

A CAST FOR FORTUNE.

By CHRISTIAN REID, IN "Lippincott's Magazine."

CHAPTER IV.

"A labyrinth of mountains, which, arid and desolate, lose themselves in the distance; infinitely varied in form, suggesting inexpressible and awful conceptions; full of deep, sad shadows, lonely, terrifying, like a sombre and tempestuous ocean suddenly petrified with awe at the whisper of God."

So has a Mexican writer impressively described the region of the great Sierras that lift their desolate heights above the fertile table-land. The flanks of these vast ranges, as they stretch down to the *tierra caliente*, are clothed with tropical forests, but as they rise above the plateau—in itself from six to eight thousand feet above the level of the sea—they are bare of all vegetation, and their rugged forms, rent and torn by volcanic action into deep chasms and gorges, wild, inaccessible peaks, and wonderful serrated ridges, suggest the immediate presence of nature's most terrible and resistless forces. No one can shake off a sense of awe, and of a distaste amounting to repugnance, in travelling through these regions, so wild, so desolate, and so forbidding.

It was in the midst of such a region that Derwent found himself three or four days after leaving Guadalajara. A journey on mule-back of twenty leagues had brought him into the heart of the great Sierra Madre, and when he was told that the mine was at hand he looked on a scene that for wildness, sublimity, and loveliness could hardly be matched in the world. They were threading their way along one of the great *barrancas*,—immense gorges that divide the mountains and descend often to a depth of three or four thousand feet,—while all around great peaks thrust themselves against the sky, varying only in the abrupt ruggedness of their forms, invariably in the desolate barrenness of their aspect.

The group of riders passing in single file along the shelf-like road that overhung the *barranca* added the only touch of life to the scene. There were five in the party,—Derwent, Fernandez, a Mexican named Aranda whom Fernandez introduced as one of the owners of the mine, and two servants, known in Mexico as *mozos*. The two riders in front of Derwent were a continual source of pleasure to his eye, from the picturesque appearance which they presented, with their silver-inlaid bridles, their elaborately decorated saddles, their leggings of stamped and fringed leather, and their short jackets which afforded an excellent view of the pistols they wore in a belt around their waist. The two *mozos* behind were, in modified degree, not less striking in aspect, and Derwent had a humorous sense of his own commonplace appearance in a tweed suit and a soft felt hat.

Presently a rare and welcome sound came to their ears, the sound of falling water. From a gorge that opened upon the *barranca* a small stream issued, and, crossing their path, fell in a succession of leaping cascades to the depths below. A road turned off into the gorge, and this they followed. It was hardly more than a trail along the bank of the stream, ever mounting higher in the midst of scenery that grew more wildly picturesque with every step. Wherever there is water in Mexico, luxuriant verdure follows; and the ravine was full of a greenness absolutely enchanting after the arid desolation of the scenes over which they had passed.

Turning to Derwent, Fernandez said that the stream would lead them immediately to the mouth of the mine, and while he was descending on the great advantages that water so near at hand afforded for the reducing of the ores, a sudden turn of the winding way brought them into full view of a commanding mountain, and, extending his hand with a dramatic gesture, he said, "There is the Buena Esperanza."

It made an impressive picture, and one that Derwent was never likely to forget. Standing at the head of the gorge and closing it like a gate, the vast slopes, surrounded by deep canons, rose upward into a peak that dominated all the surrounding heights. Was it the young man's fancy that gave a peculiar air of majesty to this towering crest, uplifted in regal calm against the deep-blue? Already, as they climbed beside the chafing stream, he could see a dark opening in its side, which led to the treasure buried within its heart in distant ages by the wonderful forces of nature. What fairy-tale of man's imagination can equal the reality of this sober fact? The chamber of Aladdin was poor compared to the wealth that might be held in the lodes to which that passage ran. So Derwent said to himself, smiling a little at his own fancies, as they dismounted before the arched entrance of a tunnel draped by vines and surrounded by luxuriant greenery, while the stream, now near its head, dashed in white foam over the rocks just below.

"This tunnel goes in a hundred and fifty feet, and cuts the vein three hundred feet below the surface," said Fernandez, "of course as you perceive,"—pointing to the water issuing from it,—"it drains the mine to that depth: so we can examine it. But first come up the hill and look at the croppings. I want to know if you ever saw anything to equal them."

