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The Spanish Treasure.

A NOVEL.

By Mrs. Elizabeth C. Winter.

(ISABELLA CASTELAR.)

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CHAPTER XI.
CONTINUED.

"And it was here that Pedro Mendoza finally resolved to stay, for a secret prescience—the magnet that responded to the love of gold within his soul—told him that on this favored spot he would yet find the treasure he sought.

"The natives of this island were in every way superior to any the Spanish adventurers had yet encountered, for they were simple in nature, and, as the others had done, they firmly believed Columbus and his followers to be angelic visitors descended from the sky. They said, in answer to the usual inquiries for gold, that the island abounded with the precious metal, but must be sought in the interior, where lived a great prince, surrounded by warriors, all of whom were ornaments of gold and whose wrists and ankles were strings of pearls and precious stones about their necks and on their arms and ankles.

"This was joyful tidings for Columbus, who felt certain he had now reached the East Indies. He determined to send a party to the court of this king, while he and the rest of his followers investigated more closely the riches of the island. The natives said it lay a long distance away—a four days' journey—and he was not expecting the return of his messengers under ten days; for he had ordered Ithona to bring back full information of all they should find and the exact location of the gold and treasure of the interior. When, therefore, they returned several days sooner than expected from reporting that no gold nor any kind of treasure was to be discovered, he was bitterly disappointed, but Pedro Mendoza, who had been one of the party, smiled. In the disappointment of Columbus he saw his own triumph, the hour for which he had waited and hoped was now at hand.

"The island was soon decided to be the largest and best of the Bahamas, and the fleet sailed further in search of the river whose waters reveal concealed gold. A young Indian had informed the Admiral that this river was to be found on an adjacent island called Cuba. It is supposed that Columbus had named the island, but an entirely descriptive one, on account of its productiveness, and that the admiral's ignorance of the Indian language caused him to mistake it for the name of a place. To the disappointment of Mendoza, and to the dissatisfaction of the rest of the crew, he decided at once to set sail in search of Cuba, etc. Discontent had already begun to fill among the sailors, although as yet nothing of it had reached the ears of Columbus; but Pedro knew that Martin Alonzo, captain of the Pinta, had sworn to part from Columbus, in order to make discovery on his own account. Pinzon and his crew, and indeed all the sailors, considered that Columbus made the great waste to leave these islands before he had thoroughly investigated their resources or even permitted his men the enjoyment of a single week on land.

"But through desertion of the Pinta gave Mendoza the opportunity for which he had been watching. When the order was given to return to the boats he concealed himself and was nowhere seen. He feared a search might be made for him if his absence was observed, but no one had given out among his fellows an intention to join the crew of the Pinta. This would, of course, anger the admiral, whom he hated, but as the Pinta would also have deserted before the morning, anger would be useless. It pleased Mendoza to think of commander's dismay when he should discover the desertion of Martin Alonzo with his ship and crew, and it pleased him still more to picture to himself the distress of Columbus at the loss of 'a faithful follower,' if he should ever be rejoined by the Pinta. This manhated the admiral with the instinctive hate of evil toward good and for personal reasons besides. The reward for the first sight of 'land' had been awarded to the sailor on board the Pinta, although Mendoza swore that he had first proclaimed it. This reward was finally given to the commander himself, as being the real discoverer, from his having first descried a light moving along the shore of San Salvador.

"That the act Pedro Mendoza never knew; and if he had, it would only have intensified his hate of Christopher Columbus. With a triumphant heart he watched the preparations for leaving the island, and from a secure hiding place his gaze followed the other sailors, accompanied by great numbers of the natives, as they slowly took their way to the water's edge, where they entered the boats and soon rowed to the three ships at anchor in the beautiful bay.

"It was characteristic of this singular and selfish-trained being that even while he beheld the departing vessels lessening every moment as the sunset shades crept over them like a purple veil, his feelings were all of exultation and not of sadness. He remembered, indeed, that he was alone on this island, surrounded by savages, of whose language he was ignorant and of whose real disposition he could not, from his brief acquaintance with them, possess much knowledge. He had taken care, however, to provide himself with arms, and he knew that the Indian ascribed supernatural power to everything appertaining to the white man. He was quick to note the awe with which they had regarded the brilliant colors of the Admiral's dress, and he had supplied himself from the wardrobe of his commander with such articles as he thought likely to be effective in displaying his own personal advantages, of which he was well aware, and he had garnered up every little string of beads and every pair of hawk's bells that he had been able to borrow, beg or steal, from the moment he had first conceived the idea of remaining with the Indians. He was, therefore, fairly well prepared for the existence he had undertaken. It was only necessary to work on the superstition and simplicity of the natives to have a free course.

"He decided not to show himself till the morning, for in the early dawn of the next day, when the natives were gathered for their festival, he suddenly appeared among them, with the full effect of having descended on the sky. Their surprise was wholly joyous, and with shouts of 'Turey, Turey' they welcomed him, and Mendoza perceived by their tone of reverence, and by many other indications, that he was considered a god. But he had returned to them with the promise and thus to be duly received and adored as a god. But he had returned to them with the promise and thus to be duly received and adored as a god. But he had returned to them with the promise and thus to be duly received and adored as a god.

"Mendoza had resolved to fix that any search would be made for him by Columbus, for he had duly informed him of his intention to stay, so that the escaped envy and consideration of the latter. During the time the admiral's ignorance had enabled him to gain the confidence and respect of the natives, he had become thoroughly familiar with the language, and while every hour and day trembled with the music of love that blended into one long plaintive melody of praise and joy, the Spanish adventurer awaked, thoroughly refreshed, and ready from his retirement to step forward and present himself for the coming interview. He made a careful toilet, taking pains to make the most of his fine figure and handsome face, and also to display to the most advantage the brilliant scarlet tunic stolen from the admiral's wardrobe, and as many bright-colored beads and peculiar little tinkly bells as he could hang about his neck and arms and ankles.

"In his simple followers he was a very important figure, and while they prepared and served his breakfast, standing so as to form a circle round the sacred person, Pedro began to feel that he was rapidly becoming more than mortal.

"When they began the ascent of the mountains, Mendoza pointed to the highest peak, and signified that nothing would satisfy him but to be carried into the city beyond from the greatest elevation; and as this was in accordance with their desires, for the character was a deity, it was but the work of a few moments for the natives to improvise their simple conveyances. He went first, and behind him came those of his attendants who were not required to bear him company, and then the rest of the natives, who, with loud shouts and exclamations of wonder, followed the procession, making the air resound with their voices, and while every face and form