"I dare say that is the place," declared the other—"must be, according to the time we have been coming this way. It is big place, isn't it?" as he looked more closely; "greatest wonder to me how those priests ever made such buildings as that with no other workmen than a lot of lazy worthless Injuns."

"They could not have been entirely worthless," remarked his companion drily, "they seem to have accomplished something when they did that, and it must have required a master-head to plan the thing. I never could quite understand it."

The other did not answer this. He was busy unpacking a lunch they carried with them, and when it was ready to be partaken of he spoke again:

"There, now, that is good enough for any one! Eat something, Henry, and your brain may be able to do better work," and he smiled at his own conceit; "no use arguing with a man with an empty stomach. I make it a point never to do that."

His companion needed no second invitation, for he was hungry. As they were eating, however, he remarked: "The country is even better then you led me to expect, Jake. I feel much better than when I came, and as a land for opportunities—well, I guess it is that, too."

"You just bet it is! Cheap land here now will be worth many times what it is selling for in a few years. I mean to invest most of my means, then let it lay until prices raise. It won't be long."

The eyes of the other roved over the little valley. "Did you ever see a prettier, more peaceful scene?" he asked.

His companion, who had been giving strict attention to his stomach, followed his gaze. It was, indeed, a beautiful scene. Suddenly he leaned forward; "I believe there is just what we are looking for," he declared.

"What do you mean?"

"Why, that the land in this valley is just what we want. There is fertile land, there is water, there is beauty—what more do we want?"

"But can you not see this land is already taken? See the houses," pointing toward them.

The one addressed as Jake laughed a low unpleasant laugh. "Them are just Injuns' houses. They don't count."

"Do you mean you can take this land away from the Indians?" asked the other in surprise.

"Cert'! they don't count, I tell you. They can't hold land. The Government has declared that they have no right to it. This land is for sale."

"It is a beastly shame!" indignantly. "If they have no right to it, I should just like to know who has?"

"We have," grinned Jake.

"We have not, and I will be party to no scheme to take this land away from its rightful owners!"

"Don't get excited, Henry; it will not do a mite of good. These Injuns cannot hold this land, and we might jest as well have it as any one. It suits me, and I intend to have it."

"You can do as you like, of course; but I warn you that not one cent of my money or Ruth's, as far as I have control of it, shall go into any such questionable business. It is a disgrace and a shame."

"Well, then, I will buy on my own hook," growled Jake, "but you may see your folly after awhile."

Pepillo lay perfectly still while this conversation was going on. He did not understand all that was said, but he understood enough to know that they were talking about the land in the valley where he lived; then, too, he had heard stories of how the Indians had been driven away in other places. His eyes flashed with indignation, and he raised himself to get a good look at the men as they caught their horses and prepared to continue their journey. The dark man uttered an exclamation.

"What is it?" asked his companion.

"That Injun boy—did you see him? He bobbed up out of nowhere, and his eyes made me think of a wildcat's or a mountain lion's. Do you think he understood what we said?"

"Not very likely. They do not speak English, but I presume they are all taught not to have very much love for the Americans, and I, for one, do not wonder at it."

A shrug of the shoulders was the only answer he received, for the other did not seem to be disposed to argue with him about the matter; and so they rode slowly towards the Mission, while Pepillo followed them with his eyes, the eyes that had so startled the man called Jake.

He knew what it meant, of course he did. Did he not know how his countrymen had been driven from their homes in other places? Of course they had hoped that they might not be molested, but evidently their turn had come. A white man had cast covetous glances at the land they held. That was enough; he would lose no time in possessing himself of it—and they, where would they go? The boy caught his breath sharply. He looked around him. For years and years this had been the home of members of his tribe, and now where would they go? Where could they go? If they went elsewhere and made themselves homes, would not the white men come and take them, also, as soon as they became valuable?

His young heart was wrung with the unjustness of it all, and all the afternoon he could think of nothing else. When evening came he collected his sheep and drove them carefully in again, but it was not the care free boy that had gone out with the morning light, but a man with a burdened mind that returned.

To his parents, however, he said nothing of what he had heard; they would know in time, but he kept his secret to tell first to the Padre. He would be able to advise him what was best to do. Perhaps he might even know some way by which their land could be saved for them; if not—but he did not let his thoughts wander farther than that. He would think nothing until he had seen the Padre, and with this thought in mind he at last slept.