Leaving their mules, they climbed up the steep, almost perpendicular mountain-side, and soon found the quartz vein, distinctly traceable as a light seam, running across the slope. For a surface showing, its dimensions were immense. Derwent followed it for at least a mile, and found its width never less than twelve feet, and often more. Various shafts had been sunk, and the rich ore piled around the mouth of each proved the value and permanency of the mine.

"It had been twice in bonanza," said Fernandez, "and millions have been taken from it. I am sure, Mr. Derwent, that you never saw such a mine offered before for so little money."

Derwent was, indeed, quite sure of this. Every indication proved the great value of the property; but as his conviction of its value increased, so also did his conviction that there was something unusual and calculated to inspire distrust, in the fact that it should be offered for so low a price.

He said nothing of this to Fernandez, however, until after they had thoroughly examined the interior to the depth of the tunnel. This was a long, a very laborious, and very disagreeable business; but the result confirmed all that had been said. The lodes

"The 'hot lands' of the coast.

increased in size and richness as depth was reached; and Derwent saw no reason to doubt Senor Aranda's statement that in the lower shaft (now filled with water) the vein was eighteen feet wide and very rich in silver.

When they had struggled back to the light of day, along the apparently interminable tunnel, and sat down in the sweet outer air by the side of the stream, the young man spoke with quiet deliberateness.

"The mine is all that you have described it, Senor Fernandez," he said, "and apparently well worth the price asked. But, to speak frankly I do not see how the owners can afford to sell at this price, nor where your profits in the transaction are to come from."

Fernandez looked at him with a smile. "I do not wonder that it strikes you in this way," he said. "I shall be glad to explain. As for the owners, what can they do but sell? The mine is rich, but they cannot work it: it has gone beyond them. The water is very strong, and before the shaft can be carried deeper, a pump must be put in. They have no money for such an expense."

"There is one enough in sight to pay that and all other expenses for a considerable time to come."

"To pay expenses, yes,—but not to make much profit when worked by the *patio* process. There is the explanation, Mr. Derwent. The Buena Esperanza yielded a fortune in its docile ores; but the ores are now refractory, and the wealth that it still holds can be extracted only by a large outlay of money. Capital must take hold of it, and work it on a great scale. The day is past for small things."

"That is true," said Derwent. "This is a mine which will yield immensely, but it must, as you say, be worked on a great scale. Put the owners aside, then, where is your profit in the matter?"

"I thought Morell had explained that," answered Fernandez. "We expect to make our profit from you. If you work the mine, we want a share in it; if you sell it (which I suppose to be your intention), we want a share of your profit, as a return for having put into your hands a very good thing."

"I was under the impression," said Derwent, "that it is usually the seller and not the buyer, who pays the intermediate agent his commission."

"That might easily have been arranged," returned the other. "We need only have asked you forty thousand dollars for the mine, instead of twenty thousand, and we should have made ten thousand apiece. You cannot say that the Buena Esperanza is not worth as much as that."

"The Buena Esperanza may be worth it, but I should not have given it," Derwent replied.

"You might, if you had never heard of the lower price," said Fernandez calmly. "I am not flattering you, Mr. Derwent, when I say that you know how to judge a mine. And you are aware that this mine is worth ten times what is asked for it. When Morell received your letter, he said to me, 'Here is a man who wants a mine for speculative purposes, to take into the great markets of the world and sell for a big price. In order to succeed in this, he must have a good mine. We will sell him the Buena Esperanza at its bottom price, and then we will make our profit by sharing in his. When we have put such a property in his hands, he cannot refuse this.' I am sure Morell was right, Mr. Derwent. You cannot refuse to enter into such an arrangement."

"And if I do refuse," said Derwent,—"for I object very much to having partners in my business,—what then?"

"Then we must ask you to pay forty thousand dollars for the mine. That is our lowest price."

