

# Doctor Carajo's Patient

By Julian Hawthorne

## I.

Doctor Carajo sat in his verandah, smoking a cigar. His chair was a curious bamboo structure, of Japanese manufacture; and upon the carved stone balustrade beside him stood a goblet of Venetian glass half full of iced sherbet. The Doctor sat in the clear shadow, and gazed out meditatively upon a lovely prospect of semitropical sea and shore. His house, built in the Spanish style, stood on a height at the verge of the antique town—a town of narrow, irregular streets, and high-shouldered buildings, with projecting windows and arched doorways. It had not altered in hundreds of years, save to grow greyer, more indolent, and more venerable. Here and there on the outskirts clusters of palm trees supported their dark waving plumes on delicate stems; to the right a great river merged slumbering into the sea. Across this scene the afternoon sun flung a broad mellow radiance, and breathings of delicious air came up with messages of coolness from the ocean.

In this lovely and forgotten spot Doctor Carajo had lived three years. Not every man could have made himself part of such a community without occasioning a good deal of excitement and remark: a stranger was nowhere so much a stranger as in that ancient town. But Doctor Carajo had ventured into the still and immemorial life of the place as quietly and unremarkably as a shadow of the evening. Quiet and reserved he was of manner, but he was in no sense an insignificant man. His forehead was white and high, with a peculiar fineness of modelling about the temples; thin black hair, slightly tinged with grey, grew in short curls about his head. His brows were heavy, his eyes deep set and black, with a clear, calm gaze, which never kindled into wrath or melted into tenderness. His nose was straight, with sensitive nostrils; his mouth and chin were concealed by a heavy grey moustache and imperial. In figure he was slight, somewhat round-shouldered, and he had a grave, methodical way of walking, not devoid of unconscious dignity. In his bearing towards others he was courteous, but wholly cold and unimpassioned. His smile was rare, and slightly contemptuous. His voice was musical and low, but somewhat metallic; his speech brief, unhurried, and careless. He seemed not so much a man, with warm blood in his veins and living interests in his heart, as a serene and loveless abstraction of certain human qualities. Thus he came among the people of the old town unquestioned and, in a social sense, almost unobserved. He brought no wife with him, nor were there any female servants in his household. He never was known to seek a woman's company, nor to indicate by his demeanour any perception of difference of sex in those he met. On the other hand, as a man of learning, wealth, and great skill in his profession, his reputation in the community was unrivalled, and people consulted him as they might have consulted some wise volume containing infallible remedies for bodily ills. Doctor Carajo, in brief, held the position of a kind of physical Providence, little thought about until he was needed, and then trusted implicitly. Professionally, he was known to everyone; personally, to none.

## II

As Doctor Carajo sat smoking in his chair that sunny afternoon, the noise of a carriage proceeding up the street attracted his attention. Without altering his position, he allowed his eyes to rest upon the vehicle and its occupant. The latter was a woman, dressed in white, with a black lace mantilla thrown over her shoulders. She was in the prime of her youth and beauty, but her anxious and nervous manner showed evidences of acute distress of mind. As Doctor Carajo looked upon her, his eyes dilated and his face flushed; then he grew very pale. He leaned back in his chair as if to conceal himself from view, and remained for several moments motionless, save for his uneven breathing, and the tremulous grasp of his hands upon the arms of his chair. But when the wheels stopped before his door, and the boll sounded in the court below, Doctor Carajo drew a longer and firmer breath, and sat erect. By the time the servant arrived with the information that a lady was below who desired to see him on a matter of life and death, he appeared no less serene and impressive than usual.

“Bring hither a chair for the lady,” he said, and say that I await her.”

Having given these directions, the Doctor rose from his chair and remained leaning negligently against the stone balustrade of the balcony, with his face towards the room which opened upon it. A short time elapsed—short, that is, by the watch, though how long it may have seemed to Doctor Carajo it is impossible to say. Then a rustle and a whiteness advancing through the darkness of the room announced the visitor’s approach. As she set foot on the balcony, the Doctor bowed his head courteously.

