at the sunset, and listening. Ramona had said, "I will call you when I am 'ready." But she did not do as she said. She told Margarita to call.

"Run. Margarita," she said. "All is ready now: see if Alessandro is in sight. Call him to come and take the things.

So it was Margarita's voice, and not Ramonas's that called, "Alessandro 1 Alessandro ! the supper is ready."

But it was Ramona who, when Alessandro reached the doorway, stood there holding in her arms a huge smoking plattor of the stew which had so roused poor Juan Can's longings and it was Ramona who said, as sho gave it into Alessandro's hauds, "Take care, Alessandro, it is very full. The gravy will run over if you are not careful. You are not used to waiting on table;" and as she said it, sho smiled full into Alessandro's eyes—a little flitting, gentle, friendly smile, which went near to making him drop the platter, mutton gravy, and all, then and there, at her feet.

The men ate fast and greedily, and it was not, after all, much more than an hour, when, full fed and happy, they were mounting their horses to set off. At the last moment Alessandro drew one of them aside. "Jose," he said. "whose horse is the faster, yours or Antonio's !"

"Mine," promptly replied Jose. "Mine by a great deal. I will run Antonio any day he likes."

Alessandro knew this as well before asking as after. But Alessandro was learning a great many things in these days—among other things a little diplomacy. He wanted a man to ride at the swiftest to Temecula and back. He knew that Jose's pony could go like the wind. He knew also that there was a perpetual feud of rivalry between him and Antonio in matter of the fleetness of their respective posies. So, having chosen Jose for his messenger, he went thus to work to make sure that be would urge his horse to its utmost speed.

Whispering in Jose's ear a few words, he said, "Will you go? I will pay you for the time, all you could carn at the shearing."

"I will go," said Jose, elated. "You will see me back to morrow by sundown."

"Not earlier ?" asked Alessandro. "I thought by noon."

"Well, by noon be it, then," said Jose. "The horse can do it." "Have great care!" said Alessan-

dro. "That will I," replied Jose; and

giving his horse's sides a sharp punch with his knees, set off at full gallop westward.

"I have sont Jose with a message to Temccula," said Alessandro, walking up to Fernando. "He will be back here to-morrow noon, and join you at the Ortega's the next morning."

"Back here by noon to-morrow !" exclaimed Fernando. "Not unless he kills his horse !"

"Tuat was what he said," replied Alessandro nonchalently.

"Easy enough; too !" cried Antonio. riding up on his little dun mare. "I'd go in less time than that on this mare. Jose's is no match for her, and never was. Why did you not send me, Alessandro?"

"Is your horse really faster than Jose's?" said Alessandro, "Then I wish I had sent you. I'll send you next time."

CHAPTER VII.

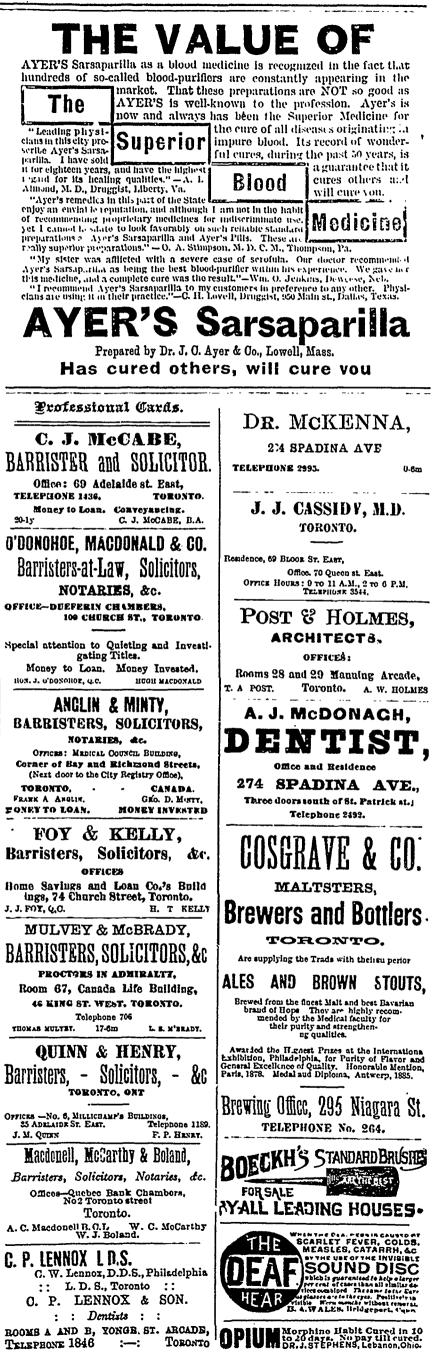
It was strange to see how quickiy and naturally Alessandro fitted into bis place in the household. How tangles straightened out, and rough places became smooth, as he quietly took matters in hand. Luckily, old Juan Can had always liked him, and felt a great sense of relief at the news of his staying on. Not a wholly unsifish relief, perhaps; for since his accident Juan had not been without fears that he might lose his place alto-

