

**THE LOST LODGE;  
STELLA'S  
DISCIPLINE**

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The lost lode; Stella's Discipline by Christian Reid & F. X. L.

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**CHRISTIAN REID & F. X. L.**

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BY  
CHRISTIAN REID.

AND

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# THE LOST LODGE.

## CHAPTER I.

FAR in the heart of the great Sierras that in wild and austere majesty stretch their length of tossed and broken heights along the western coast of Mexico lies the Espiritu Santo Mine. It is a mine with a wonderful history—the history of a bonanza running through more than a century, of powerful families created and enriched by its wealth, and of a flourishing town, which built upon its prosperity, fell into decay with its failure. For there came a day when even the Espiritu Santo failed. The great bonanza, which had lasted for a length of time almost unexampled even in Mexican mines, disappeared at length. Whether it was finally worked out, or whether it had only been lost, as lodes are often lost, no one could say. It was in the terrible period which the people call “the times of the revolution” that the ore ceased to pay; and in this era of confusion and bloodshed, of suffering and distress, financial collapse in all forms was too common to excite surprise or comment. It seemed altogether a thing to be ex-

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pected that the great silver lode of the Espiritu Santo should have failed at this time. Had it not failed, there was then neither money nor men to work it. The money was taken by forced levies, for the support of armies and revolutionary leaders, the men died by thousands on obscure battle-fields where the land was drenched in the blood of its sons.

And so, for many years, the great and once famous mine was left deserted, water rose unchecked in its dark tunnels, from whence the value of a kingdom's ransom had been drawn; and no one was bold enough to attempt to touch it. Even after the long throes of revolution were over and something like peace descended upon the exhausted land, men were too impoverished and too afraid of risking what yet remained to them, to think of the Espiritu Santo Mine. For in this case the Mexican proverb, "*Una mina quiere otra mina*" ("One mine wants another mine"—to furnish means to work it), was especially true. To drain the mine and to explore its deep workings for the lost lode of fabulous richness would require a large capital—a capital so large, in fact, that no single man was likely to furnish it, and the only hope for a renewed working was in the organization of a company.

This being well known, every one was astonished when Fernando Sandoval "denounced" the mine; for nothing was a more indisputable fact

than that Fernando neither had nor could command means to work it. He belonged to a family that in former times had owned a large interest and grown rich from its profits. But those riches had now taken wings, for in Mexico as in other countries, the case of the bottom rail finding itself on the top, and *vice versa*, was a frequent practical result of the wars. The family Sandoval were now very poor. They, who had once counted their territory by leagues rather than by acres, were now reduced to one small estate in the beautiful valley over which frowned the rugged heights and passes of the mountains within whose great purple clefts lay the opening of the mine from which they had once derived so much wealth.

It was perhaps because it lay there, dominating the poverty in which he spent his life with the suggestion of untold riches, that Fernando, the eldest son of the family, felt his heart burning with a discontent very unusual in one of his people, who, as a rule, accept the alterations of fortune with oriental stoicism. Or perhaps the fact that he wished very much to marry and could not afford to do so caused him to think by day and night of the lost lode, and to speculate upon the chances of finding it. For he knew well that unless he could reach fortune by some short-cut the soft, dark eyes of his cousin Guadalupe would never be allowed to smile for him. She



was an orphan, dwelling beneath his father's roof and subject entirely to the control of his parents, who, although they had given her a home and love and kindness, when the cruel changes of war had in early childhood left her orphaned and penniless, would certainly never consent to his marrying her unless he could prove his right to do so by making money enough to enable him to do as he pleased.

But how was this to be accomplished? It is not an easy task, even in a country where opportunities for money-making abound, but in a country impoverished by revolutions, with few industries, few avenues to wealth, it becomes an almost insoluble problem. So Fernando found it, and so his thoughts turned more and more towards the romantic stories which abound in Mexico of sudden wealth yielded by the mines that from the days of Cortez to our own have surpassed in richness all others in the world. If he could but find again the lost lode of the *Espiritu Santo*! He began to haunt the deserted mine, to descend as far as he could into it, to gaze with passionate longing at the depths of still water that covered the old workings. Somewhere, somewhere there—down there—must lie the lost lode! He felt it with an intensity and a certainty that was like a consuming passion. For money to drain those dark waters and search untiringly until the lode was found, what would he not give or do! But

money for such investment he neither had nor could possibly obtain. And this being so, it was necessary to put his wits to work and endeavor to accomplish by other means the end on which he had set his heart.

About this time he began to correspond with a friend in the City of Mexico, a lawyer known to have business dealings with certain English companies. The result of the correspondence was that one day Fernando went to the Mining Deputation and denounced the Espiritu Santo Mine, thus becoming its owner after the formalities of the law were complied with, but bound by law to do a certain amount of work within a certain limit of time, or to forfeit his title, in which case the mine would again revert to the state and be again open to denoucement, as the process of acquiring title is called.

It was then that his friends and acquaintances began to wonder what Fernando meant to do. They were not long left in doubt. Soon two foreigners appeared on the scene, who inspected the mine as far as inspection was possible, and then took a bond upon it. Men were at once placed at work, although no work of any real importance was possible until the mine was drained; for which purpose a powerful modern pump was necessary. In the course of a few months this arrived, the engine was put up, and soon the water of the mine was pouring in a flood

through the mouth of the tunnel which was the chief entrance into it, and flowing tumultuously down the steep *arroyo* of the mountain-side.

Following upon this, a new person arrived on the scene—a young Englishman who, it was understood, was to take charge of the work now that there would be something of importance to be done. He did not seem very much like one who would stimulate or hasten work, this dark, languid young man, who, except in manner and speech, had no appearance of an Englishman; but since he carried half the alphabet after his name, in token that he belonged to half a dozen scientific societies, it is to be supposed that the new owners of the *Espiritu Santo* knew what they were about in sending him to look after their interests. That he was the son of one of them had perhaps as much bearing upon the case as the scientific initials; but neither fact impressed Fernando Sandoval with much belief in his practical ability. Although he did not smile when he saw him, for a Mexican has the impassive calm of an Indian together with the stately dignity of a Spaniard, he certainly thought that this bored-looking fine gentleman, with his sleepy eyes, his English drawl, and admirably-cut London clothes, would not be likely either to find the lost lode himself, or to interfere seriously with certain plans already matured in his (Sandoval's) mind regarding it.