

forgetful of everything, he urged his horse faster, shouting as he rode, "Stop that man! Stop that man with the black horses!"

Jos (only son of Jefferson and Maria Hyer, commonly called "Aunt Ri") hearing his name called on all sides, reined in Benito and Baba as soon as he could, and looked around in bewilderment to see what had happened. Before he had time to ask any question, Felipe had overtaken him, and riding straight to Baba's head, had flung himself from his own horse and taken Baba by the rein, crying, "Baba! Baba!" Baba knew his voice, and began to whinny and plunge. Felipe was nearly unmanned. For the second he forgot everything. A crowd was gathering around them. It had never been quite clear to the San Bernardino mind that Jos's title to Benito and Baba would bear looking into; and it was no surprise, therefore, to some of the onlookers, to hear Felipe cry in a loud voice, looking suspiciously at Jos, "How did you get him?"

Jos was a wag, and Jos was never hurried. The man did not live, nor could the occasion arrive, which would quicken his constitutional drawl. Before even beginning his answer he crossed one leg over the other and took a long observant look at Felipe; then in a pleasant voice he said: "Wall, Senor—I allow yer air a Senor by yer colour—it would take right smart uv time tew tell yeow haow I cum by that horse, 'n by the other one tew. They ain't mine, neither one on 'em."

Jos's speech was unintelligible to Felipe. Jos saw it, and chuckled.

"Mebbe 'twould help yer tew understand me ef I wuz tew talk Mexican. he said, and proceeded to repeat in tolerably good Spanish the sum and substance of what he had just said, adding: "They belong to an Indian over on San Jacinto; at least, the off one does; the nigh one's his wife's; he wouldn't ever call that one anything but hers. It had been hers ever sence she was a girl, they said. I never saw people think so much of horses as they did."

Before Jos had finished speaking, Felipe had bounded into the waggon, throwing his horses reins to a boy in the crowd, and crying, "Follow along with my horse will you? I must speak to this man."

Found! Found—the saints be praised—at last! How should he tell this man fast enough! How should he thank him enough!

Laying his hand on Jos's knee, he cried: "I can't explain to you; I can't tell you. Bless you for ever—for evèr! It must be the saints led you here!"

"Oh Lawd!" thought Jos; "another o' them saint fellers! I allow not, Senor," he said, relapsing into Tennesseean. "It wur Tom Wurmsee led me; I wuz gwine to move his truck for him this afternoon."

"Take me home with you to your house," said Felipe, still trembling with excitement; "we cannot talk here in the street. I want to hear all you can tell me about them. I have been searching for them all over California."

Jos's face lighted up. This meant good fortune for that gentle, sweet Ramona, he was sure. "I'll take you straight there," he said; "but first I must stop at Tom's. He will be waiting for me."

The crowd dispersed, disappointed; cheated out of their anticipated scene of an arrest for horse-stealing. "Good for you, Tennessee!" and, "Fork over that black horse, Jos!" echoed from the departing groups. Sensations were not so common in San Bernardino that they could afford to slight so notable an occasion as this.

As Jos turned the corner into the street where he lived he saw his mother coming at a rapid run. She had her sunbonnet half off, and her spectacles pushed up on her forehead.

"Why, thar's mammy!" he exclaimed. "Whet hez gone wrong naow?"

Before he finished speaking, she saw the black horse, and snatching her bonnet from her head waved it wildly, crying, "Yeow Jos! Jos, hyar! Stop! I wuz er comin' ter hunt yer!"

Breathlessly she continued talking, her words half lost in the sound of the wheels. Apparently she did not see the stranger sitting by Jos's side. "Oh, Jos, thar's the terriblest news come! Thet Injun Alessandro's got killed; murdered; jest murdered, I say; 'tain't no lees. Thar wuz an Injun come down from ther mounting with a letter to the Ager."

"Good God! Alessandro killed!" burst from Felipe's lips in a heartrending voice.

Jos looked bewilderedly from his mother to Felipe; the complication was almost beyond him. "Oh Lawd!" he gasped. Turning to Felipe, "Thet's mammy," he said. "She wuz real fond o' both on 'em." Turning to his mother, "This hyar's her brother," he said. "He jest knowed me by Baba, hyar on ther street. He's been huntin' 'em everywhar."

Aunt Ri grasped the situation instantly. Wiping her streaming eyes, she sobbed out: "Wall, I'll allow, arter this, thar is sech ez thing ez a Providence, ez they call it. 'Pears like ther couldn't ennythin' less brang yer hyar jest naow. I know who yer be; ye're her brother Feelepey, ain't yer? Menny's ther time she's tolt me about yer! Oh Lawd! How air we ever goin' to git ter her? I allow she's dead! I allow she'd never live arter seein' him shot down dead! He tolt me thar couldn't nobody git up thar whar they'd gone; no white folks, I mean. Oh Lawd. Lawd!"

Felipe stood paralysed, horror-stricken. He turned in despair to Jos. "Tell me in Spanish," he said. "I cannot understand."

As Jos gradually drew out the whole story from his mother's excited and incoherent speech, and translated it, Felipe groaned aloud, "Too late! Too late!" He too felt, as Aunt Ri had, that Ramona never could have survived the shock of seeing her husband murdered. "Too late! Too late!" he cried, as he staggered into the house. "She has surely died of the sight."

"I allow she didn't die, nuther," said Jos; "not ser long ez she hed thet young un to look arter!"

"Yer air right, Jos!" said Aunt Ri. "I allow yer air right. Thar couldn't nothin' kill her, shori er wild beasts, ef she hed ther baby'n her arms! She ain't dead, not ef the baby ez erlive, I allow. Thet's some comfort."

Felipe sat with his face buried in his hands. Suddenly looking up he said, "How far is it?"

"Thirty miles 'n' more inter the valley, where we wuz," said Jos; "'n' the Lawd knows how fur 'tis up on ter the mounting, where they wuz livin'. It's like goin' up the wall uv a house, goin' up San Jacinto Mounting, daddy sez. He wuz thar huntin' all summer with Alessandro."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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