There was a silence. Had Derwent followed his impulse, he would have risen to his feet, said, curtly, "I decline to buy your mine on any terms," and, mounting his mule, have ridden away. But it required only a moment's reflection to show that such a course would be particularly ill advised at present. Whether or not Fernandez meant to flatter him when he said that he knew how to judge a mine, the fact remained that he did know, and that he had never seen a mine that seemed to him so well worth possessing as the Buena Esperanza. He had said to himself as he examined its lodes, that if all went well with him he ought to be able to make enough out of this alone to accomplish the end he had in view. And now, after he had, as it were, seen with his own eyes the treasure that was to redeem fortune and honor for him, it was snatched away, and he had to choose between resigning it altogether—for to pay the additional price asked was impossible—or to share with others the profit needed by himself. It was a hard decision, and the manner in which it was forced upon him—the time and place—made him say to himself that his original distrust of Fernandez was well justified.

As he sat on the green bank, with the shade-arched entrance of the mine behind him, the foaming water at his feet, and his gaze taking in idly the two *mozos* with the feathered animals farther down the stream, and Senor Aranda near at hand smoking cigarettes, he asked himself what he should do, with a desire for counsel and direction such as he had never known before. And while he still hesitated, uncertain how to deal with the man who he now felt sure would take any advantage of him, a sound suddenly smote on the ears of all three, which made them look at each other with a glance of surprised interrogation.

CHAPTER V.

It was the sound of a horse's hoofs striking on the rocky road as he came up the gorge, the enclosing walls of which conducted the sound with startling distinctness in advance. There was nothing yet to be seen, but the sounds made it plainly evident that the rider was hurrying his animal at a pace very unsuited to the character of the way. Derwent saw the two Mexicans exchange a startled glance. Then Aranda shrugged his shoulders with the air of a man who foresees a difficulty. "It is Barrera," he said, in Spanish. "I told you that he had threatened to come."

"And what does he expect to gain by coming?" asked Fernandez, with an expression of lip and eye that did not promise a very amicable reception for that hurrying rider. "He knows that he can do nothing. I have

him here." And he closed his hand with a quick significant gesture.

"That may be," said the other, cautiously. "But Barrera is a man who stops at nothing. It will be well to conciliate him if possible. When he is angry, he is—dangerous."

"And so am I dangerous—when I am provoked," returned Fernandez. "If Senor Barrera comes here to give trouble, instead of conciliating I shall defy him. Then let him do his worst. He knows that he can do nothing."

The meaning of these quick sentences did not escape Derwent, though he understood little of the language in which they were spoken. Human tones are much the same in all languages, however, and there could be no more doubt of the anger of one man than of the apprehension of the other.

"What is the matter?" he asked, turning to Fernandez. "Who is coming?"

"We do not know," that gentleman replied. "But Aranda thinks it may be the owner of the mine,—the man I told you of, who is dissatisfied with the bargain. If it should prove to be so, do not trouble yourself about the matter. I can manage him, and he has no power to do anything."

There was a minute's further suspense, and then, emerging from the green foliage at the head of the *canada*, came a powerful black horse, ridden by a middle-aged Mexican, who, in his picturesque buckskin dress, and his broad sombrero overshadowing a strongly-marked face, with the dark, flashing eye of an eagle, was by far the most imposing figure Derwent had yet beheld. Handsome men he had seen, but none who impressed him more by an individuality derived from a long line of warlike and untamed ancestors. "I wonder how many Indian chiefs, with a strain of the Spanish *hidalgo*, have gone to make this man what he is!" he thought, with a thrill of irrefragable admiration. Simultaneously with the appearance of the rider he found his sympathy enlisted on his side, and said to himself that the old fable of the lion and the fox had found another realization, when the new-comer dismounted, and, striding forward, met Fernandez.

Whether he came in peace or war was a question that no one would have found need to ask. The first sound of his deep-toned voice was enough to show that he was animated by a wrath that did not pause to dissemble and consider phrases. It seemed to Derwent, standing by with intelligence alert and observant, that the character of each man was more clearly revealed to him by manner because he did not understand the language they spoke. The indignant wrath of the new-comer was not more evident than the insulting defiance of Fernandez. If he did not repeat in words that he held the man before him powerless in his hand, his manner expressed it as plainly as speech; and there was a scorching power to exasperate in his few, quiet sentences.

Presently Senor Barrera turned and accosted Derwent, asking courteously if he spoke Spanish. With very sincere regret the young man answered that he did not; and then, taking a sudden resolution, he addressed Fernandez. "What does this man wish to say to me?" he asked. "If it concerns the purchase of the mine, I have a right to know."

