

A CAST FOR FORTUNE.

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

CHAPTER XVII.

Derwent ever afterward declared that his mother simply and absolutely fell in love with Don Maurizio at first sight. There could be no doubt that she was as favorably impressed as he could have desired with the handsome man whose perfect blending of worldly polish and frank cordiality could not have failed to charm even the least susceptible to the effect of manner. Sibyl did not hesitate to affirm that she had never before seen so princely a man, and that the admirable results of a wound in the shoulder were daily becoming more apparent to her. Don Maurizio, on his part, was evidently much pleased with Derwent's friends,—with Mrs. Derwent's delicate refinement and Sibyl's spirited charm. He was most courteously prompt in paying his respects, accompanying Derwent, who lost no time in seeking him, back to the hotel for that purpose. His daughter, he said, would give herself the pleasure of calling later, and hoped the ladies would drive with her on the Pase that afternoon. "For my self," he said, "I sometimes take out an English dog-cart, and if either, or both, of you gentlemen will accept a seat with me, I shall be very happy." Both invitations were accepted, and, waiving Mrs. Derwent's renewed thanks for her son's great debt of kindness, the stately *hacendado* bowed himself away.

But, if Don Maurizio had awakened enthusiasm in the breasts of these explorers from the States, what can be said of the effect which Dona Zarifa produced, with her surpassing beauty enhanced by a toilet fresh from the hands of the most consummate artist in Paris? Derwent, who had found that he could not trust himself to speak of her, had said very little of her personal charms, and so Sibyl's eyes turned upon him with a look of amazement and interrogation which almost provoked him to laughter. "What did you mean by not preparing us for such a vision as this?" the look said. And indeed that perfect face, framed by a hat which was a mass of soft, curling plumes, was enough to provoke the inquiry. Yet to Derwent's eyes nothing could ever frame it so well as the graceful Spanish drapery in which he had seen it first, although he was glad that these critical feminine eyes should behold his princess in all the bravery of modern picturesque costuming.

Great is the effect of wealth. Who does not know this? Yet, to a nature not readily or deeply impressed by the accidents of life, its wonderful effect is a standing marvel which custom cannot stale. To-went said to himself that if Dona Zarifa had been stripped of every accessory of fortune her noble beauty and still more noble character would have been none the less evident to him, and none the less adorable in his eyes. Perhaps he was right,—though the test would be a severe one, even for a lover,—but at last he had no reason to expect to find such eyes in others. There was nothing surprising in the fact that Mrs. Derwent was more struck by the surroundings of the young heiress than by her remarkable loveliness. The luxurious carriage which awaited them, with its handsome horses, liveried servants, and every appointment perfect as if for Hyde Park, brought home to her more vividly than all of Derwent's words the position and wealth of the people with whom his good fortune had associated him. As he passed the equipage on the Pase, Derwent could not but smile at the expression of his mother's face as she lay back on the softly-cushioned seat, regarding with a look of perfect satisfaction the brilliant scene of which she was a part.

He was not surprised that, when they met at dinner, Sibyl's enthusiastic admiration overflowed all verbal bounds. "She is simply the most beautiful creature that I have ever seen!" she said, referring to Zarifa. "I really did nothing but stare at her; for she is a perfect picture of loveliness. And when her eyes light up, and she makes that fascinating little Mexican salutation with the fingers, she is utterly bewitching. Geoffrey, if you were to swear until you were black in the face that you did not fall in love with her when you were out at their place, I should not believe you."

"There is no need for me to subject myself to such an unpleasant test, then, Sibyl," answered Geoffrey, calmly. "But I may be allowed to remark that it would be as sensible for me to fall in love with a royal princess as with Dona Zarifa. She is the greatest heiress in Mexico, and will no doubt make a great alliance."

"There is a very hackneyed proverb which it strikes me might have an application in this case," said Halbert. "We know what is said of a faint heart and a fair lady. The fair lady is here. May not the faint heart be also?"

"I really do not see," observed Mrs. Derwent, "why it should be supposed that Geoffrey would hesitate to offer himself to any woman, even if she is a great heiress. No one who knows him could suspect him of an interested motive, and he has sufficient fortune of his own."