III

PEPILLO CONSULTS THE PADRE

When the bells in the tower of the Mission were ringing for morning Mass Pepillo made his way toward the building. His brothers were tending the sheep, and as he always went to the Mission on every possible pretext, no one thought anything of his going this time.

He paused and gazed at it; it was indeed, an imposing structure and well might men say there must have been a master-mind behind it all. The building itself was 150 or 60 feet long and 50 wide, as high as wide. At one corner was the tower, with its beautiful chimes that were now ringing to call the worshipers to Mass, and along the opposite side were 250 arches that reminded one of some old Roman castle. But the boy knew nothing of all this; he knew only that the building was grand beyond anything he ever dreamed of, and that he felt a great awe come over him when he stood within it. This morning, however, he looked at it for perhaps the first time without a feeling of joy and gladness that it was theirs—for if they were sent away, then who would have their stately church?

He followed the worshipers into the church and joined devoutly in the services, but his mind sometimes strayed, and who could wonder that it was so? When the others, one after another, had left the building he waited patiently; an Indian is taught patience when very young and it is a part of his very nature.

At length he ventured to approach the Father. "What is it, my son?" he asked with a smile, for Pepillo was a great favorite with him. "It is from such as he we may expect great things for his people," he often said.

"Father, bless me," answered the lad, as he kneeled before him. With his hand on the bowed head the old man gave the blessing the boy craved. As Pepillo arose, however, he again addressed him: "Something troubles you, my son. Speak out."

"Something does trouble me, Father," he answered in a low voice, "and I came to tell you before I told any one else."

"That was quite right, especially if it concerns others as well as yourself."

"It does concern others even more than myself, but yet myself, also," answered the lad earnestly; "Father, when caring for my sheep yesterday two strange men stopped to rest near me; they did not see me and—" the boy stopped for a moment in confusion, as he met the clear gaze of the Padre, supposing he had done wrong in not making himself known at first.

"Yes, go on, my son," said the Father gently.

"They did not see me and I kept quiet—I do not know why—and they soon began to talk. As they talked English, I did not understand all that they said, but, Father, one of the men said he was going to have this valley—that we did not count—that we had no right to it. Father, is it true? Have we no right to our homes?".

"Repeat just what you heard," answered the Father in a low, strange voice—"you may have been mistaken," but his face showed that he did not believe that this was so.

Pepillo repeated what he had heard, for every word was engraven on his memory with startling distinctness.

The face of the listening priest aged in a few moments that followed as though years had rolled over it. He did not doubt the statement of the lad before him; besides, had not two just such men as he described stayed the night before in the travelers' room at the Mission, and had not the dark one asked many questions about the valley and seemed very much pleased at the answers? This, then, was the reason!

For a few moments he was silent. He knew that for months a skeleton had walked by his side; although he had kept his eyes steadfastly fixed on high and refused to see it, yet he had felt its presence and knew that it was there—and it was this! The blow he so dreaded was about to fall. The people to whom he had given his whole life were to be driven out from their homes and he must stand by and see, with no power to help them. How could it be?

"Father, can you not help us?" It was the lad who broke the silence and brought him back to the present.

"I will try—I will do what I can," he answered slowly. "This day will I seek those in authority and see what can be done, and do you not speak of this to any one as yet. It is better that they do not know until our fears become a certainty; there will be time enough for suffering then. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Father. I will say nothing."

After a little more conversation he bade the boy go, and as he obeyed there were tears in the eyes that watched him. How much he had hoped for this lad only he and God knew—and now must it all be dashed away?

He prepared at once to go and consult with those in authority, as he had promised he would, but his heart was heavy the while. He knew the same thing had happened in other places and there had seemed to be no help. He made his petition, however, and the judge answered him:

"It cannot be helped, as I can see. The Government has decided that the Indians have no claim on these lands."

"But why have they not the same right to settle on them if they belong to the Government that the white men have?"

"Because they are not citizens of the United States."

"Then," pleaded the priest patiently, "why may they not take out papers and become citizens? I am sure you have many much worse."

"That may be, too," was the answer, "but how can we naturalize a person who is not a foreigner? It is impossible—you should recognize that fact."

"Not a citizen and not a foreigner! Then will you explain to me what an Indian is?"

"Can't do it, I am of the opinion he is not anything. Candidly, it is not right—I know that—but I do not make the laws and I cannot do otherwise than I do. I am as helpless as you are, I wish things were different, and I have said so. But what did those people down at Washington care for my opinion? Not a thing!"

