

THE STORY OF A MINE.

CHAPTER IX.

WHAT THE FAIR HAD TO DO ABOUT IT.



occupied finally in his despair. Intended originally as the palace of some inebriate California Aladdin, it usually ended as a lodging house in which some helpless widow or hopeless spinster managed to combine respectability with the hard task of bread-getting. Thatcher's landlady was one of the former class. She had unfortunately survived not only her husband but his property, and, living in some deserted chamber, had, after the fashion of the Italian nobility, let out the rest of the ruin. A tendency to dwell upon these facts gave her conversation a peculiar significance upon the first of each month. Thatcher had noticed this with the sensitiveness of an impoverished gentleman.

But when, a few days after her lodger's sudden disappearance, a note came from him containing a draft in noble excess of all arrears and charges, the widow's heart was lifted, and the rock smitten with the golden wand gushed beneficence that shone in a new gown for the widow and a new suit for "Johnny," her son, a new cloak in the hall, better service to the lodger, and, let us be thankful, a kinder consideration for the poor little black-eyed painter from Monterey, then dreadfully behind in her room rent. For, to tell the truth, the call upon Miss De Haro's scant purse by her uncle had lately been frequent, perjury having declined in the Monterey market through excessive and injudicious supply, until the line of demarcation between it and absolute verity was so badly drawn that Victor Garcia had trembled lest the night would tell the truth and save his soul, since the devil was in the market.

Miss De Haro, the landlady, could not resist the desire to acquaint Carmen De Haro with her good fortune. "He was always a friend of yours, my dear, and I know him to be a gentleman that would never let a poor widow suffer; and so what he says about you?" Here she produced Thatcher's note and read: "Tell my little neighbor that I shall come back soon to carry her and her sketching tools off by force, and I shall not let her return until she has caught the Black Mountain and the red rocks she used to talk about, and put the 'Blue Mass' mill in the foreground of the picture I shall order."

What! this little one? Surely, Carmen, then could not blush at this, the first grand offer. Holy Virgin! is it of a necessity that she should stand the wrong end of the brush in the mouth, and then drop in to the light? Or was it taught too by the good Michelangelo, the content to smile in that boyish fashion to the side of the other antiquarian from their hands the massive stone wheels? Here of this we would know, O Carmen, a small number of luminous spots, little ones, even in this own undimmed vision, that I may commend this and thy rare illustration to my own fair country women.

Also, neither the present chronicler nor Miss De Haro got any further information from the prudent Carmen, and must faintly speculate upon certain facts that were already known.

Miss Carmen's little room was opposite to Thatcher's, and once or twice, the doors being open, Thatcher had a glimpse across the passage of a black-haired and a sturdy, boyish little figure in a green blue apron, perched on a stool before an easel, and on this other hand, Carmen had often been conscious of the tones of a tobacco pipe penetrating her deserted seclusion, and had seen across the passage, vaguely enveloped in the same nicotine cloud, an American Olympian, in a rocking chair, with his feet on the mantel shelf. They had once or twice met on the staircase, on which occasion Thatcher had greeted her with a word or two of respectful yet half-humorous courtesy—a courtesy which never really offends a true woman, although it often plagues her self-plomb by the slight assumption of superiority in the humorist. A woman is quick to recognize the fact that the great and more dangerous passions are always serious, and may be exercised in self-respect she is often induced to try if there be not somewhere under the skin of this laughing Mercurio the flesh and blood of a Romeo. Thatcher was by nature a defender and protector; weakness and weakness alone, stirred the depths of his tenderness—often, I fear, only through its half-humorous aspects—and on this plane he was pleased to place women and children. I mention this fact for the benefit of the more youthful members of my species, and am satisfied that an unconditional surrender and the complete laying down at the foot of beauty of all strong masculinity is a cheap Gallicism that is untranslatable to most women worthy the winning. For a woman must always look up to the man she truly loves—even if she has to go down on her knees to do it.