"He wishes to tell you," replied Fernandez, "that he has changed his mind about selling it at the price named. But this is child's play. He has signed the bond, and has no right to interfere at all in the matter."

"Has he not sense enough to know that?" "Who can say? You may see for yourself that he is a passionate fool,—the kind of man to run his head against a rock. And now and then he finds a rock of particular hardness," he added, grimly.

Derwent did not reply at once. He could not say, what he distinctly thought, "You are deceiving me. This man is no fool, and there is more in the matter than you pretend." But he decided that he would waive the purchase of the Buena Esperanza for the present. The counsel and direction which he had desired a few minutes before had come to him most unexpectedly. He had distrusted Fernandez vaguely from the first. He now determined that he would take nothing through his hands, for he felt sure that the taint of fraud would be upon it. Entirely ignorant though he was of the point at issue between the two men before him, he was nevertheless certain that Barrera was an honest man and Fernandez a scoundrel. After a short pause, he spoke with a decision of manner that could not be mistaken:

"Be kind enough to say for me to the gentleman that he may rest his mind at rest so far as I am concerned. I shall not buy the Buena Esperanza until I am assured that there is harmony among the sellers. I wish to take no man's property against his will. Further, I object to having the price of the mine doubled upon me, as you have doubled it within the last half-hour. We will therefore say nothing more at present of purchase."

Fernandez turned sharply and looked at him with a light in his eyes that was altogether evil. "Do you really mean this?" he demanded. "Do you intend, after all my trouble and expense, to refuse to take the mine?"

"I regret your trouble; but it was taken, I believe, in the line of business," answered Derwent. "Your expense I will reimburse. But I shall certainly not take the mine with the passionate opposition of its owners."

"This man has no power to harm you, I will warrant that," he said. "But it seems that I have power to harm him by taking his property against his wish. That I will not do unless I know something of the history of the bond that he evidently repudiates. Frankly, there is a look about this thing that I do not like, and I will not touch it."

"I should have taken care to keep this fool away if I had imagined that his mere appearance would intimidate you so completely," said Fernandez, with a bitter sneer. "I am not intimidated in the least," said Derwent, calmly. "If you think so, you are mistaken. But you do not think so. You know very well why I decline to have anything further to do with this affair. Let us have no more words. It is sufficient to state explicitly that I will not buy the Buena Esperanza under the present circumstances, at any price."

Having said this, he turned and walked away. It was the only thing to do, for he felt that his own anger was rising, and he knew that nothing could have been more inadvisable than an altercation with Fernandez. In fact, as cooler thought came to him he was conscious that he had been rash to speak so openly and decidedly. A little diplomacy would have been better. He might have deferred his decision until they returned to Guadalajara. But it was too late

to think of that now; and as he walked down the bank of the stream toward the mules and the *mozos*, he thought ruefully that his first effort in Mexico seemed likely to prove a *fiasco* in every respect.

While he stood idly watching the whirling water on its course, Senor Aranda came down the path and said a few words to the attendants. They at once began to saddle the animals, and it was evident that an order for departure had been given. This was a relief; and as Derwent moved forward to lend a helping hand, hoof-strokes sounded again on the descent behind him. He turned in time to see the powerful black horse and his rider pass, and to receive a courteous salutation. Whether or not Fernandez had rightly interpreted him to Barrera,—and this he knew was doubtful,—the latter obviously did not include him in his anger. There was something almost friendly in the "*Adios, senor*," with which he passed.

But there was nothing friendly in the air and manner of Fernandez when he appeared. If Derwent had ever doubted what was in the man, he saw it now,—saw the bitter and implacable enmity of which he was capable in lowering brow and angry glance. There were no words exchanged. Derwent would have been glad to be courteous as long as the exigencies of their journey threw them together; but Fernandez for once seemed unable to put any constraint upon himself or else did not care to exercise it. He mounted silently and rode off with Aranda, leaving Derwent to follow with the *mozos*.

As they passed down the *canada*, the young man turned in his saddle and looked back at the majestic mountain the first appearance of which had so fascinated him. It formed a beautiful picture for his parting glance, standing in stately isolation at the head of the gorge, its noble summit bathed in golden sunshine, while the purple shadows of late afternoon had gathered in the deep chasms around its base. Knowing just where to look, his eye caught the light gleam of the great lode running across the mighty slope; and with a pang of disappointment keener than he had reckoned upon, he bade adieu to the hopes which it had kindled.