"And they call this a land of justice—a land of freedom!"

"I know it does not look very consistent, but, as I said before, I can do nothing, only advise that the Indians leave quietly without any trouble."

"You would not leave your home quietly without any trouble."

"Very true, but trouble will only make it worse for them. They are helpless."

There was nothing more to be done, and the sad Father, with a heart full of care, rode back again to his Mission—the Mission that would most likely soon be surrounded by the white men, and those for whom it was built would be scattered and gone. The man old in years, who had given his whole life to them for their uplifting, felt that his heart was indeed broken.

The valley lay quiet, with no hint of the tragic scene it was to witness before many moons had come and gone, as the Father entered it at the close of day. The sun cast his rays over the Mission and the walls glistened in beauty, while the cross at the top was gilded until it looked like gold. He heard the sheep-bells and the gentle lowing of cattle, as he drew rein that he might feast his eyes once more on the scene; then he dismounted and walked onward. Not often did he allow himself to ride, but this time the urgency of the occasion had required all haste.

He met many of the Indians, the most of whom he had known from infancy, and they followed him with their eyes beaming with love. Some, more quick to discern than others, wondered why he looked so sad as he passed on toward the Mission.

IV

HIS DREAMS

Pepillo turned away from the Mission with a lighter heart. He had thrown the burden, as it were, on the shoulders of another, and he felt quite confident that the Father would be able to do something. How could any one help listening to him, so thought the boy. As he was passing a small adobe house he heard his name called. He turned at the sound, and saw a girl of about his own age sitting in the doorway with a lace frame in her hands.

"Why do you pass your friends without a word?" she laughed. Pepillo smiled also, as he threw himself on the ground not far from her.

"The truth is, Juanita, I was thinking and I did not see you,"

"That I can believe, for you looked very serious—not like my happy playmate. Have you forgotten so soon, Pepillo, the days we spent together as children?"

"Not so, but of late it has been work for me with the sheep, and," touching the lace frame, "with you, also, has it not?"

"Yes, I, too, work, but all day as I work I weave my dreams into the lace. In other years we always told each other our dreams, you remember."

"We did, and if I may say so, yours are pleasant ones. Am I right?"

"You should be," she answered in a low voice. "You have heard I am to have a wedding soon, and a feast, and the Father will bless me, and—" she stopped in some confusion.

"A wedding! Why, Juanita, you are too young!"

"You forget that I am a year older than you, and older than many brides, but it is so."

"True, I had forgotten! But who is the man?"

"Diego."

"He is fortunate. And so it is of him you dream as you weave the lace!" The boy smiled at her, but even as he did so a cloud darkened the sun, as he thought of what coming events might bring to the happy maid. She had been the same as a sister to him. He had had none of his own, but from childhood up they had played together and told each other their secrets.

"But, you, Pepillo, you are growing, too. Have you no dreams for the future?"

"I dream," he said, "of learning, of goodness, of——" he stopped for a moment, then continued, "I dream of what I have never dared before to tell, for dreams do not come true. I dream of being to my people or to others, what the good Father is. If I might but follow in his steps.

The girl looked at his now radiant face with something of awe. A dream of that kind she could not understand. He had suddenly grown away from her—the playmate of her childhood. She realized this dimly, yet did not understand. But if she could not understand him he could fully appreciate her, and so they talked on for a while. Then he rose to go. "The madre will want me," he said, as he started on.

His mother did not need him, however, and he wandered on, at last stopping before a woman, old and bent. She was seated before a tiny rude hut made of reeds, and to look at her one might have imagined she was some Egyptian mummy come to life, were it not for the eyes, that were black and bright as two beads. She was the oldest women in the village and could tell many tales when she would, which, however, was not often. She was diligently weaving a basket, but she responded to Pepillo's greeting, letting her hands rest for a moment as she looked at him with piercing eyes.

"You are making another basket, grandmother?"

"It is always another basket—and then another—for it is work we must for what little we eat. It was not so in the old days."

"Ah, you remember the old days, then—perhaps before the gringos came?" said the lad, without, however, showing the eagerness to hear her talk that he really felt, for he knew that if he did perhaps she would not say a word.

"Remember? Of course, as though it was yesterday—and happy days they were, too. Three times each day were the vitualla served to us, and after the work of the day then there was much dancing and merry-making, and each had the same as the other—never one better than the rest, and when they, like I am, got too old for the work, then they did nothing at all and had enough to eat just the same. No sitting and making baskets then. Oh, they were blessed days, blessed days! But they are gone and now it is work we must for our bite of atole, and no more the steaming meat and soups like we had then."