"My dear mother," interposed Derwent, with a gallant attempt to laugh, "the matter has not reached the point of even a contemplated proposal. I have the honor to admire Dona Zarifa exceedingly, but beyond that my presumption does not venture."

"I am unable to perceive where the question of presumption comes in," said Mrs. Derwent, majestically. "Derwent did not reply, for he was indeed partly amused and partly irritated to perceive that his mother, having been disappointed in her long-cherished hope of seeing him marry Sibyl Lenox, had now conceived the brilliant idea of an alliance with Dona Zarifa. She would have shivered at the thought of a Mexican marriage before coming to the country, and especially before Dona Zarifa's wealth and beauty had dawned upon her, but now her imagination was eagerly at work. The romance as well as the solid advantage of such a match allured her greatly, and it was evident that she would not readily relinquish an idea so fascinating. Derwent who felt too sick at heart with the hopelessness of his position to argue with or laugh at her, strove to avoid the subject, and Sibyl, who was soon keen enough to perceive this, kindly seconded his efforts.

When they parted after their drive, Don Maurizio had said to him, "Come to see me to-morrow morning. I would like to speak with you on a matter of business." And Derwent lost no time the next day in keeping the appointment. More than ever now

his resolve was set on replacing Sibyl's fortune in its entirety, and he knew that if he persevered in the intentions with which he came to Mexico, no one could better direct him toward the means necessary for his end than Don Maurizio.

The old Cardella casa is one of the most splendid of the palace-like houses erected during the colonial period of wealth and magnificence, in the city of Mexico. Derwent had admired its great sculptured portal and taken a glance into its spacious court when he had been in the capital first, but he did not appreciate all its stately beauty until he entered and saw the whole effect of the interior, which was at once fortress-like in its solidity and graceful in architectural detail as a vision of the Orient. Around the immense inner court, set with orange-trees and flowering shrubs and musical with the murmur of a fountain, were the domestic offices, while above, resting on Moorish arches that sprang from slender, clustered pillars, was the gallery, reached by two sweeping flights of marble steps, on which the family apartments opened. A king might have found himself not unfitly lodged in such a dwelling. Derwent thought, as he followed the servant who had received his card up the great staircase and into an apartment which reminded him of Don Maurizio's room at Miraflores. There was the same business-like air about this apartment, although it was more luxurious in its appointments than the one at the hacienda. Don Maurizio himself rose from a deep, leather-covered chair, and, putting down a paper, held out his hand in greeting.

"Mr. Derwent," he said, when they were both seated, "I have a confession to make, as a preface to a business proposal, and I will be quite frank in making it. Briefly, then, when you recovered from your wound in my house, and when I found that the stranger I had succeeded as a matter of charity proved to be a gentleman and a person of whom one might wish to make a friend, I remembered prudence, and I felt that before admitting you to friendly intimacy I should know something about you as you are known at home. This does not offend you, I hope?"

"On the contrary," answered Derwent, "it is what I should have desired; for, naturally, a man who has all his life occupied a distinct and unquestioned social position is not anxious to appear in the light of a mere adventurer of fortune. And that, as I am well aware, is what I seemed to you. Well," he smiled slightly,—"I suppose you made some inquiries about me?"

"Yes, I wrote to an old friend, a man of the highest position, in New Orleans. And this, I may remark in passing, I did not because I needed assurance myself, but because it was an absolutely necessary step if I was to help you in a business point of view. Well, my friend's reply was so flattering that some day I will show it to you. Only one thing in his letter puzzles me a little. After speaking of your social position and your personal character in the highest terms, he mentions that you have recently inherited from your father a large estate. Yet, notwithstanding this, am I mistaken in believing that you have come to Mexico to make money in rather perilous ventures?"

"You are not mistaken," Derwent replied, whose resolution to be perfectly candid was taken with a quickness which surprised himself. "I have lately inherited a considerable estate from my father, and I have also come to Mexico to endeavor to make money in ventures which I hope may not prove perilous. If you were not so kind, I should hesitate before intruding my private affairs upon you; but, since you are good enough to take an interest in me, I hope you will let me explain why I have found it necessary to take this step."

"You spoke to my daughter, I think, of a debt of honor," said Don Maurizio, whose clear eyes were reading the young man's face as if they would read his soul.

