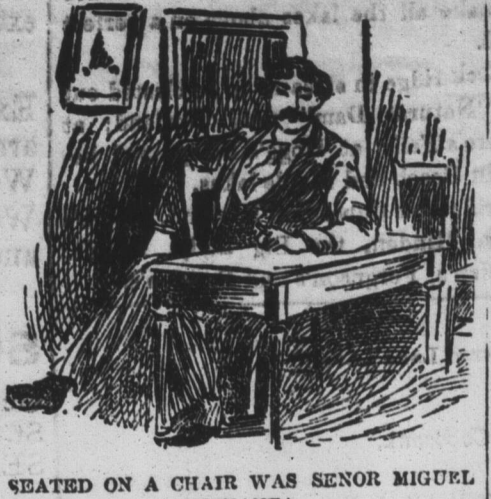




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found. If Corot is in London, or one of his men, will be sure to discover him. "And you think I had better not appear in the matter at all?" Penly asked, appealing to both of them. "Not at present, certainly," Mr. Fordyce said. "As Mr. Stuart is at present acting in it, it had better be left to him. Mr. Cundall's agents in the city have placed everything in his hands, and suppose you, as his heir, will have no objection to do so also."

and because, none the less, he had heard of any one bearing the name of Corot in his life. "And it is of such a person with that name, that Watson has been making little inquiries whenever he has dropped in to try a Spanish luncheon at a Spanish dinner. "Beated a few days after the murder of Walter Cundall, an one of the three chairs in the passage, and meditatively smoking cigarettes out of which, as is said with Spanish-made ones, the tobacco would frequently fall in a lighted mass on the marble table, was Senor Miguel Guffanta, as he was inscribed in Diaz's books. And the Senor been as carefully washed as the upper classes of Spaniards usually are, had his linen been as white and clean as the linen usually worn by the upper classes of Spaniards, and had he been freshly shaved, he would, in all probability have presented the appearance of a fine, handsome man. But he had come downstairs this morning to smoke his cigarette, without troubling to make his toilette, putting through an abominable process at all, and with a thick, heavy stubble of twenty-four hours' growth upon his cheeks and chin. Still, with all this carelessness, Senor Miguel Guffanta was a handsome man. He had a dark, Moorish-looking face, the lines of which were very regular, he had large luminous eyes that, when he closed, he could open to an enormous extent, and a coal-black hair that curled thickly over his head. His frame was a powerful one, his chest broad and deep, and his long, sinewy, brown hands looked as though their grasp would be a grasp of iron, if put to their utmost strength. In age he was about thirty-eight or forty, but he looked younger, because no single gray hair had appeared either in his luxuriant locks or in his long, black moustache. As he sat there, taking fresh cigarette-papers from his pocket, and when he had put some dry, dusty tobacco into them, while he gazed meditatively either at the ceiling of the passage, or into the species of horse-box that was designated as the "bureau," a stranger might have wondered what brought the Senor there. Unquestionably he was there for some purpose, either in the easy grace of his figure or in the contemptuous, almost haughty, look in his face, that proclaimed instantly that this was not a man accustomed to settling orders for wine, or appearing in Spanish ballets or choruses, or of, in any way, ministering to other people's amusement. As he still sat there thinking and smoking, the landlord came down the passage, and having wished him "Good morning" in Spanish, entered his box, and proceeded to make some entries in his books. The Senor nodded in return, and then made another cigarette and went on with his meditations; but, when that on a sudden he saw the man and leaped against the door-post of the bureau and addressed Zaratze. "And have any more guests arrived since last night," he asked, "and is the hotel yet full?" "No more," Senor, no more as yet, but there is little business doing now." "That is not well! And he who loves so much our Spanish luncheons and dinners, our good friend Dobson (he pronounced the name, Dobson) with the heavy, fat face and the big beard—what of him?" "He is a pig, a fool!" Diaz said, as he ran an unclean finger up a column of accounts. "He believes not when I tell him that of his accursed Corot I know nothing, and that I believe no such man is in London." The Senor laughed gently to himself at this answer, and then he said: "And he has not yet found him?" "Dios! found him, no! Of that name I never heard before, no, never! There is no such name." "For what does he say he wishes to see this Corot? Is it that he has a legacy to give him, or has he committed a crime for which this fat man, this heavy Alguazil, wants to arrest him?" "Gulen said he had a little friendly question to ask him, that is all. He says if he could see him for one moment, he would tell him all he wants to know. And then he says he must find him. But I do not think now he will ever find him." "Now do I," the Senor said. Then he looked up at the clock, and seeing it was past twelve, went to his room, saying that it was time he prepared himself for the day. When he reached that apartment, which was a small room on the second floor, that looked out on to the back windows of the street that ran parallel with the one in which the Hotel Lepanto was situated, it did not seem as if those preparations stood in any great need of hurry. The inevitable cigarette-papers were neatly produced and the dusty tobacco, and the Senor, throwing himself into the arm-chair that stood in the corner of the room, gave himself up to meditation. "Corot," he said to himself, "Corot. How is it that that man has ever heard the name—what does he know about it, why should he want to find him? I thought that, outside Los Torros and Puerto Cortes, that name had never been heard. Walter knew, and Juananna knew it, and I knew it, but of others there was no one alive who knew it. Yet here, in this big, stupid city (where a poor Diot, one may be stabled to death, and none find it a slur), with the name upon his lips. How has he ever heard it, how he has never known of it?" He could find no answer to these questions which he asked of himself, and gradually his thoughts went off into another train. "So, after all," he continued, "his name was not Cundall but Oebleve, and he it was who was this Corot, this Penly, though that other bears the name. And he, who inherited that wealth from the old man, had no right to it, not so much rights as Juananna—poor Juananna!—and I had. And now he is gone, and it is with the living that I have to