“Doctor Carajo,” she began, speaking abruptly and impetuously, “I was told to come to you—that no one but you could cure my husband—”

At that word, the Doctor raised his head, and looked his visitor in the face, while a faint, contemptuous smile quivered for an instant beneath his grey moustache.

The lady stopped short, her beautiful lips apart, and her great eyes fixed in a gaze of seeming amazement or dismay. Presently she muttered some unintelligible words, raised her hands across her bosom with a gesture of fear or of repulsion, and her face and neck crimsoned with a hot blush.

The Doctor contemplated her for a few moments, and then said coldly, “Be seated, madam. Your husband, you were about to say—?”

“I should not have come—they said Doctor Carajo—”

“You were rightly informed, madam. I am Doctor Carajo, and I alone can cure your husband—if he be curable. You may place every confidence in me.”

“Oh, what shall I do?” murmured the lady, pressing her hands over her face. She stood dizzily, and would have fallen, had not the Doctor, by a light touch, guided her to a chair. She sank down, a tremor passed through her body, and her eyes closed.

“You appear yourself to be indisposed, madam,” observed the Doctor. “The heat outside is great, and you have over-exerted yourself. This scent will revive you;” and as he spoke he held to her nostrils a small phial containing a pungent perfume. “You ask me what you should do,” he continued. “You should, in my opinion, lose no time in telling me the circumstances to which I owe your visit. If your husband’s case is so precarious, as I am given to understand, a delay might prove fatal.”

“Would you not be more fatal than any delay?” demanded the lady, fixing her eyes upon him.

“You are scarcely complimentary,” returned the Doctor, with a smile. “I would do my best for him, as for any other human creature entrusted to my care. Nevertheless, if you deem it best to

seek assistance elsewhere—you should know me enough to know that I leave you free to do what you will.”

“Yes, I know you in that speech,” exclaimed the lady, in a low but passionate tone. “You would leave me free—too free. You say you would do your best for any human creature left to your care; but the human soul entrusted to your care you would leave free to fall into temptation and be destroyed! But, perhaps, God will be more merciful than you think.”

“I will not say I am surprised at your attacking me, madam,” said the Doctor quietly; “but I cannot pretend that, under the circumstances, I understand it.”

A brief silence ensued; then the lady leaned forward, her hands clasped on her knees, and her face raised towards Doctor Carajo, who still remained leaning negligently against the balustrade of the balcony.

“I am at your mercy,” she said; “and even such a revenge as yours should be satisfied to see me here imploring your help. I take all the blame of what has been upon myself. But no punishment you could inflict on me could be half so humiliating as this which I inflict on myself. I ask you to save him! In asking it, I give my life for his; for, after such a degradation, life would be a burden and a shame. If you have been waiting all these years for a chance to wreak your hatred on me, your time is come. It will never come again!”

The wild and reckless emphasis of this appeal, enhanced by the hushed voice in which it was spoken, seemed to have some effect upon Doctor Carajo. He stroked his grey moustache and meditated a little.

“Do you love this—husband of yours, madam?” he finally inquired.

“Enough to beg his life at your hands,” she answered, sinking on her knees.

“As a physician,” continued Doctor Carajo, “I have my professional customs. While always ready to exercise my skill in behalf of human suffering, I demand in return certain equivalents. From some, one thing; from some, another; money but seldom, for I am wealthy; but I compel my patients to feel that, when the cure is effected, we are but quits. I have already told you that it will give me pleasure to attempt the relief of your husband; but I omitted to mention the equivalent. Are you prepared to give it?”

“Anything—even my life!”

“Not your life, by any means. I shall merely require you, as soon as he is restored to health, to leave this town, never to return. You will leave it alone, concealing from your husband your route and your destination. Never henceforth will you either see him or hold any manner of communication with him. Do you agree?”

The lady had risen to her feet, and was pressing one hand over her heart. Her eyes searched Doctor Carajo’s countenance with terrible intensity. “Will you fulfil your part of the contract?” she demanded.

“I will,” he replied.

Her bosom rose and fell rapidly, her face quivered, and was now pale, now red. At last she said with a gasp, as if the words tore her life up by the roots, “Then I consent. God hear me, and judge between us!”

