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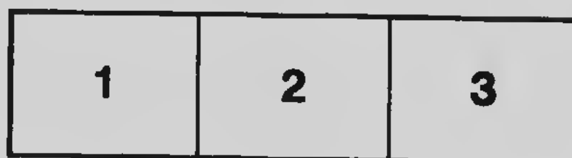

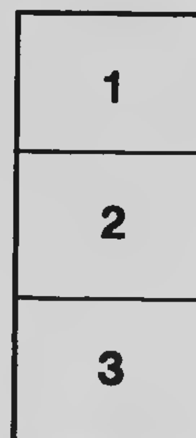

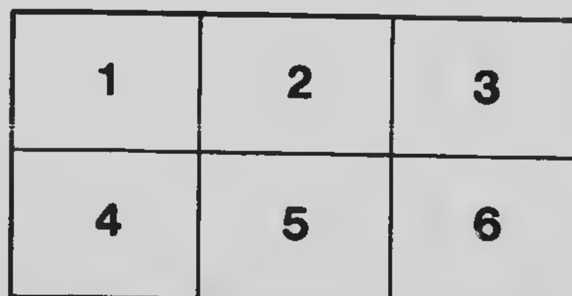

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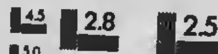
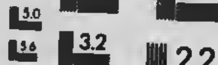
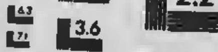
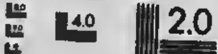

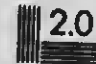
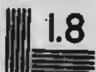

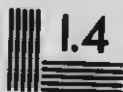
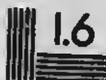

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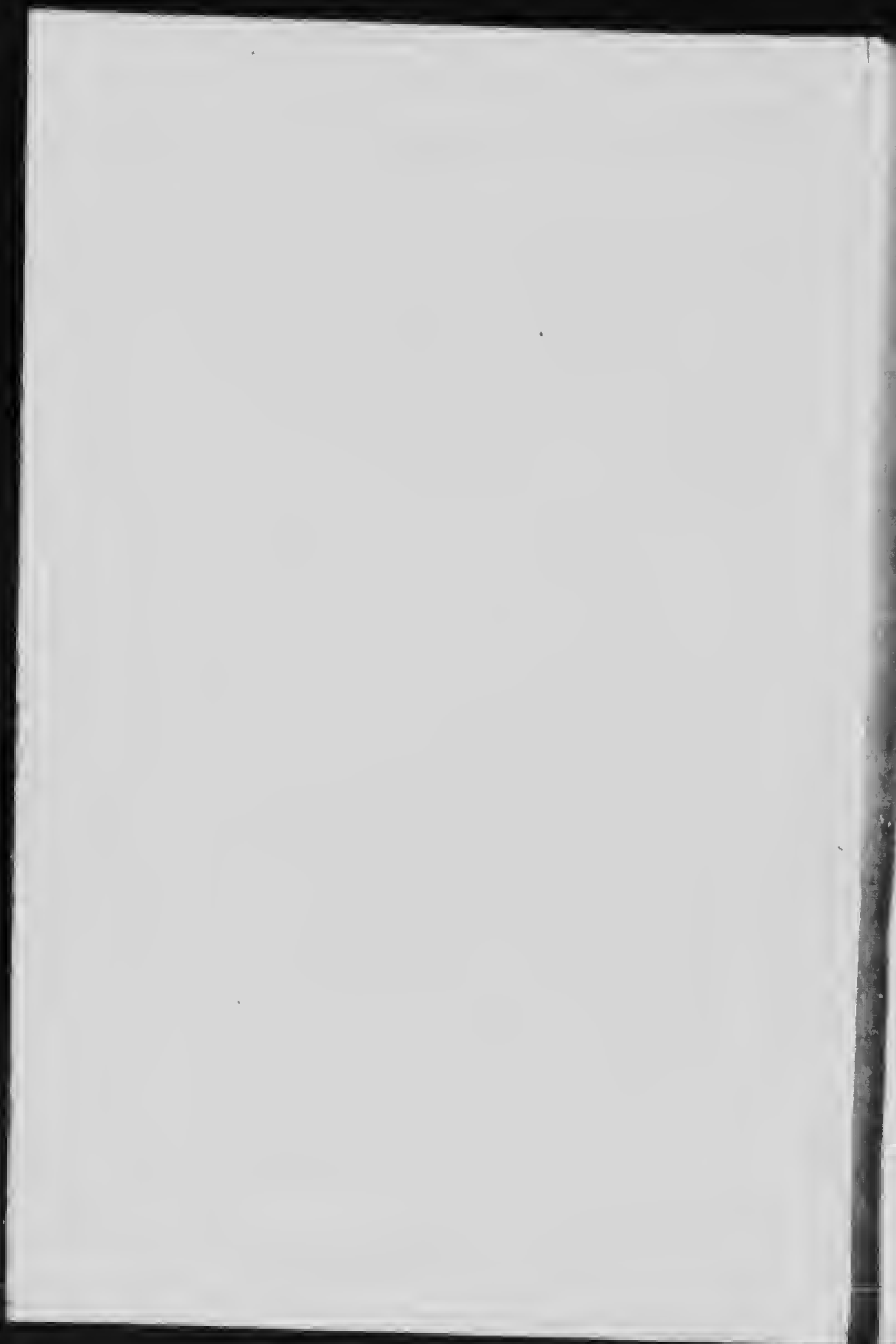

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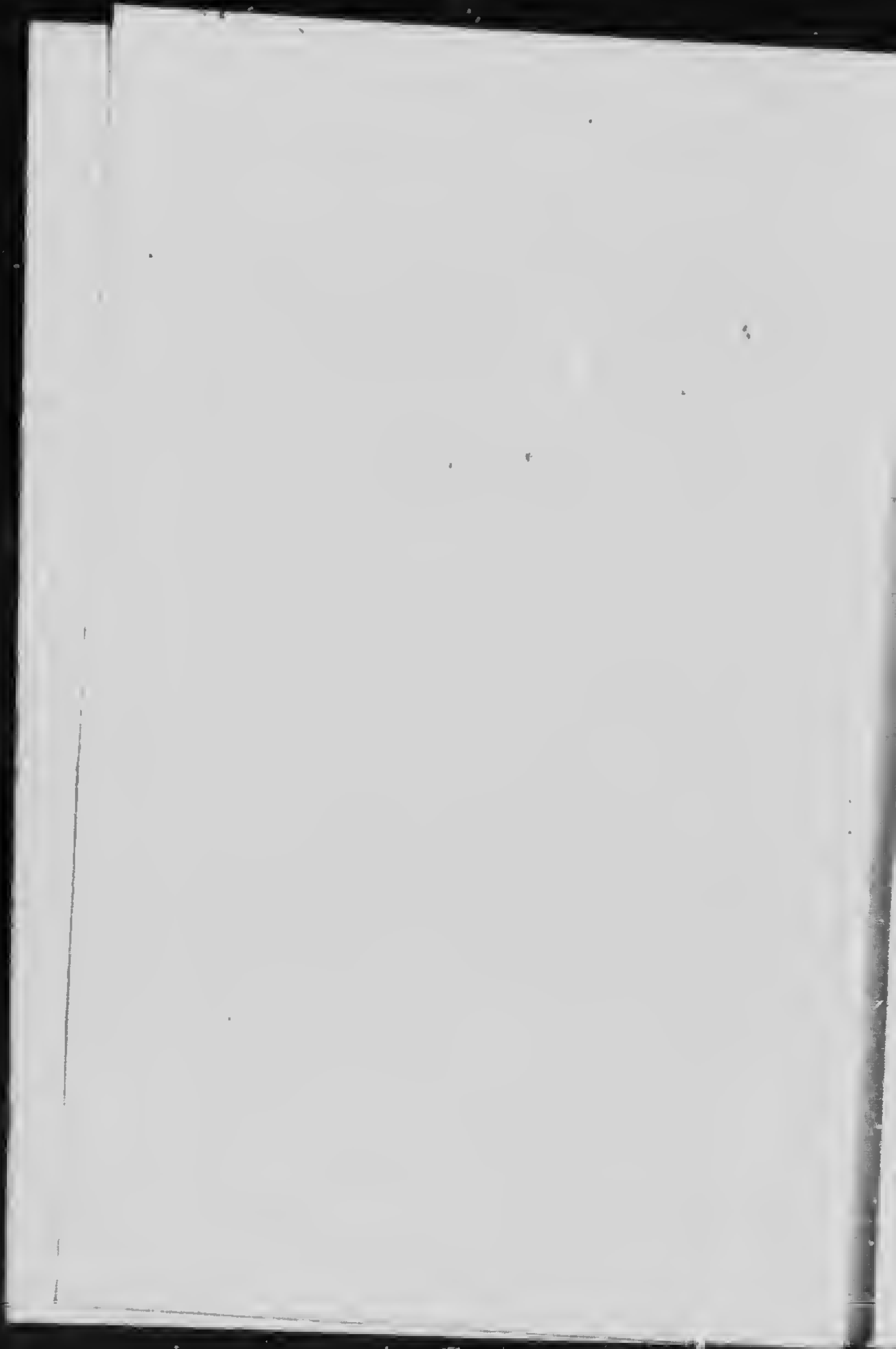


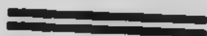
IT WAS THE REGULAR MORNING DELIVERY OF THE COUNTRY NEWSPAPER

BARKER'S LUCK

ETC.

By BRET HARTE

With Thirty-nine Illustrations by A. Forestier, Paul Hardy, A. Morrow and J. Gülich



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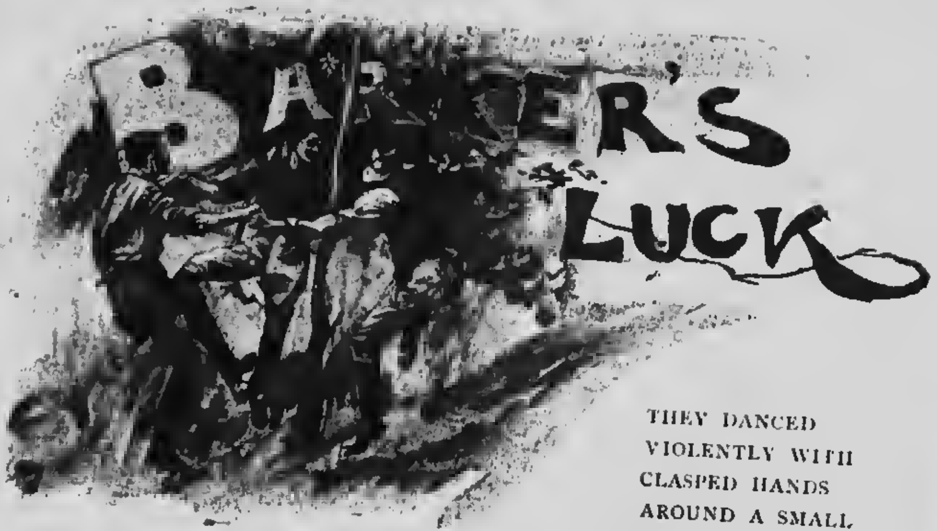


THEY DANCED VIOLENTLY WITH CLASPED HANDS AROUND A SMALL BUCKEYE

A BIRD twittered! The morning sun shining through the open window was apparently more potent than the cool mountain air, which had only caused the sleeper to curl a little more tightly in his blankets. Barker's eyes opened instantly upon the light and the bird on the window ledge. Like all healthy young animals he would have tried to sleep again, but with his momentary consciousness came the recollection that it was *his* turn to cook the breakfast that morning, and he regretfully rolled out of his bunk to the floor. Without stopping to dress he opened the door and stepped outside, secure in the knowledge that he was overlooked only by the Sierras, and plunged his head and

shoulders in the bucket of cold water that stood by the door. Then he began to clothe himself, partly in the cabin and partly in the open air, with a lapse between the putting on of his trousers and coat, which he employed in bringing in wood. Raking together the few embers on the *adobe* hearth, not without a prudent regard to the rattlesnake which had once been detected in haunting the warm ashes, he began to prepare breakfast. By this time the other sleepers, his partners Stacy and Demorest, young men of about his own age, were awake, alert, and lazily critical of his progress.

'I don't care about my quail on toast being underdone for breakfast,' said Stacy, with a yawn; 'and you needn't serve with red wine. I'm not feeling very peckish this morning.'

'And I reckon you can knock off the fried oysters after the Spanish mackerel for *me*,' said Demorest gravely. 'The fact is, that last bottle of Veuve Clicquot we had for supper wasn't as dry as I am this morning.'

Accustomed to these regular Barmecide suggestions, Barker made no direct reply. Presently, looking up from the fire, he said: 'There's no more saleratus, so you mustn't blame me if the biscuit is extra heavy. I told you we had none when you went to the grocery yesterday.'

'And I told you we hadn't a red cent to buy

any with,' said Stacy, who was also treasurer. 'Put these two negatives together and you make the affirmative—saleratus. Mix freely and bake in a hot oven.'

Nevertheless, after a toilette as primitive as Barker's, they sat down to what he had prepared, with the keen appetite begotten of the mountain air and the regretful fastidiousness born of the recollection of better things. Jerked beef, frizzled with salt pork in a frying-pan, boiled potatoes, biscuit, and coffee composed the repast. The biscuits, however, proving remarkably heavy after the first mouthful, were used as missiles, thrown through the open door at an empty bottle, which had previously served as a mark for revolver practice, and a few moments later pipes were lit to counteract the effects of the meal and take the taste out of their mouths. Suddenly they heard the sound of horses' hoofs, saw the quick passage of a rider in the open space before the cabin, and felt the smart impact upon the table of some small object thrown by him. It was the regular morning delivery of the county newspaper!

'He's getting to be a mighty sure shot,' said Demorest approvingly, looking at his upset can of coffee as he picked up the paper, rolled into a cylindrical wad as tightly as a cartridge, and began to straighten it out. This was no easy matter, as

the sheet had evidently been rolled while yet damp from the press; but Demorest eventually opened it and ensconced himself behind it.

'Nary news?' asked Stacy.

'No. There never is any,' said Demorest scornfully. 'We ought to stop the paper.'

'You mean the paper man ought to. *We* don't pay him,' said Barker, gently.

'Well, that's the same thing, smarty. No news, no pay. Hallo!' he continued, his eyes suddenly riveted on the paper. Then, after the fashion of ordinary humanity, he stopped short and read the interesting item to himself. When he had finished he brought his fist and the paper, together, violently down upon the table. 'Now look at this! Talk of luck, will you? Just think of it. Here are *we*—hard-working men with lots of *sabe*, too—grubbin' away on this hillside like niggers, glad to get enough at the end of the day to pay for our soggy biscuits and horse-bean coffee, and just look what falls into the lap of some lazy sneakin' greenhorn who never did a stroke of work in his life! Here are *we*, with no foolishness, no airs nor graces, and yet men who would do credit to twice that amount of luck—and seem born to it, too—and we're set aside for some long, lank, pen-wiping scrub, who just knows enough to sit down on his office stool and hold on to a bit of paper.'

'What's up now?' asked Stacy, with the carelessness begotten of familiarity with his partner's extravagance.

'Listen,' said Demorest, reading. '"Another unprecedented rise has taken place in the shares of the 'Yellow Hammer First Extension Mine since the sinking of the new shaft. It was quoted yesterday at ten thousand dollars a foot. When it is remembered that scarcely two years ago the original shares, issued at fifty dollars per share, had dropped to only fifty cents a share, it will be seen that those who were able to hold on have got a good thing."'

'What mine did you say?' asked Barker, looking up meditatively from the dishes he was already washing.

'The Yellow Hammer First Extension,' returned Demorest, shortly.

'I used to have some shares in that, and I think I have them still,' said Barker, musingly.

'Yes,' said Demorest, promptly; 'the paper speaks of it here. "We understand,"' he continued, reading aloud, '"that our eminent fellow-citizen, George Barker, otherwise known as 'Get Left Barker' and 'Chucklehead,' is one of these fortunate individuals."'

'No,' said Barker, with a slight flush of innocent pleasure, 'it can't say that. How could it know?'

Stacy laughed, but Demorest coolly continued: 'You didn't hear all. Listen! "We say *was* one of them; but having already sold his apparently useless certificates to our popular druggist, Jones, for corn plasters, at a reduced rate, he is unable to realise."'

'You may laugh, boys,' said Barker, with simple seriousness; 'but I really believe I have got 'em yet. Just wait. I'll see!' He rose and began to drag out a well-worn valise from under his bunk. 'You see,' he continued, 'they were given to me by an old chap in return——'

'For saving his life by delaying the Stockton boat that afterwards blew up,' returned Demorest briefly. 'We know it all! His hair was white, and his hand trembled slightly as he laid these shares in yours, saying, and you never forgot the words, "Take 'em, young man—and——"'

'For lending him two thousand dollars, then, continued Barker with a simple ignoring of the interruption, as he quietly brought out the valise.

'*Two thousand dollars!*' repeated Stacy. 'When did *you* have two thousand dollars?'

'When I first left Sacramento—three years ago,' said Barker, unstrapping the valise.

'How long did you have it?' said Demorest, incredulously.

'At least two days, I think,' returned Barker

quietly. 'Then I met that man. He was hard up, and I lent him my pile and took those shares. He died afterwards.'

'Of course he did,' said Demorest severely. 'They always do. Nothing kills a man more quickly than an action of that kind.' Nevertheless the two partners regarded Barker rummaging among some loose clothes and papers with a kind of paternal toleration. 'If you can't find them, bring out your government bonds,' suggested Stacy. But the next moment, flushed and triumphant, Barker rose from his knees, and came towards them carrying some papers in his hands. Demorest seized them from him, opened them, spread them on the table, examined hurriedly the date, signatures, and transfers, glanced again quickly at the newspaper paragraph, looked wildly at Stacy and then at Barker, and gasped—

'By the living hookey! it is *so*!'

'B'gosh! he *has* got 'em!' echoed Stacy.

'Twenty shares,' continued Demorest breathlessly, 'at ten thousand dollars a share—even if it's only a foot—is two hundred thousand dollars! Jerusalem!'

'Tell me, fair Sir,' said Stacy, with sparkling eyes, 'hast still left in yonder casket any rare jewels, rubies, sarcenet, or links of fine gold? Peradventure a pearl or two may have been overlooked!'

'No—that's all,' returned Barker simply.

'You hear him! Rothschild says "that's all." Prince Esterhazy says he hasn't another red cent—only two hundred thousand dollars.'

'What ought I to do, boys?' asked Barker, timidly glancing from the one to the other. Yet he remembered with delight all that day, and for many a year afterwards, that he only saw in their faces unselfish joy and affection at that supreme moment.

'Do?' said Demorest promptly. 'Stand on your head and yell! No! stop! Come here!' he seized both Barker and Stacy by the hand, and ran out into the open air. Here they danced violently with clasped hands around a small buckeye, in perfect silence, and then returned to the cabin, grave but perspiring.

'Of course,' said Barker, wiping his forehead, 'we'll just get some money on these certificates and buy up that next claim which belongs to old Carter—where you know we thought we saw the indication.'

'We'll do nothing of the kind,' said Demorest decidedly. '*We* ain't in it. That money is yours, old chap—every cent of it—property acquired before marriage, you know; and the only thing we'll do is to be d——d before we'll see you drop a dime of it into this God-forsaken hole. No!'

'But we're partners,' gasped Barker.

'Not in *this*! The utmost we can do for you, opulent Sir—though it ill becomes us horny-handed sons of toil to rub shoulders with Dives—is perchance to dine with you, to take a pasty and a glass of Malvoisie, at some restaurant in Sacramento—when you've got things fixed, in honour of your return to affluence. But more would ill become us!'

'But what are *you* going to do?' said Barker, with a half-hysteric, half-frightened smile.

'We have not yet looked through our luggage,' said Demorest with invincible gravity, 'and there's a secret recess—a double fond—to my portmanteau, known only to a trusty page, which has not been disturbed since I left my ancestral home in Faginia. There may be a few First Debentures of Erie or what not still there.'

'I felt some strange, disc-like protuberances in my dress suit the other day, but belike they are but poker chips,' said Stacy thoughtfully.

An uneasy feeling crept over Barker. The colour which had left his fresh cheek returned to it quickly, and he turned his eyes away. Yet he had seen nothing in his companions' eyes but affection—with even a certain kind of tender commiseration that deepened his uneasiness. 'I suppose,' he said desperately, after a pause, 'I

ought to go over to Boomville and make some inquiries.'

'At the bank, old chap ; at the bank!' said Demorest emphatically. 'Take my advice and don't go *anywhere else.* Don't breathe a word of your luck to anybody. And don't, whatever you do, be tempted to sell just now ; you don't know how high that stock's going to jump yet.'

'I thought,' stammered Barker, 'that you boys might like to go over with me.'

'We can't afford to take another holiday on grub wages, and we're only two to work to-day,' said Demorest, with a slight increase of colour and the faintest tremor in his voice. 'And it won't do, old chap, for us to be seen bumming round with you on the heels of your good fortune. For everybody knows we're poor, and sooner or later everybody'll know you *were* rich even when you first came to us.'

'Nonsense!' said Barker indignantly.

'Gospel, my boy!' said Demorest shortly.

'The frozen truth, old man!' said Stacy.

Barker took up his hat with some stiffness and moved towards the door. Here he stopped irresolutely, an irresolution that seemed to communicate itself to his partners. There was a moment's awkward silence. Then Demorest suddenly seized him by the shoulders with a grip

that was half a caress, and walked him rapidly to the door. 'And now don't stand foolin' with us, Barker boy; but just trot off like a little man, and get your grip on that fortune; and when you've got your hooks in it hang on like grim death. You'll—' he hesitated for an instant only, possibly to find the laugh that should have accompanied his speech—'you're sure to find *us* here when you get back.'

Hurt to the quick, but restraining his feelings, Barker clapped his hat on his head and walked quickly away. The two partners stood watching him in silence until his figure was lost in the underbrush. Then they spoke.

'Like him—wasn't it?' said Demorest.

'Just him all over,' said Stacy.

'Think of him having that stock stowed away all these years and never even bothering his dear old head about it!'

'And think of his wanting to put the whole thing into this rotten hillside with us!'

'And he'd have done it, by gosh! and never thought of it again. That's Barker.'

'Dear old man!'

'Good old chap!'

'I've been wondering if one of us oughtn't to have gone with him? He's just as likely to pour

his money into the first lap that opens for it,' said Stacy.

'The more reason why we shouldn't prevent him, or seem to prevent him,' said Demorest almost fiercely. 'There will be knaves and fools enough who will try to put the idea of our using him into his simple heart without that. No! Let him do as he likes with it—but let him be himself. I'd rather have him come back to us even after he's lost the money—his old self and empty-handed—than try to change the stuff God put into him and make him more like others.'

The tone and manner were so different from Demorest's usual levity that Stacy was silent. After a pause he said: 'Well! we shall miss him on the hillside—won't we?'

Demorest did not reply. Reaching out his hand, abstractedly, he wrenched off a small slip from a sapling near him, and began slowly to pull the leaves off, one by one, until they were all gone. Then he switched it in the air, struck his bootleg smartly with it, said roughly: 'Come, let's get to work!' and strode away.

Meantime Barker, on his way to Boomville, was no less singular in his manner. He kept up his slightly affected attitude until he had lost sight of the cabin. But, being of a simple nature, his emotions were less complex. If he had not seen

the undoubted look of affection in the eyes of his partners he would have imagined that they were jealous of his good fortune. Yet why had they refused his offer to share it with him? Why had they so strangely assumed that their partnership with him had closed? Why had they declined to go with him? Why had this money—of which he had thought so little, and for which he had cared so little—changed them toward him? It had not changed *him*—*he* was the same! He remembered how they had often talked and laughed over a prospective 'strike' in mining, and speculated what *they* would do together with the money! And now that 'luck' had occurred to one of them, individually, the effect was only to alienate them! He could not make it out. He was hurt, wounded—yet oddly enough he was conscious now of a certain power within him to hurt and wound in retribution. He was rich: he would let them see *he* could do without them. He was quite free now to think only of himself and Kitty.

For it must be recorded that, with all this young gentleman's simplicity and unselfishness, with all his loyal attitude to his partners, his *first* thought at the moment he grasped the fact of his wealth was of a young lady. It was Kitty Carter, the daughter of the hotel-keeper at Boomville, who owned the claim that the partners had mutually

coveted. That a pretty girl's face should flash upon him with his conviction that he was now a rich man meant perhaps no disloyalty to his partners, whom he would still have helped. But it occurred to him now, in his half-hurt, half-vengeful state, that they had often joked him about Kitty, and perhaps further confidence with them was debarred. And it was only due to his dignity that he should now see Kitty at once.

This was easy enough, for, in the naïve simplicity of Boomville, and the economic arrangements of her father, she occasionally waited upon the hotel table. Half the town was always actively in love with her; the other half *had been*, and was silent, cynical, but hopeless in defeat. For Kitty was one of those singularly pretty girls occasionally met with in South-Western frontier civilisation whose distinct and original refinement of face and figure were so remarkable and original as to cast a doubt on the sagacity and prescience of one parent and the morality of the other, yet no doubt with equal injustice. But the fact remained that she was slight, graceful, and self-contained, and moved beside her stumpy, commonplace father, and her faded, commonplace mother, in the dining-room of the Boomville Hotel like some distinguished alien. The three partners, by virtue, perhaps, of their college education and

refined manners, had been exceptionally noticed by Kitty. And for some occult reason—the more serious, perhaps, because it had no obvious or logical presumption to the world generally—Barker was particularly favoured.

He quickened his pace, and as the flagstaff of the Boomville Hotel rose before him in the little hollow he seriously debated whether he had not better go to the bank first, deposit his shares, get a small advance on them to buy a new necktie or a 'boiled shirt' in which to present himself to Miss Kitty; but, remembering that he had partly given his word to Demorest that he would keep his shares intact for the present, he abandoned this project, probably from the fact that his projected confidence with Kitty was already a violation of Demorest's injunctions of secresy, and his conscience was sufficiently burdened with that breach of faith.

But when he reached the hotel a strange trepidation overcame him. The dining-room was at its slack water, between the ebb of breakfast and before the flow of the preparation for the mid-day meal. He could not have his interview with Kitty in that dreary waste of reversed chairs and bare trestle-like tables and she was possibly engaged in her household duties. But Miss Kitty had already seen him cross the road, and

had lounged into the dining-room with an artfully simulated air of casually examining it. At the unexpected vision of his hopes, arrayed in the sweetest and freshest of rosebud sprigged print, his heart faltered. Then, partly with the desperation of a timid man, and partly through the working of a half-formed resolution, he met her bright smile with a simple inquiry for her father. Miss Kitty bit her pretty lip, smiled slightly, and preceded him, with great formality to the office. Opening the door, without raising her lashes to either her father or the visitor, she said, with a mischievous accenting of the professional manner, 'Mr. Barker to see you on business,' and tripped sweetly away.

And this slight incident precipitated the crisis. For Barker instantly made up his mind that he must purchase the next claim for his partners of this man Carter, and that he would be obliged to confide to him the details of his good fortune, and, as a proof of his sincerity and his ability to pay for it, he did so bluntly. Carter was a shrewd business man, and the well-known simplicity of Barker was a proof of his truthfulness, to say nothing of the shares that were shown to him. His selling price for his claim had been two hundred dollars, but here was a rich customer who, from a mere foolish sentiment, would be no doubt willing

to pay more. He hesitated with a bland but superior smile. 'Ah, that was my price at my last offer, Mr. Barker,' he said, suavely; 'but, you see, things are going up since then.'