The lad drank in every word, not because it was new to him and he had known it not, but because he could never hear it often enough.

"I well remember," she continued, "that when I was married we had a feast and the games were played nearly the whole night—and what does a wedding amount to now?"

Pepillo thought of Juanita and sighed. It was true, what was there for the people of his race?

"It was all the Americans," he declared, but the old woman shook her head.

"No, it had begun to be bad for us before the Americans came. There was trouble, the Father said—I never understood, but it was something about Spain. But it does not matter now—nothing matters now!"

Her voice had fallen to a soft monotone, and her fingers kept time to her talk as she worked busily on the basket she was weaving.

"Oh, but it does matter," cried the boy; "everything matters—not to you, perhaps, but to us who are still young. We must be thought of."

She shook her head. "You think so, boy, but you will soon see it is not so. Nothing matters. You are an Indian. You can never be white."

"I am an Indian!" exclaimed the lad quickly, "and I am proud of it. I would not be white and cruel, but—" the sentence was left unfinished. Pepillo would not be white, and yet he craved to be like the whites.

The old woman laughed. "You are young. Wait, and when you are as old as I you, too, will know."

He did not answer, but presently he said, "What a pretty basket, grandmother! It will bring you quite a sum no doubt."

She paused a moment and looked up. "That is it—it must go for money always—just money! money! It is a part of myself, and yet I must sell it to buy something to keep the life in this old body of mine."

It was little more than just keeping life in the body, too; the boy knew that, but he made no answer to her words. He simply touched the basket and asked, "What does it mean?" But the old woman had talked as long as she wished, and she turned to her work with the words:

"You ask too much question. No time to talk—must work more and talk less," and not another word would she say, as Pepillo well knew. So he did not urge her; he did ask, however, if there was anything he could do for her, and she answered:

"Sometimes when you are out in the fields with the sheep, if you will remember and bring me a bunch of the bright flowers I will be glad," and Pepillo promised that he would not forget.

V

THE WHITE MAN'S JUSTICE

Swiftly did the time pass in the little Indian village that was the home of Pepillo. Everything went on just as it had in the past, and a visitor would have no idea that there hung over them a sad fate—not unless admitted to the confidence of the Padre or reading the sorrow written in his face. The Indian who loved him so dearly noticed, and thinking he was not well, many and many were the prayers that were offered for him among the simple people to whom he had given his life.

Juanita was married. She had her wedding just as she told Pepillo she would and then went to live in a tiny house that the bridegroom had built with his own hands. The Padre sighed as he saw their childlike faith in the future and wondered what it would bring to them; but more often his eyes turned to Pepillo, to him for whom he had hoped much, but now—

It was nearing fall when the blow fell. One of the Indians, working in his field one day, was surprised by the advent of a white man, with wagon and tools, who calmly unloaded them in his field.

"What you do, here?" demanded the Indian. "This is my place."

"Not much it ain't; this is mine, and you better jest clear out," answered the other sharply.

The Indian watched him for a few minutes in silence, then turned and walked away. He would find out what this meant. Straight to the Padre he went with the question.

"Father, what does it mean when white man come tell me this his land when it mine?" and he looked into the face of the Padre with the simple trust of a child.

"Alas, my poor children, it means that this is a white man's justice," and the tears ran down his face as he spoke.

"But if they take it away from us, where will we go?" and the light died out in the face before him, never to be kindled again—the light of peace and hope.

"My poor child, I do not know—I do not know!"

Torn with emotion, knowing that he could do nothing, the poor old priest turned and went into the Mission, into the place where for years he had gathered the red children about him and where they might come never again.

It was soon known throughout the village that the white men had taken their land, that they were going to be compelled to move, to go they did not know where—and what would be the use? They would make new homes, and then the white men would want them and would take them away. Sullen faces were on all sides? They would not move—no, they would not—but soon news reached them that the officers were coming to make them move, and the Padre advised them sadly to go.

"If you try to resist, it will be but the worse for you," he declared.

But the old man, burdened with years, fought a bitter fight. He could not stay and witness the agony of those he had tried so long to help. He must get away before the blow fell, and so, saying nothing to the people, who he well knew would not allow him to go did they know it, he set out for a port, hoping to embark in a vessel there before they learned of his intentions.

