

THE ROSE DAWN

CHAPTER I

I

COLONEL RICHARD PEYTON stepped to the edge of his veranda and looked up into the early morning through the branches of his over-arching live oak trees. He was very proud of those trees, for they were taller and more wide spread and branchy than any other live oaks in Arguello County; and that is saying a good deal. In fact so impressive were they that the Colonel had named the five or six acres they occupied *Cathedral Oaks*, thus placing them apart in all minds from the Rancho de la Corona del Monte, which was the Colonel's real property. Every morning thus the Colonel stepped early to his veranda's edge and looked up. And every morning something mysterious of the new day came down and met his spirit; whether it was a sound, as the low soft cooing of mourning doves; or a scent, as of something released by the dampness of fog or dew or the winter rains; or a sight, as of the slant of golden or silver light, or a solemn belated owl, or the sailing of slow clouds down the wind. These things he absorbed, and they grew into his subconsciousness, and thus became part of him, so that at last he rose to a mild scorn of all who did not likewise arise betimes.

"By Godfrey, Allie!" he would cry to his plump, bright-eyed, alert little wife, as he strode around the breakfast table to kiss her ceremonially. "I cannot understand these slug-abeds! They miss the best of the day!"

And then he would seat himself across the table and beam about. The dining room thereupon resumed its natural size;