Only the masculine reader will infer from this that Carmen was in love with Thatcher; the more critical and analytical feminine eye will see nothing herein that might not have happened consistently with friendship. For Thatcher was no sentimentalist; he had hardly paid a compliment to the girl—even in the unspoken but most delicate form of attention. There were days when his room door was closed; there were days days succeeding those blanks when he met her as frankly and naturally as if he had seen her yesterday. Indeed, on those days following his flight the simple-minded Carmen, being aware—heaven

knows how—that he had not opened his door during that period, and fearing sickness, sudden death, or perhaps suicide, by her appeals to the landlady, assisted unwittingly in discovering his flight and defection. As she was for a few moments as indignant as Mrs. Plodgett, it is evident that she had but little sympathy with the delinquent. And besides, hitherto she had known only Concho, her earliest friend, and was true to his memory, as against all Americans, when she firmly believed to be his murderers.

So she dismissed the offer and the man from her mind, and went back to her painting—a fancy portrait of the good Padre Junipero Serra, a great missionary, who, happily for the integrity of his bones and character, died some hundred years before the Americans took possession of California. The picture was fair but unsalable, and she began to think seriously of sign painting, which was then much more popular and marketable. An unfinished head of San Juan de Bantista, artificially framed in clouds, she disposed of to a prominent druggist for \$50, where it did good service as exhibiting the effect of four bottles of "Jones's Freckle Eradicator," and in a pleasant and unobtrusive way revived the memory of the saint. Still, she felt weary and was growing despondent, and had longing for the good sisters and the blameless lethargy of conventual life, and then—

He came!

But not as the prince should come on a white charger, to carry away the cruelly-abused and enchanted damsel. He was unburdened, he was bearded like "the pard," he was a little careless as to his dress and preoccupied in his ways. But his mouth and eyes were the same, and when he repeated in his old frank, half-mischievous way the invitation of his letter, poor little Carmen could only hesitate and blush.

The news of his coming and sent the color to his face. Your gentleman born is always as modest as a woman. He ran down stairs and seizing the widowed Plodgett, said hastily: "You're just killing yourself here. Take a change. Come down to Monterey for a day or two with me and bring Miss De Haro with you for company."

The old lady recognized the situation. Thatcher was now a man of vast possibilities. In all maternal daughters of Eve there is the slightest bit of the chaperone and match maker. It is the last way of reviving the past.

She consented and Carmen De Haro could not well refuse. The ladies found the "Blue Mass" mills very much as Thatcher had previously delivered it to them, "a trifle rough and mannish." But he made over to them the one tenement reserved for himself and slept with his men, or more likely under the trees. At first Mrs. Plodgett missed gas and running water, and these several conveniences of civilization, among which I fear may be mentioned sheets and pillow cases; but the balsam of the mountain air soothed her neuralgia and her temper. As for Carmen, she rioted in the unlimited license of her absolute freedom from conventional restraint and the tutelage of her child-like impulses. She secured as lodges far and wide about she dipped into dark caverns and scrambled over the stony patches of charcoal, and came back laden with the spoils of Western Alamosa, mammoth berries and laurel. But she would not make a sketch of the "Blue Mass" company's mills on a Marseilles projection—something that could be afterwards like graphed or etched, with the mills turning out tons of quillsilver through the energetic of a happy and picturesque assemblage of miners—even to please her patrons, Don Royal Thatcher. On the contrary, she made a study of the ruins of the crumbled and decayed red rock furnace, with the black mountain above it, and the light of a dying camp fire shining upon it, and the dull red excavations in the ledge. But even this did not satisfy her until she had made some alterations, and when she finally brought her finished study to Don Royal, she looked at him a little defiantly. Thatcher admired honestly, and then criticized a little humorously and dishonestly. "But couldn't you, for a consideration, put up a sign board on that rock with the inscription, 'Road to the Blue Mass company's new mills to the right,' and combine business with art? That's the fault of you geniuses. But what's this blanketed figure doing here, lying before the furnace? You never saw one of my miners there—and a Mexican, too, by his serape."

