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A Drama of the Race Conflict in Four Acts by B. Harrison Peyton

CHARACTERS

Mauricio Crispin, a dancer from the Argentine, age 25 years.
La Corusca, Senora Crispin, his Argentine mother, age 42.
Agnes, their American guest and dancing pupil, age 22.
Mrs. Vincent Widener, a woman journalist, age 35.
Period: Present. Place: Providencia, a city on the Pacific coast.

(Continued from Last Week.)

Agnes: It's impossible! Will you never realize love between us is hopeless—like a fruit grown on a forbidden tree and cankered with a dreadful worm that embitters and feeds upon the soul?

Crispin: My love, you'll go back to little Godfrey, but if you don't return to me, I swear, regardless of consequences, I'll come and take you from your father—and make you my own before all the world!

Agnes: No, señor, never! How can you expect me to ever forsake my father, who needs me so immensely more than you in any event conceivable can?

Crispin: But, Agnes, what is your father? A detestable fire-eater, born and bred in an atmosphere infected with race prejudice and hatred as with a pestilence! He has breathed and fed his nature on the contagium of malevolence until his very heart's become inflamed with it, his very flesh rad bone impregnated with inhumanity! Girl, think how his mind's diseased, overpowered by that brutal madness which makes the complexions of darker fellow-beings as intolerable as in the scarlet of the matador's cloak to the infuriate bull! Oh! tell me you won't renounce me for that rancorous fiend, who may prove to have practically killed his own poor little son!

Agnes: But, señor, what if our darling should be taken from us—Godfrey who's the pride of my father's eyes and like a tendril wound about his heart, and then I besides desert father? Why, I've no doubt that would actually prove a deathblow to him.

Crispin: You speak of death, the simplest thing in creation. Oh, dear Agnes! what of the love that has wedded your soul and mine? Have faith in my word, any death would be better for us both than that I should permit you, merely in order that the guilty may escape just suffering, to smother your love alive there in your bosom through all the rest of your life. But, ah! no, heart of me, I won't permit that—even though you're plainly afraid to break with your father—afraid 'twill provoke him to harm you in some way!

Agnes: Señor, I fear nothing less than my conscience!

Crispin: Agnes, it's conscience—conscience—always conscience! Ask your conscience about the bitter fate that awaits me, if all the sweet, seductive hopes you've kindled for me are to be shattered to the winds like embers of a dying fire!

Agnes: Señor, won't you acknowledge the truth? Though I do, yet I have no right to love you.

Crispin: To love nobly, dear Agnes, is a self-vindicating right. I beg you, give a thought to amazing and dauntless Cynthia Lilburn. Mrs. Widener and I were discussing her no longer ago than tonight. You gentle, self-denying girl! is there need to prompt you to remembrance of how, for a supreme love, she defied the despotism of hereditary pride, artificial barriers and social traditions—tore herself free from the friends who now despise her—free from everything that an idolized woman of her elevated breeding would ordinarily cling to as being indispensable?

Agnes: The fetters that bound Cynthia Lilburn to her home, señor, were mere golden threads; my fetters are irremovable—like cumbersome and formidable steel!

Crispin: Mere golden threads! Was it nothing then, that that dashing girl sacrificed on the altar of her heart, señorita, the venerable blood of the Lilburns, her attachment to her birthland, all of her title to the mighty prerogatives of her race?

Agnes: There was between her and her grandfather no bond of a jointly beloved child; nor was the governor, señor, dependent on her as my father is of me.

Crispin: Indeed, no. Rogério Nobrega alone was dependent on her, as I now am on you! Yet how much less than what Cynthia Lilburn renounced is this which I implore of you! In the holy name of love and that of eternal justice, amora preciosa, I ask, how can you refuse me?

Agnes: Oh! if you only wouldn't keep on goading me to desperation! forcing me to shut the gates of sympathy upon you, in order to defend the position I know—I know—is right!

Crispin: Bless me! I say again, Agnes, you shan't make a filial sacrifice of yourself in that way! I won't

let you! Agnes, do you hear me? You shan't! I won't let you!

Agnes: Holy Redeemer! Señor how you talk as though I already belong to you!

Crispin: You're mine, Agnes! by a bond stronger than the blood, by a right God-given and absolute, by the right of love!—love!

Agnes: No, no! I'll never, I can never—never belong to you! Heed me! It's useless! Catch me in your arms again—and I'll scream—scream from the racking pain of it!

Crispin: My girl, sooner or later you'll realize what love has given not even a father can withhold! Why not right now consent to become my wife?

Agnes: Your wife! Eternal God! Señor Crispin still talks of my becoming his wife!

Crispin: For Heaven's sake, Agnes! However limited the sense in which you always have intended the term should apply, my father, the plain fact is—father—father's become—a maniac—his mind really deranged! That was the purpose of Mrs. Widener's visit here this evening—to break to me the dreadful news of my—!

Crispin: You mean, Agnes, they, the doctors have examined into the condition of his mind?