“Be it so,” rejoined the Doctor gravely. “And now, if you please, I will accompany you to your husband. On the way, you will inform me as to his ailment. He shall be brought to my house, and you shall witness my treatment of him. Afterwards—” he made a significant gesture. The lady moved her head in assent. But as they left the balcony, a thought struck her, and she turned again.

“You will not let him know that you—are—?”

“I will let him know that I am Doctor Carajo, madam,” said the other, bowing coldly, and making way for her to pass.

### III.

Doctor Carajo’s private room was as cool, as quiet, and as secluded as the Doctor himself. The floor was of fine Pompeian mosaic, partly covered with rugs of delicately-woven Indian matting. The lower part of the walls was of yellow marble, relieved with black; above were panels of rich woods, highly polished. The ceiling was vaulted, and contained a window of stained glass, in the nature of a skylight. At one end of the room was a deep alcove, across the entrance to which was suspended a screen or veil of some soft silken fabric, through which the interior of the room could be seen, though the observer could himself be invisible. Large-leaved plants stood here and there in marble vases; low chairs and tables were placed in convenient positions; and in the centre of the chamber was a broad couch or ottoman, cushioned, and draped with the finest cambric. At the end opposite the alcove was a small water-jet, playing with a tinkling sound through the mouth of a bronze lion’s head into a marble basin attached to the wall. A delicious coolness and fragrance pervaded the apartment, which was entirely removed from all outside noises and influences.

Three persons were present in this room— Doctor Carajo, the lady, and a man who lay at full length upon the couch. He was tall and powerfully formed, with broad shoulders and massive limbs. His features expressed strength and vigour; too rugged to be called handsome, but full of masculine pith and ability. A thick brown beard covered the lower part of his face; his eyes were closed, and he lay in an apparent lethargy. Upon his forehead and on his arms, which were bare, appeared a number of small spots or blotches, of a purplish hue. But for a slight intermittent movement of the chest, indicating a subdued respiration, the man might have been supposed to be dead.

“The opiate will exhaust its effect in a few minutes,” observed Doctor Carajo, bending over his patient and eyeing him critically. “From this time the active phase of the case begins. The poison has thus far made itself perceptible only by a superficial beat and stinging. It will now lay hold on the interior parts of the organism; there will be little or no pain, but more danger.”

“How long will this last?” asked the lady, who had now assumed a demeanour outwardly as quiet and self-possessed as the Doctor’s own.

“We may expect three separate stages,” the Doctor answered, “extending over several hours. The patient will retain his faculties, but their action will be modified in a peculiar manner in each of the three stages. As the poison strikes more and more deeply inward, you will notice a corresponding alteration in ah! he begins to awake.”

“Is there any hope?” asked the lady.

“The poison is one of the most insidious and deadly known to science, and also one of the rarest,” the Doctor replied. “Probably few men besides myself know how to deal with it at all. The strong vital power of the patient is in his favour; on the other hand, too long a time elapsed before the treatment began. I have an antidote here which, had it been given immediately, would have overcome the evil.”

“And how, should you give it now?” demanded the lady.

“It would still counteract the poison, but at the expense of the patient’s life. He has not now the strength to undergo the necessary struggle.”

“What shall you do?”

“I shall administer drugs which will have the double effect of increasing the vital power, and weakening the action of the poison. Human skill can do no more. Hush! he will open his eyes in another moment. He must not be aware of your presence. Step into that alcove, and make no sound. You can there see all that passes. Let nothing that he may say induce you to discover yourself, unless I give you the sign.”

The lady moved to the side of the couch, bent quickly, and kissed the forehead of the half-conscious man, and then drew back and vanished behind the curtain of the alcove.

#### IV.

The man drew a deep and quick breath, moved slightly on his cushions, and opened his eyes. His glance wandered round the room, and passed over Doctor Carajo several times before seeming to take note of him. When at length it centred upon him, the man said, in a deep and resonant voice, “You are my physician, I suppose? I feel better—free from pain, and more strength; thanks to your skill, no doubt. How soon do you promise to have me up again?”

“It is now six o’clock in the morning,” said Doctor Carajo. “By this noon, at furthest, the crisis will have passed.”