The keenest duplicity is apt to fail before absolute simplicity. Barker, thoroughly believing him, and already a little frightened at his own presumption—not for the amount of the money involved, but from the possibility of his partners refusing his gift utterly—quickly took advantage of this *locus penitentiæ*. 'No matter, then,' he said hurriedly; 'perhaps I had better consult my partners first; in fact,' he added, with a gratuitous truthfulness all his own, 'I hardly know whether they will take it of me, so I think I'll wait.'

Carter was staggered; this would clearly not do! He recovered himself with an insinuating smile. 'You pulled me up too short, Mr. Barker; I'm a business man, but hang it all! what's that among friends? If you reckoned I *gave my word* at two hundred—why, I'm there! Say no more about it—the claim's yours. I'll make you out a bill of sale at once.'

'But,' hesitated Barker, 'you see I haven't got the money yet, and——'

'Money!' echoed Carter, bluntly, 'what's that among friends? Gimme your note at thirty days—that's good enough for *me*. An' we'll settle the

whole thing now—nothing like finishing a job while you're about it.' And before the bewildered and doubtful visitor could protest he had filled up a promissory note for Barker's signature and himself signed a bill of sale for the property. 'And I reckon, Mr. Barker, you'd like to take your partners by surprise about this little gift of yours,' he added, smilingly. 'Well, my messenger is starting for the Gulch in five minutes; he's going by your cabin, and he can just drop this bill o' sale, as a kind o' settled fact, on 'em afore they can say anything, see! There's nothing like actin' on the spot in these sort of things. And don't you hurry 'bout them either! You see, you sorter owe us a friendly call—havin' always dropped inter the hotel only as a customer—so ye'll stop here over luncheon, and I reckon, as the old woman is busy, why Kitty will try to make the time pass till then by playin' for you on her new pianner.'

Delighted, yet bewildered by the unexpected invitation and opportunity, Barker mechanically signed the promissory note, and as mechanically addressed the envelope of the bill of sale to Demorest, which Carter gave to the messenger. Then he followed his host across the hall to the apartment known as 'Miss Kitty's parlour.' He had often heard of it as a sanctum impervious

to the ordinary guest. Whatever functions the young girl assumed at the hotel and among her father's boarders, it was vaguely understood that she dropped them on crossing that sacred threshold, and became '*Miss* Carter.' The county judge had been entertained there, and the wife of the bank manager. Barker's admission there was consequently an unprecedented honour.

He cast his eyes timidly round the room, redolent and suggestive in various charming little ways of the young girl's presence. There was the cottage piano which had been brought up in sections on the backs of mules from the foot of the mountain; there was a crayon head of Minerva done by the fair occupant at the age of twelve; there was a profile of herself done by a travelling artist; there were pretty little china ornaments and many flowers, notably a faded but still scented woodland shrub which Barker had presented to her two weeks ago, and over which Miss Kitty had discreetly thrown her white handkerchief as he entered. A wave of hope passed over him at the act, but it was quickly spent as Mr. Carter's roughly-playful voice introduced him:

'Ye kin give Mr. Barker a tune or two to pass time afore lunch, Kitty. You kin let him see what you're doing in that line. But you'll have

to sit up now, for this young man's come inter some property, and will be sasheying round in 'Frisco afore long with a biled shirt and a stove pipe, and be givin' the go-by to Boomville. Well! you young folks will excuse me for a while, as I reckon I'll just toddle over and get the Recorder to put that bill o' sale on record. Nothin' like squaring things to onct, Mr. Barker.'

As he slipped away Barker felt his heart sink. Carter had not only bluntly forestalled him with the news, and taken away his excuse for a confidential interview, but had put an ostentatious construction on his visit. What could she think of him now? He stood ashamed and embarrassed before her.

But Miss Kitty, far from noticing his embarrassment, in a sudden concern regarding the 'horrid' untidiness of the room, which made her cheeks quite pink in one spot, and obliged her to take up and set down in exactly the same place several articles, was exceedingly delighted. In fact, she did not remember ever having been so pleased before in her life! These things were always so unexpected! Just like the weather, for instance. It was quite cool last night—and now it was just stifling. And so dusty! Had Mr. Barker noticed the heat coming from the Gulch? Or perhaps, being a rich man, he—with a dazzling

smile—was above walking now. It was so kind of him to come here first and tell her father.

'I really wanted to tell only—*you*, Miss Carter,' stammered Barker. 'You see——' he hesitated. But Miss Kitty saw perfectly. He wanted to tell *her*, and, seeing her, he asked for *her father*! Not that it made the slightest difference to her, for her father would have been sure to have told her. It was also kind of her father to invite him to luncheon. Otherwise she might not have seen him before he left Boomville.

But this was more than Barker could stand. With the same desperate directness and simplicity with which he had approached her father he now blurted out his whole heart to her. He told her how he had loved her hopelessly from the first time that they had spoken together at the church picnic. Did she remember it? How he had sat and worshipped her, and nothing else, at church! How her voice in the church choir had sounded like an angel's; how his poverty and his uncertain future had kept him from seeing her often, lest he should be tempted to betray his hopeless passion. How, as soon as he realised that he had a position, that his love for her need not make her ridiculous to the world's eyes, he came to tell her *all*. He did not even dare to hope! But she would *hear* him at least, would she not?

Indeed, there was no getting away from his boyish, simple, outspoken declaration. In vain Kitty smiled, frowned, glanced at her pink cheeks in the glass and stopped to look out of the window. The room was filled with his love—it was encompassing her—and, despite his shy attitude, seemed to be almost embracing her. But she managed at last to turn upon him a face that was now as white and grave as his own was eager and glowing.

'Sit down,' she said, gently.

He did so obediently, but wonderingly. She then opened the piano and took a seat upon the music stool before it, placed some loose sheets of music in the rack, and ran her fingers lightly over the keys. Thus entrenched, she let her hands fall idly in her lap, and for the first time raised her eyes to his.

'Now listen to me—be good and don't interrupt! There!—not so near; you can hear what I have to say well enough where you are. That will do.'

Barker had halted with the chair he was dragging towards her and sat down.

'Now,' said Miss Kitty, withdrawing her eyes and looking straight before her, 'I believe everything you say; perhaps I oughtn't to—or at least *say* it—but I do. There! But because I do

SHE OPENED THE PIANO, AND RAN HER FINGERS LIGHTLY OVER THE KEYS

believe you—it seems to me all wrong! For the very reasons that you give for not having spoken to me *before*, if you really felt as you say you did, are the same reasons why you should not speak to me now. You see, all this time you have let nobody but yourself know how you felt towards me. In everybody's eyes *you* and your partners have been only the three stuck-up, exclusive, college-bred men who mined a poor claim in the Gulch, and occasionally came here to this hotel as customers. In everybody's eyes *I* have been only the rich hotel-keeper's popular daughter, who sometimes waited upon you—but nothing more. But at least we were then pretty much alike, and as good as each other. And now, as soon as you have become suddenly rich, and, of course, the *superior*, you rush down here to ask me to acknowledge it by accepting you!'

'You know I never meant that, Miss Kitty,' burst out Barker vehemently, but his protest was drowned in a rapid *roulade* from the young lady's fingers on the keys. He sank back in his chair.

'Of course you never *meant* it,' she said, with an odd laugh; 'but everybody will take it in that way, and you cannot go round to everybody in Boomville and make the pretty declaration you have just made to me. Everybody will say I accepted you for your money; everybody will say

it was a put-up job of my father's. Everybody will say that you threw yourself away on me. And I don't know but that they would be right. Sit down, please! or I shall play again.'

'You see,' she went on, without looking at him; 'just now you like to remember that you fell in love with me first as a pretty waiter girl, but if I became your wife it's just what you would like to *forget*. And *I* shouldn't, for I should always like to think of the time when you came here, whenever you could afford it, and sometimes when you couldn't, just to see me; and how we used to make excuses to speak with each other over the dishes. You don't know what these things mean to a woman who——' she hesitated a moment, and then added abruptly, 'but what does that matter? You would not care to be reminded of it. So,' she said, rising up with a grave smile and grasping her hands tightly behind her, 'it's a good deal better that you should begin to forget it now. Be a good boy and take my advice. Go to San Francisco. You will meet some girl there in a way you will not afterwards regret. You are young, and your riches, to say nothing,' she added in a faltering voice that was somewhat inconsistent with the mischievous smile that played upon her lips, 'of your kind and simple heart, will secure that which the world would call unselfish

affection from one more equal to you, but would always believe was only *bought* if it came from me.'

'I suppose you are right,' he said simply.

She glanced quickly at him, and her eyebrows straightened. He had risen, his face white and his grey eyes widely opened. 'I suppose you are right,' he went on, 'because you are saying to me what my partners said to me this morning, when I offered to share my wealth with them, God knows as honestly as I offered to share my heart with you. I suppose that you are both right; that there must be some curse of pride or selfishness upon the money that I have got; but *I* have not felt it yet, and the fault does not lie with me.'

She gave her shoulders a slight shrug, and turned impatiently towards the window. When she turned back again he was gone. The room around her was empty; this room, which a moment before had seemed to be pulsating with his boyish passion, was now empty, and empty of *him*. She bit her lips, rose, and ran eagerly to the window. She saw his straw hat and brown curls as he crossed the road. She drew her handkerchief sharply away from the withered shrub over which she had thrown it, and cast the once treasured remains in the hearth. Then, possibly because she had it ready in her hand, she clapped

the handkerchief to her eyes, and, sinking side-ways upon the chair he had risen from, put her elbows on its back, and buried her face in her hands.

It is the characteristic and perhaps cruelty of a simple nature to make no allowance for complex motives, or to even understand them! So it seemed to Barker that his simplicity had been met with equal directness. It was the possession of this wealth that had in some way hopelessly changed his relations with the world. He did not love Kitty any the less; he did not even think she had wronged him; they, his partners and his sweetheart, were cleverer than he; there must be some occult quality in this wealth that he would understand when he possessed it, and perhaps it might even make him ashamed of his generosity; not in the way they had said, but in his tempting them so audaciously to assume a wrong position. It behoved him to take possession of it at once, and to take also upon himself alone the knowledge, the trials, and responsibilities it would incur. His cheeks flushed again as he thought he had tried to tempt an innocent girl with it, and he was keenly hurt that he had not seen in Kitty's eyes the tenderness that had softened his partners' refusal. He resolved to wait no longer, but sell his dreadful stock at once. He walked directly to the bank.

The manager, a shrewd but kindly man, to whom Barker was known already, received him graciously in recognition of his well-known simple honesty, and respectfully as a representative of the equally well-known poor but 'superior' partnership of the Gulch. He listened with marked attention to Barker's hesitating but brief story, only remarking at its close:

'You mean, of course, "the *Second* Extension" when you say "First"?'

'No,' said Barker; 'I mean the "First"—and it said First in the Boomville paper.'

'Yes, yes!—I saw it—it was a printer's error. The stock of the "First" was called in two years ago. No! You mean the "Second," for, of course, you've followed the quotations, and are likely to know what stock you're holding shares of. When you go back, take a look at them, and you'll see I am right.'

'But I brought them with me,' said Barker, with a slight flushing as he felt in his pocket, 'and I am quite sure they are the "First."' He brought them out and laid them on the desk before the manager.

The words 'First Extension' were plainly visible. The manager glanced curiously at Barker, and his brow darkened.

'Did anybody put this joke up on you?' he

said sternly. 'Did your partners send you here with this stuff?'

'No! no!' said Barker eagerly. 'No one! It's all *my* mistake. I see it now. I trusted to the newspaper.'

'And you mean to say you never examined the stock or the quotations, nor followed it in any way, since you had it?'

'Never!' said Barker. 'Never thought about it at all till I saw the newspaper. So it's not worth anything?' And, to the infinite surprise of the manager, there was a slight smile on his boyish face.

'I am afraid it is not worth the paper it's written on,' said the manager gently.

The smile on Barker's face increased to a little laugh, in which his wondering companion could not help joining. 'Thank you,' said Barker suddenly, and rushed away.

'He beats everything!' said the manager, gazing after him. 'D——d if he didn't seem even *pleased*.'

He *was* pleased. The burden of wealth had fallen from his shoulders; the dreadful incubus that had weighed him down and parted his friends from him was gone! And he had not got rid of it by spending it foolishly. It had not ruined anybody yet; it had not altered anybody in *his* eyes. It

was gone; and he was a free and happy man once more. He would go directly back to his partners; they would laugh at him, of course, but they could not look at him now with the same sad, commiserating eyes. Perhaps even Kitty—but here a sudden chill struck him. He had forgotten the bill of sale! He had forgotten the dreadful promissory note given to her father in the rash presumption of his wealth! How could it ever be paid? And, more than that, it had been given in a fraud. He had no money when he gave it, and no prospect of any but what he was to get from those worthless shares. Would anybody believe him that it was only a stupid blunder of his own? Yes, his partners might believe him; but, horrible thought, he had already implicated *them* in his fraud! Even now, while he was standing there hesitatingly in the road, they were entering upon the new claim he had *not paid for—could not pay for*—and in the guise of a benefactor he was dishonouring them. Yet it was Carter he must meet first; he must confess all to him. He must go back to the hotel—that hotel where he had indignantly left her, and tell the father he was a fraud. It was terrible to think of; perhaps it was part of that money curse that he could not get rid of, and was now realising; but it *must* be done. He was simple, but his very

simplicity had that unhesitating directness of conclusion which is the main factor of what men call 'pluck.'

He turned back to the hotel and entered the office. But Mr. Carter had not yet returned. What was to be done? He could not wait there; there was no time to be lost; there was only one other person who knew his expectations, and to whom he could confide his failure—it was Kitty. It was to taste the dregs of his humiliation, but it must be done. He ran up the staircase and knocked timidly at the sitting-room door. There was a momentary pause, and a weak voice said 'Come in.' Barker opened the door; saw the vision of a handkerchief thrown away, of a pair of tearful eyes that suddenly changed to stony indifference, and a graceful but stiffening figure. But he was past all insult now.

'I would not intrude,' he said, simply, 'but I came only to see your father. I have made an awful blunder—more than a blunder, I think—a *fraud*. Believing that I was rich, I purchased your father's claim for my partners, and gave him my promissory note. I came here to give him back his claim—for that note can *never* be paid! I have just been to the bank; I find I have made a stupid mistake in the name of the shares upon which I based my belief in my wealth. The ones

I own are worthless—I am as poor as ever—I am even poorer, for I owe your father money I can never pay!'

To his amazement he saw a look of pain and scorn come into her troubled eyes which he had never seen before. 'This is a feeble trick,' she said bitterly; 'it is unlike you—it is unworthy of you!'

'Good God! You must believe me. Listen! It was all a mistake—a printer's error. I read in the paper that the stock for the First Extension mine had gone up, when it should have been the Second. I had some old stock of the First, which I had kept for years, and only thought of when I read the announcement in the paper this morning. I swear to you——'

But it was unnecessary. There was no doubting the truth of that voice—that manner. The scorn fled from Miss Kitty's eyes, to give place to a stare, and then suddenly change to two bubbling blue wells of laughter. She went to the window and laughed. She sat down to the piano and laughed. She caught up the handkerchief and, hiding half her rosy face in it, laughed. She finally collapsed into an easy chair and, burying her brown head in its cushions, laughed long and confidentially until she brought up suddenly against a sob. And then was still.

Barker was dreadfully alarmed. He had heard of hysterics before. He felt he ought to do something. He moved towards her timidly, and gently drew away her handkerchief. Alas! the blue wells were running over now. He took her cold hands in his; he knelt beside her and passed his arm around her waist. He drew her head upon his shoulders. He was not sure that any of these things were effective until she suddenly lifted her eyes to his with the last ray of mirth in them vanishing in a big tear-drop, put her arms round his neck, and sobbed:

'O George! You blessed innocent!'

An eloquent silence was broken by a remorseful start from Barker.

'But I must go and warn my poor partners, dearest; there yet may be time; perhaps they have not yet taken possession of your father's claim.'

'Yes, George dear,' said the young girl, with sparkling eyes; 'and tell them to do so *at once*!'

'What?' gasped Barker.

'At once—do you hear?—or it may be too late! Go quick.'

'But your father—— Oh, I see, dearest, you will tell him all yourself, and spare me.'

'I shall do nothing so foolish, Georgey.

Nor shall you! Don't you see the note isn't due for a month? Stop! Have you told anybody but Paw and me?'

'Only the bank manager.'

She ran out of the room, and returned in a minute tying the most enchanting of hats by a ribbon under her oval chin. 'I'll run over and fix him,' she said.

'Fix him?' returned Barker, aghast.

'Yes, I'll say your wicked partners have been playing a practical joke on you, and he musn't give you away. He'll do anything for me.'

'But my partners didn't! On the contrary——'

'Don't tell me, George,' said Miss Kitty, severely. '*They* ought never to have let you come here with that stuff. But come! You must go at once. You must not meet Paw; you'll blurt out everything to him; I know you! I'll tell him you could not stay to luncheon. Quick, now; go. What? Well—there!'

Whatever it represented, the exclamation was apparently so protracted that Miss Kitty was obliged to push her lover to the front landing before she could disappear by the back stairs. But, once in the street, Barker no longer lingered. It was a good three miles back to the Gulch; he might still reach it by the time his partners were

taking their noonday rest, and he resolved that, although the messenger had preceded him, they would not enter upon the new claim until the afternoon. For Barker, in spite of his mistress's injunction, had no idea of taking what he couldn't pay for; he would keep the claim intact until something could be settled. For the rest, he walked on air! Kitty loved him! The accursed wealth no longer stood between them. They were both poor now--everything was possible.

The sun was beginning to send dwarf shadows towards the east when he reached the Gulch. Here a new trepidation seized him. How would his partners receive the news of his utter failure? *He* was happy, for he had gained Kitty through it. But they? For a moment it seemed to him that he had purchased his happiness through their loss. He stopped, took off his hat, and ran his fingers remorsefully through his damp curls.

Another thing troubled him. He had reached the crest of the Gulch, where their old working ground was spread before him like a map. They were not there; neither were they lying under the four pines on the ridge where they were wont to rest at midday. He turned with some alarm to the new claim adjoining theirs, but there was no sign of them there either. A sudden fear that

they had, after parting from him, given up the claim in a fit of disgust and depression, and departed, now overcame him. He clapped his hand on his head and ran in the direction of the cabin.

He had nearly reached it when the rough challenge of 'Who's there?' from the bushes halted him, and Demorest suddenly swung into the trail. But the singular look of sternness and impatience which he was wearing vanished as he saw Barker, and with a loud shout of 'All right, it's only Barker! Hooray!' he ran towards him. In an instant he was joined by Stacy from the cabin, and the two men, catching hold of their returning partner, waltzed him joyfully and breathlessly into the cabin. But the quick-eyed Demorest suddenly let go his hold and stared at Barker's face. 'Why, Barker, old boy, what's up?'

'Everything's up,' gasped the breathless Barker. 'It's all up about these stocks. It's all a mistake; all an infernal lie of that newspaper. I never had the right kind of shares. The ones I have are worthless rags;' and the next instant he had blurted out his whole interview with the bank manager.

The two partners looked at each other, and then, to Barker's infinite perplexity, the same

extraordinary convulsion that had seized Miss Kitty fell upon them. They laughed, holding on each other's shoulders; they laughed, clinging to Barker's struggling figure; they went out and laughed with their backs against a tree. They laughed separately and in different corners. And then they came up to Barker with tears in their eyes, dropped their heads on his shoulder, and murmured exhaustedly:

'You blessed ass!'

'But,' said Stacy, suddenly, 'how did you manage to buy the claim?'

'Ah! that's the most awful thing, boys. I've *never paid for it*,' groaned Barker.

'But Carter sent us the bill of sale,' persisted Demorest, 'or we shouldn't have taken it.'

'I gave my promissory note at thirty days,' said Barker desperately, 'and where's the money to come from now? But,' he added wildly, as the men glanced at each other—'you said "taken it." Good heavens! you don't mean to say that I'm *too late*—that you've—you've touched it?'

'I reckon that's pretty much what we *have* been doing,' drawled Demorest.

'It looks uncommonly like it,' drawled Stacy.

Barker glanced blankly from the one to the other. 'Shall we pass our young friend in to see the show?' said Demorest to Stacy.

'Yes, if he'll be perfectly quiet and not breathe on the glasses,' returned Stacy.

They each gravely took one of Barker's hands and led him to the corner of the cabin. There, on an old flour barrel, stood a large tin prospecting pan, in which the partners also occasionally used to knead their bread. A dirty towel covered it. Demorest whisked it dexterously aside, and disclosed three large fragments of decomposed gold and quartz. Barker started back.

'Heft it!' said Demorest grimly.

Barker could scarcely lift the pan!

'Four thousand dollars' weight if a penny!' said Stacy, in short staccato sentences. 'In a pocket! Brought it out the second stroke of the pick! We'd been awfully blue after you left. Awfully blue, too, when that bill of sale came, for we thought you'd been wasting your money on *us*. Reckoned we oughtn't to take it, but send it straight back to you. Messenger gone! Then Demorest reckoned as it was done it couldn't be undone, and we ought to make just one "prospect" on the claim, and strike a single stroke for you. And there it is. And there's more on the hillside.'

'But it isn't *mine!* It isn't *yours!* It's Carter's. I never had the money to pay for it—and I haven't got it now.'

'But you gave the note—and it is not due for thirty days.

A recollection flashed upon Barker. 'Yes, he said with thoughtful simplicity, 'that's what Kitty said.'

'Oh, Kitty said so,' said both partners, gravely.

'Yes,' stammered Barker, turning away with a heightened colour, 'and, as I didn't stay there to luncheon, I think I'd better be getting it ready.' He picked up the coffee pot and turned to the hearth as his two partners stepped beyond the door.

'Wasn't it exactly like him?' said Demorest.

'Him all over,' said Stacy.

'And his worry over that note?' said Demorest.

'And "what Kitty said,"' said Stacy.

'Look here! I reckon that wasn't *all* that Kitty said.'

'Of course not.'

'What luck!'

A YELLOW DOG

I NEVER knew why in the Western States of America a yellow dog should be proverbially considered the acme of canine degradation and incompetency, nor why the possession of one should seriously affect the social standing of its possessor. But the fact being established, I think we accepted it at Rattlers Ridge without question. The matter of ownership was more difficult to settle; and although the dog I have in my mind at the present writing attached himself impartially and equally to every one in camp, no one ventured to exclusively claim him; while, after the perpetration of any canine atrocity, everybody repudiated him with indecent haste.

'Well, I can swear he hasn't been near our shanty for weeks,' or the retort, 'He was last seen comin' out of *your* cabin,' expressed the eagerness with which Rattlers Ridge washed its hands of any responsibility. Yet he was by no means a common dog, nor even an unhandsome dog; and it was a singular fact that his severest

critics vied with each other in narrating instances of his sagacity, insight, and agility which they themselves had witnessed.

He had been seen crossing the 'flume' that spanned Grizzly Cañon, at a height of nine hundred feet, on a plank six inches wide. He had tumbled down the 'shoot' to the South Fork, a thousand feet below, and was found sitting on the river bank 'without a scratch, 'cept that he was lazily givin' himself with his off hind paw.' He had been forgotten in a snowdrift on a Sierran shelf, and had come home in the early spring with the conceited complacency of an Alpine traveller and a plumpness alleged to have been the result of an exclusive diet of buried mail bags and their contents. He was generally believed to read the advance election posters, and disappear a day or two before the candidates and the brass band—which he hated—came to the Ridge. He was suspected of having overlooked Colonel Johnson's hand at draw poker, and of having conveyed to the Colonel's adversary, by a succession of barks, the danger of betting against four kings.

While these statements were supplied by wholly unsupported witnesses, it was a very human weakness of Rattlers Ridge that the responsibility of corroboration was passed to *the dog* himself, and *he* was looked upon as a consummate liar.

'Snoopin' round yere, and *callin'* yourself a poker sharp, are ye? Scoot, you yallor pizin!' was a common adjuration whenever the unfortunate animal intruded upon a card party. 'Ef thar was a spark, an *atom* of truth in *that dog*, I'd believe my own eyes that I saw him sittin' up and trying to magnetise a jay bird off a tree. But wot are ye goin' to do with a yaller equivocator like that?'

I have said that he was yellow—or, to use the ordinary expression, 'yaller.' Indeed, I am inclined to believe that much of the ignominy attached to the epithet lay in this favourite pronunciation. Men who habitually spoke of a '*yellow* bird,' a '*yellow* hammer,' a '*yellow* leaf,' always alluded to him as a '*yaller* dog.'

He certainly *was* yellow. After a bath—usually compulsory,—he presented a decided gamboge streak down his back, from the top of his forehead to the stump of his tail, fading in his sides and flank to a delicate straw colour. His breast, legs, and feet—when not reddened by 'slumgullion,' in which he was fond of wading—were white. A few attempts at ornamental decoration from the India-ink pot of the storekeeper failed, partly through the yellow dog's excessive agility, which would never give the paint time to dry on him, and partly through his

success in transferring his markings to the trousers and blankets of the camp.

The size and shape of his tail—which had been cut off before his introduction to Rattlers Ridge—were favourite sources of speculation to the miners, both as determining his breed and his moral responsibility in coming into camp in that defective condition. There was a general opinion that he couldn't have looked worse with a tail, and its removal was therefore a gratuitous effrontery.

His best feature was his eyes, which were a lustrous Vandyke brown, and sparkling with intelligence; but here again he suffered from evolution through environment, and their original trustful openness was marred by the experience of watching for flying stones, sods, and passing kicks from the rear, so that the pupils were continually reverting to the outer angle of the eyelid.

Nevertheless, none of these characteristics decided the vexed question of his *breed*. His speed and scent pointed to a 'hound,' and it is related that on one occasion he was laid on the trail of a wild cat with such success that he followed it apparently out of the State, returning at the end of two weeks, footsore, but blandly contented.

Attaching himself to a prospecting party, he was sent under the same belief 'into the brush' to drive off a bear, who was supposed to be haunting the camp fire. He returned in a few minutes *with* the bear, *driving it into* the unarmed circle and scattering the whole party. After this the theory of his being a hunting dog was abandoned. Yet it was said—on the usual uncorroborated evidence—that he had 'put up' a quail; and his qualities as a retriever were for a long time accepted, until, during a shooting expedition for wild ducks, it was discovered that the one he had brought back had never been *shot*, and the party were obliged to compound damages with an adjacent settler.

His fondness for paddling in the ditches and 'slumgullion' at one time suggested a water spaniel. He could swim, and would occasionally bring out of the river sticks and pieces of bark that had been thrown in; but as *he* always had to be thrown in

with them, and was a good-sized dog, his aquatic reputation faded also. He remained simply 'a yaller dog.' What more could be said? His actual name was 'Bones'—given to him, no doubt, through the provincial custom of confounding the occupation of the individual with his quality, for which it was pointed out precedent could be found in some old English family names.

But if Bones generally exhibited no preference for any particular individual in camp, he always made an exception in favour of drunkards. Even an ordinary roystering bacchanalian party brought him out from under a tree or a shed in the keenest satisfaction. He would accompany them through the long straggling street of the settlement, barking his delight at every step or misstep of the revellers, and exhibiting none of that mistrust of eye which marked his attendance upon the sane and the respectable. He accepted even their uncouth play without a snarl or a yelp, hypocritically pretending even to like it; and I conscientiously believe would have allowed a tin can to be attached to his tail if the hand that tied it on were only unsteady, and the voice that bade him 'lie still' were husky with liquor. He would 'see' the party cheerfully into a saloon, wait outside the door—his tongue fairly lolling from his mouth

HE WOULD AFTERWARDS ACCOMPANY THEM HOME

in enjoyment—until they reappeared, permit them even to tumble over him with pleasure, and then gambol away before them, heedless of awkwardly projected stones and epithets. He would afterwards accompany them separately home, or lie with them at cross roads until they were assisted to their cabins. Then he would trot rakishly to his own haunt by the saloon stove, with the slightly conscious air of having been a bad dog, yet of having had a good time.