"Yes," the latter answered, "and the story of that debt of honor is known at present to only one person in the world besides myself,—that is my cousin, Mr. Halbert. With your permission, I will tell it to you."

Then, in the briefest manner possible, he told it. The few, simple words were strong with feeling, and stronger still with purpose, as Don Maurizio, listening with an interest far removed from curiosity, perceived. When the story was finished he held out his hand. "I will do my best to help you, Mr. Derwent," he said. "And no other expression of confidence was necessary."

"Now," he added, after Derwent had expressed his thanks, "let us consider the best means of helping you,—that is, of enabling you to accomplish your end in the shortest time possible. And here comes in my business proposal. You were, I believe, very favorably impressed with the value of the Buena Esperanza?"

"I have never seen a better mine," Derwent answered. "Nothing is needed but the proper application of scientific methods to realize a great fortune from it. But I have understood that Senor Barrera will not sell."

"He will not, but the other owners will. Their share of the mine has been offered to me. Barrera is anxious that I should buy them out, put in machinery, and work the mine for a half-interest in the result. I have not the least doubt that it would be a good investment, and I thought of doing this before Fernandez extorted his bond. That bond has now been cancelled, and before I left Miraflores Barrera renewed the old proposal to me. I asked him if he was willing to transfer the offer to you, and he agreed to do so. Now Mr. Derwent, this is a chance which does not occur every day,—not even in Mexico. What do you think of it?"

"I shall be delighted to allow you whatever you wish to take," Derwent replied. "Could I do less, when it is to you I am indebted for the whole? Do you think I am indifferent to the fact that you have stood aside in order to benefit me?"

"I am too busy a man to undertake minding myself," the other said, smiling, "but with you as an active partner I have little doubt we shall succeed. I have long known the value of the Buena Esperanza. Were it otherwise,—were I not sure of this investment,—believe me, Mr. Derwent, after your confidence, I should not counsel you to touch it."

"I am not only sure of that," replied Derwent, "but deeply grateful for your thoughtful kindness, and no effort on my part shall be lacking to enable both yourself and Senor Barrera to realize a fortune."

"I think from a purely business point of view, we will make a good triumvirate," said Don Maurizio. "Now let us resolve ourselves into committee of ways and means and decide what the immediate expenses will be."

CHAPTER XVIII.

"It is simply like a dream of the 'Arabian Nights'!" said Sibyl, as they entered the great court of the casa Cardella, with its splendid space, its graceful arches, its feathery, broad-leaved plants, its fragrance of orange flowers, its musical fountain, gilded galleries, and gleaming lamps—for it was evening, and the American party had been invited to dine with Derwent's Mexican friends.

The reporter who received them clapped his hands, in the Oriental fashion of the country, and a servant in picturesque Mexican dress appeared and ushered them up the sweeping staircase to the door of a *salon* of superb size and proportion. Artistically wrought columns of marble and onyx supported the frescoed ceiling from which depended great Venetian chandeliers, forming, with their fairy-like prismatic beauty, masses of radiance which were reflected in the shining floor, formed of tiles as brilliant and highly polished as glass. Over this gleaming pavement rich hued Eastern rugs were scattered in profusion, and numbers of low, luxurious couches were covered with soft Persian silk and heaped with embroidered cushions. From one of these couches a figure rose and came forward that was in full accord with the splendid room.

Even Derwent, accustomed to Dona Zarifa's beauty as he had become, was dazzled by it at this moment. She wore a gown of rose-tinted crepe de Chine, which fell in lines of the most graceful classic drapery around her slender form, and all the borders of which were embroidered with silver in a Greek pattern. Her masses of dark hair were bound in a close high coiffure with fillets of rose-red ribbon studded with tiny silver stars, her beautiful throat with its melting lines was encircled by a necklace of the delicate Mexican silver-work she liked so much to wear, and on the rounded arms were bracelets of the same design. Into her girlish were thrust the exquisite rosy blooms of the cactus, and her noble head rose above the charming, classic dress like the head of a young goddess on an antique frieze. As she came forward, with her dark eyes shining, her lovely lips smiling, Sibyl could only say to herself, "Oh, poor Geoffrey!"