“The crisis! Humph! Then I’m not out of danger yet? Tell me the truth, Doctor; I’m not afraid to hear it. Death or life—which is it?”

“Since you have chosen to ask, I will reply,” said the Doctor, after a pause. “You may live; but it is more probable that you will die.”

“Humph! Well, such is life—and death! I have lived—I have been alive—as much as most men. And this is to be the end? The end! a strange idea, that! “ He was silent a moment or two, and then said, “Where is Lenore?”

A slight contraction overshadowed the Doctor’s brow, and passed away again.

“I presume you refer to your wife?” he said.

“Certainly—the woman I love—my wife, if there’s any meaning in words. Where is she?”

“It was indispensable, for her sake and your own, that she should remain apart from you for the present. She will be summoned as soon as safety will allow—or as soon as hope vanishes.”

“Poor darling! what would become of her were I to go!” muttered the patient, half to himself. “I must tighten my grip for her sake. Not die! no—no! She gave herself to me, body and soul, and I must stand by her to the end. There, again—the end! Is this it? It isn’t what I expected. Me to die, and she to live on? it mustn’t be! my darling—my Lenore! What a life we have had these three years past; what a love! Never a day’s shadow; never a regret. Ha! Doctor, you are there, aren’t you?—and I’ve probably been thinking aloud, as my habit is. Well, I like your face: you’re a cold man, but an honest one. You may hear whatever comes; and maybe ’twould be as well to make you my father-confessor out and out! You’re as honest as any jack-priest of ’em all—eh, Doctor?”

“I have never betrayed the confidence of man or woman,” said Doctor Carajo, quietly.

“Humph! Well, I am myself indifferently honest, as the world goes, but I can’t speak quite so fair of myself as that. But ’tis society saps our principles. What law is so strong as the love of a man for a woman? and the strongest must win. Sin and virtue are a matter of words—be the responsibility his who utters them, and the suffering his who believes them. The wise man knows he is free, and that life is short, and the fire of youth burns but once. The treasure belongs to him who can keep it; vain to buy it with money, or bind it with cords or with vows. It will go where it belongs, and there ’tis safe.”

“What, then, do you hold love to be?” inquired Doctor Carajo.

“I hold love to be—all that my blood and marrow, my flesh and pulses, and my five senses, tell me that it is: the delight of a man in what is strange, yet familiar; like, yet unlike; man, yet woman; forbidden, yet allowed. Love is passion—incarnate happiness; a surrender that is victory; to receive by giving; the generosity of selfishness; a fire that creates by consuming; a madness that is wisdom. It is the inarticulate language that transcends all languages—the sweet speech of flesh to flesh. There’s a string of paradoxes for you, Doctor, whereof you will comprehend nothing. Nor do I myself, for the matter of that; I only know that the look and touch of a certain woman will take a certain man captive, body and bones; and that the more he is captive, the better he likes it. That was my case. I found a treasure, made for me to enjoy; ’twas said another man owned it, but I knew naught of him. If it were his, he would have kept it. I have proved my right to it; and if it were, to take over again, I would take it!”

“Love, therefore, is wholly a physical matter?” said Doctor Carajo, with a smile.

“Yes: and yet, by that inspiration man has invented poetry, and the soul, and heaven, and all manner of the like glorious hallucinations. Love cannot die, we say; no—nor will the sun ever cease to warm the cold, or water to refresh the thirsty. But neither sun, nor water, nor love itself will animate the dead; so what is one more than the other?”

“Surely a convincing argument,” remarked Doctor Carajo, still smiling, and with a glance towards the curtained alcove. “And lovers parted on earth are parted for ever. The only wonder is that, for so slight a cause, a man should compromise himself so deeply. The world is wider than a woman’s arms; and power, learning, and revenge are sweeter than her kiss.”

“I have not found them so,” replied the other, closing his eyes.