HIS ENJOYMENT

We never could satisfy ourselves whether his enjoyment arose from some merely selfish conviction that he was more *secure* with the physically and mentally incompetent, from some active sympathy with active wickedness, or from a grim sense of his own mental superiority at such moments. But the general belief leant towards his kindred sympathy as a 'yaller dog' with all

that was disreputable. And this was supported by another very singular canine manifestation—the 'sincere flattery' of simulation or imitation.

'Uncle Billy' Riley for a short time enjoyed the position of being the camp drunkard, and at once became an object of Bones' greatest solicitude. He not only accompanied him everywhere, curled at his feet or head according to Uncle Billy's attitude at the moment, but, it was noticed, began presently to undergo a singular alteration in his own habits and appearance. From being an active, tireless scout and forager, a bold and unovertakable marauder, he became lazy and apathetic; allowed gophers to burrow under him without endeavouring to undermine the settlement in his frantic endeavours to dig them out, permitted squirrels to flash their tails at him a hundred yards away, forgot his usual *caches*, and left his favourite bones unburied and bleaching in the sun. His eyes grew dull, his coat lustreless, in proportion as his companion became blear-eyed and ragged; in running, his usual arrow-like directness began to deviate, and it was not unusual to meet the pair together, zig-zagging up the hill. Indeed, Uncle Billy's condition could be predetermined by Bones' appearance at times when his temporary master was invisible. 'The old man must have an awful jag on to-day,'

was casually remarked when an extra fluffiness and imbecility was noticeable in the passing Bones. At first it was believed that he drank also, but when careful investigation proved this hypothesis untenable he was freely called a 'derned time-servin', yaller hypocrite.' Not a few advanced the opinion that if Bones did not actually lead Uncle Billy astray, he at least 'slavered him over and coddled him until the old man got conceited in his wickedness.' This undoubtedly led to a compulsory divorce between them, and Uncle Billy was happily despatched to a neighbouring town and a doctor.

Bones seemed to miss him greatly, ran away for two days, and was supposed to have visited him, to have been shocked at his convalescence, and to have been 'cut' by Uncle Billy in his reformed character; and he returned to his old active life again, and buried his past with his forgotten bones. It was said that he was afterwards detected in trying to lead an intoxicated tramp into camp after the methods employed by a blind man's dog, but was discovered in time by the—of course—uncorroborated narrator.

I should be tempted to leave him thus in his original and picturesque sin, but the same veracity which compelled me to transcribe his faults and iniquities obliges me to describe his ultimate and

somewhat monotonous reformation, which came from no fault of his own.

It was a joyous day at Rattlers Ridge that was equally the advent of his change of heart and the first stage coach that had been induced to diverge from the high road and stop regularly at our settlement. Flags were flying from the post office and Polka saloon—and Bones was flying before the brass band that he detested, when the sweetest girl in the county—Pinkey Preston—daughter of the county judge, and hopelessly beloved by all Rattlers Ridge, stepped from the coach which she had glorified by occupying as an invited guest.

'What makes him run away?' she asked quickly, opening her lovely eyes in a possible innocent wonder that anything could be found to run away from her.

'He don't like the brass band,' we explained eagerly.

'How funny!' murmured the girl; 'is it as out of tune as all that?'

This irresistible witticism alone would have been enough to satisfy us—we did nothing but repeat it to each other all the next day—but we were positively transported when we saw her suddenly gather her dainty skirts in one hand and trip off through the red dust towards Bones, who, with

his eyes over his yellow shoulder, had halted in the road, and half turned in mingled disgust and rage at the spectacle of the descending trombone. We held our breath as she approached him. Would Bones evade her as he did us at such moments, or would he save our reputation, and consent, for the moment, to accept her as a new kind of inebriate? She came nearer; he saw her; he began to slowly quiver with excitement—his stump of a tail vibrating with such rapidity that the loss of the missing portion was scarcely noticeable. Suddenly she stopped before him, took his yellow head between her little hands, lifted it, and looked down in his handsome brown eyes with her two lovely blue ones. What passed between them in that magnetic glance no one ever knew. She returned with him; said to him casually: 'We're not afraid of brass bands, are we?' to which he apparently acquiesced, at least stifling his disgust of them, while he was near her—which was nearly all the time.

During the speech-making her gloved hand and his yellow head were always near together, and at the crowning ceremony—her public checking of Yuba Bill's 'waybill,' on behalf of the township, with a gold pencil, presented to her by the Stage Company—Bones' joy, far from knowing

no bounds, seemed to know nothing but them, and he witnessed it apparently in the air. No one dared to interfere. For the first time a local pride in Bones sprang up in our hearts—and we lied to each other in his praises openly and shamelessly.

Then the time came for parting. We were standing by the door of the coach, hats in hand, as Miss Pinkey was about to step into it; Bones was waiting by her side, confidently looking into the interior, and apparently selecting his own seat on the lap of Judge Preston in the corner, when Miss Pinkey held up the sweetest of admonitory fingers. Then, taking his head between her two hands, she again looked into his brimming eyes, and said, simply, '*Good* dog,' with the gentlest of emphasis on the adjective, and popped into the coach.

The six bay horses started as one, the gorgeous green and gold vehicle bounded forward, the red dust rose behind, and the yellow dog danced in and out of it to the very outskirts of the settlement. And then he soberly returned.

A day or two later he was missed—but the fact was afterwards known that he was at Spring Valley, the county town where Miss Preston lived—and he was forgiven. A week afterwards he was missed again, but this time for a longer

period, and then a pathetic letter arrived from Sacramento for the storekeeper's wife.

'Would you mind,' wrote Miss Pinkey Preston, 'asking some of your boys to come over here to Sacramento and bring back Bones? I don't

MISS PINKEY PRESTON

mind having the dear dog walk out with me at Spring Valley, where everyone knows me; but here he *does* make one so noticeable, on account of *his colour*. I've got scarcely a frock that he agrees with. He don't go with my pink muslin,

and that lovely buff tint he makes three shades lighter. You know yellow is *so* trying.'

A consultation was quickly held by the whole settlement, and a deputation sent to Sacramento to relieve the unfortunate girl. We were all quite indignant with Bones—but, oddly enough, I think it was greatly tempered with our new pride in him. While he was with us alone his peculiarities had been scarcely appreciated, but the recurrent phrase, 'that yellow dog that they keep at the Rattlers,' gave us a mysterious importance along the country side, as if we had secured a 'mascot' in some zoological curiosity.

This was further indicated by a singular occurrence. A new church had been built at the cross roads, and an eminent divine had come from San Francisco to preach the opening sermon. After a careful examination of the camp's wardrobe, and some felicitous exchange of apparel, a few of us were deputed to represent 'Rattlers' at the Sunday service. In our white ducks, straw hats, and flannel blouses, we were sufficiently picturesque and distinctive as 'honest miners' to be shown off in one of the front pews.

Seated near the prettiest girls, who offered us their hymn-books—in the cleanly odour of fresh pine shavings, and ironed muslin, and blown over by the spices of our own woods through the open

windows, a deep sense of the abiding peace of Christian communion settled upon us. At this supreme moment someone murmured in an awe-stricken whisper:

'*Will* you look at Bones?'

We looked. Bones had entered the church and gone up in the gallery through a pardonable ignorance and modesty; but, perceiving his mistake, was now calmly walking along the gallery rail before the astounded worshippers. Reaching the end, he paused for a moment, and carelessly looked down. It was about fifteen feet to the floor below—the simplest jump in the world for the mountain-bred Bones. Daintily, gingerly, lazily, and yet with a conceited airiness of manner, as if, humanly speaking, he had one leg in his pocket and were doing it on three, he cleared the distance, dropping just in front of

HE PAUSED FOR A MOMENT, AND CARELESSLY LOOKED DOWN

the chancel, without a sound, turned himself around three times, and then lay comfortably down.

Three deacons were instantly in the aisle coming up before the eminent divine, who, we fancied, wore a restrained smile. We heard the hurried whispers: 'Belongs to them.' 'Quite a local institution here, you know.' 'Don't like to offend sensibilities;' and the minister's prompt 'By no means,' as he went on with his service.

A short month ago we would have repudiated Bones; to-day we sat there in slightly supercilious attitudes, as if to indicate that any affront offered to Bones would be an insult to ourselves, and followed by our instantaneous withdrawal in a body.

All went well, however, until the minister, lifting the large Bible from the communion table and holding it in both hands before him, walked towards a reading stand by the altar rails. Bones uttered a distinct growl. The minister stopped.

We, and we alone, comprehended in a flash the whole situation. The Bible was nearly the size and shape of one of those soft clods of sod which we were in the playful habit of launching at Bones when he lay half asleep in the sun, in order to see him cleverly evade it.

We held our breath. What was to be done? But the opportunity belonged to our leader, Jeff

BONES UTTERED A DISTINCT GROWL

Briggs—a confoundedly good-looking fellow, with the golden moustache of a northern viking and the curls of an Apollo. Secure in his beauty and bland in his self-conceit, he rose from the pew, and stepped before the chancel rails.

'I would wait a moment if I were you, sir,' he said respectfully, 'and you will see that he will go out quietly.'

'What is wrong?' whispered the minister in some concern.

'He thinks you are going to heave that book at him, sir, without giving him a fair show, as we do.'

The minister looked perplexed, but remained motionless, with the book in his hands. Bones arose, walked half way down the aisle, and vanished like a yellow flash!

With this justification of his reputation, Bones disappeared for a week. At the end of that time we received a polite note from Judge Preston, saying that the dog had become quite domiciled in their house, and begged that the camp, without yielding up their valuable *property* in him, would allow him to remain at Spring Valley for an indefinite time; that both the judge and his daughter—with whom Bones was already an old friend—would be glad if the members of the camp would visit their old favourite whenever they

desired, to assure themselves that he was well cared for.

I am afraid that the bait thus ingenuously thrown out had a good deal to do with our ultimate yielding. However, the reports of those who visited Bones were wonderful and marvellous. He was residing there in state, lying on rugs in the drawing-room, coiled up under the judicial desk in the judge's study, sleeping regularly on the mat outside Miss Pinkey's bedroom door, or lazily snapping at flies on the judge's lawn.

'He's as yaller as ever,' said one of our informants, 'but it don't somehow seem to be the same back that we used to break clods over in the old time, just to see him scoot out of the dust.'

And now I must record a fact which I am aware all lovers of dogs will indignantly deny, and which will be furiously bayed at by every faithful hound since the days of Ulysses. Bones not only *forgot*, but absolutely *cut us*! Those who called upon the judge in 'store clothes' he would perhaps casually notice, but he would sniff at them as if detecting and resenting them under their superficial exterior. The rest he simply paid no attention to. The more familiar term of 'Bonesy'—formerly applied to him, as in our rare moments of endearment—produced no response. This pained, I think, some of the

more youthful of us; but, through some strange human weakness, it also increased the camp's respect for him. Nevertheless, we spoke of him familiarly to strangers at the very moment he ignored us. I am afraid that we also took some pains to point out that he was getting fat and unwieldy, and losing his elasticity, implying covertly that his choice was a mistake and his life a failure.

A year after he died, in the odour of sanctity and respectability, being found one morning coiled up and stiff on the mat outside Miss Pinkey's door. When the news was conveyed to us we asked permission, the camp being in a prosperous condition, to erect a stone over his grave. But when it came to the inscription we could only think of the two words murmured to him by Miss Pinkey, which we always believe effected his conversion:

'*Good* Dog!'

THE TWINS WERE QUITE NATURALLY ALIKE

A MOTHER OF FIVE

SHE was a mother—and a rather exemplary one—of five children, although her own age was barely nine. Two of these children were twins, and she generally alluded to them as 'Mr. Amplach's children,' referring to an exceedingly respectable gentleman in the next settlement, who, I have reason to believe, had never set eyes on her or them. The twins were quite naturally alike—

having been in a previous state of existence two ninepins—and were still somewhat vague and inchoate below their low shoulders in their long clothes, but were also firm and globular about the head, and there were not wanting those who professed to see in this an unmistakable resemblance to their reputed father. The other children were dolls of different ages, sex, and condition, but the twins may be said to have been distinctly her own conception. Yet such was her admirable and impartial maternity that she never made any difference between them. 'The Amplach's children' was a description rather than a distinction.

She was herself the motherless child of Robert Foulkes, a hard-working but somewhat improvident teamster on the Express Route between Big Bend and Reno. His daily avocation, when she was not actually with him in the waggon, led to an occasional dispersion of herself and her progeny along the road and at wayside stations between those places. But the family was generally collected together by rough but kindly hands already familiar with the handling of her children. I have a very vivid recollection of Jim Carter trampling into a saloon, after a five-mile walk through a snowdrift, with an Amplach twin in his pocket. 'Suthin' ought to be done,'

he growled, 'to make Meary a little more careful o' them Amplach children ; I picked up one outer the snow a mile beyond Big Bend.' 'God bless my soul!' said a casual passenger, looking up

JIM CARTER TRAMPLING INTO A SALOON

hastily ; 'I didn't know Mr. Amplach was married.' Jim winked diabolically at us over his glass. 'No more did I,' he responded gloomily, 'but you can't tell anything about the ways o' them respectable, psalm-singing jay birds.' Hav-

ing thus disposed of Amplach's character, later on, when he was alone with Mary, or 'Meary,' as she chose to pronounce it, the rascal worked upon her feelings with an account of the infant Amplach's sufferings in the snowdrift and its agonised whisperings for 'Meary! Meary!' until real tears stood in Mary's blue eyes. 'Let this be a lesson to you,' he concluded, drawing the ninepin dexterously from his pocket, 'for it took nigh a quart of the best forty-rod whisky to bring that child to.' Not only did Mary firmly believe him, but for weeks afterwards 'Julian Amplach'—this unhappy twin—was kept in a somnolent attitude in the cart, and was believed to have contracted dissipated habits from the effects of his heroic treatment.

Her numerous family was achieved in only two years, and succeeded her first child, which was brought from Sacramento at considerable expense by a Mr. William Dodd, also a teamster, on her seventh birthday. This, by one of those rare inventions known only to a child's vocabulary, she at once called 'Misery'—probably a combination of 'Missy,' as she herself was formerly termed by strangers, and 'Missouri,' her native State. It was an excessively large doll at first—Mr. Dodd wishing to get the worth of his money—but time, and perhaps an excess of maternal care, remedied the defect, and it lost flesh and certain unem-

ployed parts of its limbs very rapidly. It was further reduced in bulk by falling under the waggon and having the whole train pass over it, but singularly enough its greatest attenuation was in the head and shoulders—the complexion peeling off as a solid layer, followed by the disappearance of distinct strata of its extraordinary composition. This continued until the head and shoulders were much too small for even its reduced frame, and all the devices of childish millinery—a shawl secured with tacks and well hammered in, and a hat which tilted backwards and forwards and never appeared at the same angle—failed to restore symmetry. Until one dreadful morning, after an imprudent bath, the whole upper structure disappeared, leaving two hideous iron prongs standing erect from the spinal column. Even an imaginative child like Mary could not accept this sort of thing as a head. Later in the day Jack Roper, the blacksmith at the 'Crossing,' was concerned at the plaintive appearance, before his forge, of a little girl, clad in a bright blue pinafore of the same colour as her eyes, carrying her monstrous offspring in her arms. Jack recognised her and instantly divined the situation. 'You haven't,' he suggested kindly, 'got another head at home—suthin' left over?' Mary shook her head sadly; even her prolific

'YOU HAVEN'T,' HE SUGGESTED KINDLY, 'GOT ANOTHER HEAD AT HOME—SUTHIN' LEFT OVER?'

maternity was not equal to the creation of children in detail. 'Nor anythin' like a head?' he persisted sympathetically. Mary's loving eyes filled with tears. 'No, nuffen!' 'You couldn't,' he continued thoughtfully, 'use her the other side up?—we might get a fine pair o' legs outer them irons,' he added, touching the two prongs with artistic suggestion. 'Now look here——'; he was about to tilt the doll over when a small cry of feminine distress and a swift movement of a matronly little arm arrested the evident indiscretion. 'I see,' he said gravely. 'Well, you come here to-morrow, and we'll fix up suthin' to work her.' Jack was thoughtful the rest of the day, more than usually impatient with certain stubborn mules to be shod, and even knocked off work an hour earlier to walk to Big Bend and a rival shop. But the next morning when the trustful and anxious mother appeared at the forge she uttered a scream of delight. Jack had neatly joined a hollow iron globe, taken from the newel post of some old iron staircase railing, to the two prongs, and covered it with a coat of red fire-proof paint. It was true that its complexion was rather high, that it was inclined to be top heavy, and that in the long run the other dolls suffered considerably by enforced association with this unyielding and implacable head and shoulders, but

this did not diminish Mary's joy over her restored first-born. Even its utter absence of features was no defect in a family where features were

IT WAS A PRETTY SIGHT TO SEE HER ON A SUMMER AFTERNOON SITTING UPON A WAYSIDE STUMP, HER OTHER CHILDREN DUTIFULLY RANGED AROUND HER

as evanescent as in hers, and the most ordinary student of evolution could see that the 'Amplach' ninepins were in legitimate succession to the

globular-headed 'Misery.' For a time I think that Mary even preferred her to the others. Howbeit it was a pretty sight to see her on a summer afternoon sitting upon a wayside stump, her other children dutifully ranged around her, and the hard, unfeeling head of Misery pressed deep down into her loving little heart, as she swayed from side to side, crooning her plaintive lullaby. Small wonder that the bees took up the song and droned a slumberous accompaniment, or that high above her head the enormous pines, stirred through their depths by the soft Sierran air—or Heaven knows what—let slip flickering lights and shadows to play over that cast-iron face, until the child, looking down upon it with the quick, transforming power of love, thought that it smiled.

The two remaining members of the family were less distinctive. 'Gloriana'—pronounced as two words: 'Glory Anna'—being the work of her father, who also named it, was simply a cylindrical roll of canvas waggon-covering, girt so as to define a neck and waist, with a rudely inked face—altogether a weak, pitiable, man-like invention; and 'Johnny Dear,' alleged to be the representative of John Doremus, a young storekeeper who occasionally supplied Mary with gratuitous sweets. Mary never admitted this, and, as we were all gentlemen along that road, we

were blind to the suggestion. 'Johnny Dear' was originally a small, plaster phrenological cast of a head and bust, begged from some shop window in the county town, with a body clearly constructed by Mary herself. It was an ominous fact that it was always dressed as a *boy*, and was distinctly the most *human*-looking of all her progeny. Indeed, in spite of the faculties that were legibly printed all over its smooth, white, hairless head, it was appallingly life-like. Left sometimes by Mary astride of the branch of a wayside tree, horsemen had been known to dismount hurriedly and examine it, returning with a mystified smile, and it was on record that Yuba Bill had once pulled up the Pioneer Coach at the request of curious and imploring passengers, and then grimly installed 'Johnny Dear' beside him on the box seat, publicly delivering him to Mary at Big Bend, to her wide-eyed confusion and the first blush we had ever seen on her round, chubby, sunburnt cheeks. It may seem strange that, with her great popularity and her well-known maternal instincts, she had not been kept fully supplied with proper and more conventional dolls; but it was soon recognised that she did not care for them—left their waxen faces, rolling eyes, and abundant hair in ditches, or stripped them to help clothe the more extravagant creatures of her fancy.

HORSEMEN HAD BEEN KNOWN TO EXAMINE IT

So it came that 'Johnny Dear's' strictly classical profile looked out from under a girl's fashionable straw sailor hat, to the utter obliteration of his prominent intellectual faculties; the Amplach twins wore bonnets on their ninepin heads, and even an attempt was made to fit a flaxen scalp on the iron-headed Misery. But her dolls were always a creation of her own—her affection for them increasing with the demand upon her imagination. This may seem somewhat inconsistent with her habit of occasionally abandoning them in the woods or in the ditches. But she had an unbounded confidence in the kindly maternity of Nature, and trusted *her* children to the breast of the Great Mother as freely as she did herself in her own motherlessness. And this confidence was rarely betrayed. Rats, mice, snails, wild cats, panther and bear never touched her lost waifs. Even the elements were kindly; an Amplach twin buried under a snowdrift in high altitudes reappeared smilingly in the spring in all its wooden and painted integrity. We were all Pantheists then—and believed this implicitly. It was only when exposed to the milder forces of civilisation that Mary had anything to fear. Yet even then, when Patsey O'Connor's domestic goat had once tried to 'sample' the lost Misery, he had retreated with the loss of three front teeth, and Thompson's

mule came out of an encounter with that iron-headed prodigy with a sprained hind leg and a cut and swollen pastern.

But these were the simple Arcadian days of the road between Big Bend and Reno, and progress and prosperity, alas! brought changes in their wake. It was already whispered that Mary ought to be going to school, and Mr. Amplach—still happily oblivious of the liberties taken with his name—as trustee of the public school at Dockville, had intimated that Mary's Bohemian wanderings were a scandal to the county. She was growing up in ignorance, a dreadful ignorance of everything but the chivalry, the deep tenderness, the delicacy and unselfishness of the rude men around her, and obliviousness of faith in anything but the immeasurable bounty of Nature towards her and her children. Of course there was a fierce discussion between 'the boys' of the road and the few married families of the settlement on this point, but, of course, progress and 'snivelisation'—as the boys chose to call it—triumphed. The projection of a railroad settled it; Robert Foulkes, promoted to a foremanship of a division of the line, was made to understand that his daughter must be educated. But the terrible question of Mary's family remained. No school would open its doors to that heterogeneous

collection, and Mary's little heart would have broken over the rude dispersal or heroic burning of her children. The ingenuity of Jack Roper suggested a compromise. She was allowed to select one to take to school with her; the others were *adopted* by certain of her friends, and she was to be permitted to visit them every Saturday afternoon. The selection was a cruel trial, so cruel that, knowing her undoubted preference for her first-born, Misery, we would not have interfered for worlds, but in her unexpected choice of 'Johnny Dear' the most unworldly of us knew that it was the first glimmering of feminine tact—her first submission to the world of propriety that she was now entering. ''Johnny Dear' was undoubtedly the most presentable; even more, there was an educational suggestion in its prominent, mapped-out phrenological organs. The adopted fathers were loyal to their trust. Indeed, for years afterwards the blacksmith kept the iron-headed Misery on a rude shelf, like a shrine, near his bunk; nobody but himself and Meary ever knew the secret, stolen, and thrilling interviews that took place during the first days of their separation. Certain facts, however, transpired concerning Mary's equal faithfulness to another of her children. It is said that one Saturday afternoon, when the road manager of the new line was seated in his office at Reno in

private business discussion with two directors, a gentle tap was heard at the door. It was opened to an eager little face, a pair of blue eyes, and a blue pinafore. To the astonishment of the directors, a change came over the face of the manager. Taking the child gently by the hand, he walked to his desk, on which the papers of the new line were scattered, and drew open a drawer from which he took a large ninepin extraordinarily dressed as doll. The astonishment of the two gentlemen was increased at the following quaint colloquy between the manager and the child.

'She's doing remarkably well in spite of the trying weather, but I have had to keep her very quiet,' said the manager, regarding the ninepin critically.

'Ess,' said Mary quickly. 'It's just the same with Johnny Dear; his cough is f'ightful at nights. But Misery's all right. I've just been to see her.'

'There's a good deal of scarlet fever around,' continued the manager with quiet concern, 'and we can't be too careful. But I shall take her for a little run down the line to-morrow.'

The eyes of Mary sparkled and overflowed like blue water. Then there was a kiss, a little laugh, a shy glance at the two curious strangers, the blue pinafore fluttered away, and the colloquy ended. She was equally attentive in her care of the others, but the rag baby 'Gloriana,' who had

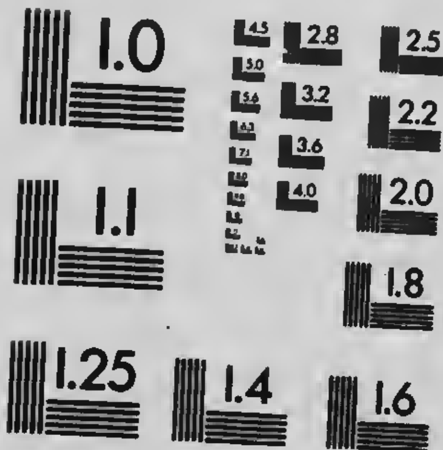
found a home in Jim Carter's cabin at the Ridge, living too far for daily visits, was brought down regularly on Saturday afternoon to Mary's house by Jim, tucked in asleep in his saddle bags or riding gallantly before him on the horn of his saddle. On Sunday there was a dress parade of all the dolls, which kept Mary in heart for the next week's desolation.

GLORIANA

But there came one Saturday and Sunday when Mary did not appear, and it was known along the road that she had been called to San Francisco to meet an aunt who had just arrived from 'the States.' It was a vacant Sunday to 'the boys,' a very hollow, unsanctified Sunday, somehow, without that little figure. But the next Sunday, and the next, were still worse, and then it was known that the dreadful aunt was making much of Mary, and was sending her to a grand school—a convent at Santa Clara—where it was

MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



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rumoured girls were turned out so accomplished that their own parents did not know them. But *we* knew that was impossible to our Mary; and a letter which came from her at the end of the month, and before the convent had closed upon the blue pinafore, satisfied us, and was balm to our anxious hearts. It was characteristic of Mary; it was addressed to nobody in particular, and would—but for the prudence of the aunt—have been entrusted to the Post Office open and undirected. It was a single sheet, handed to us without a word by her father; but, as we passed it from hand to hand, we understood it as if we had heard our lost playfellow's voice.

'Thers more houses in 'Frisco than you kin shake a stick at and wimmens till you kant rest, but mules and jakasses aint got no sho, nor blacksmiffs shops, wich is not to be seen no wear. Rapits and Skwirls also bares and panfers is on-noun and unforgotten on account of the streets and Sunday skoles. Jim Roper you orter be very good to Mizzery on a kount of my not bein here, and not harten your hart to her bekos she is top heavy—which is ontroo and simptly an imptient lie—like you allus make. I have a kinary bird wot sings deliteful—but isnt a yellerhamer sutch as I know, as youd think. Dear Mister Montgommery, dont keep Gulan Amplak to

mutch shet up in office drors; it isn't good for his lungs and chest. And dont you ink his head—nother! youre as bad as the rest. Johnny Dear, you must be very kind to your attopted father, and you, Glory Anna, must lov your kind Jimmy Carter verry mutch for taking you hossback so offen. I has been buggy ridin with an orficer who has killed injuns real! I am comin back soon with grate affeckshun, so luke out and mind.'

But it was three years before she returned, and this was her last and only letter. The 'adopted fathers' of her children were faithful, however, and when the new line was opened, and it was understood that she was to be present with her father at the ceremony, they came, with a common understanding, to the station to meet their old playmate. They were ranged along the platform—poor Jack Roper a little overweighted with a bundle he was carrying on his left arm. And then a young girl in the freshness of her teens and the spotless purity of a muslin frock, that although brief in skirt was perfect in fit, faultlessly booted and gloved, tripped from the train, and offered a delicate hand in turn to each of her old friends. Nothing could be prettier than the smile on the cheeks that were no longer sunburnt; nothing could be clearer than the blue eyes lifted frankly to theirs. And yet, as she gracefully

OFFERED A DELICATE HAND TO EACH OF HER OLD FRIENDS

turned away with her father, the faces of the four adopted parents were found to be as red and embarrassed as her own on the day that Yuba Bill drove up publicly with 'Johnny Dear' on the box seat.