Derwent felt himself to be indeed an object of commiseration, and this feeling was sensibly increased when, after the party had been received by Dona Luisa, she presented a dark, slender, distinguished-looking man as "our kinsman, Senor Cardella." Into Derwent's mind there came at once the recollection that on the first day he had seen Dona Zarifa he had been told that she would probably marry her cousin, Senor Cardella, and an instinct told him that this was the man. He was a man who might have reconciled a woman to a *mariage de convenance*, a man to be possibly feared as a rival, yet even as a rival not to be disliked, for his manner was a delightful blending of the dignity of the Spaniard and the charming friendliness of the Mexican.

Keenest observation, however, failed to detect anything lover-like in his manner to Zarifa, and the reason why he had been invited to meet the American party was soon apparent in the fact that he spoke English perfectly. When dinner was announced, Don Maurizio offered his arm to Mrs. Derwent, Senor Cardella took it to Sibyl, and while Derwent hesitated, uncertain whether or not he was to have the pleasure of taking in Zarifa, she said to him, smiling, "Will you take Dona Luisa?" while laying her own hand on Halbert's arm.

It was a momentary disappointment; but when they entered the dining-room and grouped themselves around the beautifully-appointed table he found that, after all, fate, or some other benign power, had placed Zarifa at his right hand, with Halbert beyond. It was too small a party, however, for anything like private conversation. Led by the genial host, talk was altogether general, and as gay and bright as talk mostly is when well-loved people meet around a dinner-table whose delicate dishes are served by perfectly-trained servants and finest wines poured into sparkling glasses. The floral decorations were the same beautiful rose-red blossoms of the cactus which the young hostess wore, and now and then, in the midst of the courses that proved a French *chef* in the kitchen, a distinctively Mexican dish was introduced, to give, as it were, a national note. "For we cannot allow you to forget that you are in Mexico," said Don Maurizio once, with a smile.

"Do you think that would be possible under any circumstances?" asked Sibyl. "Mexico has fascinated us so deeply that I am afraid we shall not be able to forget it even when we go home."

Besides, the language in which most of the conversation was conducted, the only English thing about the entertainment was the fact that the group of men lingered a little over their wine and cigars after the ladies had left the room. The interval, however, was not long, and when they re-entered the *salon* Derwent at once perceived his opportunity to exchange a few words with Dona Zarifa.

She and Sibyl had been walking up and down the long, splendid room, while Mrs. Derwent sat on the special sofa of honor with Dona Luisa and talked French fluently. Both girls paused as the gentlemen entered, and Miss Lenox sank gracefully into a seat, while Dona Zarifa moved away to where a vase filled with great masses of growing heliotrope stood on a pedestal of Puebla onyx. She began to gather a few sprays, and the fragrance of the flowers filled the whole atmosphere around her. It was almost intoxicating in its sweetness, Derwent thought, as, while Senor Cardella

paused by Sibyl, he moved on toward the lovely classic figure and the dark, soft eyes with their glance of welcome.

"Are you gathering those sprays of heliotrope for me, senorita?" he asked, smiling. "Thanks; you are too good, to answer that presumptuous speech by giving me one. It is delicious,—I have never seen heliotrope bloom anywhere else as in Mexico,—but, if I might venture to say so, there is another flower that I would prefer to have."

"And why should you not venture?" she asked. "Surely you have learned that with our flowers at least we are generous."

"What are you not generous with? But your cactus"—he looked at the blossoms she wore in her belt—"is so entirely your own that I fear you would not care to give it to a stranger."

"Oh!" she glanced down, smiling, and blushing a little, "it is the cactus you mean? Well, frankly, I think the heliotrope suits you better. This, as you say, is specially for Mexicans."

"And may I not be adopted, in a degree at least, as a Mexican?" he asked. "Do you know that I am going to make Mexico my home for an indefinite length of time to come? And, more than that, I am to be your neighbor at Miraflores. Don Maurizio and I are to take the Buena Esperanza with Senor Barrera, and I shall personally direct the work. This, you see, will bring me within comfortable distance of Miraflores."

"Do you call sixteen leagues a comfortable distance?"

"Compared to a thousand miles,—yes, very comfortable. I can see you once or twice a month at least. I only hope I shall not become a dreadful nuisance."

The Number Seven in the Bible.