Since there was only an hour or two of daylight remaining, they made as much haste as possible out of the *barranca*, and then, turning from the direct road, took their way to a ranch on the slope of the mountains, where Senor Aranda had made arrangements for them to spend the night.

The next morning Fernandez proved to be in the same mood as on the preceding evening,—saying only such few words as were necessary for interpretation and direction; so Derwent, as he swung himself into his saddle, thought without much cheerfulness of the long, silent ride before him,—for they hoped to make *Etizatlan* by night. But the ride was not destined to be so silent as he had anticipated. Fernandez came to his side, and, observing that they had both been somewhat hasty the day before, proposed to explain fully the whole history of the bond. It would have been a brutal incivility, of which Derwent was incapable, to tell the man that he distrusted his statements altogether; so he listened to a sketch of Barrera's impracticable and fiery disposition, of the desire of the other owners to sell the mine, of the difficulty they had in inducing him to consent to a sale, and of the manner in which he had since endeavored to embarrass their efforts. On abstract grounds Derwent agreed that it was hard that one man should have power to annoy others and injure their interests; but he said to himself that he was by no means sure on which side the injury lay, and he altogether declined to reconsider his own decision. The result was finally the exchange of a few angry words which cut deeply on each side, and then the two men parted, Fernandez to join Senor Aranda, and Derwent to soothe himself with a cigar alone.

At noon they halted for a short rest and refreshment by the side of the only water on their road. They were in the midst of a very wild and desolate country, surrounded by mountains, with a savage-looking defile before them, through which their road lay. "What an inviting place for brigands?" thought Derwent, regarding the narrow pass and frowning heights. But, knowing how sternly this little amusement had been put down in the country, he had no apprehensions of anything of the kind. The thought was merely suggested by the recollections of the many bloody deeds which such localities had witnessed in times past. It was not even strong enough to deter him, a little later, from falling behind the rest of the party, as they passed down a *barranca* with a steep mountain strewn with rocks on one side and a precipice which dropped two thousand feet deep on the other. The road at this point descended so sharply that his mule, to relieve himself as well as his rider, dismounted and walked, with the animal following close behind him. It was a dangerous place, for the almost precipitous incline of the road was strewn with fragments of boulders from the mountain above; and his attention was altogether fixed upon the path, when the sudden falling of a rock immediately before him caused him to look quickly up the mountain-side. There was only time for a glance,—a glance which showed him the partially concealed form of a man behind a great boulder,—when there came a flash, a report, a burning pain in his shoulder, and simultaneously the frightened mule dashed past, knocking him off his feet. He was conscious of falling down the precipice, of throwing out his hands wildly to save himself, of a crushing blow upon the head: and darkness followed.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

A Willing Substitute.

"Oh, what is that belt for?" the maiden inquired.

Of her lover, who sat by her side.

"Why that is a life-buoy, in danger required."

The happy young fellow replied.

"I think I'm in danger," the maiden went on.

"And I need a life-buoy very badly; I guess I must have one ere the year's gone."

Said her lover: "I'll be that boy gladly."

Sweet Revenge.

Voice from speaking tube—"Help! H-e-l-p! I've caught a man in my room. Oh, what shall I do?"

Clerk (to himself)—"That's that funny old maid in 49."

Clerk (through the tube)—"Lock the door; you'll never have a chance to catch another."—*Figaro*.

How the Americans Treat Their Indians.

In his book, "My Life Among the Indians," Bishop Whipple presents facts which should flush with scarlet the cheek of every man who has the honor of the American nation at heart and who hates oppression and wrong-doing. The record of the United States in its treatment of the Indian tribes is fully as infamous as that of the Spaniards of the natives of South America and Mexico; it is of a character in which cruelty, robbery, slaughter, are the salient traits. "The Indian," says Bishop Whipple, "is not in any gross sense an idolator. His universe is peopled with spirits. He recognizes a Great Spirit; he believes in a future life. He has a passionate love for his children, and will gladly die for his people. He is a true friend and a bitter enemy. I have never known an instance where the Indian was the first to violate plighted faith." These are facts. History will prove that there never has been an Indian war in the United States in which the Indians were the aggressors. The treatment extended to the Sioux and Ojibway Indians is one instance like a thousand others. The latter tribe "justly claimed," according to the bishop, arrears for more than \$50,000, under old treaties which had never been paid. "They sold some of the most beautiful land in Minnesota for a cent and a half an acre under the promise that it should become the home of a friendly body of Indians, who would be a protection against their enemies, the Dakotas."