'You weren't such a fool,' said Jack Montgomery to Roper, 'as to bring "Misery" here with you?'

'I was,' said Roper with a constrained laugh, —'and you?' He had just caught sight of the head of a ninepin peeping from the manager's pocket. The man laughed, and then the four turned silently away.

'Mary' had indeed come back to them; but not 'The Mother of Five!'

BULGER'S REPUTATION

WE all remembered very distinctly Bulger's advent in Rattlesnake Camp. It was during the rainy season—a season singularly inducive to settled reflective impressions as we sat and smoked around the stove in Mosby's grocery. Like older and more civilised communities, we had our periodic waves of sentiment and opinion, with the exception that they were more evanescent with us, and, as we had just passed through a fortnight of dissipation and extravagance, owing to a visit from some gamblers and speculators, we were now undergoing a severe moral revulsion, partly induced by reduced finances and partly by the arrival of two families with grown-up daughters on the hill. It was raining, with occasional warm

breaths, through the open window, of the south-west trades, redolent of the saturated spices of the woods and springing grasses, which perhaps were slightly inconsistent with the hot stove around which we had congregated. But the stove was only an excuse for our listless, gregarious gathering; warmth and idleness went well together, and it was currently accepted that we had caught from the particular reptile which gave its name to our camp much of its pathetic, life-long search for warmth, and its habits of indolently basking in it.

A few of us still went through the affectation of attempting to dry our damp clothes by the stove, and sizzling our wet boots against it; but as the same individuals calmly permitted the rain to drive in upon them through the open window without moving, and seemed to take infinite delight in the amount of steam they generated, even that pretence dropped. Crotalus himself, with his tail in a muddy ditch, and the sun striking cold fire from his slit eyes as he basked his head on a warm stone beside it, could not have typified us better.

Percy Briggs took his pipe from his mouth at last and said, with reflective severity :—

'Well, gentlemen, if we can't get the waggon

road over here, and if we're going to be left out by the stage coach company, we can at least straighten up the camp, and not have it look like a cross between a tenement alley and a broken-down circus. I declare I was just sick when these two Baker girls started to make a short cut through the camp. Darned ii they didn't turn round and take to the woods and the Rattler's again afore they got half-way. And that benighted idiot, Tom Rollins, standin' there in the ditch, spattered all over with slumgullion 'til he looked like a spotted tarrypin, wavin' his fins and sashaying backwards and forrards and sayin', "This way, ladies; this way!"'

'*I* didn't,' returned Tom Rollins, quite casually, without looking up from his steaming boots; '*I* didn't start in night afore last to dance "The Green Corn Dance" outer "Hiawatha," with feathers in my hair and a red blanket on my shoulders, round that family's new potato patch, in order that it might "increase and multiply." I didn't sing "Sabbath Morning Bells" with an anvil accompaniment until twelve o'clock at night over at the Crossing, so that they might dream of their Happy Childhood's Home. It seems to me that it wasn't *me* did it. I might be mistaken—it was late—but I have the impression that it wasn't *me*.'

From the silence that followed this would seem to have been clearly a recent performance of the previous speaker, who, however, responded quite cheerfully :—

'WE'VE GOT TO START IN AGAIN FAIR'

An evenin' o' simple, childish gaiety don't count. We've got to start in again *fair*. What

we want here is to clear up and encourage decent immigration, and get rid o' gamblers and blatherskites that are makin' this yer camp their happy hunting-ground. We don't want any more permiskus shootin'. We don't want any more paintin' the town red. We don't want any more swaggerin' galloots ridin' up to this grocery and emptyin' their six-shooters in the air afore they 'light. We want to put a stop to it peacefully and without a row—and we kin. We ain't got no bullies of our own to fight back, and they know it, so they know they won't get no credit bullyin' us; they'll leave, if we're only firm. It's all along of our cussed fool good-nature; they see it amuses us, and they'll keep it up as long as the whisky's free. What we want to do is, when the next man comes waltzin' along——'

A distant clatter from the rocky hillside here mingled with the puff of damp air through the window.

'Looks as ef we might hev a show even now,' said Tom Rollins, removing his feet from the stove as we all instinctively faced towards the window.

'I reckon you're in with us in this, Mosby?' said Briggs, turning towards the proprietor of the grocery, who had been leaning listlessly against the wall behind his bar.

'Arter the man's had a fair show,' said Mosby,

cautiously. He deprecated the prevailing condition of things, but it was still an open question whether the families would prove as valuable customers as his present clients. 'Everything in moderation, gentlemen.'

The sound of galloping hoofs came nearer, now swishing in the soft mud of the highway, until the unseen rider pulled up before the door. There was no shouting, however, nor did he announce himself with the usual salvo of fire-arms. But when, after a singularly heavy tread and the jingle of spurs on the platform, the door flew open to the new-comer, he seemed a realisation of our worst expectations. Tall, broad, and muscular, he carried in one hand a shot-gun, while from his hip dangled a heavy navy revolver. His long hair, unkempt but oiled, swept a greasy circle around his shoulders ; his enormous moustache, dripping with wet, completely concealed his mouth. His costume of fringed buckskin was wild and *outré* even for our frontier camp. But what was more confirmative of our suspicions was that he was evidently in the habit of making an impression, and after a distinct pause at the doorway, with only a side glance at us, he strode towards the bar.

'As there don't seem to be no hotel hereabouts, I reckon I kin put up my mustang here and have a shakedown somewhere behind that counter,' he

said. His voice seemed to have added to its natural depth the hoarseness of frequent over-straining.

'Ye ain't got no bunk to spare, you boys, hev ye?' asked Mosby, evasively, glancing at Percy Briggs, without looking at the stranger. We all looked at Briggs also; it was *his* affair after all—*he* had originated this opposition. To our surprise he said nothing.

The stranger leaned heavily on the counter.

'I was speaking to *you*,' he said, with his eyes on Mosby and slightly accenting the pronoun with a tap of his revolver-butt on the bar. 'Ye don't seem to catch on.'

Mosby smiled feebly, and again cast an imploring glance at Briggs. To our greater astonishment, Briggs said, quietly: 'Why don't you answer the stranger, Mosby?'

'Yes, yes,' said Mosby, suavely, to the newcomer, while an angry flush crossed his cheek as he recognised the position in which Briggs had placed him. 'Of course, you're welcome to what doings *I* hev here, but I reckoned these gentlemen over there,' with a vicious glance at Briggs, 'might fix ye up suthin' better; they're so pow'ful kind to your sort.'

The stranger threw down a gold piece on the counter and said: 'Fork out your whisky, then,' waited until his glass was filled, took it in his hand,

and then, drawing an empty chair to the stove, sat down beside Briggs. 'Seein' as you're that kind,' he said, placing his heavy hand on Briggs's knee, 'mebbe ye kin tell me ef thar's a shanty or a cabin at Rattlesnake that I kin get for a couple o' weeks. I saw an empty one at the head o' the hill. You see, gennelmen,' he added confidentially as he swept the drops of whisky from his long moustache with his fingers and glanced around our group, 'I've got some business over at Bigwood' (our nearest town), 'but ez a place to *stay at* it ain't my style.'

'What's the matter with Bigwood?' said Briggs, abruptly.

'It's too howlin', too festive, too rough; thar's too much yellin' and shootin' goin' day and night. Thar's too many card sharps and gay gamboleirs cavortin' about the town to please me. Too much permiskus soakin' at the bar and free jim-jams. What I want is a quiet place whar a man kin give his mind and elbow a rest from betwixt grippin' his shootin'-irons and crookin' in his whisky. A sort o' slow, quiet, easy place *like this.*'

We all stared at him, Percy Briggs as fixedly as any. But there was not the slightest trace of irony, sarcasm, or peculiar significance in his manner. He went on slowly:—

'When I struck this yer camp a minit ago;

when I seed that thar ditch meanderin' peaceful like through the street, without a hotel or free saloon or express office on either side; with the smoke just a curlin' over the chimbley of that log shanty, and the bresh just set fire to and a smoulderin' in that potato patch with a kind o' old-time stingin' in your eyes and nose, and a few women's duds just a flutterin' on a line by the fence, I says to myself: "Bulger—this is peace! This is wot you're lookin' for, Bulger—this is wot you're wantin'—this is wot *you'll hev!*"'

'You say you've business over at Bigwood. What business?' said Briggs.

'It's a peculiar business, young fellow,' returned the stranger, gravely. 'Thar's different men ez has different opinions about it. Some allows it's an easy business, some allows it's a rough business; some says it's a sad business, others says it's gay and festive. Some wonders ez how I've got into it, and others wonder how I'll ever get out of it. It's a payin' business—it's a peaceful sort o' business when left to itself. It's a peculiar business—a business that sort o' b'longs to me, though I ain't got no patent from Washington for it. It's *my own* business.' He paused, rose, and saying, 'Let's meander over and take a look at that empty cabin, and ef she suits me, why, I'll plank down a slug for her on the spot, and move in to-morrow,'

walked towards the door. 'I'll pick up suthin' in the way o' boxes and blankets from the grocery,'

BULGER

he added, looking at Mosby, 'and ef thar's a corner whar I kin stand my gun and a nail to hang up my revolver—why, I'm all thar!'

By this time we were no longer astonished when Briggs rose also, and not only accompanied the sinister-looking stranger to the empty cabin, but assisted him in negotiating with its owner for a fortnight's occupancy. Nevertheless, we eagerly assailed Briggs on his return for some explanation of this singular change in his attitude towards the stranger. He coolly reminded us, however, that while his intention of excluding ruffianly adventurers from the camp remained the same, he had no right to go back on the stranger's sentiments, which were evidently in accord with our own, and although Mr. Bulger's appearance was inconsistent with them, that was only an additional reason why we should substitute a mild firmness for that violence which we all deprecated, but which might attend his abrupt dismissal. We were all satisfied except Mosby, who had not yet recovered from Briggs's change of front, which he was pleased to call 'craw-fishing.' 'Seemed to me his account of his business was extraordinary satisfactory. Sorter filled the bill all round—no mistake thar'—he suggested, with a malicious irony. 'I like a man that's outspoken.'

'I understand him very well,' said Briggs, quietly.

'In course you did. Only when you've settled in *your* mind whether he was describing horse-

stealing or tract-distributing, mebbe you'll let *me* know.'

It would seem, however, that Briggs did not interrogate the stranger again regarding it, nor did we, who were quite content to leave matters in Briggs's hands. Enough that Mr. Bulger moved into the empty cabin the next day, and, with the aid of a few old boxes from the grocery, which he quickly extemporised into tables and chairs, and the purchase of some necessary cooking utensils, soon made himself at home. The rest of the camp, now thoroughly aroused, made a point of leaving their work in the ditches, whenever they could, to stroll carelessly around Bulger's tenement in the vague hope of satisfying a curiosity that had become tormenting. But they could not find that he was doing anything of a suspicious character—except, perhaps, from the fact that it was not *outwardly* suspicious, which I grieve to say did not lull them to security. He seemed to be either fixing up his cabin or smoking in his doorway. On the second day he checked this itinerant curiosity by taking the initiative himself, and quietly walking from claim to claim and from cabin to cabin with a pacific but by no means a satisfying interest. The shadow of his tall figure carrying his inseparable gun, which had not yet apparently 'stood in the corner,' falling upon an excavated

bank beside the delving miners, gave them a sense of uneasiness they could not explain; a few characteristic yells of boisterous hilarity from their noon-

WALKING FROM CLAIM TO CLAIM

tide gathering under a cotton wood somehow ceased when Mr. Bulger was seen gravely approaching, and his casual stopping before a poker party in

the gulch actually caused one of the most reckless gamblers to weakly recede from 'a bluff' and allow his adversary to sweep the board. After this it was felt that matters were becoming serious. There was no subsequent patrolling of the camp before the stranger's cabin. Their curiosity was singularly abated. A general feeling of repulsion, kept within bounds partly by the absence of any overt act from Bulger, and partly by an inconsistent over-consciousness of his shot-gun, took its place. But an unexpected occurrence revived it.

One evening, as the usual social circle were drawn around Mosby's stove, the lazy silence was broken by the familiar sounds of pistol-shots and a series of more familiar shrieks and yells from the rocky hill road. The circle quickly recognised the voices of their old friends the roysterers and gamblers from Sawyer's Dam; they as quickly recognised the returning shouts here and there from a few companions who were welcoming them. I grieve to say that in spite of their previous attitude of reformation a smile of gratified expectancy lit up the faces of the younger members, and even the older ones glanced dubiously at Briggs. Mosby made no attempt to conceal a sigh of relief as he carefully laid out an extra supply of glasses in his bar. Suddenly the oncoming yells ceased, the wild gallop of hoofs

slackened into a trot, and finally halted, and even the responsive shouts of the camp stopped also. We all looked vacantly at each other; Mosby leaped over his counter and went to the door; Briggs followed with the rest of us. The night was dark, and it was a few minutes before we could distinguish a straggling, vague, but silent procession moving through the moist, heavy air on the hill. But, to our surprise, it was moving *away* from us—absolutely *leaving* the camp! We were still staring in expectancy when out of the darkness slowly emerged a figure which we recognised at once as Captain Jim, one of the most reckless members of our camp. Pushing us back into the grocery he entered without a word, closed the door behind him, and threw himself vacantly into a chair. We at once pressed around him. He looked up at us dazed, drew a long breath, and said slowly :—

'It's no use, gentlemen! Suthin's *got* to be done with that Bulger; and mighty quick.'

'What's the matter?' we asked eagerly.

'Matter!' he repeated, passing his hand across his forehead. 'Matter! Look yere! Ye all of you heard them boys from Sawyer's Dam coming over the hill? Ye heard their music—mebbe ye heard *us* join in the chorus? Well, on they came waltzing down the hill, like old times,

and we waitin' for 'em. Then, jest as they passed the old cabin, who do you think they ran right into—shooting-iron, long hair and moustache,

'SUTHIN'S GOT TO BE DONE WITH THAT BULGER'

and all that--standing there plump in the road?—why, Bulger!'

'Well?'

'Well!—Whatever it was—don't ask *me*—but, dern my skin, ef after a word or two from *him*—them boys just stopped yellin', turned round like lambs, and rode away, peaceful-like, along with him. We ran after them a spell, still yellin', when that thar Bulger faced around, said to us that he'd "come down here for quiet," and ef he couldn't hev it he'd have to leave with these gentlemen *who wanted it* too! And I'm gosh darned ef those *gentlemen*—you know 'em all—Patsey Carpenter, Snap-shot Harry, and the others—ever said a darned word, but kinder nodded "So long" and went away!'

Our astonishment and mystification were complete; and, I regret to say, the indignation of Captain Jim and Mosby equally so. 'If we're going to be bossed by the first new-comer,' said the former, gloomily, 'I reckon we might as well take our chances with the Sawyer's Dam boys, whom we know.'

'Ef we are going to hev the legitimate trade of Rattlesnake interfered with by the cranks of some hidin' horse-thief or retired road agent,' said Mosby, 'we might as well invite the hull of Joaquin Murietta's gang here at once! But I

suppose this is part o' Bulger's particular "business,"' he added, with a withering glance at Briggs.

'I understand it all,' said Briggs, quietly. 'You know I told you that bullies couldn't live in the same camp together. That's human nature—and that's how plain men like you and me manage to scud along without getting plugged. You see, Bulger wasn't going to hev any of his own kind jumpin' his claim here. And I reckon he was pow'ful enough to back down Sawyer's Dam. Anyhow, the bluff told—and here we are in peace and quietness.'

'Until he lets us know what *is* his little game,' sneered Mosby.

Nevertheless, such is the force of mysterious power that, although it was exercised against what we firmly believed was the independence of the camp, it extorted a certain respect from us. A few thought it was not a bad thing to have a professional bully, and even took care to relate the discomfiture of the wicked youth of Sawyer's Dam for the benefit of a certain adjacent and powerful camp who had looked down upon us. He, himself, returning the same evening from his self-imposed escort, vouchsafed no other reason than the one he had already given. Preposterous as it seemed, we were obliged to accept it, and

the still more preposterous inference that he had sought Rattlesnake Camp solely for the purpose of acquiring and securing its peace and quietness. Certainly he had no other occupation; the little work he did upon the tailings or the abandoned claim which went with his little cabin was scarcely a pretence. He rode over on certain days to Bigwood on account of his business, but no one had ever seen him there, nor could the description of his manner and appearance evoke any information from the Bigwoodians. It remained a mystery.

It had also been feared that the advent of Bulger would intensify that fear and dislike of riotous Rattlesnake which the two families had shown, and which was the origin of Briggs's futile attempt at reformation. But it was discovered that since his arrival the young girls had shown less timidity in entering the camp, and had even exchanged some polite conversation and good-humoured badinage with its younger and more impressible members. Perhaps this tended to make these youths more observant, for a few days later, when the vexed question of Bulger's business was again under discussion, one of them remarked, gloomily :—

'I reckon there ain't no doubt *what* he's here for!'

The youthful prophet was instantly sat upon after the fashion of all elderly critics since Job's. Nevertheless, after a pause he was permitted to explain.

'Only this morning, when Lance Forester and [illegible] were chirping with them gals out on the hill, [illegible] should we see hanging around in the bush [illegible] that cussed Bulger! We allowed at first that [illegible] might be only a new style of his interferin', so we took no notice, except to pass a few remarks about listeners and that sort o' thing, and perhaps to bedevil the girls a little more than we'd hev done if we'd been alone. Well, they laughed, and we laughed—and that was the end of it. But this afternoon, as Lance and me were meandering down by their cabin, we sort er turned into the woods to wait till they'd come out. Then all of a suddent Lance stopped as rigid as a pointer that's flushed somethin' and says, "B'gosh!" And thar, under a big redwood, sat that slimy hypocrite Bulger, twisting his long moustaches and smiling like clockwork alongside o' little Meely Baker—you know her, the pootiest of the two sisters—and she smilin' back on him. Think of it!—that unknown, unwashed, long-haired tramp and bully, who must be forty if a day, and that innocent gal of sixteen. It was simply disgustin'!'

I need not say that the older cynics and critics

already alluded to at once improved the occasion. What more could be expected? Women, the

'ALONGSIDE O' LITTLE MEELY BAKER'

world over, were noted for this sort of thing! This long-haired, swaggering bully, with his air of

mystery, had captivated them, as he always had done since the days of Homer. Simple merit, which sat lowly in bar-rooms, and conceived projects for the public good around the humble, unostentatious stove, was nowhere! Youth could not too soon learn this bitter lesson. And in this case youth too, perhaps, was right in its conjectures, for this *was*, no doubt, the little game of the perfidious Bulger. We recalled the fact that his unhallowed appearance in camp was almost coincident with the arrival of the two families. We glanced at Briggs; to our amazement, for the first time he looked seriously concerned. But Mosby in the meantime leaned his elbows lazily over the counter and, in a slow voice, added fuel to the flame.

'I wouldn't hev spoken of it before,' he said, with a sidelong glance at Briggs, 'for it might be all in the line o' Bulger's "business," but suthin' happened the other night that, for a minit, got me! I was passin' the Bakers' shanty, and I heard one of them gals a-singing a camp-meeting hymn. I don't calkilate to run agin you young fellers in any sparkin' or canoodlin' that's goin' on, but her voice sounded so pow'ful soothin' and pretty thet I jest stood there and listened. Then the old woman—old Mother Baker—*she* joined in, and I listened too. And then—dern my skin!—but a man's

voice joined in—jest belching outer that cabin!—and I sorter lifted myself up and kem away. That voice, gentlemen,' said Mosby, lingering artistically as he took up a glass and professionally eyed it before wiping it with his towel, 'that voice, cumf'bly fixed thar in thet cabin among them wimen folks, was Bulger's!'

Briggs got up, with his eyes looking the darker for his flushed face. 'Gentlemen,' he said huskily, 'thar's only one thing to be done. A lot of us have got to ride over to Sawyer's Dam to-morrow morning and pick up as many square men as we can muster; there's a big camp meeting goin' on there, and there won't be no difficulty in that. When we've got a big enough crowd to show we mean business we must march back here and ride Bulger out of this camp! I don't hanker arter Vigilance Committees, as a rule—it's a rough remedy—it's like drinkin' a quart o' whisky agin rattlesnake poison—but it's got to be done! We don't mind being *sold* ourselves—but when it comes to our standin' by and seein' the only innocent people in Rattlesnake given away—we kick! Bulger's got to be fired outer this camp! And he will be!'

But he was not.

For when, the next morning, a determined and thoughtful procession of the best and most

characteristic citizens of Rattlesnake Camp filed into Sawyer's Dam they found that their mysterious friends had disappeared, although they met with a fraternal but subdued welcome from the general camp. But any approach to the subject of their visit, however, was received with a chilling disapproval. Did they not know that lawlessness of any kind, even under the rude mantle of frontier justice, was to be deprecated and scouted when a 'means of salvation, a power of regeneration,' such as was now sweeping over Sawyer's Dam, was at hand? Could they not induce this man who was to be violently deported to accompany them willingly to Sawyer's Dam and subject himself to the powerful influence of the 'revival' then in full swing?

The Rattlesnake boys laughed bitterly, and described the man of whom they talked so lightly; but in vain. 'It's no use, gentlemen,' said a more worldly bystander, in a lower voice, 'the camp meetin's got a strong grip here, and betwixt you and me there ain't no wonder. For the man that runs it—the big preacher—has got new ways and methods that fetches the boys every time. He don't preach no cut-and-dried gospel; he don't carry around no slop-shop robes and clap 'em on you whether they fit or not; but he samples and measures the camp afore he wades into it.

He scouts and examines; he ain't no mere Sunday preacher with a comfortable house and once-a-week church, but he gives up his days and nights to it, and makes his family work with him, and even sends 'em forward to explore the field. And he ain't no white choker shadbelly either, but fits himself, like his gospel, to the men he works among. Ye ought to hear him afore you go. His tent is just out your way. I'll go with you.'

Too dejected to offer any opposition, and perhaps a little curious to see this man who had unwittingly frustrated their design of lynching Bulger, they halted at the outer fringe of worshippers who packed the huge inclosure. They had not time to indulge their cynicisms over this swaying mass of emotional, half-thinking, and almost irresponsible beings, nor to detect any similarity between *their* extreme methods and the scheme of redemption they themselves were seeking, for in a few moments, apparently lifted to his feet on a wave of religious exaltation, the famous preacher arose. The men of Rattlesnake gasped for breath.

It was Bulger!

But Briggs quickly recovered himself. 'By what name,' said he, turning passionately towards his guide, 'does this man—this impostor—call himself here?'

'Baker.'

'Baker?' echoed the Rattlesnake contingent.

'Baker?' repeated Lance Forester, with a ghastly smile.

IT WAS BULGER!

'Yes,' returned their guide. '*You* oughter know it too! For he sent his wife and daughters over, after his usual style, to sample your camp, a week ago! Come, now, what are you givin' us?'

IN THE TULES

He had never seen a steamboat in his life. Born and reared in one of the Western Territories, far from a navigable river, he had only known the 'dug-out' or canoe as a means of conveyance across the scant streams whose fordable waters made even those scarcely a necessity. The long, narrow, hooded waggon, drawn by swaying oxen, known familiarly as a 'prairie schooner,' in which he journeyed across the plains to California in '53, did not help his conception by that nautical figure. And when at last he dropped upon the land of promise through one of the Southern mountain passes, he halted all unconsciously upon the low banks of a great yellow river amidst a tangled

brake of strange, reed-like grasses that were unknown to him. The river, broadening as it debouched through many channels into a lordly bay, seemed to him the *ultima thule* of his journeyings. Unyoking his oxen on the edge of the luxuriant meadows which blended with scarcely any line of demarcation into the great stream itself, he found the prospect 'good' according to his lights and prairial experiences, and, converting his halted waggon into a temporary cabin, he resolved to rest here and 'settle.'

There was little difficulty in so doing. The cultivated clearings he had passed were few and far between; the land would be his by discovery and occupation; his habits of loneliness and self-reliance made him independent of neighbours. He took his first meal in his new solitude under a spreading willow, but so near his natural boundary that the waters gurgled and oozed in the reeds but a few feet from him. The sun sank, deepening the gold of the river until it might have been the stream of Pactolus itself. But Martin Morse had no imagination; he was not even a gold-seeker; he had simply obeyed the roving instincts of the frontier-man in coming hither. The land was virgin and unoccupied; it was his; he was alone. These questions settled, he smoked his pipe with less concern over his three thousand

miles' transference of habitation than the man of cities who had moved into a next street. When the sun sank he rolled himself in his blankets in the waggon bed and went quietly to sleep.

But he was presently awakened by something which at first he could not determine to be a noise or an intangible sensation. It was a deep throbbing through the silence of the night—a pulsation that seemed even to be communicated to the rude bed whereon he lay. As it came nearer it separated itself into a laboured, monotonous panting, continuous, but distinct from an equally monotonous but fainter beating of the waters, as if the whole track of the river were being coursed and trodden by a multitude of swiftly-trampling feet. A strange feeling took possession of him—half of fear, half of curious expectation. It was coming nearer. He rose, leaped hurriedly from the waggon, and ran to the bank. The night was dark; at first he saw nothing before him but the steel-black sky pierced with far-spaced, irregularly scattered stars. Then there seemed to be approaching him, from the left, another and more symmetrical constellation—a few red and blue stars high above the river, with three compact lines of larger planetary lights flashing towards him and apparently on his own level. It was almost upon him; he involuntarily

drew back as the strange phenomenon swept abreast of where he stood, and resolved itself into a dark yet airy bulk, whose vagueness, topped by enormous towers, was yet illuminated by those open squares of light that he had taken for stars, but which he saw now were brilliantly-lit windows.

Their vivid rays shot through the reeds and sent broad bands across the meadow, the stationary waggon, and the slumbering oxen. But all this was nothing to the inner life they disclosed through lifted curtains and open blinds, which was the crowning revelation of this strange and wonderful spectacle. Elegantly-dressed men and women moved through brilliantly-lit and elaborately-gilt saloons; in one a banquet seemed to be spread, served by white-jacketed servants; in another were men playing cards around marble-topped tables; in another the light flashed back again from the mirrors and glistening glasses and decanters of a gorgeous refreshment saloon; in smaller openings there was the shy disclosure of dainty white curtains and velvet lounges of more intimate apartments.

Martin Morse stood enthralled and mystified. It was as if some invisible Asmodeus had revealed to this simple frontier-man a world of which he had never dreamed. It was *the* world—a world

of which he knew nothing in his simple, rustic habits and profound Western isolation—sweeping by him with the rush of an unknown planet. In another moment it was gone; a shower of sparks shot up from one of the towers and fell all around him, and then vanished, even as he remembered the set piece of 'Fourth of July' fireworks had vanished in his own rural town when he was a boy. The darkness fell with it too. But such was his utter absorption and breathless preoccupation that only a cold chill recalled him to himself, and he found he was standing mid-leg deep in the surge cast over the low banks by this passage of the first steam-boat he had ever seen!

He waited for it the next night, when it appeared a little later from the opposite direction on its return trip. He watched it the next night and the next. Hereafter he never missed it, coming or going—whatever the hard and weary preoccupations of his new and lonely life. He felt he could not have slept without seeing it go by. Oddly enough, his interest and desire did not go further. Even had he the time and money to spend in a passage on the boat, and thus actively realise the great world of which he had only these rare glimpses, a certain proud, rustic shyness kept him from it. It was not *his* world;

he could not affront the snubs that his ignorance and inexperience would have provoked, and he was dimly conscious, as so many of us are in our ignorance, that in mingling with it he would

HE WAS STANDING MID-LEG DEEP IN THE SURGE

simply lose the easy privileges of alien criticism. For there was much that he did not understand and some things that grated upon his lonely independence.