A long silence followed, during which Doctor Carajo’s patient seemed to lie in a half-waking dream. The physician watched him carefully. At times he sprinkled his face with a certain volatile essence, fanning him the while with a long-handled fan of white owl’s feathers; once or twice he made him swallow a powder of a reddish colour. The fountain plashed in its marble basin, and the rainbow lights from the stained glass window moved slowly along the walls and across the floor, and the flowers in their vases gave out their perfume. And all this time Doctor Carajo kept his face averted from the alcove, whence came no sound nor movement.

When, at length, the patient opened his eyes once more, a change was manifest in his appearance. His pallor was great, so that a white gleam seemed to rest upon his face; his features were sharper; blue veins showed through the skin of his forehead, and his eyes were sunken and brilliant. His voice had lost its depth and strength, but was clearer and more penetrating than before. The expression of his countenance was composed and meditative.

“Where is Lenore?”

“Her time has not yet come,” replied the Doctor.

“My mind beholds her clearly,” rejoined the other. “My thoughts dwell with her, and commune with her own. In that sympathy of mind all love consists. Without it, the blind passion of the heart and the senses is misleading and mischievous. They are the force, but intellect is the guide; and when their force is gone, the intellect remains true to its choice. The delight of love is in the perception of its harmonies; and age, sickness, or absence has no power to obscure it.”

“Then, were you to see Lenore no more, it would not disturb you?” asked the Doctor.

“Bodily presence is not without its uses,” answered the other calmly. “To be a king, you must have a subject; and the body is the subject of the mind. By ruling it, the mind realizes and confirms its aims and conclusions; and, on the other hand, the body, by its suggestions and limitations, sets the mind in motion and gives it strength. Without the body, love would be a

dream; as, without the mind, it would be but a sensual and promiscuous instinct. Nevertheless, love having once attained bodily incarnation, I conceive that thenceforth the actual association together of the lovers is of secondary importance though, perhaps, the mind needs to be refreshed occasionally by renewed intercourse with its mate, providing it with fresh incidents and developments to consider and interpret."

"Your philosophy is certainly persuasive," observed Doctor Carajo. "But, from this point of view, what think you of the so-called sanctity of the marriage bond?"

"It is an ingenious device for the preservation of outward social order," said the other, "but not in itself worthy of an intellectual man's respect. The laws of the mind are evidently above the control of social laws. Were all men ruled, as they ought to be, by the intellect, bonds of any kind, marriage or other, would cease to be. Households would still exist, and families would be reared; but the free intercourse of mind with mind, with all that that implies, would be admitted, and, as a consequence, the passion of jealousy would vanish along with other relics of barbarism. In other words, marriage based upon intellectual sympathy would no longer be checked by marriages of merely material convenience; and immorality would disappear with the artificial morality which has created it.

"A desirable consummation, indeed," remarked Doctor Carajo. "And so you would, without repugnance, behold Lenore in possession of another of more sympathetic intellectual endowments than yourself?"

"The question seems a fair one," returned the other doubtfully; "but I have, perhaps, omitted some essential point in my analysis. Allowing the possibility that such an intellect as you suppose might exist, I still cannot conceive him as having rights over Lenore. The fact that we have belonged to each other has created between us something that did not exist before, and which cannot be removed; something neither physical nor intellectual, yet more substantial than either. I confess it perplexes me, and my mind is weary. I must rest awhile before considering it further."

And even as he spoke, he sank into a lethargy.

## V.

The interval between this stage and the final one lasted but a few minutes, but was marked by an even greater change in the aspect of the patient. The bodily substance of the man seemed in great measure to have sunk away and become translucent; he was not so much a physical object as a spiritual presence. The light in his eyes had the appearance of proceeding from some source beyond matter, and to see things which material sight has no cognizance of. At times a slight trembling passed through him, as if his body were shaken by the effort of some inward power to break away from its imprisonment. His voice, reduced almost to a whisper, nevertheless thrilled upon the ear with a distinctness and force that outdid the noisiness of the sturdiest lungs.

"Lenore!" he exclaimed commandingly, "come to me!"

"Hush!" said Doctor Carajo, with a frown. "She is not here."

"She is behind that veil," returned the other; "let her come forth."

At first there was no response to this summons; but by-and-by the curtain was grasped from within and slowly drawn aside. In the opening appeared the figure of Lenore, white in face and figure, like a ghost obeying a ghostly mandate. As her glance met that of Doctor Carajo's patient, she faltered, and uttered a low cry.