No sooner was the treaty made than the region was opened for white settlement. He further says that the Dakotas sold 800,000 acres of land for the purpose of securing money to aid in their civilization. At the end of four years all the land thus sold was taken up by white settlers, and the Dakotas had not received a single cent. "This," writes Bishop Whipple, "and the withholding of their annuities in 1862 for two months, precipitated that awful massacre in which 800 of our citizens were slain." Is it strange that these and similar occurrences "made the cheeks of the bishop blush with shame?"

He denounces the Indian policy in vigorous and scathing language. It was a blunder and a crime. "It recognized no personal rights of property, it gave no protection to person or life; it punished no crime. Its emoluments were rewards for political services, and most of the Indian treaties were used as a key to unlock the public treasury. At best, it established heathen almshouses to graduate savage paupers. He relates some of the incidents connected with this policy in the region where he served. "Three white men passed a sleeping Indian. One said, 'I will kill the damned redskin,' and drew his rifle and shot him. No one was punished. An Indian woman died in a border village from brutal violence. The agent was appealed to and said, 'it is none of my business.' A mixed-blood killed an Indian woman; he was arrested and sent to the United States for. After a confinement of three months the Secretary of War ordered his discharge, saying that there was no law to punish an Indian." Such are some of the features of his experience with the Indians. He relates pathetic incidents involving the love of mothers for their dead children and of the longing of Indians to be near the grave of their relatives. He saw an old man sitting on the bank of the Upper Mississippi and gave him some food. He invited the old man to go with him for a week during his stay in the Indian country. "If you will go with me I will feed you, for I have plenty of provisions, and when we part I will give you all the stores I have left." He said: "You have a kind heart. I thank you. My old wife is sleeping in a grave yonder. I can not go away from her, for she will be lonesome." The Indians believe that the departed spirit lingers by its grave.

Other Worlds Than Ours.

By means of the spectroscopic a very wonderful discovery has been made respecting Sirius. Astronomers had noticed that this star was in rapid motion through space, as it was found that year by year it was changing its position in the heavens, traversing in about 1,500 years a space equal to the apparent diameter of the moon, at a velocity of no less than twenty miles per second. Of course, by actual observation, the only motion capable of being detected would be that which was square to the line of sight, so that although Sirius appears to us to move across the heavens, he may be really traveling in a slanting direction, either toward or from us. No one would ever have expected to be able to tell whether a star was approaching or receding from us, yet even this seeming insoluble problem has of late years been accomplished by the spectroscopic. Dr. Huggins, our greatest authority on this subject, having identified certain lines in the spectrum of Sirius as those of hydrogen, found on comparison that these were displaced in such a manner as to indicate that the star was receding from us. It has been estimated that this recession, combined with the thwart motion of twenty miles per second, gives as the actual movement of about thirty-three miles per second.

These, then, constitute some of the chief items of information about Sirius at present within our knowledge.

There seems to be no reason to doubt that, in common with other suns, he has his system of planets circling round him after the manner of our own sun; and what a system! Vast as ours appears it is dwarfed into insignificance compared with a system whose ruling orb is 5,000 times larger than that which does duty for us. There seems, also, no reason to doubt that these planets are intended to be the abode of life; it may be that at the present moment none of them present any signs of life, but I think we may infer without improbability, that each one of those worlds has a destined period in its development, during which life, similar to that which now prevails on our planet, would be in existence. What a world such a one would be, in size perhaps not inferior to that of our sun, himself a million times larger than our earth; and it may be that as this Sirian world is so vastly superior to ours its inhabitants would be on a scale in proportion to its dimensions, a race of beings of such intellect and civilization compared with whom we are but savages.

Surprised and Mystified.

Young Wife (unrolling a new shirt)—I have a little surprise for you, Harold.

Young Husband—how kind of you dear! Did—did you make it yourself?

Young Wife (proudly)—Every stitch of it, Harold.

Young Husband (holding it at arm's length)—I shall prize it as long as I live, Amelia. By the way—er—darling, what is it?