One night, a lighter one than those previous, he lingered a little longer in the moonlight to watch the phosphorescent wake of the retreating boat. Suddenly it struck him that there was a certain irregular splashing in the water, quite different from the regular, diagonally crossing surges that the boat swept upon the bank. Looking at it more intently, he saw a black object turning in the water like a porpoise, and then the unmistakable uplifting of a black arm in an unskilful swimmer's overhand stroke. It was a struggling man. But it was quickly evident that the current was too strong and the turbulence of the shallow water too great for his efforts. Without a moment's hesitation, clad as he was in only his shirt and trousers, Morse strode into the reeds, and the next moment, with a call of warning, was swimming towards the now wildly struggling figure. But, from some unknown reason, as Morse approached him nearer the man uttered some incoherent protest and desperately turned away, throwing off Morse's extended arm.

Attributing this only to the vague convulsions of a drowning man, Morse, a skilled swimmer, managed to clutch his shoulder, and propelled him at arm's length, still struggling, apparently with as much reluctance as incapacity, towards the bank. As their feet touched the reeds and slimy bottom

the man's resistance ceased, and he lapsed quite listlessly in Morse's arms. Half lifting, half dragging his burden, he succeeded at last in gain-

HALF LIFTING, HALF DRAGGING HIS BURDEN

ing the strip of meadow, and deposited the unconscious man beneath the willow tree. Then he ran to his waggon for whisky.

But, to his surprise, on his return the man was already sitting up and wringing the water from his clothes. He then saw for the first time, by the clear moonlight, that the stranger was elegantly dressed and of striking appearance, and was clearly a part of that bright and fascinating world which Morse had been contemplating in his solitude. He eagerly took the proffered tin cup and drank the whisky. Then he rose to his feet, staggered a few steps forward, and glanced curiously around him at the still motionless waggon, the few felled trees and evidence of 'clearing,' and even at the rude cabin of logs and canvas just beginning to rise from the ground a few paces distant, and said, impatiently:

'Where the devil am I?'

Morse hesitated. He was unable to name the locality of his dwelling-place. He answered briefly:—

'On the right bank of the Sacramento.'

The stranger turned upon him a look of suspicion not unmingled with resentment. 'Oh!' he said, with ironical gravity, 'and I suppose that this water you picked me out of was the Sacramento River. Thank you!'

Morse, with slow Western patience, explained that he had only settled there three weeks ago, and the place had no name.

'What's your nearest town, then?'

'Thar ain't any. Thar's a blacksmith's shop and grocery at the cross-roads, twenty miles further on, but it's got no name as I've heard on.'

The stranger's look of suspicion passed. 'Well,' he said, in an imperative fashion, which, however, seemed as much the result of habit as the occasion, 'I want a horse, and mighty quick, too.'

'H'ain't got any.'

'No horse? How did you get to this place?'

Morse pointed to the slumbering oxen.

The stranger again stared curiously at him. After a pause he said, with a half pitying, half humorous smile: 'Pike—aren't you?'

Whether Morse did or did not know that this current Californian slang for a denizen of the bucolic West implied a certain contempt, he replied simply:—

'I'm from Pike County, Mizzouri.'

'Well,' said the stranger, resuming his impatient manner, 'you must beg or steal a horse from your neighbours.'

'Thar ain't any neighbour nearer than fifteen miles.'

'Then send fifteen miles! Stop.' He opened his still clinging shirt and drew out a belt pouch, which he threw to Morse. 'There! there's one

hundred and fifty dollars in that. Now, I want a horse. *Sabe?*'

'Thar ain't anyone to send,' said Morse, quietly.

'Do you mean to say you are all alone here?'

'Yes.'

'And you fished me out—all by yourself?'

'Yes.'

The stranger again examined him curiously. Then he suddenly stretched out his hand and grasped his companion's.

'All right; if you can't send, I reckon I can manage to walk over there to-morrow.'

'I was goin' on to say,' said Morse, simply, that if you'll lie by to-night, I'll start over sun up, after puttin' out the cattle, and fetch you back a horse afore noon.'

'That's enough.' He, however, remained looking curiously at Morse. 'Did you never hear,' he said, with a singular smile, 'that it was about the meanest kind of luck that could happen to you to save a drowning man?'

'No,' said Morse, simply. 'I reckon it orter be the meanest if you *didn't.*'

'That depends upon the man you save,' said the stranger, with the same ambiguous smile, 'and whether the *saving* him is only putting things

off. Look here,' he added, with an abrupt return to his imperative style, 'can't you give me some dry clothes?'

Morse brought him a pair of overalls and a 'hickory shirt,' well worn, but smelling strongly of a recent wash with coarse soap. The stranger put them on while his companion busied himself in collecting a pile of sticks and dry leaves.

'What's that for?' said the stranger, suddenly.

'A fire to dry your clothes.'

The stranger calmly kicked the pile aside.

'Not any fire to-night if I know it,' he said, brusquely. Before Morse could resent his quickly changing moods he continued, in another tone, dropping to an easy reclining position beneath the tree, 'Now, tell me all about yourself, and what you are doing here.'

Thus commanded, Morse patiently repeated his story from the time he had left his backwoods cabin to his selection of the river bank for a 'location.' He pointed out the rich quality of this alluvial bottom and its adaptability for the raising of stock, which he hoped soon to acquire. The stranger smiled grimly, raised himself to a sitting position, and, taking a penknife from his damp clothes, began to clean his nails in the bright moonlight—an occupation which made the simple Morse wander vaguely in his narration.

'And you don't know that this hole will give you chills and fever till you'll shake yourself out of your boots?'

Morse had lived before in aguish districts, and had no fear.

'And you never heard that some night the whole river will rise up and walk over you and your cabin and your stock?'

'No. For I reckon to move my shanty farther back.'

The man shut up his penknife with a click and rose.

'If you've got to get up at sunrise, we'd better be turning in. I suppose you can give me a pair of blankets?'

Morse pointed to the waggon. 'Thar's a shakedown in the waggon bed; you kin lie there.' Nevertheless he hesitated, and, with the inconsequence and abruptness of a shy man, continued the previous conversation.

'I shouldn't like to move far away, for them steamboats is pow'ful kempany o' nights. I never seed one afore I kem here,' and then, with the inconsistency of a reserved man, and without a word of further preliminary, he launched into a confidential disclosure of his late experiences. The stranger listened with a singular interest and a quietly searching eye.

'Then you were watching the boat very closely just now when you saw me. What else did you see? Anything before that—before you saw me in the water?'

'No—the boat had got well off before I saw you at all.'

'Ah,' said the stranger. 'Well, I'm going to turn in.' He walked to the waggon, mounted it, and by the time that Morse had reached it with his wet clothes he was already wrapped in the blankets. A moment later he seemed to be in a profound slumber.

It was only then, when his guest was lying helplessly at his mercy, that he began to realise his strange experiences. The domination of this man had been so complete that Morse, although by nature independent and self-reliant, had not permitted himself to question his right or to resent his rudeness. He had accepted his guest's careless or premeditated silence regarding the particulars of his accident as a matter of course, and had never dreamed of questioning him. That it was a natural accident of that great world so apart from his own experiences he did not doubt, and thought no more about it. The advent of the man himself was greater to him than the causes which brought him there. He was as yet quite unconscious of the complete

fascination this mysterious stranger held over him, but he found himself shyly pleased with even the slight interest he had displayed in his affairs, and his hand felt yet warm and tingling from his sudden soft but expressive grasp, as if it had been a woman's. There is a simple intuition of friendship in some lonely, self-abstracted natures that is nearly akin to love at first sight. Even the audacities and insolence of this stranger affected Morse as he might have been touched and captivated by the coquetries or imperiousness of some bucolic virgin. And this reserved and shy frontier-man found himself that night sleepless, and hovering with an abashed timidity and consciousness around the waggon that sheltered his guest as if he had been a very Corydon watching the moonlit couch of some slumbering Amaryllis.

He was off by daylight—after having placed a rude breakfast by the side of the still sleeping guest—and before mid-day he had returned with a horse. When he handed the stranger his pouch, less the amount he had paid for the horse, the man said curtly—

'What's that for?'

'Your change. I paid only fifty dollars for the horse.'

The stranger regarded him with his peculiar

smile. Then, replacing the pouch in his belt, he shook Morse's hand again and mounted the horse.

'WELL—GOOD-BYE, MORSEY'

'So your name's Martin Morse! Well—good-bye, Morsey!'

Morse hesitated. A blush rose to his dark

check. 'You didn't tell me *your* name,' he said. 'In case——'

'In case I'm *wanted*? Well, you can call me Captain Jack.' He smiled, and, nodding his head, put spurs to his mustang and cantered away.

Morse did not do much work that day, falling into abstracted moods and living over his experiences of the previous night, until he fancied he could almost see his strange guest again. The narrow strip of meadow was haunted by him. There was the tree under which he had first placed him, and that was where he had seen him sitting up in his dripping but well-fitting clothes. In the rough garments he had worn and returned lingered a new scent of some delicate soap, overpowering the strong alkali flavour of his own. He was early by the river side, having a vague hope, he knew not why, that he should again see him and recognise him among the passengers. He was wading out among the reeds, in the faint light of the rising moon, recalling the exact spot where he had first seen the stranger, when he was suddenly startled by the rolling over in the water of some black object that had caught against the bank, but had been dislodged by his movements. To his horror it bore a faint resemblance to his first vision of the preceding night.

But a second glance at the helplessly floating hair and bloated outline showed him that it was a *dead* man, and of a type and build far different from his former companion. There was a bruise upon his matted forehead and an enormous wound in his throat already washed bloodless, white, and waxen. An inexplicable fear came upon him, not at the sight of the corpse, for he had been in Indian massacres and had rescued bodies mutilated beyond recognition; but from some moral dread that, strangely enough, quickened and deepened with the far-off pant of the advancing steamboat. Scarcely knowing why, he dragged the body hurriedly ashore, concealing it in the reeds, as if he were disposing of the evidence of his own crime. Then, to his preposterous terror, he noticed that the panting of the steamboat and the beat of its paddles were 'slowing' as the vague bulk came in sight, until a huge wave from the suddenly arrested wheels sent a surge like an enormous heart-beat pulsating through the sedge that half submerged him. The flashing of three or four lanterns on deck and the motionless line of lights abreast of him dazzled his eyes, but he knew that the low fringe of willows hid his house and waggon completely from view. A vague murmur of voices from the deck was suddenly over-ridden by a sharp order,

and to his relief the slowly revolving wheels again sent a pulsation through the water, and the great fabric moved solemnly away. A sense of relief came over him, he knew not why, and he

HE EXAMINED THE BODY

was conscious that for the first time he had not cared to look at the boat.

When the moon arose he again examined the body, and took from its clothing a few articles of identification and some papers of formality and precision, which he vaguely conjectured to be

some law papers from their resemblance to the phrasing of sheriffs' and electors' notices which he had seen in the papers. He then buried the corpse in a shallow trench, which he dug by the light of the moon. He had no question of responsibility; his pioneer training had not included coroners' inquests in its experience; in giving the body a speedy and secure burial from predatory animals he did what one frontier-man would do for another—what he hoped might be done for *him*. If his previous unaccountable feelings returned occasionally, it was not from that; but rather from some uneasiness in regard to his late guest's possible feelings, and a regret that he had not been here at the finding of the body. That it would in some way have explained his own accident he did not doubt.

The boat did not 'slow up' the next night, but passed as usual; yet three or four days elapsed before he could look forward to its coming with his old extravagant and half-exalted curiosity—which was his nearest approach to imagination. He was then able to examine it more closely for the appearance of the stranger whom he now began to call 'his friend' in his verbal communings with himself, but whom he did not seem destined to again discover; until one day, to his astonishment, a couple of fine horses were brought

to his clearing by a stock-drover. They had been 'ordered' to be left there. In vain Morse expostulated and questioned.

'Your name's Martin Morse, ain't it?' said the drover, with business brusqueness; 'and I reckon there ain't no other man o' that name around here?'

'No,' said Morse.

'Well, then, they're *yours.*'

'But who sent them?' insisted Morse. 'What was his name, and where does he live?'

'I didn't know ez I was called upon to give the pedigree o' buyers,' said the drover drily; 'but the horses is "Morgan," you can bet your life.' He grinned as he rode away.

That Captain Jack sent them, and that it was a natural prelude to his again visiting him, Morse did not doubt, and for a few days he lived in that dream. But Captain Jack did not come. The animals were of great service to him in 'rounding up' the stock he now easily took in for pasturage, and saved him the necessity of having a partner or a hired man. The idea that this superior gentleman in fine clothes might ever appear to him in the former capacity had even flitted through his brain, but he had rejected it with a sigh. But the thought that, with luck and industry, he himself might, in course of time, approximate to Captain

Jack's evident station, *did* occur to him, and was an incentive to energy. Yet it was quite distinct from the ordinary working-man's ambition of wealth and state. It was only that it might make him more worthy of his friend. The great world was still as it had appeared to him in the passing boat—a thing to wonder at—to be above—and to criticise.

For all that, he prospered in his occupation. But one day he woke with listless limbs and feet that scarcely carried him through his daily labours. At night his listlessness changed to active pain and a feverishness that seemed to impel him towards the fateful river, as if his one aim in life was to drink up its waters and bathe in its yellow stream. But whenever he seemed to attempt it strange dreams assailed him of dead bodies arising with swollen and distorted lips to touch his own as he strove to drink, or of his mysterious guest battling with him in its current, and driving him ashore. Again, when he essayed to bathe his parched and crackling limbs in its flood, he would be confronted with the dazzling lights of the motionless steamboat and the glare of stony eyes—until he fled in aimless terror. How long this lasted he knew not, until one morning he awoke in his new cabin with a strange man sitting by his bed and a negress in the doorway.

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'You've had a sharp attack of "tule fever,"' said the stranger, dropping Morse's listless

'WHO ARE YOU?'

wrist and answering his questioning eyes; 'but you're all right now, and will pull through.'

'Who are you?' stammered Morse feebly.

'Dr. Duchesne, of Sacramento.'

'How did you come here?'

'I was ordered to come to you and bring a nurse, as you were alone. There she is.' He pointed to the smiling negress.

'*Who* ordered you?'

The doctor smiled with professional tolerance. 'One of your friends, of course.'

'But what was his name?'

'Really I don't remember. But don't distress yourself. He has settled for everything right royally. You have only to get strong now. My duty is ended, and I can safely leave you with the nurse. Only when you are strong again, I say—and *he* says—keep back farther from the river.'

And that was all he knew. For even the nurse who attended him through the first days of his brief convalescence would tell him nothing more. He quickly got rid of her and resumed his work, for a new and strange phase of his simple, childish affection for his benefactor, partly superinduced by his illness, was affecting him. He was beginning to feel the pain of an unequal friendship; he was dimly conscious that his mysterious guest was only coldly returning his hospitality and benefits, while holding aloof from any association with him—and indicating the immeasurable distance that separated their future

intercourse. He had withheld any kind message or sympathetic greeting; he had kept back even his *name*. The shy, proud, ignorant heart of the frontiersman swelled beneath the fancied slight, which left him helpless alike of reproach or resentment. He could not return the horses, although in a fit of childish indignation he had resolved not to use them; he could not reimburse him for the doctor's bill, although he had sent away the nurse.

He took a foolish satisfaction in not moving back from the river, with a faint hope that his ignoring of Captain Jack's advice might mysteriously be conveyed to him. He even thought of selling out his location and abandoning it, that he might escape the cold surveillance of his heartless friend. All this was undoubtedly childish—but there is an irrepressible simplicity of youth in all deep feeling, and the worldly inexperience of the frontiersman left him as innocent as a child. In this phase of his unrequited affection he even went so far as to seek some news of Captain Jack at Sacramento, and, following out his foolish quest, to even take the steamboat from thence to Stockton.

What happened to him then was perhaps the common experience of such natures. Once upon the boat the illusion of the great world it con-

tained for him utterly vanished. He found it noisy, formal, insincere, and—had he ever understood or used the word in his limited vocabulary —*vulgar.* Rather, perhaps, it seemed to him that the prevailing sentiment and action of those who frequented it—and for whom it was built—were of a lower grade than his own. And, strangely enough, this gave him none of his former sense of critical superiority, but only of his own utter and complete isolation. He wandered in his rough frontiersman's clothes from deck to cabin, from airy galleries to long saloons, alone, unchallenged, unrecognised, as if he were again haunting it, only in spirit, as he had so often done in his dreams.

His presence on the fringe of some voluble crowd caused no interruption; to him their speech was almost foreign in its allusions to things he did not understand, or, worse, seemed inconsistent with their eagerness and excitement. How different from all this was his old recollections of the slowly oncoming teams, uplifted above the level horizon of the plains in his former wanderings; the few sauntering figures that met him as man to man, and exchanged the chronicle of the road; the record of Indian tracks; the finding of a spring; the discovery of pasturage, with the lazy, restful hospitality of the night! And how fierce

here this continual struggle for dominance and existence, even in this lull of passage. For above all and through all he was conscious of the feverish haste of speed and exertion.

The boat trembled, vibrated, and shook with every stroke of the ponderous piston. The laughter of the crowd, the exchange of gossip and news, the banquet at the long table, the newspapers and books in the reading-room, even the luxurious couches in the state-rooms, were all dominated, thrilled, and pulsating with the perpetual throb of the demon of hurry and unrest. And when at last a horrible fascination dragged him into the engine-room, and he saw the cruel relentless machinery at work, he seemed to recognise and understand some intelligent but pitiless Moloch, who was dragging this feverish world at its heels.

Later he was seated in a corner of the hurricane deck, whence he could view the monotonous banks of the river ; yet, perhaps by certain signs unobservable to others, he knew he was approaching his own locality. He knew that his cabin and clearing would be undiscernible behind the fringe of willows on the bank, but he already distinguished the points where a few cottonwoods struggled into a promontory of lighter foliage beyond them. Here voices fell upon his ear, and

he was suddenly aware that two men had lazily crossed over from the other side of the boat, and were standing before him looking upon the bank.

'IT WAS ABOUT HERE, I RECKON'

'It was about here, I reckon,' said one, listlessly, as if continuing a previous lagging conversation, 'that it must have happened. For it was

after we were making for the bend we've just passed that the deputy, goin' to the state room below us, found the door locked and the window open. But both men—Jack Despard and Seth Hall, the sheriff—weren't to be found. Not a trace of 'em. The boat was searched, but all for nothing. The idea is that the sheriff, arter getting his prisoner comf'ble in the state-room, took off Jack's handcuffs and locked the door; that Jack, who was mighty desp'rate, bolted through the window into the river, and the sheriff, who was no slouch, arter him. Others allow—for the chairs and things was all tossed about in the state-room—that the two men clinched *thar*, and Jack choked Hall and chucked him out, and then slipped cl'ar into the water himself, for the state-room window was just ahead of the paddle-box, and the cap allows that no man or men could fall afore the paddles and live. Anyhow, that was all they ever knew of it.'

'And there wasn't no trace of them found?' said the second man, after a long pause.

'No. Cap'n says them paddles would hev' just snatched 'em and slung 'em round and round and buried 'em 'way down in the ooze of the river bed, with all the silt of the current atop of 'em, and they mightn't come up for ages; or else the wheels might have waltzed 'em 'way up to Sacramento

until there wasn't enough left of 'em to float, and dropped 'em when the boat stopped.'

'It was a mighty fool risk for a man like Despard to take,' resumed the second speaker as he turned away with a slight yawn.

'Bet your life! but he was desp'rate, and the sheriff had got him sure! And they *do* say that he was superstitious, like all them gamblers, and allowed that a man who was fixed to die by a rope or a pistol wasn't to be washed out of life by water.'

The two figures drifted lazily away, but Morse sat rigid and motionless. Yet, strange to say, only one idea came to him clearly out of this awful revelation—the thought that his friend was still true to him—and that his strange absence and mysterious silence were fully accounted for and explained. And with it came the more thrilling fancy that this man was alive now to *him* alone. *He* was the sole custodian of his secret. The morality of the question, while it profoundly disturbed him, was rather in reference to its effect upon the chances of Captain Jack and the power it gave his enemies than his own conscience. He would rather that his friend should have proven the prescribed outlaw who retained an unselfish interest in him than the superior gentleman who was coldly wiping out his gratitude. He thought

he understood now the reason of his visitor's strange and varying moods—even his bitter superstitious warning in regard to the probable curse entailed upon one who should save a drowning man. Of this he recked little; enough that he fancied that Captain Jack's concern in his illness was heightened by that fear, and this assurance of his protecting friendship thrilled him with pleasure.

There was no reason now why he should not at once go back to his farm, where, at least, Captain Jack would always find him; and he did so, returning on the same boat. He was now fully recovered from his illness, and calmer in mind; he redoubled his labours to put himself in a position to help the mysterious fugitive when the time should come. The remote farm should always be a haven of refuge for him, and in this hope he forbore to take any outside help, remaining solitary and alone that Captain Jack's retreat should be inviolate. And so the long, dry season passed, the hay was gathered, the pasturing herds sent home, and the first rains, dimpling like shot the broadening surface of the river, were all that broke his unending solitude. In this enforced attitude of waiting and expectancy he was exalted and strengthened by a new idea. He was not a religious man, but dimly remembering the exhortations of some camp meeting of his boyhood, he

conceived the idea that he might have been selected to work out the regeneration of Captain Jack. What might not come of this meeting and communing together in this lonely spot? That anything was due to the memory of the murdered sheriff, whose bones were rotting in the trench that he daily but unconcernedly passed, did not occur to him. Perhaps his mind was not large enough for the double consideration. Friendship and love—and, for the matter of that, religion—are eminently one-ideaed.

But one night he awakened with a start. His hand, which was hanging out of his bunk, was dabbling idly in water. He had barely time to spring to his middle in what seemed to be a slowly filling tank before the door fell out as from that inward pressure, and his whole shanty collapsed like a pack of cards. But it fell outwards, the roof sliding from over his head like a withdrawn canopy; and he was swept from his feet against it, and thence out into what might have been another world! For the rain had ceased, and the full moon revealed only one vast, illimitable expanse of water! It was not an overflow, but the whole rushing river magnified and repeated a thousand times, which, even as he gasped for breath and clung to the roof, was bearing him away he knew not whither. But it was bearing him away upon

its centre, for as he cast one swift glance towards his meadows he saw they were covered by the same sweeping torrent, dotted with his sailing hay-ricks and reaching to the wooded foothills. It was the great flood of '54. In its awe-inspiring completeness it might have seemed to him the primeval Deluge.

As his frail raft swept under a cottonwood he caught at one of the overhanging limbs, and, working his way desperately along the bough, at last reached a secure position in the fork of the tree. Here he was for the moment safe. But the devastation viewed from this height was only the more appalling. Every sign of his clearing, all evidence of his past year's industry, had disappeared. He was now conscious for the first time of the lowing of the few cattle he had kept as, huddled together on a slight eminence, they one by one slipped over struggling into the flood. The shining bodies of his dead horses rolled by him as he gazed. The lower-lying limbs of the sycamore near him were bending with the burden of the lighter articles from his overturned waggon and cabin which they had caught and retained, and a rake was securely lodged in a bough. The habitual solitude of his locality was now strangely invaded by drifting sheds, agricultural implements and fence rails from unknown and remote neigh-

bours, and he could faintly hear the far-off calling of some unhappy farmer adrift upon a spar of his

HE REACHED A SECURE POSITION IN THE FORK OF THE TREE

wrecked and shattered house. When day broke he was cold and hungry.

Hours passed in hopeless monotony, with no slackening or diminution of the waters. Even the drifts became less, and a vacant sea at last spread before him on which nothing moved. An awful silence impressed him. In the afternoon rain again began to fall on this grey, nebulous expanse, until the whole world seemed made of aqueous vapour. He had but one idea now—the coming of the evening boat, and he would reserve his strength to swim to it. He did not know until later that it could no longer follow the old channel of the river, and passed far beyond his sight and hearing. With his disappointment and exposure that night came a return of his old fever. His limbs were alternately racked with pain or benumbed and lifeless. He could scarcely retain his position—at times he scarcely cared to—and speculated upon ending his sufferings by a quick plunge downwards. In other moments of lucid misery he was conscious of having wandered in his mind; of having seen the dead face of the murdered sheriff, washed out of his shallow grave by the flood, staring at him from the water; to this was added the hallucination of noises. He heard voices, his own name called by a voice he knew—Captain Jack's!

Suddenly he started, but in that fatal movement lost his balance and plunged downwards.

But before the water closed above his head he had had a cruel glimpse of help near him; of a flashing light—of the black hull of a tug not many yards away—of moving figures—the sensation of a sudden plunge following his own, the grip of a strong hand upon his collar, and—unconsciousness!

When he came to he was being lifted in a boat from the tug and rowed through the deserted streets of a large city, until he was taken in through the second-story window of a half-submerged hotel and cared for. But all his questions yielded only the information that the tug—a privately procured one, not belonging to the Public Relief Association—had been despatched for him with special directions, by a man who acted as one of the crew, and who was the one who had plunged in for him at the last moment. The man had left the boat at Stockton. There was nothing more? Yes!—he had left a letter. Morse seized it feverishly. It contained only a few lines:—

'We are quits now. You are all right. I have saved *you* from drowning, and shifted the curse to my own shoulders. Good-bye.

"CAPTAIN JACK."'

The astounded man attempted to rise—to utter an exclamation—but fell back, unconscious.

Weeks passed before he was able to leave his bed—and then only as an impoverished and physically shattered man. He had no means to restock the farm left bare by the subsiding water. A kindly train-packer offered him a situation as muleteer in a pack-train going to the mountains—for he knew tracks and passes and could ride. The mountains gave him back a little of the vigour he had lost in the river valley, but none of its dreams and ambitions. One day, while tracking a lost mule, he stopped to slake his thirst in a water-hole—all that the summer had left of a lonely mountain torrent. Enlarging the hole to give drink to his beast also, he was obliged to dislodge and throw out with the red soil some bits of honeycomb rock, which were so queer-looking and so heavy as to attract his attention. Two of the largest he took back to camp with him. They were gold. From the locality he took out a fortune. Nobody wondered. To the Californian's superstition it was perfectly natural. It was 'nigger luck'—the luck of the stupid, the ignorant, the inexperienced, the non-seeker—the irony of the gods!

But the simple, bucolic nature that had sustained itself against temptation with patient industry and lonely self-concentration succumbed to rapidly acquired wealth. So it chanced that

one day, with a crowd of excitement-loving spendthrifts and companions, he found himself on the outskirts of a lawless mountain town. An eager frantic crowd had already assembled there—a desperado was to be lynched! Pushing his way through the crowd for a nearer view of the exciting spectacle, the changed and reckless Morse was stopped by armed men only at the foot of a cart, which upheld a quiet, determined man, who, with a rope around his neck, was scornfully surveying the mob, that held the other end of the rope drawn across the limb of a tree above him. The eyes of the doomed man caught those of Morse—his expression changed—a kindly smile lit his face—he bowed his proud head for the first time, with an easy gesture of farewell.

And then, with a cry, Morse threw himself upon the nearest armed guard, and a fierce struggle began. He had overpowered one adversary and seized another in his hopeless fight towards the cart when the half-astonished crowd felt that something must be done. It was done with a sharp report, the upward curl of smoke and the falling back of the guard as Morse staggered forward *free*—with a bullet in his heart. Yet even then he did not fall until he reached the cart, when he lapsed forward, dead, with his arms out-

stretched and his head at the doomed man's feet.