Pepillo, however, going to the Mission to see the Padre found him gone. Wild with grief he spread the alarm, and in company with many others started in pursuit, thinking that if they arrived in time they might still prevent their beloved friend from leaving them. On and on they went, feverish with anxiety and filled with hope. Surely, surely they could not be too late!

All that long night did Pepillo keep the lead. Swift of foot was he and he seemed not to tire, so it was ahead of the others that he arrived at the port. He ran, panting and out of breath, to the wharf. The sun had just risen in the east and flooded the land with beauty, and it shone on the white sails of a ship lying not far from the shore, making it look like some beautiful giant bird with waxen wings. The water rippled with a soft, mournful sound, and Pepillo stood for a few minutes entranced by the scene of beauty, almost forgetting for an instant why he was there. He was brought to himself presently by a man who asked roughly:

"What do you want here?"

"I came to see the Padre. Tell me, have you seen aught of our Father?"

"You will not see him," declared the other, in a tone of conviction, "for he is aboard yon vessel. He seemed in somewhat of a hurry, also. What is up?"

Pepillo did not hear the question. He gave a low, wailing cry, so mournful, so full of agony, that the man started and looked at him in surprise, muttering as he did so, "I did not know them blamed Indians had so much feeling!"

Others of the village were arriving and clustered around the boy, asking him many questions, but with a dumb look he could only point to the boat that was riding at anchor, but a short distance from the shore. Some one on the boat took the word to the Padre that the shore was lined with Indians, and he, knowing well what was the meaning, came at once on deck. At sight of him they fell upon their knees and reached out their arms to him with loud cries. It was an affecting scene—the old gray-headed man, bent with age and sorrow, and the kneeling Indians, weeping and entreating; but the poor old priest shook his head sadly, while the tears coursed down his cheeks as he raised his hands in blessing.

Then there was a cry from some one near, a splash, and all eyes were turned toward the spot where some one had gone down in the water. He arose in a moment and struck out for the ship. It was Pepillo. He could not let the poor old Padre go alone from his home. He was swimming with quick, even strokes, and many watched both on shore and on the boat. Would he make it, they wondered? The Father watched, also, with glowing eyes, for well he knew who the swimmer was. He did make it, and one of the sailors threw out a rope and drew him on board.

As he approached the Father he knelt before him. "Oh, my Father," he cried, "leave me not behind. Take Pepillo with you that there may be one devoted person near you to care for you. Oh, Father you are growing old—deny me not this boon. Take me, Father, and teach me. Make me even as you are."

For a minute the Padre hesitated, then he spoke, and his voice was low with feeling.

"My son, it shall be so. You shall go with me and I will teach you. If I may yet be spared to see you one of my Father's chosen ones, then I shall no longer feel that entirely useless was my life among your people."

Well pleased, Pepillo arose. It was enough for him that he was to go with the beloved Father, that he might perhaps be his servant, his slave. He turned and waxed an adieu to those standing on the shore, and they, seeming to understand what the scene meant were also glad that there was to go with him one of their own, although they must go back sadly to the homes that were theirs no longer and must begin anew they knew not where. Perhaps, after all, it was best that the Father was going away. He could not bear the sorrow that was coming to them—they had never noticed before how old and worn he looked.

And Pepillo, do you ask? He stayed with the Father as long as he lived and was educated and became a priest himself, but he never again saw his home in the land of liberty, where his people had been shown a white man's idea of justice.

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which my record at the leading shows this past season will prove to you. My winnings were as follows: At the Canadian National, Toronto—1st and 2nd Cockerel, 1st Pullet, and Hen; medal and diploma for best collection. At the Great Ontario, Guelph—1st Cock, 4th Hen, 1st Cockerel, 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Pullets, 37 pullets competing; special for 3 best pullets 2 years in succession. At Brantford—1st and 2nd Cockerel, 1st and 2nd Pullet, 3rd Cock and 2nd Hen; silver cup for best collection. At the Great International Show, Buffalo, in competition with Madison Square Garden and Boston winners, I won 3rd Cock, 3rd Hen, 2nd Pullet and 2nd Pen. I have more ribbons and cards than any Columbian Wyandotte breeder in Canada. If you are looking for the best, come to headquarters for your eggs. I have 4 grand pens mated for very best results. Eggs from Pens 1, 2 and 3, $5 per 15. Pen 4, $3 per 15, $5 per 45. My motto, not how many, but how good. All my winners in my yards. You get the same as I hatch myself. Please write me before you place your order.

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