"That," quoth Miss Carmen, coolly, "was put in to fill up the foreground—I wanted something there to balance the picture." "But," continued Thatcher, dropping into unconscious admiration again, "it's drawn to the life. Tell me, Miss De Haro, before I ask the aid and counsel of Mrs. Plodgett, who's my hated rival, and your lay figure and model?" "Oh," said Carmen, with a little sigh, "it's only poor Concho." "And where is Concho?" (a little impatiently.) "He's dead, Don Royal." "Dead?" "Of a verity—very dead—murdered by your countrymen." "I see—and you know him?" "He was my friend."

"Oh!" "Truly?" "But," (wickedly), "isn't this a rather ghastly advertisement—outside of an illustrated newspaper—of my property?" "Ghastly, Don Royal. Look you, he sleeps." "Ay" (in Spanish), "as the dead."

Carmen (crossing herself hastily), "After the fashion of the dead."

They were both feeling uncomfortable. Carmen was shivering. But, being a woman, and careful, she recovered her head first. "It is study for myself, Don Royal; I shall make you another."

And she slipped away, as she thought, out of the subject and his presence.

But she was mistaken; in the evening he renewed the conversation. Carmen began to fence, not from cowardice or deceit, as the

Since the quakes there are some persons who don't want the earth so much as they did.—Boston Transcript.

masculine reader would readily infer, but from some wonderful feminine instinct that told her to be cautious. But he got from her the fact, to him before unknown, that she was the niece of his antagonist, and, being a gentleman, so rebuffed his attentions and his courtesy that Mrs. Plodgett made up her mind that it was a foregone conclusion, and seriously reflected as to what she should wear on the momentous occasion. But that night poor Carmen curled herself to sleep, resolving that she would hereafter cast aside her wicked uncle for this good-hearted American, yet never once connected her innocent penmanship with the deadly feud between them. Women—the best of them—are strong as to collateral facts, swift of deduction, but vague as children are to the exact statement or recognition of premises. It is hardly necessary to say that Carmen had never thought of connecting any act of hers with the claims of her uncle, and the circumstance of the signature she had totally forgotten.

The masculine reader will now understand Carmen's confusion and blushes, and believe himself an ass to have thought them a confession of original affection. The feminine reader will, by this time, become satisfied that the deceitful mix's sole idea was to gain the affections of Thatcher. And really I don't know who is right.

Nevertheless, she painted a sketch for Thatcher—which now adorns the company's office in San Francisco, in which the property is laid out in pleasing geometrical lines, and the rosy promise of the future instilled in every touch of the brush. Then, having earned her "wage," as she believed, she became somewhat cold and shy to Thatcher. Whereat that gentleman rebuffed his attentions, seeing only in her presence a certain surprise, which concerned her more than himself. The niece of his enemy meant nothing more to him than an interesting girl—to be protected always—to be feared, never. But even suspicion may be insidiously placed in noble minds.

Miss De Haro, thus early estopped of matchmaking, of course put the blame on her own sex, and went over to the stronger side—the man's.

"It's a great pity girls should be so curious," she said, sotto voce, to Thatcher, when Carmen was in one of her sullen moods. "Yet I suppose it's in her blood. Then Spaniards are always revengeful—like the Lyolians."

That her honesty looked his surprise. "Why, don't you see, she's thinking how all these lands might have been her uncle's but for you. And instead of trying to be sweet and—here she stopped to cough."

"Good God!" said Thatcher, in great concern, "I never thought of that." He stopped for a moment, and then added with decision, "I can't believe it, it isn't like her."

Mrs. P. was piqued. She walked away, delivering, however, this Partisan arrow: "Well, I hope *both* nothing worse."