There was something so supreme and all-powerful in this hopeless act of devotion that the

MORSE STAGGERED FORWARD

heart of the multitude thrilled and then recoiled aghast at its work, and a single word or a gesture from the doomed man himself would have set him

free. But they say—and it is credibly recorded—that as Captain Jack Despard looked down upon the hopeless sacrifice at his feet his eyes blazed, and he flung upon the crowd a curse so awful and sweeping that, hardened as they were, their blood ran cold, and then leaped furiously to their cheeks.

'And now,' he said, coolly tightening the rope around his neck with a jerk of his head—'Go on, and be d——d to you! I'm ready.'

They did not hesitate this time. And Martin Morse and Captain Jack Despard were buried in the same grave.

A CONVERT OF THE MISSION

HE largest tent of the Tasajara Camp meeting was crowded to its utmost extent. The excitement of that dense mass was at its highest pitch. The Reverend Stephen Masterton, the single erect, passionate figure of that confused medley of kneeling worshippers, had reached the culminating pitch of his irresistible exhortatory power. Sighs and groans were beginning to respond to his appeals when the reverend brother was seen to lurch heavily forward and fall to the ground.

At first the effect was that of a part of his performance; the groans redoubled, and twenty or thirty brethren threw themselves prostrate in humble imitation of the preacher. But Sister Deborah Stokes, perhaps through some special revelation of feminine intuition, grasped the fallen

man, tore loose his black silk necktie, and dragged him free of the struggling, frantic crowd whose paroxysms he had just evoked. Howbeit he was pale and unconscious, and unable to continue the service. Even the next day, when he had

STEPHEN MASTERTON

slightly recovered, it was found that any attempt to renew his fervid exhortations produced the same disastrous result.

A council was hurriedly held by the elders.

In spite of the energetic protests of Sister Stokes, it was held that the Lord 'was wrestlin' with his sperrit,' and he was subjected to the same extraordinary treatment from the whole congregation that he himself had applied to *them.* Propped up pale and trembling in the 'Mourners' Bench' by two Brethren, he was 'striven with,' exhorted, prayed over, and admonished, until insensibility mercifully succeeded convulsions. Spiritual therapeutics having failed, he was turned over to the weak and carnal nursing of 'women folk.' But after a month of incapacity he was obliged to yield to 'the flesh,' and, in the local dialect, 'to use a doctor.'

It so chanced that the medical practitioner of the district was a man of large experience, of military training, and plain speech. When, therefore, he one day found in his surgery a man of rude Western type, strong limbed and sunburned, but trembling, hesitating and neurotic in movement, after listening to his symptoms gravely, he asked, abruptly: 'And how much are you drinking now?'

'I am a life-long abstainer,' stammered his patient in quivering indignation. But this was followed by another question so frankly appalling to the hearer that he staggered to his feet.

'I'm Stephen Masterton—known of men as

a Circuit Preacher, of the Northern California district,' he thundered—'and an enemy of the flesh in all its forms.'

'I beg your pardon,' responded Dr. Duchesne, grimly, 'but as you are suffering from excessive and repeated excitation of the nervous system, and the depression following prolonged artificial exaltation—it makes little difference whether the cause be spiritual, as long as there is a certain physical effect upon your *body*, which I believe you have brought to me to cure. Now—as to diet? you look all wrong there.'

'My food is of the simplest—I have no hankering for flesh-pots,' responded the patient.

'I suppose you call Saleratus bread and salt pork and flap jacks *simple*?' said the doctor, coolly; 'they are *common* enough, and if you were working with your muscles instead of your nerves in that frame of yours they might not hurt you; but you are suffering as much from eating more than you can digest as the veriest gourmand. You must stop all that. Go down to a quiet watering place for two months. . . .'

'*I* go to a watering place?' interrupted Masterton; 'to the haunt of the idle, the frivolous and wanton—never!'

'Well, I'm not particular about a "watering place,"' said the doctor, with a shrug, 'although a

little idleness and frivolity with different food wouldn't hurt you—but you must go somewhere and change your habits and mode of life *completely*. I will find you some sleepy old Spanish town in the Southern county where you can rest and diet. If this is distasteful to you,' he continued, grimly, 'you can always call it "a trial."'

Stephen Masterton may have thought it so when, a week later, he found himself issuing from a rocky gorge into a rough, badly paved, hilly street, which seemed to be only a continuation of the mountain road itself. It broadened suddenly into a square or *plaza*, flanked on each side by an irregular row of yellowing *adobe* houses, with the inevitable verandahed *tienda* in each corner, and the solitary, galleried *fonda*, with a half Moorish archway leading into an inner *patio* or courtyard in the centre.

The whole street stopped as usual at the very door of the Mission Church, a few hundred yards further on, and under the shadow of the two belfry towers at each angle of the façade, as if this were the *ultima thule* of every traveller. But all that the eye rested on was ruined, worn, and crumbling. The *adobe* houses were cracked by the incessant sunshine of the half-year long summer, or the more intermittent earthquake shock; the paved courtyard of the *fonda* was so

uneven and sunken in the centre that the lumbering waggon and faded *diligencia* stood on an incline, and the mules with difficulty kept their footing while being unladen ; the whitened plaster had fallen from the feet of the two pillars that flanked the Mission doorway, like bandages from a gouty limb, leaving the reddish core of *adobe* visible ; there were apparently as many broken tiles in the streets and alleys as there were on the heavy red roofs that everywhere asserted themselves—and even seemed to slide down the crumbling walls to the ground. There were hopeless gaps in *grille* and grating of doorways and windows, where the iron bars had dropped helplessly out, or were bent at different angles. The walls of the peaceful Mission garden and the warlike *Presidio* were alike lost in the escalading vines or levelled by the pushing boughs of gnarled pear and olive trees that now surmounted them. The dust lay thick and impalpable in hollow and gutter, and rose in little vapoury clouds with a soft detonation at every stroke of his horse's hoofs. Over all this dust and ruin idleness seemed to reign supreme. From the velvet-jacketed figures lounging motionless in the shadows of the open doorways—so motionless that only the lazy drift of cigarette smoke betokened their breathing—to the reclining *peons* in the shade of

a catalpa, or the squatting Indians in the *arroyo* —all was sloth and dirt.

The Rev. Stephen Masterton felt his throat swell with his old exhortative indignation. A gaudy yellow fan waved languidly in front of a black rose-crested head at a white-curtained window. He knew he was stifling with righteous wrath, and clapped his spurs to his horse.

Nevertheless in a few days, by the aid of a letter to the innkeeper, he was installed in a dilapidated *adobe* house, not unlike those he had seen, but situated in the outskirts, and overlooking the garden and part of the refectory of the old Mission. It had even a small garden of its own—if a strip of hot wall, overburdened with yellow and white roses, a dozen straggling callas, a bank of heliotrope, and an almond tree could be called a garden. It had an open doorway, but so heavily recessed in the thick walls that it preserved seclusion, a sitting-room, and an alcoved bed-room with deep embrasured windows, that, however, excluded the unwinking sunlight and kept an even monotone of shade.

Strange to say, he found it cool, restful, and, in spite of the dust, absolutely clean, and, but for the scent of heliotrope, entirely inodorous. The dry air seemed to dissipate all noxious emanations and decay—the very dust itself in its fine im-

palpability was volatile with a spice-like piquancy, and left no stain.

A wrinkled Indian woman, brown and veined like a tobacco leaf, ministered to his simple wants. But these wants had also been regulated by Dr. Duchesne. He found himself, with some grave doubts of his effeminacy, breakfasting on a single cup of chocolate instead of his usual bowl of molasses-sweetened coffee; crumbling a crisp *tortilla* instead of the heavy Saleratus bread, greasy flap-jack, or the lard-fried steak, and, more wonderful still, completing his repast with purple grapes from the Mission wall. He could not deny that it was simple—that it was even refreshing and consistent with the climate and his surroundings. On the other hand, it was the frugal diet of the commonest peasant—and were not those *peons* slothful idolaters?

At the end of the week—his correspondence being also restricted by his doctor to a few lines to himself regarding his progress—he wrote to that adviser:

'The trembling and unquiet have almost ceased; I have less nightly turmoil and visions; my carnal appetite seems to be amply mollified and soothed by these viands, whatever may be their ultimate effect upon the weakness of our common sinful nature. But I should not be truthful to

you if I did not warn you that I am viewing with the deepest spiritual concern a decided tendency

COMPLETING HIS REPAST WITH PURPLE GRAPES FROM THE MISSION WALL

towards sloth, and a folding of the hands over matters that often, I fear, are spiritual as well as

temporal. I would ask you to consider, in a spirit of love, if it be not wise to rouse my apathetic flesh, so as to strive, even with the feeblest exhortations—against this sloth in others—if only to keep oneself from falling into the pit of easy indulgence.'

What answer he received is not known, but it is to be presumed that he kept loyal faith with his physician, and gave himself up to simple walks and rides and occasional meditation. His solitude was not broken upon; curiosity was too active a vice, and induced too much exertion for his indolent neighbours, and the *Americano's* basking seclusion, though unlike the habits of his countrymen, did not affect them. The shopkeeper and innkeeper saluted him always with a profound courtesy which awakened his slight resentment, partly because he was conscious that it was grateful to him, and partly that he felt he ought to have provoked in them a less satisfied condition.

Once, when he had unwittingly passed the confines of his own garden, through a gap in the Mission orchard, a lissome, black-coated shadow slipped past him with an obeisance so profound and gentle that he was startled at first into an awkward imitation of it himself, and then into an angry self-examination. He knew that he loathed

that long-skirted, woman-like garment, that dangling, ostentatious symbol, that air of secrecy and mystery, and he inflated his chest above his loosely tied cravat and unbuttoned waistcoat with a contrasted sense of freedom. But he was conscious the next day of weakly avoiding a recurrence of this meeting, and in his self-examination put it down to his self-disciplined observance of his doctor's orders. But when he was strong again, and fitted for his Master's work, how strenuously he should improve the occasion this gave him of attacking the Scarlet Woman among her slaves and worshippers!

His afternoon meditations and the perusal of his only book—the Bible—were regularly broken in upon at about sunset by two or three strokes from the cracked bell that hung in the open belfry which reared itself beyond the gnarled pear trees. He could not say that it was aggressive or persistent, like his own church bells, nor that it even expressed to him any religious sentiment. Moreover, it was not a 'Sabbath' bell, but a *daily* one, and even then seemed to be only a signal to ears easily responsive, rather than a stern reminder. And the hour was always a singularly witching one.

It was when the sun had slipped from the glaring red roofs, and the yellowing *adobe* of the

Mission walls and the tall ranks of wild oats on the hillside were [illegible] f the one colour of old gold. It was when the [illegible]ering heat of the *arroyo* and dusty expanse of *p*[illegible]*za* were blending with the soft breath of the sea fog that crept through the clefts of the coast range, until a refreshing balm seemed to fall like a benediction on all nature. It was when the trade-wind-swept and irritated surfaces of the rocky gorge beyond were soothed with clinging vapours; when the pines above no longer rocked monotonously, and the great undulating sea of the wild oat plains had gone down and was at rest. It was at this hour, one afternoon, that, with the released scents of the garden, there came to him a strange and subtle perfume that was new to his senses. He laid aside his book, went into the garden, and, half-unconscious of his trespass, passed through the Mission orchard and thence into the little churchyard beside the church.

Looking at the strange inscriptions in an unfamiliar tongue, he was singularly touched with the few cheap memorials lying upon the graves—like childish toys—and for the moment overlooked the papistic emblems that accompanied them. It struck him vaguely that Death, the common leveller, had made even the symbols of a faith eternal, inferior to those simple records of undying

memory and affection, and he was for a moment startled into doubt.

He walked to the door of the church: to his surprise it was open. Standing upon the threshold he glanced inside, and stood for a moment utterly bewildered. In a man of refined taste and education that bizarre and highly coloured interior would have only provoked a smile or shrug; to Stephen Masterton's highly emotional nature, but artistic inexperience, strangely enough it was profoundly impressive. The heavily timbered roughly hewn roof, barred with alternate bands of blue and Indian red, the crimson hangings, the gold and black draperies, affected this religious backwoodsman exactly as they were designed to affect the heathen and acolytes for whose conversion the temple had been reared. He could scarcely take his eyes from the tinsel-crowned Mother of Heaven, resplendent in white and gold and glittering with jewels; the radiant shield before the Host, illuminated by tall spectral candles in the mysterious obscurity of the altar, dazzled him like the rayed disc of the setting sun.

A gentle murmur, as of the distant sea, came from the altar. In his naïve bewilderment he had not seen the few kneeling figures in the shadow of column and aisle; it was not until a man, whom

he recognised as a muleteer he had seen that afternoon gambling and drinking in the *fonda*, slipped by him like a shadow and sank upon his knees in the centre of the aisle that he realised the overpowering truth.

He, Stephen Masterton, was looking upon some rite of Popish idolatry! He was turning quickly away when the keeper of the *tienda*—a man of sloth and sin—gently approached him from the shadow of a column with a mute gesture, which he took to be one of invitation. A fierce protest of scorn and indignation swelled to his throat, but died upon his lips. Yet he had strength enough to erect his gaunt emaciated figure, throwing out his long arms and extended palms in the attitude of defiant exorcism, and then rush swiftly from the church. As he did so he thought he saw a faint smile cross the shopkeeper's face, and a whispered exchange of words with a neighbouring worshipper of more exalted appearance came to his ears. But it was not intelligible to his comprehension.

The next day he wrote to his doctor in that quaint grandiloquence of written speech with which the half-educated man balances the slips of his colloquial phrasing:—

'Do not let the purgation of my flesh be unduly protracted. What with the sloth and

idolatries of Baal and Ashtaroth, which I see daily around me, I feel that without a protest not only the flesh but the spirit is mortified. But my bodily strength is mercifully returning, and I found myself yesterday able to take a long ride at that hour which they here keep sacred for an idolatrous rite, under the beautiful name of ' The Angelus." Thus do they bear false witness to Him! Can you tell me the meaning of the Spanish words, "Don Keyhotter?" I am ignorant of these sensuous Southern languages, and am aware that this is not the correct spelling, but I have striven to give the phonetic equivalent. It was used, I am inclined to think, in reference to *myself*, by an idolater.

'P.S.—You need not trouble yourself. I have just ascertained that the words in question were simply the title of an idle novel, and, of course, could not possibly refer to *me*.'

Howbeit it was as 'Don Quixote'—*i.e.*, the common Spaniard's conception of the Knight of La Mancha, merely the simple fanatic and madman—that Mr. Stephen Masterton ever after rode all unconsciously through the streets of the Mission, amid the half-pitying, half-smiling glances of the people.

In spite of his meditations, his single volume, and his habit of retiring early, he found his even-

ings were growing lonely and tedious. He missed the prayer meeting, and, above all, the hymns. He had a fine baritone voice, sympathetic, as may be imagined, but not cultivated. One night, in the seclusion of his garden, and secure in his distance from other dwellings, he raised his voice in a familiar camp meeting hymn with a strong Covenanter's ring in the chorus. Growing bolder as he went on, he at last filled the quiet night with the strenuous sweep of his chant. Surprised at his own fervour, he paused for a moment, listening, half frightened, half ashamed of his outbreak. But there was only the trilling of the night wind in the leaves, or the far-off yelp of a *coyote*.

For a moment he thought he heard the metallic twang of a stringed instrument in the Mission garden beyond his own, and remembered his contiguity to the Church with a stir of defiance. But he was relieved, nevertheless. His pent-up emotion had found vent, and without the nervous excitement that had followed his old exaltation. That night he slept better. He had found the Lord again—with Psalmody!

The next evening he chanced upon a softer hymn of the same simplicity, but with a vein of human tenderness in its aspirations, which his more hopeful mood gently rendered. At the conclusion of the first verse he was, however, distinctly con-

scious of being followed by the same twanging sound he had heard on the previous night, and which even his untutored ear could recognise as an attempt to accompany him. But before he had finished the second verse the unknown player, after an ingenious but ineffectual essay to grasp the right chord, abandoned it with an impatient and almost pettish flourish, and a loud bang upon the sounding board of the unseen instrument. Masterton finished it alone.

With his curiosity excited, however, he tried to discover the locality of the hidden player. The sound evidently came from the Mission garden; but in his ignorance of the language he could not even interrogate his Indian housekeeper. On the third night, however, his hymn was uninterrupted by any sound from the former musician. A sense of disappointment, he knew not why, came over him. The kindly overture of the unseen player had been a relief to his loneliness. Yet he had barely concluded the hymn when the familiar sound again struck his ears. But this time the musician played boldly, confidently, and with a singular skill on the instrument.

The brilliant prelude over, to his entire surprise and some confusion, a soprano voice, high, childish, but infinitely quaint and fascinating, was mischievously uplifted. But alas! even to his ears,

ignorant of the language, it was very clearly a song of levity and wantonness, of freedom and license, of coquetry and incitement! Yet such was its fascination that he fancied it was reclaimed by the delightfully childlike and innocent expression of the singer.

Enough that this tall, gaunt, broad-shouldered man arose, and, overcome by a curiosity almost as childlike, slipped into the garden and glided with an Indian softness of tread towards the voice. The moon shone full upon the ruined Mission wall tipped with clusters of dark foliage. Half hiding, half mingling with one of them—an indistinct bulk of light-coloured huddled fleeces like an extravagant bird's nest—hung the unknown musician. So intent was the performer's preoccupation that Masterton actually reached the base of the wall immediately below the figure without attracting its attention. But his foot slipped on the crumbling *débris* with a snapping of dry twigs. There was a quick little cry from above. He had barely time to recover his position before the singer, impulsively leaning over the parapet, had lost hers, and fell outwards. But Masterton was tall, alert, and self-possessed, and threw out his long arms. The next moment they were full of soft flounces, a struggling figure was against his breast, and a woman's frightened little hands around his neck.

But he had broken her fall, and almost instantly, yet with infinite gentleness, he released her unharmed, with hardly her crisp flounces crumpled, in an upright position against the wall. Even her guitar, still hanging from her shoulder by a yellow ribbon, had bounded elastic and resounding against the wall, but lay intact at her satin-slippered feet. She caught it up with another quick little cry, but this time more of sauciness than fear, and drew her little hand across its strings, half defiantly.

'I hope you are not hurt?' said the Circuit Preacher, gravely.

She broke into a laugh so silvery that he thought it no extravagance to liken it to the moonbeams that played over her made audible. She was lithe, yet plump; barred with black and yellow and small waisted like a pretty wasp. Her complexion in that light was a sheen of pearl satin that made her eyes blacker and her little mouth redder than any other colour could. She was small, but, remembering the fourteen-year-old wife of the shopkeeper, he felt that, for all her childish voice and features, she was a grown woman, and a sudden shyness took hold of him.

But she looked pertly in his face, stood her guitar upright before her, and put her hands behind her back as she leaned saucily against the wall and shrugged her shoulders.

'It was the fault of you,' she said, in a broken English that seemed as much infantine as foreign. 'What for you not remain to yourself in your own *casa*? So it come. You creep so—in the dark—and shake my wall, and I fall. And she,' pointing to the guitar, 'is a'most broke! And for all thees, I h ve only make to you a serenade. Ingrate!'

'I beg your pardon,' said Masterton quickly, 'but I was curious. I thought I might help you, and——'

'Make yourself another cat on the wall, eh? No; one is enough, thank you!'

A frown lowered on Masterton's brow. 'You don't understand me,' he said, bluntly. 'I did not know *who* was here.'

'Ah, *bueno!* Then it is Pepita Ramirez, you see,' she said, tapping her bodice with one little finger, 'all the same; the niece from Manuel Garcia, who keeps the Mission garden and lif there. And you?'

'My name is Masterton.'

'How mooch?'

'Masterton,' he repeated.

She tried to pronounce it once or twice desperately, and then shook her little head so violently that a yellow rose fastened over her ear fell to the ground. But she did not heed it, nor the fact that Masterton had picked it up.

'Ah, I cannot!' she said, poutingly. 'It is as deefeecult to make go as my guitar with your serenade.'

'Can you not say "Stephen Masterton?"' he asked, more gently, with a returning and forgiving sense of her childishness.

'Es-stefen? Ah, *Esteban*! Yes; Don Esteban! *Bueno*! Then, Don Esteban, what for you sink so melank-olly one night, and one night so fierce? The melank-olly, he ees not so bad; but the fierce—ah! he is weeked! Ess it how the *Americano* make always his serenade?'

Masterton's brow again darkened. And his hymn of exaltation had been mistaken by these people—by this—this wanton child!

'It was no serenade,' he replied, curtly; 'it was in praise of the Lord!'

'Of how mooch?'

'Of the Lord of Hosts—of the Almighty in Heaven.' He lifted his long arms reverently on high.

'Oh!' she said, with a frightened look, slightly edging away from the wall. At a secure distance she stopped. 'Then you are a soldier, Don Esteban?'

'No!'

'Then what for you sink "I am a soldier of the Lord," and you will make die "in His army?"

Oh, yes; you have said.' She gathered up her guitar tightly under her arm, shook her small finger at him gravely, and said, 'You are a hoombog, Don Esteban; good a' night,' and began to glide away.

'One moment, Miss—Miss Ramirez,' called Masterton. 'I—that is you—you have—forgotten your rose,' he added, feebly, holding up the flower. She halted.

'Ah, yes; he have drop, you have pick him up, he is yours. *I* have drop, you have pick *me* up, but I am *not* yours. Good a' night, *Comandante* Don Esteban!'

With a light laugh she ran along beside the wall for a little distance, suddenly leaped up and disappeared in one of the largest gaps in its ruined and helpless structure. Stephen Masterton gazed after her stupidly, still holding the rose in his hand. Then he threw it away and re-entered his home.

Lighting his candle he undressed himself, prayed fervently—so fervently that all remembrance of the idle, foolish incident was wiped from his mind—and went to bed. He slept well and dreamlessly.

The next morning, when his thoughts recurred to the previous night, this seemed to him a token that he had not deviated from his spiritual in-

tegrity; it did not occur to him that the thought itself was a tacit suspicion.

So his feet quite easily sought the garden again in the early sunshine, even to the wall where she had stood. But he had not taken into account the vivifying freshness of the morning, the renewed promise of life and resurrection in the pulsing air and potent sunlight, and as he stood there he seemed to see the figure of the young girl again leaning against the wall in all the charm of her irrepressible and innocent youth. More than that, he found the whole scene re-enacting itself before him; the nebulous drapery half hidden in the foliage, the cry and the fall; the momentary soft contact of the girl's figure against his own, the clinging arms around his neck, the brush and fragrance of her flounces—all this came back to him with a strength he had *not* felt when it occurred.

He was turning hurriedly away when his eyes fell upon the yellow rose still lying in the *débris* where he had thrown it—but still pure, fresh, and unfaded. He picked it up again, with a singular fancy that it was the girl herself, and carried it into the house.

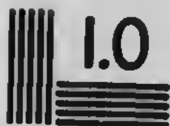
As he placed it half shyly in a glass on his table a wonderful thought occurred to him. Was not the episode of last night a special providence?

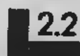
Was not that young girl, wayward and childlike, a mere neophyte in her idolatrous religion, as yet unsteeped in sloth and ignorance, presented to him as a brand to be snatched from the burning? Was not this the opportunity of conversion he had longed for; this the chance of exercising his gifts of exhortation, that he had been hiding in the napkin of solitude and seclusion? Nay, was not all this *predestined*? His illness, his consequent exile to this land of false gods—this contiguity to the Mission—was not all this part of a supremely ordered plan for the girl's salvation—and was *he* not elected and ordained for that service? Nay, more, was not the girl herself a mere unconscious instrument in the hands of a higher power; was not her voluntary attempt to accompany him in his devotional exercise a vague stirring of that predestined force within her? Was not even that wantonness and frivolity contrasted with her childishness—which he had at first misunderstood—the stirrings of the flesh and the spirit, and was he to abandon her in that struggle of good and evil?

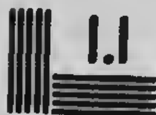
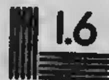
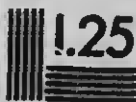
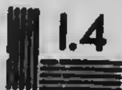
He lifted his bowed head, that had been resting on his arm before the little flower on the table—as if it were a shrine—with a flash of resolve in his blue eyes. The wrinkled Concepcion coming to her duties in the morning scarcely recognised her

MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)





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gloomily abstracted master in this transfigured man. He looked ten years younger.

She met his greeting, and the few direct inquiries that his new resolve enabled him to make more freely, with some information—which a later talk with the shopkeeper, who had a fuller English vocabulary, confirmed in detail.

'Yes! truly this was a niece of the Mission gardener, who lived with her uncle in the ruined wing of the old Presidio. She had taken her first communion four years ago. Ah, yes, she was a great musician, and could play on the organ. And the guitar, ah, yes—of a certainty. She was gay, and flirted with the Caballeros, young and old, but she cared not for any.'

Whatever satisfaction this latter statement gave Masterton, he believed it was because the absence of any disturbing worldly affection would make her an easier convert.

But how continue this chance acquaintance and effect her conversion? For the first time Masterton realised the value of expediency; while his whole nature impelled him to frankly and publicly seek her society and openly exhort her, he knew that this was impossible; still more, he remembered her unmistakable fright at his first expression of faith; he must 'be wise as the serpent and harmless as the dove.' He must

work upon her soul alone, and secretly. He, who would have shrunk from any clandestine association with a girl from mere human affection, saw no wrong in a covert intimacy for the purpose of religious salvation. Ignorant as he was of the ways of the world, and inexperienced in the usages of society, he began to plan methods of secretly meeting her with all the intrigue of a gallant. The perspicacity as well as the intuition of a true lover had descended upon him in this effort of mere spiritual conquest.

Armed with his information and a few Spanish words, he took the yellow Concepcion aside and gravely suborned her to carry a note to be delivered secretly to Miss Ramirez. To his great relief and some surprise the old woman grinned with intelligence, and her withered hand closed with a certain familiar dexterity over the epistle and the accompanying gratuity. To a man less naïvely one-ideaed it might have awakened some suspicion; but to the more sanguine hopefulness of Masterton it only suggested the fancy that Concepcion herself might prove to be open to conversion, and that he should in due season attempt *her* salvation also. But that would be later. For Concepcion was always with him and accessible; the girl was not.

The note, which .d cost him some labour of

composition, simple and almost business-like as was the result, ran as follows :—

'I wish to see you upon some matter of grave concern to yourself. Will you oblige me by coming again to the wall of the Mission to-night at early candle light? It would avert worldly suspicion if you brought also your guitar.'

The afternoon dragged slowly on; Concepcion returned; she had, with great difficulty, managed to see the Senorita, but not alone; she had, however, slipped the note into her hand, not daring to wait for an answer.

In his first hopefulness Masterton did not doubt what the answer would be, but as evening approached he grew concerned as to the girl's opportunities of coming, and regretted that he had not given her a choice of time.

Before his evening meal was finished he began to fear for her willingness, and doubt the potency of his note. He was accustomed to exhort *orally*—perhaps he ought to have waited for the chance of *speaking* to her directly without writing.

When the moon rose he was already in the garden. Lingering at first in the shadow of an olive tree, he waited until the moonbeams fell on the wall and its crests of foliage. But nothing moved among that ebony tracery; his ear was

strained for the familiar tinkle of the guitar—all was silent. As the moon rose higher he at last boldly walked to the wall, and listened for any movement on the other side of it. But nothing stirred. She was evidently *not* coming—his note had failed.

He was turning away sadly, but as he faced his home again he heard a light laugh beside him. He stopped. A black shadow stepped out from beneath his own almond tree. He started, when, with a gesture that seemed familiar to him, the upper part of the shadow seemed to fall away with a long black mantilla and the face of the young girl was revealed.

