

as far removed from him as was the morning star beneath whose radiance he had that morning watched, hoping for sight of her at her window. He did not, however, go so far as to thus think of her. Even that would have been impossible. He only knelt on the stones outside the chapel door, mechanically repeating the prayers with the rest, waiting for her to reappear. He had no doubt, now, that she was Senor Felipe's wife; all the same he wished to kneel there till she came out, that he might see her face again. His vista of purpose, fear, hope, had narrowed now down to that—just one more sight of her. Ever so civilised, he could hardly have worshipped a woman better. The mass seemed to him endlessly long. Until near the last, he forgot to sing; then, in the closing of the final hymn, he suddenly remembered, and the clear, deep-toned voice pealed out, as before, like the undertone of a great sea-wave, sweeping along.

Ramona heard the first note, and felt again the same thrill. She was as much a musician born as Alessandro himself. As she rose from her knees, she whispered to Felipe: "Felipe, do find out which one of the Indians it is has that superb voice. I never heard anything like it."

"Oh, that is Alessandro," replied Felipe, "old Pablo's son. He is a splendid fellow. Don't you recollect his singing two years ago?"

"I was not here," replied Ramona; "you forget."

"Ah, yes, so you were away; I had forgotten," said Felipe. "Well, he was here. They made him captain of the shearing band, though he was only twenty, and he managed the men splendidly. They saved nearly all their money to carry home, and I never knew them to do such a thing before. Father Salvierderra was here, which might have had something to do with it; but I think it was quite as much Alessandro. He plays the violin beautifully. I hope he has brought it along. He plays the old San Luis Rey music. His father was bandmaster there."

Ramona's eyes kindled with pleasure. "Does your mother like it, to have him play?" she asked.

Felipe nodded. "We'll have him up on the veranda to-night," he said.

While this whispered colloquy was going on the chapel had emptied, the Indians and Mexicans all hurrying out to set about the day's work. Alessandro lingered at the doorway as long as he dared, till he was sharply called by Juan Canito, looking back: "What are you gaping at there, you Alessandro! Hurry, now, and get your men to work. After waiting till near mid summer for this shearing we'll make as quick work of it as we can. Have you got your best shearers here?"

"Ay, that I have," answered Alessandro, "not a man of them but can shear his hundred in a day. There is not such a band as ours in all San Diego County; and we don't turn out the sheep all bleeding, either; 'you'll see scarce a scratch on their sides.'"

"Humph!" retorted Juan Canito. "Tis a poor shearer, indeed, that draws blood to speak of. I've sheared many a thousand sheep in my day and never a red stain on the shears. But the Mexicans have always been famed for good shearers."

Juan's invidious emphasis on the word "Mexican" did not escape Alessandro. "And we Indians also," he answered, good-naturedly, betraying no annoyance; "but as for these Americans, I saw one at work the other day, that man Lomax, who has settled near Temecula, and upon my faith, Juan Can, I thought it was a slaughter-pen, and not a shearing. The poor beasts limped off with the blood running."

Juan did not see his way clear at the moment to any fitting rejoinder to this easy assumption, on Alessandro's part, of the equal superiority of Indians and Mexicans in the sheep-shearing

art; so, much vexed, with another "Humph!" he walked away; walked away so fast that he lost the sight of a smile on Alessandro's face, which would have vexed him still further.

At the sheep-shearing sheds and pens all was stir and bustle. The shearing shed was a huge caricature of a summer house—a long, narrow structure, sixty feet long by twenty or thirty wide, all roof and pillars; no walls; the supports, slender rough posts, as far apart as was safe, for the upholding of the roof, which was of rough planks loosely laid from beam to beam. On three sides of this were the sheep-pens, filled with sheep and lambs.

A few rods away stood the booths in which the shearers' food was to be cooked and the shearers fed. These were mere temporary affairs, roofed only by willow boughs with the leaves left on. Near these, the Indians had already arranged their camp; a hut or two of green boughs had been built, but for the most part they would sleep rolled up in their blankets on the ground. There was a brisk wind, and the gay-coloured wings of the windmill blew furiously round and round, pumping out into the tank below a stream of water so swift and strong that, as the men crowded around, whetting and sharpening their knives, they got well splattered, and had much merriment pushing and elbowing each other into the spray.

A high four-posted frame stood close to the shed; in this, swung from the four corners, hung one of the great sacking bags in which the fleeces were to be packed. A big pile of these bags lay on the ground at the foot of the post. Juan Can eyed them with a chuckle. "We'll fill more than those before night, Senor Felipe," he said. He was in his element, Juan Can, at shearing times. Then came his reward for the somewhat monotonous and stupid year's work. The world held no better feast for his eyes, than the sight of a long row of big bales of fleece, tied, stamped with the Moreno brand, ready to be drawn away to the mills. "Now, there is something substantial," he thought; "no chance of wool going amiss in market!"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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Head-Constable MacMecmin, Clontarf, has been appointed to the charge of John street, station, Limerick, to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Head-Constable Phelan.

The landlords of one or two large properties in West Clare have been taking the preliminary proceedings for carrying out evictions in that district. With this view, notices under the "Eviction made easy" clauses have been issued against several tenants, and have been prominently posted in the club houses in the rural districts. The objections were obtained over three months ago, and now, at the worst period of the year for the tenants, the dreadful prospect of the workhouse or the roadside is to be offered them.

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