Thatcher chuckled, then felt uneasy. When he next met Carmen she found his gray eyes fixed on hers with a curious, half-inquisitorial look she had never noticed before. This only added fuel to the fire. Forgetting the relations of host and guest, she was absolutely rude. Thatcher was quiet, but watchful, and the Plodgett tried to get a glimpse of showing a moonlight view of the "Lost Chance Hill," discovered Carmen out of an act, as far as she dared, of civility.

"What's the matter, Miss De Haro, have I offended you?"

Miss Carmen was not aware that anything was the matter. If Don Royal pretended old friends, whose loyalty of course he knew, and who were *above* speaking ill against a gentleman to his adversary—oh, Carmen, feel if he preferred their company to *intimate* friends—why—the masculine reader will observe this tremendous climax and tremble—why she didn't know why he should blame her.

"They turned and faced each other. The conditions for a perfect misunderstanding could not have been better arranged between two people. Thatcher was a masculine reasoner, Carmen a feminine feeler—if I may be pardoned the expression, Thatcher wanted to get at certain facts and argue therefrom. Carmen wanted to get at certain feelings and then fit the facts to them."

"But I am not blaming you, Miss Carmen," he said gravely. "It was stupid in me to confront you here with the property claimed by your uncle and occupied by me, but it was a mistake—not" he added hastily, "it was not a mistake. You know it and I didn't. You overlooked it before you came, and I was too glad to overlook it after you were here."

"Of course," said Carmen pettishly, "I am the only one to be blamed. It's like you men (Men). She was just fifteen, and uttered this awful resume of experience just as if it hadn't been taught to her in her cradle."

Feminine generalities always stagger a man. Thatcher said nothing. Carmen became more enraged.

"Why did you want to take Uncle Victor's property, then?" she asked triumphantly.

"I don't know that it is your uncle's property."

"You—don't—know! Have you seen the application with Governor Micheltoresca's indorsement? Have you heard the witness?" she said passionately.

"Signatures may be forged and witnesses lie," said Thatcher quietly.

"What is it you call 'forged'?"

Thatcher instantly recalled the fact that the Spanish language held no synonym for "forgery." The act was apparently an invention of el Diablo Americano. So he said, with a slight smile in his kindly eye:

"Anybody wicked enough and dexterous enough can imitate another's handwriting. When this is used to benefit fraud we call it 'forgery.' I beg your pardon—Miss De Haro, Miss Carmen—what is the matter?"

She had suddenly lapsed against a tree, quite helpless, nervous, and with staring eyes fixed on his. As yet an embryo woman, inexperienced and ignorant, the sex's instinct was potential; she had in one plunge fathomed all that his reason had been years groping for.

Thatcher saw only that she was pained, that she was helpless; that was enough. "It is possible that your uncle may have been deceived," he began; "many honest men have been fooled by clever but deceitful tricksters, men and women."

"Stop! Madre de Dios! Will you stop?" Thatcher for an instant recoiled from the flashing eyes and white face of the little figure that had, with menacing and clenched baby fingers, strode to his side. He stopped. "Where is this application—this forgery?" she asked. "Show it to me!"

Thatcher felt relieved, and smiled the superior smile of our sex over feminine ignorance. "You could hardly expect me to be trusted with your uncle's vouchers. His papers of course are in the hands of his counsel."

"And when can I leave this place?" she asked passionately.

Thatcher saw only that she was pained, that she was helpless; that was enough. "It is possible that your uncle may have been deceived," he began; "many honest men have been fooled by clever but deceitful tricksters, men and women."



"If you cannot my wishes you will stay, if only long enough to forgive me. But if I have offended you unknowingly, and you are implacable—"

"I can go tomorrow at sunrise if I like." "As you will," returned Thatcher gravely. "Gracias, Senor."

They walked slowly back to the house, Thatcher with a masculine sense of being unreasonably afflicted, Carmen with a woman's instinct of being hopelessly crushed. No word was spoken until they reached the door. Then Carmen suddenly, in her old, impulsive way, and in a child-like treble, sang out merrily: "Good night, O Don Royal, and pleasant dreams. Hasta mañana."