He could see now that she was clad in black lace from head to foot. She looked taller, older, and he fancied even prettier than before. A sudden doubt of his ability to impress her, a swift realisation of all the difficulties of the attempt, and, for the first time, perhaps, a dim perception of the incongruity of the situation came over him.

'I was looking for you on the wall,' he stammered.

'*Madre de Dios!*' she retorted, with a laugh and her old audacity, 'you would that I shall *always* hang there, and drop upon you like a pear when you shake the tree? No!'

SHE LOOKED TALLER, OLDER, AND HE FANCIED EVEN PRETTIER THAN BEFORE

'You haven't brought your guitar,' he continued, still more awkwardly, as he noticed that she held only a long black fan in her hand.

'For why? You would that I *play* it, and when my uncle say "Where go Pepita? She is loss," some one shall say, "Oh! I have hear her tink-a-tink in the garden of the *Americano*, who lif alone." And then—it ess finish!'

Masterton began to feel exceedingly uncomfortable. There was something in this situation that he had not dreamed of. But with the persistency of an awkward man he went on.

'But you played on the wall the other night, and tried to accompany me.'

'But that was lass night and on the wall. I had not speak to you, you had not speak to me. You had not sent me the leetle note by your *peon*.' She stopped, and suddenly opening her fan before her face, so that only her mischievous eyes were visible, added: 'You had not asked me then to come to hear you make lof to me, Don Esteban. *That* is the difference.'

The Circuit Preacher felt the blood rush to his face. Anger, shame, mortification, remorse, and fear alternately strove with him, but above all and through all he was conscious of a sharp, exquisite pleasure—that frightened him still more. Yet he managed to exclaim:

'No! no! You cannot think me capable of such a cowardly trick?'

The girl started, more at the unmistakable sincerity of his utterance than at the words, whose full meaning she may have only imperfectly caught.

'A treek? A treek?' she slowly and wonderingly repeated. Then suddenly, as if comprehending him, she turned her round black eyes full upon him and dropped her fan from her face.

'And *what* for you ask me to come here then?'

'I wanted to talk with you,' he began, 'on far more serious matters. I wished to——' but he stopped. He could not address this quaint child-woman, staring at him in black-eyed wonder, in either the measured or the impetuous terms with which he would have exhorted a maturer responsible being. He made a step towards her; she drew back, striking at his extended hand half impatiently, half mischievously with her fan.

He flushed—and then burst out bluntly, 'I want to talk with you about your soul.'

'My what?'

'Your immortal soul, unhappy girl.'

'What have *you* to make with that? Are you a devil?' Her eyes grew rounder though she faced him boldly.

I am a Minister of the Gospel,' he said, in hurried entreaty. 'You must hear me for a moment. I would save your soul.'

'My immortal *soul* lif with the Padre at the Mission—you moost seek her there! My mortal *body*,' she added, with a mischievous smile, 'say to you, "good a' night, Don Esteban."' She dropped him a little curtsey and—ran away.

'One moment, Miss Ramirez.' said Masterton, eagerly; but she had already slipped beyond his reach. He saw her little black figure passing swiftly beside the moonlit wall, saw it suddenly slide into a shadowy fissure, and vanish.

In his blank disappointment, he could not bear to re-enter the house he had left so sanguinely a few moments before, but walked moodily in the garden. His discomfiture was the more complete since he felt that his defeat was owing to some mistake in his methods, and not the incorrigibility of his subject.

Was it not a spiritual weakness in him to have resented so sharply the girl's imputation that he wished to make love to her? He should have borne it as Christians had even before now borne slander and false testimony fort heir faith! He might even have *accepted it*, and let the triumph of her conversion in the end prove his innocence. Or was his purpose incompatible with

that sisterly affection he had so often preached to the women of his flock? He might have taken her hand, and called her 'Sister Pepita,' even as he had called Deborah 'Sister.' He recalled the fact that he had for an instant held her struggling in his arms: he remembered the thrill that the recollection had caused him, and somehow it now sent a burning blush across his face. He hurried back into the house.

The next day a thousand wild ideas took the place of his former settled resolution. He would seek the Padre, this custodian of the young girl's soul; he would convince *him* of *his* error, or beseech him to give him an equal access to her spirit! He would seek the uncle of the girl, and work upon his feelings.

Then for three or four days he resolved to put the young girl from his mind, trusting after the fashion of his kind for some special revelation from a supreme source as an indication for his conduct. This revelation presently occurred, as it is apt to occur when wanted.

One evening his heart leaped at the familiar sound of Pepita's guitar in the distance. Whatever his ultimate intention now, he hurriedly ran into the garden. The sound came from the former direction, but as he unhesitatingly approached the Mission wall, he could see that she

was not upon it, and as the notes of her guitar were struck again, he knew that they came from the other side. But the chords were a prelude to one of his own hymns, and he stood entranced as her sweet, child-like voice rose with the very words that he had sung. The few defects were those of purely oral imitation, the accents, even the slight reiteration of the 's,' were Pepita's own:

> Cheeldren oof the Heavenly King,
> As ye journey essweetly ssing;
> Essing your great Redeemer's praise,
> Glorioos in Hees works and ways.

He was astounded. Her recollection of the air and words was the more wonderful, for he remembered now that he had only sung that particular hymn once. But to his still greater delight and surprise, her voice rose again in the second verse, with a touch of plaintiveness that swelled his throat:

> We are travelling home to God,
> In the way our farzers trod;
> They are happy now, and we
> Soon their happiness shall see.

The simple, almost childish words—so childish that they might have been the fitting creation of her own childish lips—here died away with a

sweep and crash of the whole strings. Breathless silence followed, in which Stephen Masterton could feel the beatings of his own heart.

'Miss Ramirez,' he called, in a voice that scarcely seemed his own. There was no reply. 'Pepita!' he repeated; it was strangely like the accent of a lover, but he no longer cared. Still the singer's voice was silent.

Then he ran swiftly beside the wall, as he had seen her run, until he came to the fissure. It was overgrown with vines and brambles almost as impenetrable as an abattis, but if she had pierced it in her delicate crape dress, so could he! He brushed roughly through, and found himself in a glimmering aisle of pear trees close by the white wall of the Mission church.

For a moment in that intricate tracing of ebony and ivory made by the rising moon, he was dazzled, but evidently his irruption into the orchard had not been as lithe and silent as her own, for a figure in a parti-coloured dress suddenly started into activity, and running from the wall, began to course through the trees until it became apparently a part of that involved pattern. Nothing daunted, however, Stephen Masterton pursued; his speed increased as he recognised the flounces of Pepita's barred dress, but the young girl had the advantage of knowing

the locality, and could evade her pursuer by unsuspected turns and doubles.

For some moments this fanciful sylvan chase was kept up in perfect silence; it might have been

A FIGURE IN A PARTI-COLOURED DRESS SUDDENLY STARTED INTO ACTIVITY

a woodland nymph pursued by a wandering shepherd. Masterton presently saw that she was making towards a tiled roof that was now visible as projecting over the Presidio wall, and was evidently her goal of refuge He redoubled his

speed ; with skilful audacity and sheer strength of his broad shoulders he broke through a dense Ceanothus hedge which Pepita was swiftly skirting, and suddenly appeared between her and her house.

With her first cry, the young girl turned and tried to bury herself in the hedge ; but in another stride the Circuit Preacher was at her side, and caught her panting figure in his arms.

While he had been running he had swiftly formulated what he should do and what he should say to her. To his simple appeal for her companionship and willing ear he would add a brotherly tenderness, that should invite her trustfulness in him ; he would confess his wrong and ask her forgiveness of his abrupt solicitations ; he would propose to teach her more hymns, they would practise psalmody together ; even this priest, the custodian of her soul, could not object to that ; but chiefly he would thank her : he would tell her how she had pleased him, and this would lead to more serious and thoughtful converse. All this was in his mind while he ran, was upon his lips as he caught her, and for an instant she lapsed, exhausted, in his arms. But, alas ! even in that moment he suddenly drew her towards him, and kissed her as only a lover could !

* * * * *

The wire grass was already yellowing on the Tasajasa plains with the dusty decay of the long, dry summer, when Doctor Duchesne returned to Tasajasa. He came to see the wife of Deacon Sanderson, who, having for the twelfth time added to the population of the settlement, was not 'doing as well' as everybody—except, possibly, Doctor Duchesne—expected. After he had made this hollow-eyed, over-burdened, under-nourished woman as comfortable as he could in her rude, neglected surroundings, to change the dreary chronicle of suffering, he turned to the husband, and said, 'And what has become of Mr. Masterton, who used to be in your—vocation?' A long groan came from the Deacon.

'Hallo! I hope he has not had a relapse,' said the Doctor, earnestly. 'I thought I'd knocked all that nonsense out of him—I beg your pardon—I mean,' he added, hurriedly, 'he wrote to me only a few weeks ago that he was picking up his strength again and doing well!'

'In his weak, gross, sinful flesh—yes, no doubt,' returned the Deacon, scornfully, 'and, perhaps, even in a worldly sense, for those who value the vanities of life; but he is lost to us, for all time, and lost to eternal life for ever. Not,' he continued in sanctimonious vindictiveness, 'but that I often had my doubts of Brother

Masterton's steadfastness. He was too much given to imagery and song.'

'But *what* has he done?' persisted Doctor Duchesne.

'Done! He has embraced the Scarlet Woman!'

'Dear me!' said the Doctor, 'so soon? Is it anybody you knew here?—not anybody's wife? Eh?'

'He has entered the Church of Rome,' said the Deacon, indignantly; 'he has forsaken the God of his fathers for the tents of the idolaters; he is the consort of Papists and the slave of the Pope!'

'But are you *sure*?' said Doctor Duchesne, with perhaps less concern than before.

'Sure,' returned the Deacon angrily, 'didn't Brother Bulkley, on account of warning reports made by a God-fearing and soul-seeking teamster, make a special pilgrimage to this land of Sodom to enquire and spy out its wickedness? Didn't he find Stephen Masterton steeped in the iniquity of practising on an organ—he that scorned even a violin or harmonium in the tents of the Lord—in an idolatrous chapel, with a foreign female Papist for a teacher? Didn't he find him a guest at the board of a Jesuit priest, visiting the schools of the Mission where this young Jezebel of a singer

'DIDN'T HE FIND MASTERTON STEEPED IN THE INIQUITY OF PRACTISING ON AN ORGAN?'

teaches the children to chant in unknown tongues? Didn't he find him living with a wrinkled Indian witch who called him 'Padrone,' and speaking her gibberish? Didn't they find him, who left here a man mortified in flesh and spirit and pale with striving with sinners, fat and rosy from native wines and flesh pots, and even vain and gaudy in coloured apparel? And last of all, didn't Brother Bulkley hear that a rumour was spread far and wide that this miserable backslider was to take to himself a wife—in one of these strange women—that very Jezebel who seduced him? What do you call that?'

'It looks a good deal like human nature,' said the Doctor, musingly, 'but *I* call it a cure!'

THE INDISCRETION OF ELSBETH

The American paused. He had evidently lost his way. For the last half-hour he had been wandering in a mediæval town, in a profound mediæval dream. Only a few days had elapsed since he had left the steamship that carried him hither; and the accents of his own tongue, the idioms of his own people and the sympathetic community of New World tastes and expressions still filled his mind, until he woke up, or rather, as it seemed to him, was falling asleep in the past of this Old World town which had once held his ancestors. Although a republican, he had liked to think of them in quaint distinctive garb, representing State and importance—perhaps even aristocratic pre-eminence—content to let the responsibility of such 'bad eminence' rest with them entirely, but a habit of conscientiousness and love for historic truth eventually led him also to regard an honest *Bauer* standing beside his cattle in the quaint market-place, or a kindly-faced black-eyed *Dienstmädchen* in a doorway, with a

timid, respectful interest, as a possible type of his progenitors. For, unlike some of his travelling countrymen in Europe, he was not a snob, and it struck him—as an American—that it was, perhaps, better to think of his race as having improved than as having degenerated. In these ingenuous meditations he had passed the long rows of quaint, high houses, whose sagging roofs and unpatched dilapidations were yet far removed from squalor, until he had reached the road bordered by poplars, all so unlike his own country's waysides—and knew that he had wandered far from his hotel.

He did not care, however, to retrace his steps and return by the way he had come. There was, he reasoned, some other street or turning that would eventually bring him to the market-place and his hotel, and yet extend his experience of the town. He turned at right angles into a narrow grass lane, which was, however, as neatly kept and apparently as public as the highway. A few moments' walking convinced him that it was not a thoroughfare and that it led to the open gates of a park. This had something of a public look, which suggested that his intrusion might be, at least, a pardonable trespass, and he relied, like most strangers, on the exonerating quality of a stranger's ignorance. The park lay in the

direction he wished to go, and yet it struck him as singular that a park of such extent should be allowed to still occupy such valuable urban space. Indeed, its length seemed to be illimitable as he wandered on, until he became conscious that he must have again lost his way, and he diverged toward the only boundary, a high, thickset hedge to the right, whose line he had been following.

As he neared it he heard the sound of voices on the other side, speaking in German, with which he was unfamiliar. Having, as yet, met no one, and being now impressed with the fact that for a public place the park was singularly deserted, he was conscious that his position was getting serious, and he determined to take this only chance of enquiring his way. The hedge was thinner in some places than in others, and at times he could see not only the light through it but even the moving figures of the speakers, and the occasional white flash of a summer gown. At last he determined to penetrate it, and with little difficulty emerged on the other side. But here he paused motionless. He found himself behind a somewhat formal and symmetrical group of figures with their backs toward him, but all stiffened into attitudes as motionless as his own, and all gazing with a monotonous intensity in the direction of a handsome building, which had been invisible above the hedge,

but which now seemed to arise suddenly before him. Some of the figures were in uniform. Immediately before him, but so slightly separated from the others that he was enabled to see the house between her and her companions, he was confronted by the pretty back, shoulders and blonde braids of a young girl of twenty. Convinced that he had unwittingly intruded upon some august ceremonial, he instantly slipped back into the hedge, but so silently that his momentary presence was evidently undetected. When he regained the park side he glanced back through the interstices; there was no movement of the figures nor break in the silence to indicate that his intrusion had been observed. With a long breath of relief he hurried from the park.

It was late when he finally got back to his hotel. But his little modern adventure had, I fear, quite outrun his previous mediæval reflections, and almost his first enquiry of the silver-chained porter in the courtyard was in regard to the park. There was no public park in Alstadt! The Herr possibly alluded to the Hof Gardens—the Schloss, which was in the direction he indicated. The Schloss was the residency of the hereditary Grand Duke. *Ja wohl!* He was stopping there with several *Hoheiten.* There was naturally a party there—a family reunion. But it was a private

enclosure. At times, when the Grand Duke was not 'in residence,' it was open to the public. In point of fact, at such times tickets of admission were to be had at the hotel for fifty *Pfennige* each. There was not, of truth, much to see except a model farm and dairy—the pretty toy of a previous Grand Duchess.

But he seemed destined to come into closer collision with the modern life of Alstadt. On entering the hotel, wearied by his long walk, he passed the landlord and a man in half-military uniform on the landing near his room. As he entered his apartment he had a vague impression, without exactly knowing why, that the landlord and the military stranger had just left it. This feeling was deepened by the evident disarrangement of certain articles in his unlocked portmanteau and the disorganisation of his writing-case. A wave of indignation passed over him. It was followed by a knock at the door, and the landlord blandly appeared with the stranger.

'A thousand pardons,' said the former smilingly, 'but Herr Sanderman, the Ober-Inspector of Police, wishes to speak with you. I hope we are not intruding?'

'Not *now*,' said the American drily.

The two exchanged a vacant and deprecating smile.

'I have to ask only a few formal questions,' said the Ober-Inspector in excellent but somewhat precise English, 'to supplement the report which, as a stranger, you may not know is required by the police from the landlord in regard to the names and quality of his guests who are foreign to the town. You have a passport?'

'I have,' said the American still more drily. 'But I do not keep it in an unlocked portmanteau or an open writing-case.'

'An admirable precaution,' said Sanderman with unmoved politeness. 'May I see it? Thanks,' he added, glancing over the document which the American produced from his pocket. 'I see that you are a born American citizen—and an earlier knowledge of that fact would have prevented this little *contretemps*. You are aware, Mr. Hoffman, that your name is German?'

'It was borne by my ancestors, who came from this country two centuries ago,' said Hoffman curtly.

'We are indeed honoured by your return to it,' returned Sanderman suavely, 'but it was the circumstance of your name being a local one, and the possibility of your still being a German citizen liable to unperformed military duty, which has caused the trouble.' His manner was clearly civil and courteous, but Hoffman felt that all the

time his own face and features were undergoing a profound scrutiny from the speaker.

'And you are making sure that you will know me again?' said Hoffman with a smile.

'I trust, indeed, both,' returned Sanderman with a bow, 'although you will permit me to say that your description here,' pointing to the passport, 'scarcely does you justice. *Ach Gott!* it is the same in all countries; the official eye is not that of the young *Damen*.'

Hoffman, though not conceited, had not lived twenty years without knowing that he was very good-looking, yet there was something in the remark that caused him to colour with a new uneasiness. The Ober-Inspector rose with another bow, and moved toward the door. 'I hope you will let me make amends for this intrusion by doing anything I can to render your visit here a pleasant one. Perhaps,' he added, 'it is not for long?'

But Hoffman evaded the evident question as he resented what he imagined was a possible sneer.

'I have not yet determined my movements,' he said.

The Ober-Inspector brought his heels together in a somewhat stiffer military salute and departed.

Nothing, however, could have exceeded the later almost servile urbanity of the landlord, who seemed to have been proud of the official visit to his guest. He was profuse in his attentions, and even introduced him to a singularly artistic-looking man of middle age, wearing an order in his buttonhole, whom he met casually in the hall.

'Our Court photographer,' explained the landlord with some fervour, 'at whose studio, only a few houses distant, most of the *Hoheiten* and *Prinzessinnen* of Germany have sat for their likenesses.'

'I should feel honoured if the distinguished American Herr would give me a visit,' said the stranger gravely, as he gazed at Hoffman with an intensity which recalled the previous scrutiny of the Police-Inspector, 'and I would be charmed if he would avail himself of my poor skill to transmit his picturesque features to my unique collection.'

Hoffman returned a polite evasion to this invitation, although he was conscious of being struck with this second examination of his face, and the allusion to his personality.

The next morning the porter met him with a mysterious air. The Herr would still like to see the Schloss? Hoffman, who had quite forgotten his adventure in the park, looked vacant. *Ja wohl*

—the Hof authorities had no doubt heard of his visit and had intimated to the hotel proprietor that he might have permission to visit the model farm and dairy. As the American still looked indifferent the porter pointed out with some importance that it was a Ducal courtesy not to be lightly treated; that few, indeed, of the burghers themselves had ever been admitted to this eccentric whim of the late Grand Duchess. He would, of course, be silent about it; the Court would not like it known that they had made an exception to their rules in favour of a foreigner; he would enter quickly and boldly alone. There would be a housekeeper or a dairymaid to show him over the place.

More amused at this important mystery over what he, as an American, was inclined to classify as a 'free pass' to a somewhat heavy 'side show,' he gravely accepted the permission, and the next morning after breakfast set out to visit the model farm and dairy. Dismissing his driver, as he had been instructed, Hoffman entered the gateway with a mingling of expectancy and a certain amusement over the 'boldness' which the porter had suggested should characterise his entrance. Before him was a beautifully kept lane bordered by arboured and trellised roses, which seemed to sink into the distance. He was instinctively

following it when he became aware that he was mysteriously accompanied by a man in the livery of a *chasseur*, who was walking among the trees almost abreast of him, keeping pace with his step, and after the first introductory military salute preserving a ceremonious silence. There was something so ludicrous in this solemn procession toward a peaceful, rural industry that by the time they had reached the bottom of the lane the American had quite recovered his good humour. But here a new astonishment awaited him. Nestling before him in a green amphitheatre lay a little wooden farmyard and outbuildings, which irresistibly suggested that it had been recently unpacked and set up from a box of Nuremberg toys. The symmetrical trees, the galleried houses with preternaturally glazed windows, even the spotty, disproportionately sized cows in the white-fenced barnyards, were all unreal, wooden and toylike.

Crossing a miniature bridge over a little stream. from which he was quite prepared to hook metallic fish with a magnet their own size, he looked about him for some real being to dispel the illusion. The mysterious *chasseur* had disappeared. But under the arch of an arbour, which seemed to be composed of silk ribbons, green glass and pink tissue paper, stood a quaint but delightful figure.

At first it seemed as if he had only dispelled one illusion for another. For the figure before him might have been made of Dresden china—so daintily delicate and unique it was in colour and arrangement. It was that of a young girl dressed in some forgotten mediæval peasant garb of velvet braids, silver stay-laced corsage, lace sleeves and helmeted metallic comb. But, after the Dresden method, the pale yellow of her hair was repeated in her bodice, the pink of her cheeks was in the roses of her chintz overskirt. The blue of her eyes was the blue of her petticoat; the dazzling whiteness of her neck shone again in the sleeves and stockings. Nevertheless she was real and human, for the pink deepened in her cheeks as Hoffman's hat flew from his head, and she recognised the civility with a grave little curtsey.

'You have come to see the dairy,' she said in quaintly accurate English. 'I will show you the way.'

'If you please,' said Hoffman gaily, 'but——'

'But what?' she said, facing him suddenly with absolutely astonished eyes.

Hoffman looked into them so long that their frank wonder presently contracted into an ominous mingling of restraint and resentment. Nothing daunted, however, he went on:

'Couldn't we shake all that?'

The look of wonder returned. 'Shake all that?' she repeated. 'I do not understand.'

'Well! I'm not positively aching to see cows, and you must be sick of showing them. I think, too, I've about sized the whole show. Wouldn't it be better if we sat down in that arbour—supposing it won't fall down—and you told me all about the lot? It would save you a heap of trouble and keep your pretty frock cleaner than trapesing round. Of course,' he said with a quick transition to the gentlest courtesy, 'if you're conscientious about this thing we'll go on and not spare a cow. Consider me in it with you for the whole morning.'

She looked at him again and then suddenly broke into a charming laugh. It revealed a set of strong white teeth, as well as a certain barbaric trace in its cadence which civilised restraint had not entirely overlaid.

'I suppose she really is a peasant, in spite of that pretty frock,' he said to himself as he laughed too.

But her face presently took a shade of reserve, and with a gentle but singular significance she said:

'I think you must see the dairy.'

Hoffman's hat was in his hand with a vivacity that tumbled the brown curls on his forehead.

'By all means,' he said instantly, and began walking by her side in modest but easy silence. Now that he thought her a conscientious peasant he was quiet and respectful.

Presently she lifted her eyes, which, despite her gravity, had not entirely lost their previous mirthfulness, and said:

'But you Americans—in your rich and prosperous country, with your large lands and your great harvests—you must know all about farming.'

'Never was in a dairy in my life,' said Hoffman gravely. 'I'm from the city of New York, where the cows give swill milk and are kept in cellars.'

Her eyebrows contracted prettily in an effort to understand. Then she apparently gave it up and said with a slanting glint of mischief in her eyes:

'Then you come here like the other Americans in hope to see the Grand Duke and Duchess and the Princesses?'

'No. The fact is I almost tumbled into a lot of 'em—standing like wax figures—the other side of the park lodge, the other day—and got away as soon as I could. I think I prefer the cows.'

Her head was slightly turned away. He had

to content himself with looking down upon the strong feet in their serviceable but smartly buckled shoes that uplifted her upright figure as she moved beside him.

'Of course,' he added with boyish but unmistakable courtesy, 'if it's part of your show to trot out the family, why I'm in that too. I dare say you could make them interesting.'

'But why,' she said with her head still slightly turned away toward a figure—a sturdy-looking woman, which, for the first time, Hoffman perceived was walking in a line with them as the *chasseur* had done—'why did you come here at all?'

'The first time was a fool accident,' he returned frankly. 'I was making a short cut through what I thought was a public park. The second time was because I had been rude to a Police-Inspector whom I found going through my things, but who apologised—as I suppose—by getting me an invitation from the Grand Duke to come here, and I thought it only the square thing to both of 'em to accept it. But I'm mighty glad I came; I wouldn't have missed *you* for a thousand dollars. You see I haven't struck any one I cared to talk to since.' Here he suddenly remarked that she hadn't looked at him, and that the delicate whiteness of her neck was quite suf-

fused with pink, and stopped instantly. Presently he said quite easily:

'Who's the chorus?'

'The lady?'

'Yes. She's watching us as if she didn't quite approve, you know—as if she didn't catch on.'

'She's the head housekeeper of the farm. Perhaps you would prefer to have her show you the dairy; shall I call her?'

The figure in question was very short and stout, with voluminous petticoats.

'Please don't; I'll stay without your setting that paper-weight on me. But here's the dairy. Don't let her come inside among those pans of fresh milk with that smile, or there'll be trouble.

The young girl paused too, made a slight gesture with her hand, and the figure passed on as they entered the dairy. It was beautifully clean and fresh. With a persistence that he quickly recognised as mischievous and ironical, and with his characteristic adaptability accepted with even greater gravity and assumption of interest, she showed him all the details. Thence they passed to the farmyard, where he hung with breathless attention over the names of the cows and made her repeat them. Although she was evidently familiar with the subject, he could see that her zeal was fitful and impatient.

'Suppose we sit down,' he said, pointing to an ostentatious rustic seat in the centre of the green.

'Sit down?' she repeated wonderingly. 'What for?'

'To talk. We'll knock off and call it half a day.'

'But if you are not looking at the farm you are, of course, going,' she said quickly.

'Am I? I don't think these particulars were in my invitation.'

She again broke into a fit of laughter, and, at the same time, cast a bright eye around the field.

'Come,' he said gently, 'there are no other sightseers waiting and your conscience is clear,' and he moved toward the rustic seat.

'Certainly not—there,' she added in a low voice.

They moved on slowly together to a copse of willows which overhung the miniature stream.

'You are not staying long in Alstadt?' she said.

'No; I only came to see the old town that my ancestors came from.'

They were walking so close together that her skirt brushed his trousers, but she suddenly drew

away from him, and looking him fixedly in the eye said :

'Ah, you have relations here ?'

'Yes, but they are dead two hundred years.'

She laughed again with a slight expression of relief. They had entered the copse and were walking in dense shadow when she suddenly stopped and sat down upon a rustic bench. To his surprise he found that they were quite alone.

'Tell me about these relatives,' she said, slightly drawing aside her skirt to make room for him on the seat.

He did not require a second invitation. He not only told her all about his ancestral progenitors, but, I fear, even about those more recent and more nearly related to him ; about his own life, his vocation—he was a clever newspaper correspondent with a roving commission—his ambitions, his beliefs and his romance.

'And then, perhaps, of this visit—you will also make "copy"?'

He smiled at her quick adaptation of his professional slang, but shook his head.

'No,' he said gravely. 'No—this is *you*. The "Chicago Interviewer" is big pay and is rich, but it hasn't capital enough to buy you from me.'

He gently slid his hand toward hers and slipped his fingers softly around it. She made a slight movement of withdrawal, but even then—as if in forgetfulness or indifference—permitted her hand to rest unresponsively in his. It was scarcely an encouragement to gallantry, neither was it a rejection of an unconscious familiarity.

'But you haven't told me about yourself,' he said.

'Oh, I—' she returned, with her first approach to coquetry in a laugh and a sidelong glance, 'of what importance is that to you? It is the Grand Duchess and Her Highness the Princess that you Americans seek to know. I am—what I am—as you see.'

'You bet,' said Hoffman with charming decision.

'I *what*?'

'You *are*, you know, and that's good enough for me, but I don't even know your name.'