"You are dying, my love!" she said; "he has killed you!"

“By no means!” said Doctor Carajo sullenly. “At this moment I would buy his life with my own. Human skill has done its utmost.”

“Do not come too near!” murmured Lenore’s lover, as she advanced towards him. “We have no time to lose!”

“Am I not yours? Do you not love me?” she cried, in a voice weighted with unshed tears, and holding out her hands to him.

“There is a spiritual barrier between us,” he said. “Do not let your fleshly hand disregard it. It seemed to me that I loved you; it seems so still. But there has never been a true union between you and me. The license of the body, the arrogant insanity of the intellect—these parody love, and banish it. Can happiness be founded on murder? and we murdered marriage, Lenore!”

“But I never loved him—nor he me!” she said passionately. And then, with a sweeping gesture of the arm, she pointed to Doctor Carajo. “That is the man! Let him answer if what I say is not true.”

The Doctor shrugged his shoulders. “The question is a futile one,” he said. “Sin, like God, is no respecter of persons. Take it, if you will, that I was justly served; her responsibility towards the covenant she broke is the same, and thereby she is condemned. But I deprecate this discussion, and the foolish revelation which occasioned it. If I ever were the person she asserts, I have long ceased to be so. His name and his heart—be it good or evil—are mine no more. I am plain Doctor Carajo, a man of science, and an observer.”

“Your heart is at least the same in its coldness and revengefulness!” said Lenore bitterly.

“Coldness! I loved you!” exclaimed Doctor Carajo, with sudden and strange vehemence. “I tried to win your love, but you withheld it. Mine was no surface passion, to be expressed with a flow of words and protestations; and because I could not speak, you thought me indifferent. Then, in my absence, you met this man, and betrayed me. I would not condescend to pursue you and supplicate you, or to seek a vulgar vengeance. I left you to the retribution of time and change. And this hour rewards me.”

“Can such love as ours be wrong?” demanded Lenore, turning to her lover. “Is it not its own justification?”

“No, Lenore; nor must we seek justification,” answered the dying man. “We have polluted the sacred symbol which is the image of creation. As light is married to heat, form to substance, and truth to goodness, so is man married to woman. The sanctity of that union is above and independent of individual conditions. For the sake of one selfish pleasure, should we oppose and defy a law in which are bound up the purity and welfare of mankind? or should we say that, because this man fails to be a worthy husband, we may violate the warrant whereof he, whether worthy or not, is the representative?”

“If the love that, for these three years past, has been my life, be wickedness,” said Lenore, “then why should I desire truth and goodness?”

“The love which opposes love of humanity is, in its essence, not love, but hatred,” the dying man answered. “It is with such love that we heretofore loved each other; it is grounded in mortality, and must pass away. But there is something in us that outlasts the strength of the body and the pride of intellect—a soul which cannot die, and whose love is real and immortal. My soul, which until now I have never known or acknowledged, is now awake, and fills the place of death: it is I!”

“And do you love me still?” asked Lenore.

“Whether it be a new profanation or a promise, I love you still,” he murmured; “nay, I have never truly loved you until this moment.”

“We shall meet hereafter,” she said.

“Let not your heart imagine it,” he replied:

“the wages of sin is not immortal happiness. Pray only that he whom we have chiefly wronged be less a sufferer thereby than we ourselves.”

“Let not that disturb you,” said Doctor Carajo gloomily. “If what this dying man has said be true—and it may be so, for aught I can tell—you have injured each other more fatally than you have injured me. I ask no more. Heaven may promise you what happiness it will; I shall not cross you there.”

“Farewell, Lenore!” said her lover, in a tone whose solemnity overawed its tenderness.

“Must I stay here alone?” she cried out in agony. “Let me go with you!”

“Not so! Rejoice, rather, that your road of retribution lies in this world. As for me, I go to a strange country, whose ways and boundaries no man knows.”

There was a silence. “He is gone!” muttered Doctor Carajo, turning away.

But Lenore pressed her hands over her heart.

“He is here!” said she.