Thatcher stood dumb and astounded at this capricious girl. She saw his mystification instantly. "It is for the old man!" she whispered, jerking her thumb over her shoulder in the direction of the sleeping Mrs. P. "Good night—go!"

He went to give orders for a peon to attend the ladies and their equipage the next day. He went to find Miss De Haro gone, with her escort, towards Monterey. And without the Plodgett.

He could not conceal his surprise from the latter lady. She left alone and not altogether satisfactorily, until the wiles of our sex was understood. But not so much that she could not say to Thatcher, "I told you so—good night—go!"

"All! De—n! what can she tell him?" roared Thatcher, stamp out of his self-control.

"Nothing, I hope, but she should not," said Mrs. P., and hastily retired.

She was right. Miss Carmen posted to Monterey, running her horse nearly off its legs to do it, and then sent back her beast and escort, saying she would repair Mrs. Plodgett by steamer at San Francisco. Then she went boldly to the law office of Saponaceous Wood, district attorney and whitest solicitor of her uncle.

With the majority of masculine Monterey Miss Carmen was known and respectfully addressed, despite the infelix reputation of her kinship. Mr. Wood was glad to see her, and awkwardly gallant. Miss Carmen was cool and business-like, she had come from her uncle to "regard" the papers in the "Red Rock Ranch" case. They were instantly produced. Carmen turned to the application for the grant. Her chest paled slightly. With her clear memory and wonderful fidelity of perception she could not be mistaken. The signature of Micheltoresca was in her own hand-writing!

"Yet she looked up to the lawyer with a smile: 'May I take these papers for an hour to my uncle?'"

Even an older and better man than the district attorney could not have resisted those drooping lids and that gentle voice.

"Certainly."

"I will return them in an hour."

She was as good as her word, and within the hour dropped the papers and a little courtesy to her uncle's legal advocate, and that night took the steamer to San Francisco.

The next morning Victor Garcia, a little the worse for the previous night's dissipation, roused into Wood's office. "I have letters for my niece Carmen. She is with the enemy," he said thickly. "Look you at this."

It was an anonymous letter in Mrs. Plodgett's own awkward hand, advising him of the fact that his niece was bought by the enemy, and cautioning him against her.

"Impossible," said the lawyer. "It was only last week she sent these \$50."

Victor blushed, even though his ensanguined cheeks, and made an impatient gesture with his hand.

"Besides," added the lawyer coolly, "she has been here to examine the papers at my request, and returned them yesterday."

Victor gasped—"And you—you—gave them to her?"

"Of course!"

"All! Even the application and the signature?"

"Certainly—you sent her."

Mr. Wood reproduced the file. Garcia ran over it with trembling fingers until at last he clutched the fateful document. Not content with opening it and glancing at its text and signature, he took it to the window.

"It is the same," he muttered with a sigh of relief.

"Of course it is," said Mr. Wood sharply. "The papers are all there. You're a fool, Victor Garcia!"

And so he was. And for the matter of that, so was Mr. Saponaceous Wood, of course.

Meanwhile Miss De Haro returned to San Francisco and resumed her work. A day or two later she was joined by her landlady. Mrs. P. has too large a nature to permit an anonymous letter, written by her own hand, to stand between her and her demerit to her little lodger. So she cuddled her and flattered her and depicted in slightly exaggerated colors the grief of Don Royal at her sudden departure. All of which Miss Carmen received in a demure, kitten-like way, but still kept quietly at her work. In due time Don Royal's order was completed; still she had leisure and inclination enough to add certain touches to her ghastly sketch of the crumbling furnace.

Nevertheless, as Don Royal did not return, through excess of business, Mrs. Plodgett turned an honest penny by letting his room, temporarily, to two quiet Mexicans, who, but for a beastly habit of cigar smoking which tainted the whole house, were fair enough lodgers. If they failed in making the acquaintance of their fair countrywoman, Miss De Haro, it was through that lady's pre-occupation in her own work, and not through their ostentatious endeavors.

