced by the long and handsome front of the Governor's palace, the other by the great mass of the cathedral building, a picturesque mixture of Byzantine and Greek architecture with its tall towers rising against the deep violet sky. The remaining two sides were lined by brilliantly-lighted arcades, and the whole effect was of a long-established order and

Oh, yes," said Senor Fernandez, in

importance for more than two hundred years. It is only second in importance to Mexico itself. But observe whether or not I have spoken to you correctly of the beauty of our ladies."

"I have already seen a number of pretty faces," answered Derwent. "Guadalajara is evidently 'La Perla del Occidente' in many respects. But—by Jove! it can't be possible!—yes, it is—Well, this is certainly extraordinary!"

As he uttered these quick, disjointed remarks, his companion turned, stared at him for an instant, and then, following the direction of his glance, saw in the line of promenaders a tall, handsome man of distinguished bearing advancing with a beautiful girl on his arm. She walked with a step as firm, a carriage as stately, as his own, and they were both of appearance so striking that they would have attracted attention anywhere.

"Oh! you know Don Maurizio, then!" said Fernandez, in a tone of surprise, which, had Derwent observed, would have struck him as not being very well pleased. But he did not observe at all. He was looking at the lovely face of the girl passing by, as he answered, absently,—

"Don—who? No, I don't know the man at all. But that is the same lady I saw in the Alameda in Mexico last Sunday. How curious that she should be here!"

"No more curious than that you are here yourself," answered the other, smiling. "Those people have a large hacienda near this place, and Don Maurizio has evidently come in to meet his daughter on her return from Mexico."

"But Morell told me that her father was an Irishman."

"Well, so he is. Do you think he looks like a Mexican? He is Don Maurizio Ormond, who married the great Cardella heiress. She had a magnificent estate, but he has doubled or trebled it since it came into his hands. He has remarkable business capabilities; but then he had such opportunities as do not come to many men. His daughter is very handsome, and a greater heiress than her mother. It is said that her father will look at no one less than a prince for her."

"But princes do not exist in Mexico." "No; but we have only a few great landed aristocrats to represent them. But Don Maurizio, it is said, will go to the Old World for an alliance for his daughter. He comes, I believe, of a noble family himself: and as for the Cardellas, everybody knows that they are of pure Spanish descent and have held their lands by royal grant since the Conquest."

"The matrimonial prospects of the Senorita Ormond seem to be a good deal canvassed," said Derwent. "Morell told me, when I saw her in the Alameda, that she would probably marry her cousin, the representative of her mother's family, in order to restore the land to the name."

"The Cardellas are, of course, anxious for that; but it is said that Don Maurizio does not favor the idea. How Don Zarifa stands herself I have never heard, but she will certainly have a word to say in the matter, or report does her injustice."

"She has too noble and too strong a face not to have a word—the most important word—to say," Derwent remarked, positively. "That girl will never allow her hand to be given away for considerations of family or ambition.—But they do not return, Surely they have grown tired of walking very soon."

"Probably they were only taking a turn around the plaza while looking for seats," said Fernandez. "Shall we walk and look for them?"

"By all means," answered Derwent, rising lightly. As with his companion he fell into place in the circling masculine throng, he did not think of the difference between the first time he had seen Dona Zarifa, and the present. The first time he had been indifferent whether he saw her again or not, while now he was conscious of a strong desire to look once more on a face that fascinated him, like a rare and exquisite picture.

But, although he made several circuits of the plaza, and scanned as closely as compatible with good manners the row of faces on each side of the promenade, he had no further glimpse of Don Maurizio or his daughter.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

There is a steady increase of the popularity of English novels in Germany.