SEATED ON A CHAIR WAS SENOR MIGUEL GUFFANTA.

Well, it shall be done, and by my father's blood the reckoning shall be a heavy one if this lord does not clear himself!" He rose from his seat, and going to a cupboard, took from it a suit of clothes of good, dark material, and after brushing them carefully, laid them out upon the bed. From a shelf in it he took out a very good silk hat, which he also brushed, and a pair of nearly new gloves. Then he ran the comb, and bathed the servant who answered it bring him sufficient hot water for shaving and washing. As he went through his toilette, which he did very carefully, and putting on now linen of dazzling whiteness, with which the most scrupulous person could have found no fault, his thoughts still ran upon the subject that had occupied his mind entirely for many days. There was danger in it, of course, he muttered to himself, "but I am used to danger; there was danger when Gonzalez provoked me, though it was not as great as that I stand in now. The English are stupid, but they are crafty also, and it may be that a trap will be set for me. Well, I will escape from it as I have from others. And, after all, I have one damning proof in my favor, one card that, if I am forced to play, must save me! What I have to do shall be done to-day. I am resolved!" His toilette was finished now, he was clean-shaved and well-dressed from head to foot, and the Senor Miguel Guffanta stood in his room a very different looking man from the one who had sat in the hotel. Before he left it, he unlocked a p. manteau, and took from it a pocket-book into which he looked for a moment, and then locked his door and descended the stairs. "Good-bye for this day, Senor!" Diaz asked, as he peered out of his box. "Yes, I am going to make a call on an English friend. Adios." "Adios, Senor." "It is as hot as Honduras," Senor Guffanta said to himself as he crossed to the shady side of the street. "I must walk slowly to keep myself cool." He did walk slowly, making his way through Leicester Square and down Piccadilly, and, at nearly the bottom of the latter, turned off to the right, and passed through several streets. Then, when he had arrived at a house which stood at a corner he stopped. He evidently had been here before, for he had found his way without any difficulty through the labyrinth of streets between the houses at Leicester Square, and now he paused for one moment previous to mounting the door-step. But, before he did so, he turned away and went a short distance down a side-street. The big house outside which he was standing formed the end of two streets, and the Senor had now turned into. At the back of it was a garden, fairly filled with trees, that ran some distance farther down this street, and into which an open-worked iron gate led, a gate through which any passer-by could look. It was not a well-kept garden, and in it there was some undergrowth; and it was at this undergrowth, on the farthest right hand side, that Senor Guffanta peered for some few moments through the bushes. "It seems the same," he muttered to himself; "nothing appears disturbed since I was last here." Then he returned to the front of the house, and mounting the steps knocked at the hall door. The footman who opened it had no time to ask the tall, well-dressed foreigner with the handsome face, who was standing before him, what he required, before the Senor said, in good English: "Is Lord Penly at home?" "Is Lord Penly at home," the man answered. "Do you wish to see him?" "Yes. Be good enough to take him my card, if you please," and he produced one bearing the name of Senor Miguel Guffanta. "Give it to him," the man said, "and say that I wish to see him." The footman motioned him to a seat, and had put the card upon a salver to take to his master, when the Senor said, "Stay, I will put a word upon it, and, taking a pencil from his pocket, he wrote underneath his name, "From Honduras." "He will see me, I think," he said, "when he sees that." "The man bowed and went away, returning a few minutes afterwards with that Lord Penly would see him, and he followed him into the room in which so many other interviews had taken place. Lord Penly rose and bowed, and Senor returned the bow gravely, while he fixed his dark eyes intently on the other face. "You state on your card, Senor Guffanta, that you are from Honduras. I imagine, therefore, that you have come about a matter that at the present moment is of the utmost importance to me," Lord Penly said. "You refer to the late Mr. Cundall?" the Senor asked. "Yes, I do. Pray be seated." "I knew him intimately," Senor Guffanta said. "It is about him and his murder that I have come to talk."

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