

XVII

It took time, as much as a week or two, after the receipt of Frank's letter announcing that the water fight for Tierra Longa had been abandoned and the suit withdrawn, before it was borne in upon Kenneth that the situation created for him by the sudden release of opposition was, for him, practically no situation at all. If, as he had said to Virginia, he was done with Business, it was equally certain that Business was done with him. There was no prospect whatever of his being taken on by the Rickart Interests, and no likelihood that his life would supply him with any other opening into the world of finance half so good. The law as a profession had never interested him enough to be thought of as a sole means of livelihood, and though he had enthusiastically declared his devotion to the cause of mutton and alfalfa, the only opportunity open to him for coming into a productive relation to either of these was as a hireling on his sister's ranch. After six years with one of the most successful capitalists on the Coast, he had nothing more creditable than a scant two or three thousand dollars and this water right to show, a right which he might as easily have acquired without the necessity for quarreling with Rickart.

It was a right and not a possession. He had, as he humorously saw with that new capacity for playing with his work which had arisen for him out of the stroke of necessity, proposed himself as a consort for as much of the River as was not claimed elsewhere. His being married to it depended on his being able to support it in