gether ; there was a Mexican, he know, who had long been scheming to get the situation, and had once openly boasted at a fandango, where he was dancing with Anita, that as soon as that superannuated old fool, Juan Canito, was out of the way, he meant to be the Senora Moreno's head shepherd himself, To have seen this man in authority on the place would have driven Juan out of his mind.

But the gentle Alessandro, only an Indian—and of course the Senora would never think of putting an Indian permanently in so responsible a position on the estate—it was exactly as Juan would have wished; and he fraternized with Alessandro heartily from the outset; kept him in his room by the hour, giving him hundreds of longwinded directions and explanations about things which, if only he had known it, Alessandro understood far better than he did.

Alessandro's father had managed the Mission flocks and herds at San Luis Rey for twenty years; few were as skilful as he; he himself owned nearly as many sheep as the Sinora Moreno; but this Juan did not know. Neither did he realize that Alcssandro, as Chief Pablo's son, had a position of his own not without dignity and authority. To Juan, an Indian was an Indian, and that was the end of it. The gentle courteousness of Alessandro's manner, and his behavior were set down in Juan's mind to the score of the hoy's native amiability and sweetness. If Juan had been told that the Senor Felipe himself had not been more carefully trained in all precepts of kindliness, honourable dealing. and polite usage, by the Senora, his mother, than had Alessandro by his father, he would have opened his eyes wide. The standards of the two parents were different, to be sure ; but the advantage could not be shown to be entirely on the Senora's side. There were many things that Felips knew, of which Alessandro was profoundly ignorant; but there were others in which Alessandro could have taught Felipe; and when it came to the things of the soul, and of honour, Alessandro's plane was the higher of the two. Felipe was a fair-minded, honourable man, as men go ; but circumstance and opportunity would have a hold on him they could never get on Alessandro. Alessandro would not lie. Felipe might. Alessandro was by nature full of veneration and the religious instinct ; Felipe had been trained into being a good Catholic. But they were both singularly pureminded, open-hearted, generous-souled young men, and destined, by the strange chance which had thus brought them into familiar relations, to become strongly attached to each other. After the day on which the madness of Felipe's fever had been so miraculously soothed and controlled by Alessandro's singing he was never again wildly delirious. When he waked in the night from that first long sleep, he was, as Father Salvierderra had predicted, in his right mind ; knew every one, and asked rational questions. But the overheated and excited brain did not for some time resume normal action. At intervals he wandered, especially when just arousing from sleep; and, strangely enough, it was always for Alessandro that he called at these times, and it seemed always to be music that he craved. He recollected Alessandro having sung to him that first night. "I was not so crazy as you all thought," he said. "I know a great many of the things I said, but I couldn't help saying them; and I heard Ramona ask Alessandro to sing; and when he began, I remember I thought the Virgin had reached down and put her hand on my head and cooled it." (TO BE CONTINUED.)

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