"Miss De Haro is peculiar," explained the polite Mrs. Plodgett to her guests; "she makes no acquaintances, which I consider bad for her business. If it had not been for me, she would not have known Royal Thatcher, the great quicksilver miner—and had his order for a picture of his mine!"

The two foreign gentlemen exchanged glances. One said, "Ah, God! this is bad," and the other, "It is not possible," and then, when the landlady's back was turned, introduced themselves with a skeleton key into the then vacant bed room and studio of their fair countrywoman, who was absent sketching.

"Thou observest," said Mr. Pedro, refugee, to Miguel, ex-ecclesiastic, "that this Americano is all powerful, and that this Victor, drunkard as he is, is right in his suspicions."

"Of a verity, yes," replied Miguel, "thou dost remember it was Jovita Castro, who, fur her Americano lover, betrayed the Sobriete chain. It is only with us, my Pedro, that the Mexican spirit, the real God and liberty, yes lives!"

They shook hands nobly and with sentimental fervor, and then went to work, i. e., the unmaking over the trunks, drawers and portmanteaus of the poor little painter, Carmen De Haro, and even ripped up the mattress of her virginal cot. But they found not what they sought.

"What is that yonder on the easel, covered with a cloth?" said Miguel; "it is a trick of these artists to put their valuables together."

Pedro strode to the easel and tore away the muslin curtain that veiled it; then entered a studio that appalled his comrade and brought him to his side.

"In the name of God!" said Miguel, hastily, "are you trying to alarm the house?"

"The easel-painter was resembling like a child. 'Look! he said humbly, look! do you see it is the hand of God?' and fainted on the floor."

Miguel looked. It was Carmen's partly finished sketch of the deserted furnace. The figure of Concho, thrown out strongly by the camp fire, occupied the left foreground. But to balance her picture she had evidently been obliged to introduce another—the face and figure of Pedro, on all fours, creeping toward the sleeping man.

AUSTIN CORBIN.

The New President of the Philadelphia and Reading Road.

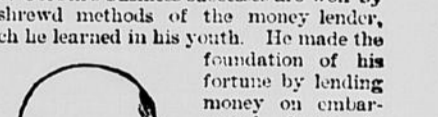
The coming man in the railroad world appears now to be Austin Corbin, the newly elected president of the Philadelphia and Reading railroad. That road has been before the public up and down now for a dozen years as one whose affairs seemed everlastingly entangled. Mr. Corbin saved the Long Island railroad when it was in the hands of a receiver overwhelmed with debt, and in his own words, compelled only of "two streaks of rust and a right of way." Under his management it changed from this condition in eight months' time to a road in good repair and paying expenses.

Mr. Corbin's business successes are won by the shrewd methods of the money lender, which he learned in his youth. He made the foundation of his fortune by lending money on embarrassed farms in Iowa. In this way he came into possession of western lands. He was born in New Hampshire nearly sixty years ago. He studied law and went to Iowa. But he soon found the real estate business more profitable than the law, and he went into that at Davenport. From real estate he turned his attention to banking. He established in Davenport the first national bank ever chartered in this country.

He presently felt a call to go east and try his money making ability there. Eastern capitalists had loaned large sums of money through him on Iowa farms, and he already had an extensive financial acquaintance on the Atlantic coast. He went to New York in 1855, and has gained steadily in wealth and reputation.

Mr. Corbin has the prominent nose and square cut mouth of the money getter. He would get rich when all around him became poor. He is the proprietor of the largest hotels and the railroad on Coney Island. He has so fenced off the land there that it is impossible to get from one of his hotels to another without traveling upon his railroad though the houses are only a few minutes' walk apart.

AUSTIN CORBIN.



AUSTIN CORBIN.