

8 Patience Sparhawk and Her Times

you so fond of scenery — nature, as Miss Galpin calls it — I wonder? ”

“I don’t know,” said Patience, and at that age she did not. She was responsive but dumb. She gazed down and out and upward with a pleasure that never grew old. A great bleak mountain loomed on the other side of the valley. It was as steep as if the ocean had gnawed it flat, but only the peaceful valley lay under ; out in the ocean it tapered to an immense irregular mass of rock over which the breakers leapt and fought. Carmel River sparkled peacefully beneath its moving willows. The blue bay murmured to the white sands with the peace of evening. Close to the little beach the old Mission hung its dilapidated head. Through its yawning arches dark objects flitted ; mould was on the yellow walls ; from yawning crevice the rank grass grew. Only the tower still defied elements and vandals, although the wind whistled through its gaping windows and the silver bells were no more. The huts about the church had collapsed like old muscles, but in their ruin still whispered the story of the past.

“Isn’t it splendid to think that we have a ruin ! ” exclaimed Patience.

“It’s a ruin sure enough ; but there’s uncle Jim. He must think we’re dead.”

A prolonged “Hialloa ! ” came from the valley, and Patience, with a sigh, bade Billy “Git up,” which he did in the course of a moment.

“Halloa, you youngsters, why don’t you hurry? ” cried a nasal voice. “I’ve been waiting here an hour.”

“Coming,” said Patience. “It’s too bad he had to wait.”

“Oh, he smoked and swore, so he’s all right,” said