On the seventh day God ended His work. In the seventh month Noah's ark touched the ground.

In seven days a dove was sent out.

Abraham pleaded seven times for Sodom. Jacob mourned seven days for Joseph. Jacob served seven years for Rachel. And yet another seven years.

Jacob was pursued a seven days' journey by Laban.

A plenty of seven years and a famine of seven years were foretold in Pharaoh's dream by seven fat and seven lean beasts, and seven ears of full and seven ears of blasted corn.

On and after the seventh day of the seventh month the Children of Israel fasted seven days and remained in their tents.

Every seventh year the land rested.

Every seventh year the law was read to the people.

In the destruction of Jericho seven person bore trumpets seven days; on the seventh day they surrounded the walls seven times, and at the end of the seventh round the walls fell.

Solomon was seven years building the temple (for cost, size, etc., see this department of the Republic, issue of September 14, 1889) and fasted seven days at its dedication.

The golden candlesticks had seven branches.

Naaman washed seven times in the Jordan.

Job's friends sat with him seven days and seven nights, and offered seven bullocks as an atonement.

Hundreds of other biblical references to the number seven could be given did space permit.

Mighty Mimrods in Africa.

"Lion hunting made easy" might be the motto employed by M. Cattier, a bold colonist of Algeria. He has taken up the succession of the late M. Bombonnel, who died a few days ago in Dijon after having been for the greater part of his existence a mighty Mimrod in the north African jungles and deserts. If we are to credit the testimony of those who know the colony well, it is an error to suppose that there are no lions in Algeria. On the contrary, the "monarchs of the desert" abound in the forests of Bona and in the gorges of Palestro. M. Cattier is "running" his lion-hunting business at Palestro, and is doing his best to work up a connection, not only among gentlemen who may wish to accompany him in his expeditions, but also among ladies. Here is a splendid opening at once for the "modern woman" who dares do all that man does. M. Cattier has inscribed his business cards with a notice to the effect that in his hunting rendezvous are to be found lions of the Atlas Mountains, panthers, jackals, and other wild beasts, and that his establishment is provided with a special refuge or shelter for the weaker sex. The property on which M. Cattier has organized his happy hunting ground was bequeathed to him—so far as the rights of chase are concerned—by his friend Bombonnel, at whose disposal it was placed by the Government in order to facilitate his zoological researches—or, rather, what may literally be called "pursuits."

Jones—"What! a new daughter at your house? If she grows up to resemble your wife she'll be a belle." Smith—"Yes, I suppose she will, for she bellers now."

Gain may be temporary and uncertain, but ever while you live expense is constant and certain; and it is easier to build two chimneys than to keep one in fuel.—[Franklin.]

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There are some errors so sweet that we repent them only to bring them to memory.

All Men

young, old, or middle-aged, who find themselves nervous, weak and exhausted, who are broken down from excess or overwork, resulting in many of the following symptoms: Mental depression, premature old age, loss of vitality, loss of memory, bad dreams, dimness of sight, palpitation of the heart, emissions, lack of energy, pain in the kidneys, headache, pimples on the face or body, itching or peculiar sensation about the scrotum, wasting of the organs, dizziness, specks before the eyes, twitching of the muscles, eye lids and elsewhere, bashfulness, deposits in the urine, loss of will power, tenderness of the scalp and spine, weak and flabby muscles, desire to sleep, failure to be rested by sleep, constipation, dullness of hearing, loss of voice, desire for solitude, excitability of temper, sunken eyes surrounded with LEADEN CIRCLE, oily looking skin, etc., are all symptoms of nervous debility that lead to insanity and death unless cured. The spring or vital force having lost its tension every function wanes in consequence. Those who through abuse committed in ignorance may be permanently cured. Send your address for book on all diseases peculiar to man. Address M. V. LUBON, 50 Front St. E., Toronto, Ont. Books sent free sealed. Heart disease, the symptoms of which are faint spells, purple lips, numbness, palpitation, skip beats, hot flushes, rush of blood to the head, dull pain in the heart with beats strong, rapid and irregular, the second heart beat quicker than the first, pain about the breast bone, etc., can positively be cured. No cure, no pay. Send for book. Address M. V. LUBON, 50 Front Street East, Toronto, Ont.

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[THE END.]