Agnes: No; that is, no one excepting—! Señor, oh! don't you mind! I tell you simply, never as long as my father lives, can I regard myself as being anything to you—never anything but my father's daughter, the venomous flesh of his flesh, the self sprung of himself—the child of a lunatic and a worker of iniquities! Let it fall short of your understanding, let me repeat it, señor! Never can I be anything to you but ill-attended part with that enemy who killed your beloved friend, Bell—oh! of a truth, his very own by training, by the brand upon both him and me, by the affinity that runs in the blood!

Crispin: Oh, Agnes, my soul! why won't you believe in the all-embracing strength of my love? Haven't I assured you, you're to me of all womankind, the most irreproachable—the one incomparable?

Agnes: You keep telling me that; it makes me laugh! Señor, I practice upon you the grossest deception. I beguile you into a friendship that's like presenting a smiling, but poisoned cup to the lips. And what do you do? You open wide to me your heart, with all its overflowing compassion and goodwill. So in the end I requite all your tenderness—with gall and wormwood, and call you a dune! Of that contemptible act, cruel, perfidious wicked, I'm guilty; guilty! Oh heavens and earth! now you say I'm of all womankind, the most irreproachable, actually the one incomparable: It's really too ludicrous, too ridiculous, for anything in the world, and, oh! how it makes me laugh!

Crispin: But your happiness, Agnes? I alone possess the power to give you happiness! For mercy's sake, O dearest! my own! my poor, woe-begone love! don't cast away every hope of happiness for a father who can only bring upon you greater and greater misery!

Agnes: Though I've victimized you by the scurviest imposture, that's not the worst I've done, señor! You'd despise me, revile me, just as you do my lunatic father, if you knew all I've done, knew the grand total of the wickedness I've committed along with my father! The most irreproachable of all womankind! Oh! how thoroughly ridiculous! And what imbecility!

Crispin: Agnes! Agnes! O Holy Intercesor, save her from herself!

(END SCENE III.)

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

The Hundredfold Recompense.

Corusca: Ha! I perceive faithful Andrew has brought your luggage downstairs in readiness for the expressman; and, señorita querida, I can well understand your feverish impatience to start on your long journey.

Agnes: Ah! senora, it's such sickening disappointment to learn that a train departed for Shadow City only an hour ago and there'll not be another for an hour and a half yet!

Corusca: Don't fret, amora mia. Believe me, I had no end of trouble in my effort to get telephone connection with the railway station; but, as Mauricio has told you, it happened I already was contemplating a trip down town in the vicinity, in order to purchase one or two necessary articles—and thus it became convenient for me to make personal inquiry at the station concerning the trains. Nevertheless, as regards delay, it's always so. Whenever one attempts haste, everything tends to detain one.

Agnes: Of course, good senora; yet if Godfrey—our Godfrey—if—before I reach home!

Corusca: Oh, I'm going to show

you something! Agnes, La Corusca has her share of feminine vanity; she is solicitous to know whether you find her newest gewgaw as pleasing to your taste as her desire is it should be?

Agnes: Oh! the diamonds and rubies, senora! senora! how they flash with dancing fire! Glories that be! they're my favorite gems! But, senora, do please try on the bracelet, do!

Corusca: No; rather let me see the happy effect of gold against your milkwhite skin.

Agnes: Senora, aren't you the least afraid I shall run off to my home with this treasure? What, senora! you bought it only this evening? Why, the watch's running on exact time!

Corusca: Nina mia, you've endeared and solemnized to Mauricio and to me, every minute and hour and day of your sojourn in Providencia! Oh, the memory of you shall be like an inexhaustible fountain set flowing within us, and, hija, with that meek fortitude which is yours, refresh and strengthen us whenever in the future we encounter the cragged way of trouble! Then, is it not fitting we should give you some small token of our esteem? Hija dulce, the bracelet is yours—a gift from Mauricio and myself.

Agnes: Mine—you—Señor Crispin—be—?

Corusca: Agnes querida, my sole hope is the watch ever will be a faithful remembrancer of the transient hours we've spent together.

Agnes: Words are—to convey my thankfulness—mere words! Madre Corusca! Madre Corusca! If I just knew a way to—oh! to express what I feel—if I just—!

Corusca: There! Now, I'm recompensed a hundredfold! But, nina mia, I fancy I saw you admiring this

cloak. 'Twas presented to Mauricio by a gallant friend, a grandee in Aragon, a famous patron of la corrida de toros.

Agnes: Senora, small wonder, then, it gives el señor a dignity so superb—such a jaunty air.

Corusca: Is the impression due to the cloak, hija pequena, or Mauricio's Argentine birth and breeding? Only ponder the vital consequence of one's birthplace. It even determines one's religion. Born in some remote countries of Islam, one supplicates God by the name of Allah, and reverences Mohammed as the only true prophet. Born in central Africa, one's a savage, perhaps a cannibal, a prostrater before the sun or graven idols, a crea-

ture! Alma mia! but how it makes me think of Anthony! Had he been born where Mauricio—oh! had the fraternal Argentine been his birthland, who—?

Crispin: Madre, I believe Andrew is seeking you, and wishes to speak to you on a matter of great urgency. Corusca: Is he? Thanks. Your pardon, querida; I'll return in a few minutes.

(END SCENE I.)
(To be Continued.)

Customer—Where will I find the candelabra?

New Floorman—All canned goods are in the grocery department on the fourth floor.—Boston Transcript.



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