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THE MARK OF ZORRO

JOHNSTON MCCULLEY

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"And the *señorita* must forgive me the deception. I courted her as Don Diego, and she would have none of me. Then I tried it as Señor Zorro, and the saints were kind, and she gave me her love.

"Perhaps there was some method in that, also. For she turned from the wealth of Don Diego Vega to the man she loved, though she deemed him, then, an outcast and outlaw.

"She has showed me her true heart, and I am rejoiced at it. Your excellency, this *señorita* is to become my wife, and I take it you will think twice before you will annoy her family further."

His excellency threw out his hands in a gesture of resignation.

"It was difficult to fool you all, but it has been done," Don Diego continued. "Only years of practice allowed me to accomplish it. And now Señor Zorro shall ride no more, for there will be no need, and moreover a married man should take some care of his life."

"And what man do I wed?" the Señorita Lolita asked, blushing because she spoke the words where all could hear.

"What man do you love?"

"I had fancied that I loved Señor Zorro, but it comes to me now that I love the both of them," she said. "Is it not shameless? But I would rather have you Señor Zorro than the old Don Diego I knew."

"We shall endeavor to establish a golden mean," he replied, laughing again. "I shall drop the old languid ways and change gradually into the man you would have me. People will say that marriage made a man of me!"

He stooped and kissed her there before them all.

"Meal mush and goat's milk!" swore Sergeant Gonzales.

THE END

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