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The Spanish Treasure.

A NOVEL.

By Mrs. Elizabeth C. Winter.

(SADELLA CASTLEBY)

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CHAPTER XIX.

All right, haven't I already told you that I always delayed, now, goodby? You really must go," and as the door closed after the professor, the Hon. Clarence stretched his arms above his head, and, curiously enough, his head, was suddenly dropped into a chair.

"The hypnotizing business is exhausting business," he said; "if this is how Van used to feel, I can understand his need of a stimulant." Poor old Van! He's just about crazy on the subject, and when an awful horse like this didn't choke him off from time to time, but it has been a good day.

"Oh, Clarence!" exclaimed Polly, "I don't? When have I not loved you?"

"Really, truly, Polly?"

He had not meant to say so much. As he told himself afterward, it had been a mere accident. He certainly did not mean to commit himself so irreversibly; but when Polly spoke these words, "Better than my life?" and in speaking them raised her pretty rosy mouth toward her, she was irresistible. That Stanley bent and kissed her, and was ever afterward under the impulse that made him do so; for as he declared to himself,

"A fellow would be a brute not to kiss a pretty girl when she so evidently expected it."

"Ho-ho!" said Polly. Then, gently withdrawing from the half-embrace in which he held her, "Here comes Dolores."

And almost with the words Dolores entered. She took the roll of manuscript in her hand, and was evidently ready to begin the reading of it at once; and holding slightly to Stanley, almost as if she had already so吻ed him, she seated herself at a little distance from one of the windows.

"She shall not be interrupted," said Polly. "That is why I received you here in this little boudoir, Clarence. You are the only gentleman, except myself, who enters this room. It is sacred to my girlfriends, and I hope you will appreciate the honor. I have given orders that no one shall interrupt us, Rita."

Dolores answered only by one swift look of thanks, and, smoothing out the pages of writing, she glanced hurriedly through them.

"It is here," she said. "I make no apology for it. And I can only guess, the writing being my father's, that he was the editor as well as the writer. I have called it 'A Legend of the Mendozas.'

A LEGEND OF THE MENDOZAS.

"WHAT EVER."

"A tropic sea so beautiful that nature fashioned no other blue so deep, so rich, so wonderful with which one can compare it. A tropic sky without one cloud as far as the eye can see, and in the west the fading tint of sunset dying in a soft blending of purple, gold, mauve, pink and palest green—a color that, as it slowly fades into the night, leaves on the soul a lightheartedness, like the last notes of an exquisit madrigal, and through all, the warm, sweet breath of the tropics blown from lands of spice and laden with the perfume of strange, rare fruits and flowers."

"Over this tranquil sea were sailing three ships, bound for a shore to which it may be no ship had ever sailed; certain it is, no such ship had ever till then been seen in these waters, for they came from many thousand miles away, and they carried the first links of the great chain that was henceforth to bind the old world to the new. The largest and the chief of these vessels was called the Santa Maria, and in its deck now stood the man whom Queen Isabella of Spain had named 'Our Admiral of the Seas,' Don Christopher Columbus."

"It was a form and a body to which he was familiar, and he would have been almost at home surprised if Polly Hamilton could have seen it at times when his mind was bent upon exposing many secret movements when our evil tendencies were entirely in the ascendancy."

"Well, I have a good many ironies to live past now," he thought, "and between the two I must certainly be able to sample out the various little examples and samples that best my career of life. If the Mendoza treasure turned out to be a myth, the entire nation of西班牙 and a fat new roll went into a bad lookout, and may yet be mine; and if all else fails, there is always Polly—sheer, charming little Polly."

And whistling an air from the opera—Polly Hamilton's favorite air—Mr. Clarence Stanley at last turned from the mirror, glanced about the room to be quite sure that all drawers had been carefully tested, and with a light step went forth in search of dinner. Having dined, Stanley wandered about aimlessly, dropped into one or two theater, not being sufficiently interested to know what the play had been about when he came out; and at last, being in the neighborhood of his hotel, he returned to his room and went to bed. In the morning, he found himself somewhat despondent and inclined to take himself to task for wasting time on anything so trifling as the Mendoza treasure; a quest which, though very well known, had brought only loss, despair and death to many a member of his family.

"Am I," he questioned, "behaving like a fool thus by hazarding the outcome for the shadow? There is pretty Polly Hamilton, with all her father's virtues, waiting to drop into my arms; and all that I have to do is simply to open them. Wouldn't it be the part of wisdom and good common sense to go to see Polly; and, well, perhaps, hold my arms?"

And full of these thoughts, which showed an unusual degree of vacillation on the part of Clarence Stanley, he took himself toward the home of the Hammonds at an unusually early hour that afternoon. But, almost unconsciously to himself, there was in his mind the thought that he would see Dolores, and perhaps obtain the hearing of that mysterious manuscript, the story of which would, he fancied, shed light on much that was still obscure to him in the history of his own family. And fate itself seemed to declare in his favor on this day, for Polly met him robust with delight, at his arrival, and triumphing in the knowledge that Dolores had promised to read the manuscript within that very hour if she should come.

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"But you ought to have known," said Polly, "and I believe she's with a lovely fascinating—which—for everything she says comes to pass. She has gone to her room now, to get the papers, because she said she felt that you were coming. Now, Clarence, how in the world should she have known that, when even I, who have lived in this house all my life, could be quite sure of it?"

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