

lived empire of Maximilian was overthrown, when Herlinda crowned the long fidelity of Gonzales by following the rare example given by a few released nuns and became the wife of the Liberal soldier, the silent yet resolute man who had been his constant companion in arms disappeared, and with him Pedro Gomez.

No one but Rosario, who as the wife of Don Alonzo took the lead among the young and idle wives of the hacienda employés, asked any questions concerning the disappearance of Leon Vallé. Doña Rita looked wise, and Don Rafael smiled at her, for she knew nothing, and could conjecture nothing that might bring evil. Rafael was the same indulgent, easy husband he had ever been. It did not occur to either that a more perfect confidence might have been observed between them, — they had followed custom; what more could be needful?

Chata and her mother sometimes talked of Vallé with wondering pity; but they saw that Doña Isabel was content, — his fate was not a mystery to her. Perhaps he was wandering in foreign countries. At least, after he had gained the new, fresh fame which honored the name of Leon Vallé, he was no more seen in Mexico. There was but one thought that troubled the heart of Chata. She could not, even for Chinita's sake, forgive the murderer of her father.

It was when Ashley Ward had gained a certain assurance of success and ultimate wealth, that he wooed and won the object of his early, generous search, his early protecting interest, his later love. In the heart of Chata no rival flame had ever glowed; Ashley had been her first, her only love. And he perhaps was scarcely conscious that the pang which ever came at the sound of one almost sacred name, was the throb of a scar where love had set its deathless root. Chata never suspected that an uncommon grief had made possible the tranquil happiness which she shared with her husband; while he never questioned even in his own soul whether his happiness would have been greater, or perhaps have been changed to torture and torment, had the beautiful, erratic daughter of Leon Vallé been spared to earth. Whatever wild emotion had thrilled him, Chata, — the good, the sweet, the gentle Chata, with the intelligent and reflective mind, which curbed and per-