She laughed again and after a pause said: 'Elsbeth.'

'But I couldn't call you by your first name on our first meeting, you know.'

'Then you Americans are really so very formal—eh?' she said slyly, looking at her imprisoned hand.

'Well, yes,' returned Hoffman disengaging it.

I suppose we are respectful, or mean to be. But whom am I to enquire for? To write to?'

'You are neither to write nor enquire.'

'What?'

She had moved in her seat so as to half face him with eyes in which curiosity, mischief and a certain seriousness alternated, but for the first time seemed conscious of his hand, and accented her words with a slight pressure.

'You are to return to your hotel presently and say to your landlord: "Pack up my luggage. I have finished with this old town and my ancestors, and the Grand Duke whom I do not care to see, and I shall leave Alstadt to-morrow!"'

'Thank you! I don't catch on.'

'Of what necessity should you? I have said it. That should be enough for a chivalrous American like you.' She again significantly looked down at her hand.

'If you mean that you know the extent of the favour you ask of me, I can say no more,' he said seriously; 'but give me some reason for it.'

'Ah so!' she said with a slight shrug of her shoulders. 'Then I must tell you. You say you do not know the Grand Duke and Duchess. Well! *they know you!* The day before yesterday you were wandering in the park, as you admit. You say, also, you got through the hedge and inter-

rupted some ceremony. That ceremony was not a Court function, Mr. Hoffman, but something equally sacred—the photographing of the Ducal family before the Schloss. You say that you instantly withdrew. But after the photograph was taken the plate revealed a stranger standing actually by the side of the Princess Alexandrine, and even taking the *pas* of the Grand Duke himself. That stranger was you!'

'And the picture was spoiled,' said the American with a quiet laugh.

'I should not say that,' returned the lady with a demure glance at her companion's handsome face, 'and I do not believe that the Princess—who first saw the photograph—thought so either. But she is very young and wilful, and has the reputation of being very indiscreet, and unfortunately she begged the photographer not to destroy the plate, but to give it to her, and to say nothing about it, except that the plate was defective, and to take another. Still it would have ended there if her curiosity had not led her to confide a description of the stranger to the Police-Inspector, with the result you know.'

'Then I am expected to leave town because I accidentally stumbled into a family group that was being photographed?'

'Because a certain Princess was indiscreet

enough to show her curiosity about you,' corrected the fair stranger.

'But look here! I'll apologise to the Princess, and offer to pay for the plate.'

'Then you do want to see the Princess?' said the young girl smiling; 'you are like the others.'

'Bother the Princess! I want to see *you*. And I don't see how they can prevent it if I choose to remain.'

'Very easily. You will find that there is something wrong with your passport, and you will be sent on to Pumpernickel for examination. You will unwittingly transgress some of the laws of the town and be ordered to leave it. You will be shadowed by the police until you quarrel with them—like a free American—and you are conducted to the frontier. Perhaps you will strike an officer who has insulted you, and then you are finished on the spot.'

The American's crest rose palpably until it cocked his straw hat over his curls.

'Suppose I am content to risk it—having first laid the whole matter and its trivial cause before the American Minister, so that he could make it hot for this whole caboodle of a country if they happened to "down me." By Jove! I shouldn't mind being the martyr of an international episode if they'd spare me long enough to let me get the

first "copy" over to the other side.' His eyes sparkled.

'You could expose them, but they would then deny the whole story, and you have no evidence. They would demand to know your informant, and I should be disgraced, and the Princess, who is already talked about, made a subject of scandal. But no matter! It is right that an American's independence shall not be interfered with.'

She raised the hem of her handkerchief to her blue eyes and slightly turned her head aside. Hoffman gently drew the handkerchief away, and in so doing possessed himself of her other hand.

'Look here, Miss—Miss—Elsbeth. You know I wouldn't give you away, whatever happened. But couldn't I get hold of that photographer—I saw him, he wanted me to sit to him —and make him tell me?'

'He wanted you to sit to him,' she said hurriedly, 'and did you?'

'No,' he replied, 'He was a little too fresh and previous, though I thought he fancied some resemblance in me to somebody else.'

'Ah!' She said something to herself in German which he did not understand, and then added aloud:

'You did well; he is a bad man, this photographer. Promise me you shall not sit for him.'

'How can I if I'm fired out of the place like this?' He added ruefully, 'But I'd like to make him give himself away to me somehow.'

'He will not, and if he did he would deny it afterward. Do not go near him nor see him. Be careful that he does not photograph you with his instantaneous instrument when you are passing. Now you must go. I must see the Princess.'

'Let me go, too. I will explain it to her,' said Hoffman.

She stopped, looked at him keenly and attempted to withdraw her hands. 'Ah, then it *is* so. It is the Princess you wish to see. You are curious—you, too; you wish to see this lady who is interested in you. I ought to have known it. You are all alike.'

He met her gaze with laughing frankness, accepting her outburst as a charming feminine weakness, half jealousy, half coquetry—but retained her hands.

'Nonsense,' he said. 'I wish to see her that I may have the right to see you—that you shall not lose your place here through me; that I may come again.'

'You must never come here again.'

'Then you must come where I am. We will meet somewhere when you have an afternoon

off. You shall show me the town—the houses of my ancestors—their tombs; possibly—if the Grand Duke rampages—the probable site of my own.'

She looked into his laughing eyes with her clear, steadfast, gravely questioning blue ones. 'Do not you Americans know that it is not the fashion here, in Germany, for the young men and the young women to walk together—unless they are *verlobt?* '

'*Ver*—which?'

'Engaged.' She nodded her head thrice: viciously, decidedly, mischievously.

'So much the better.'

'*Ach Gott!*' She made a gesture of hopelessness at his incorrigibility, and again attempted to withdraw her hands.

'I must go now.'

'Well then, good-bye.'

It was easy to draw her closer by simply lowering her still captive hands. Then he suddenly kissed her coldly startled lips, and instantly released her. She as instantly vanished.

'Elsbeth,' he called quickly. 'Elsbeth!'

Her now really frightened face reappeared with a heightened colour from the dense foliage—quite to his astonishment.

'Hush,' she said with her finger on her lips. 'Are you mad?'

'I only wanted to remind you to square me with the Princess,' he laughed, as her head disappeared.

He strolled back toward the gate. Scarcely had he quitted the shrubbery before the same *Chasseur* made his appearance with precisely the same salute; and, keeping exactly the same distance, accompanied him to the gate. At the corner of the street he hailed a drosky and was driven to his hotel.

The landlord came up smiling. He trusted that the Herr had greatly enjoyed himself at the Schloss. It was a distinguished honour—in fact, quite unprecedented. Hoffman, while he determined not to commit himself, nor his late fair companion, was, nevertheless, anxious to learn something more of her relations to the Schloss. So pretty, so characteristic and marked a figure must be well known to sightseers. Indeed, once or twice the idea had crossed his mind with a slightly jealous twinge that left him more conscious of the impression she had made on him than he had deemed possible. He asked if the model farm and dairy were always shown by the same attendants.

'*Ach Gott!* no doubt, yes; His Royal High-

ness had quite a retinue when he was in residence.'

'And were these attendants in costume?'

'There was undoubtedly a livery for the servants.'

Hoffman felt a slight republican irritation at the epithet—he knew not why. But this costume was rather an historical one; surely it was not entrusted to every-day menials—and he briefly described it.

His host's blank curiosity suddenly changed to a look of mysterious and arch intelligence.

'*Ach Gott!* yes!' He remembered now (with his finger on his nose) that when there was a *Fest* at the Schloss the farm and dairy were filled with shepherdesses, in quaint costume worn by the ladies of the Grand Duke's own theatrical company, who assumed the characters with great vivacity. Surely it was the same, and the Grand Duke had treated the Herr to this special courtesy. Yes—there was one pretty, blonde young lady—the Fräulein Wimpfenbuttel, a most popular soubrette, who would play it to the life! And the description fitted her to a hair! Ah, there was no doubt of it; many persons, indeed, had been so deceived.

But happily, now that he had given him the wink, the Herr could corroborate it himself by

going to the theatre to-night. Ah, it would be a great joke—quite colossal! if he took a front seat where she could see him. And the good man rubbed his hands in gleeful anticipation.

Hoffman had listened to him with a slow repugnance that was only equal to his gradual conviction that the explanation was a true one, and that he himself had been ridiculously deceived. The mystery of his fair companion's costume, which he had accepted as part of the 'show'; the inconsistency of her manner and her evident occupation; her undeniable wish to terminate the whole episode with that single interview; her mingling of worldly *aplomb* and rustic innocence; her perfect self-control and experienced acceptance of his gallantry under the simulated attitude of simplicity—all now struck him as perfectly comprehensible. He recalled the actress's inimitable touch in certain picturesque realistic details in the dairy—which she had not spared him; he recognized it now even in their bowered confidences (how like a pretty ballet scene their whole interview on the rustic bench was!), and it breathed through their entire conversation—to their theatrical parting at the close! And the whole story of the photograph was, no doubt, as pure a dramatic invention as the rest! The Princess's romantic interest in him—that

Princess who had never appeared (why had he not detected the old, well-worn, sentimental situation here?)—was all a part of it. The dark, mysterious hints of his persecution by the police were a necessary culmination to the little farce. Thank Heaven! he had not 'risen' at the Princess, even if he had given himself away to the clever actress in her own humble *rôle*. Then the humour of the whole situation predominated and he laughed until the tears came to his eyes, and his forgotten ancestors might have turned over in their graves without his heeding them. And with this humanizing influence upon him he went to the theatre.

It was capacious even for the town, and although the performance was a special one, he had no difficulty in getting a whole box to himself. He tried to avoid this public isolation by sitting close to the next box, where there was a solitary occupant—an officer—apparently as lonely as himself. He had made up his mind that when his fair deceiver appeared he would let her see by his significant applause that he recognized her, but bore no malice for the trick she had played on him. After all, he had kissed her—he had no right to complain. If she should recognize him, and this recognition led to a withdrawal of her prohibition, and their better acquaintance, he

would be a fool to cavil at her pleasant artifice. Her vocation was certainly a more independent and original one than that he had supposed; for its social equality and inequality he cared nothing. He found himself longing for the glance of her calm blue eyes, for the pleasant smile that broke the seriousness of her sweetly restrained lips. There was no doubt that he should know her even as the heroine of the 'Czar und der Zimmerman on the bill before him. He was becoming impatient. And the performance evidently was waiting. A stir in the outer gallery, the clatter of sabres, the filing of uniforms into the Royal box, and a triumphant burst from the orchestra showed the cause. As a few ladies and gentlemen in full evening dress emerged from the background of uniforms and took their places in the front of the box Hoffman looked with some interest for the romantic Princess. Suddenly he saw a face and shoulders in a glitter of diamonds that startled him, and then a glance that transfixed him.

He leaned over to his neighbour. 'Who is the young lady in the box?'

'The Princess Alexandrine.'

'I mean the young lady in blue with blonde hair and blue eyes.'

'It is the Princess Alexandrine Elsbeth Marie Stephanie, the daughter of the Grand Duke—there is none other there.'

'Thank you.'

He sat silently looking at the rising curtain and the stage. Then he rose quietly, gathered his hat and coat and left the box. When he reached the gallery he turned instinctively and looked back at the Royal box. Her eyes had followed him, and as he remained a moment motionless in the doorway her lips parted in a grateful smile, and she waved her fan with a faint but unmistakable gesture of farewell.

The next morning he left Alstadt. There was some little delay at the *Zoll* on the frontier, and when Hoffman received back his trunk it was accompanied by a little sealed packet which was handed to him by the Custom-house Inspector. Hoffman did not open it until he was alone.

. . . . .

There hangs upon the wall of his modest apartment in New York a narrow, irregular photograph ingeniously framed, of himself standing side by side with a young German girl, who, in the estimation of his compatriots, is by no means stylish and only passably good-looking. When he is joked by his friends about the post of honour given to this production, and questioned as to the lady, he remains silent. The Princess Alexandrine Elsbeth Marie Stephanie von Westphalen-Alstadt, among her other Royal qualities, knew whom to trust.

THE DEVOTION OF ENRIQUEZ

In a previous chronicle which dealt with the exploits of 'Chu Chu,' a Californian mustang,[1] I gave some space to the accomplishments of Enriquez Saltillo, who assisted me in training her, and who was also brother to Consuelo Saltillo, the young lady to whom I had freely given both the mustang and my youthful affections. I consider it a proof of the superiority of masculine friendship that neither the subsequent desertion of the mustang nor the young lady ever made the slightest difference to Enriquez or me in our exalted amity. To a wondering doubt as to what I ever could possibly have seen in his sister to admire he joined a tolerant scepticism of the whole sex. This he was wont to express in that marvellous combination of Spanish precision and Californian slang for which he was justly famous. 'As to thees women and their little game,' he would say, 'believe me, my friend, your old Oncle 'Enry is not in it. No; he will ever take a back seat when lofe is around. For why? Regard

[1] See 'The Bell-Ringer of Angel's,' &c.

me here! If she is a horse, you shall say, "She will buck-jump," "She will ess-shy," "She will not arrive," or "She will arrive too quick." But if it is thees women, where are you? For when you shall say, "She will ess-shy," look you, she will walk straight; or she will remain tranquil when you think she buck-jump; or else she will arrive and, look you, you will not. You shall get left. It is ever so. My father and the brother of my father have both make court to my mother when she was but a señorita. My father think she have lofe his brother more. So he say to her: "It is enofe; Tranquillize yourself. I will go. I will efface myself. Adios! Shake hands! Ta-ta! So long! See you again in the fall." And what make my mother? Regard me! She marry my father—on the instant! Of thees women, believe me, Pancho, you shall know nothing. Not even if they shall make you the son of your father or his nephew.'

I have recalled this characteristic speech to show the general tendency of Enriquez's convictions at the opening of this little story. It is only fair to say, however, that his usual attitude toward the sex he so cheerfully maligned exhibited little apprehension or caution in dealing with them. Among the frivolous and light-minded intermixture of his race he moved with great freedom

and popularity. He danced well; when we went to fandangos together his agility and the audacity of his figures always procured him the prettiest partners, his professed sentiments, I presume, shielding him from subsequent jealousies, heart-burnings, or envy. I have a vivid recollection of him in the mysteries of the *sembicuacua*, a somewhat corybantic dance which left much to the invention of the performers, and very little to the imagination of the spectator. In one of the figures a gaudy handkerchief, waved more or less gracefully by dancer and danseuse before the dazzled eyes of each other, acted as love's signal, and was used to express alternate admiration and indifference, shyness and audacity, fear and transport, coyness and coquetry, as the dance proceeded. I need not say that Enriquez's pantomimic illustration of these emotions was peculiarly extravagant; but it was always performed and accepted with a gravity that was an essential feature of the dance. At such times sighs would escape him which were supposed to portray the incipient stages of passion; snorts of jealousy burst from him at the suggestion of a rival; he was overtaken by a sort of St. Vitus's dance that expressed his timidity in making the first advances of affection; the scorn of his lady-love struck him with something like a dumb ague; and a single

gesture of invitation from her produced marked delirium. All this was very like Enriquez; but on the particular occasion to which I refer, I think no one was prepared to see him begin the figure with the waving of *four* handkerchiefs! Yet this he did, pirouetting, capering, brandishing his silken signals like a ballerina's scarf in the languishment or fire of passion, until, in a final figure, where the conquered and submitting fair one usually sinks into the arms of her partner, need it be said that the ingenious Enriquez was found in the centre of the floor supporting four of the dancers! Yet he was by no means unduly excited either by the plaudits of the crowd or by his evident success with the fair. 'Ah, believe me, it is nothing,' he said quietly, rolling a fresh cigarette as he leaned against the doorway. 'Possibly I shall have to offer the chocolate or the wine to thees girls, or make to them a promenade in the moonlight on the verandah. It is ever so. Unless, my friend,' he said, suddenly turning toward me in an excess of chivalrous self-abnegation, 'unless you shall yourself take my place. Behold, I gif them to you! I vamos! I vanish! I make track! I skedaddle!' I think he would have carried his extravagance to the point of summoning his four gipsy witches of partners, and committing them to my care, if the crowd had not

at that moment parted before the remaining dancers, and left one of the onlookers, a tall, slender girl, calmly surveying them through gold-rimmed eye-glasses in complete critical absorption. I stared in amazement and consternation; for I recognized in the fair stranger Miss Urania Mannersley, the Congregational minister's niece.

Everybody knew Rainie Mannersley throughout the length and breadth of the Encinal. She was at once the envy and the goad of the daughters of those South-western and Eastern immigrants who had settled in the valley. She was correct, she was critical, she was faultless and observant. She was proper, yet independent; she was highly educated; she was suspected of knowing Latin and Greek; she even spelled correctly! She could wither the plainest field nosegay in the hands of other girls by giving the flowers their botanical names. She never said, 'Ain't you?' but 'Aren't you?' She looked upon 'Did I which?' as an incomplete and imperfect form of 'What did I do?' She quoted from Browning and Tennyson, and was believed to have read them. She was from Boston. What could she possibly be doing at a free-and-easy fandango?

Even if these facts were not already familiar to every one there, her outward appearance would

have attracted attention. Contrasted with the gorgeous red, black, and yellow skirts of the dancers, her plain, tightly fitting gown and hat, all of one delicate grey, were sufficiently notable in themselves, even had they not seemed, like the girl herself, a kind of quiet protest to the glaring flounces before her. Her small, straight waist and flat back brought into greater relief the corsetless, waistless, swaying figures of the Mexican girls, and her long, slim, well-booted feet, peeping from the stiff, white edges of her short skirt, made their broad, low-quartered slippers, held on by the big toe, appear more preposterous than ever. Suddenly she seemed to realize that she was standing there alone, but without fear or embarrassment. She drew back a little, glancing carelessly behind her as if missing some previous companion, and then her eyes fell upon mine. She smiled an easy recognition; then, a moment later, her glance rested more curiously upon Enriquez, who was still by my side. I disengaged myself and instantly joined her, particularly as I noticed that a few of the other bystanders were beginning to stare at her with little reserve.

'Isn't it the most extraordinary thing you ever saw?' she said quietly. Then, presently noticing the look of embarrassment on my face, she went

on, more by way of conversation than of explanation: 'I just left uncle making a call on a parishioner next door, and was going home with Jocasta (a peon servant of her uncle's), when I heard the music, and dropped in. I don't know what has become of her,' she added, glancing round the room again; 'she seemed perfectly wild when she saw that creature over there bounding about with his handkerchiefs. You were speaking to him just now. Do tell me—is he real?'

'I should think there was little doubt of that,' I said with a vague laugh.

'You know what I mean,' she said simply. 'Is he quite sane? Does he do that because he likes it, or is he paid for it?'

This was too much. I pointed out somewhat hurriedly that he was a scion of one of the oldest Castilian families, that the performance was a national gipsy dance which he had joined in as a patriot and a patron, and that he was my dearest friend. At the same time I was conscious that I wished she hadn't seen his last performance.

'You don't mean to say that all that he did was in the dance?' she said. 'I don't believe it. It was only like him.' As I hesitated over this palpable truth, she went on: 'I do wish he'd do it again. Don't you think you could make him?'

'Perhaps he might if *you* asked him,' I said a little maliciously.

'Of course I shouldn't do that,' she returned quietly. 'All the same, I do believe he is really going to do it—or something else. Do look!'

I looked, and to my horror saw that Enriquez, possibly incited by the delicate gold eye-glasses of Miss Mannersley, had divested himself of his coat, and was winding the four handkerchiefs, tied together, picturesquely around his waist, preparatory to some new performance. I tried furtively to give him a warning look, but in vain.

'Isn't he really too absurd for anything?' said Miss Mannersley, yet with a certain comfortable anticipation in her voice. 'You know, I never saw anything like this before. I wouldn't have believed such a creature could have existed.'

Even had I succeeded in warning him, I doubt if it would have been of any avail. For, seizing a guitar from one of the musicians, he struck a few chords, and suddenly began to zigzag into the centre of the floor, swaying his body languishingly from side to side in time with the music and the pitch of a thin Spanish tenor. It was a gipsy love-song. Possibly Miss Mannersley's lingual accomplishments did not include a knowledge of Castilian, but she could not fail to see that the gestures and illustrative pantomime

were addressed to her. Passionately assuring her that she was the most favoured daughter of the Virgin, that her eyes were like votive tapers, and yet in the same breath accusing her of being a 'brigand' and 'assassin' in her attitude toward 'his heart,' he balanced with quivering timidity toward her, threw an imaginary cloak in front of her neat boots as a carpet for her to tread on, and with a final astonishing pirouette and a languishing twang of his guitar, sank on one knee, and blew, with a rose, a kiss at her feet.

If I had been seriously angry with him before for his grotesque extravagance, I could have pitied him now for the young girl's absolute unconsciousness of anything but his utter ludicrousness. The applause of dancers and bystanders was instantaneous and hearty; her only contribution to it was a slight parting of her thin red lips in a half-incredulous smile. In the silence that followed the applause, as Enriquez walked pantingly away, I heard her saying, half to herself, 'Certainly a most extraordinary creature!' In my indignation I could not help turning suddenly upon her and looking straight into her eyes. They were brown, with that peculiar velvet opacity common to the pupils of near-sighted persons, and seemed to defy internal scrutiny. She only repeated carelessly, 'Isn't he?' and added: 'Please see if you can

find Jocasta. I suppose we ought to be going now; and I dare say he won't be doing it again. Ah! there she is. Good gracious child! what have you got there?'

It was Enriquez' rose, which Jocasta had picked up, and was timidly holding out toward her mistress.

'Heavens! I don't want it. Keep it yourself.'

I walked with them to the door, as I did not fancy a certain glitter in the black eyes of the Señoritas Manuela and Pepita, who were watching her curiously. But I think she was as oblivious of this as she was of Enriquez' particular attentions. As we reached the street I felt that I ought to say something more.

'You know,' I began casually, 'that although those poor people meet here in this public way, their gathering is really quite a homely pastoral and a national custom; and these girls are all honest, hard-working peons or servants enjoying themselves in quite the old idyllic fashion.'

'Certainly,' said the young girl, half abstractedly. 'Of course it's a Moorish dance, originally brought over, I suppose, by those old Andalusian immigrants two hundred years ago. It's quite Arabic in its suggestions. I have got something like it in an old *cancionero* I picked up at a

book-stall in Boston. But,' she added, with a gasp of reminiscent satisfaction, 'that's not like *him!* Oh, no! *he* is decidedly original. Heavens! yes.'

I turned away in some discomfiture to join Enriquez, who was calmly awaiting me, with a cigarette in his mouth, outside the sala. Yet he looked so unconscious of any previous absurdity that I hesitated in what I thought was a necessary warning. He, however, quickly precipitated it. Glancing after the retreating figures of the two women, he said, 'Thees mees from Boston is return to her house. You do not accompany her? I shall. Behold me—I am there.' But I linked my arm firmly in his. Then I pointed out, first, that she was already accompanied by a servant; secondly, that if I, who knew her, had hesitated to offer myself as an escort, it was hardly proper for him, a perfect stranger, to take that liberty; that Miss Mannersley was very punctilious of etiquette, which he, as a Castilian gentleman, ought to appreciate.

'But will she not regard lofe—the admiration excessif?' he said, twirling his thin little moustache meditatively.

'No; she will not,' I returned sharply; 'and you ought to understand that she is on a different level from your Manuelas and Carmens.'

'Pardon, my friend,' he said gravely; 'thees women are ever the same. There is a proverb in my language. Listen: "Whether the sharp blade of the Toledo pierce the satin or the goat-skin, it shall find behind it ever the same heart to wound." I am that Toledo blade—or possibly it is you, my friend. Wherefore, let us together pursue this girl of Boston on the instant.'

But I kept my grasp on Enriquez' arm, and succeeded in restraining his mercurial impulses for the moment. He halted, and puffed vigorously at his cigarette; but the next instant he started forward again. 'Let us, however, follow with discretion in the rear: we shall pass *her* house; we shall gaze at it; it shall touch her heart.'

Ridiculous as was this following of the young girl we had only just parted from, I nevertheless knew that Enriquez was quite capable of attempting it alone, and I thought it better to humour him by consenting to walk with him in that direction; but I felt it necessary to say:

'I ought to warn you that Miss Mannersley already looks upon your performances at the sala as something *outré* and peculiar, and if I were you I shouldn't do anything to deepen that impression.'

'You are saying she ees shock?' said Enriquez, gravely.

felt I could not conscientiously say that she was shocked, and he saw my hesitation. 'Then she have jealousy of the *Señoritas*,' he suggested, with insufferable complacency. 'You observe! I have already said. It is ever so.'

I could stand it no longer. 'Look here, Harry,' I said, 'if you must know it, she looks upon you as an acrobat—a paid performer.'

'Ah!'—his black eyes sparkled—'the *torero*, the man who fight the bull, he is also an acrobat.'

'Yes; but she thinks you a clown!—a *gracioso de teatro*,—there!'

'Then I have make her laugh?' he said coolly.

I don't think he had; but I shrugged my shoulders.

'Bueno!' he said cheerfully. 'Lofe, he begin with a laugh, he make feenish with a sigh.'

I turned to look at him in the moonlight. His face presented its habitual Spanish gravity—a gravity that was almost ironical. His small black eyes had their characteristic irresponsible audacity—the irresponsibility of the vivacious young animal. It could not be possible that he was really touched with the placid frigidities of Miss Mannersley. I remembered his equally elastic gallantries with Miss Pinky Smith, a blonde Western belle, from which both had harmlessly rebounded. As we walked on slowly I continued

more persuasively: 'Of course this is only your nonsense; but don't you see, Miss Mannersley thinks it all in earnest and really your nature?' I hesitated, for it suddenly struck me that it *was* really his nature. 'And—hang it all!—you don't want her to believe you a common buffoon, or some intoxicated *muchacho.*'

'Intoxicated?' repeated Enriquez, with exasperating languishment. 'Yes; that is the word that shall express itself. My friend, you have made a shot in the centre—you have ring the bell every time! It is intoxication—but not of *aguardiente.* Look! I have long time an ancestor of whom is a pretty story. One day in church he have seen a young girl—a mere peasant girl—pass to the confessional. He look her in her eye, he stagger,'—here Enriquez wobbled pantomimically into the road,—'he fall!'—he would have suited the action to the word if I had not firmly held him up. 'They have take him home, where he have remain without his clothes, and have dance and sing. But it was the drunkenness of lofe. And, look you, thees village girl was a nothing, not even pretty. The name of my ancestor was—'

'Don Quixote de la Mancha,' I suggested maliciously. 'I suspected as much. Come along. That will do.'

'My ancestor's name,' continued Enriquez, gravely, 'was Antonio Hermenegildo de Salvatierra, which is not the same. Thees Don Quixote of whom you speak exist not at all.'

'Never mind. Only, for heaven's sake, as we are nearing the house, don't make a fool of yourself again.'

It was a wonderful moonlight night. The deep redwood porch of the Mannersley parsonage, under the shadow of a great oak,—the largest in the Encinal,—was diapered in black and silver. As the women stepped upon the porch their shadows were silhouetted against the door. Miss Mannersley paused for an instant, and turned to give a last look at the beauty of the night as Jocasta entered. Her glance fell upon us as we passed. She nodded carelessly and unaffectedly to me, but as she recognised Enriquez she looked a little longer at him with her previous cold and invincible curiosity. To my horror Enriquez began instantly to affect a slight tremulousness of gait and a difficulty of breathing; but I gripped his arm savagely, and managed to get him past the house as the door closed finally on the young lady.

'You do not comprehend, friend Pancho,' he said gravely, 'but those eyes in their glass are as the *espejo ustorio*, the burning mirror. They burn,

they consume me here like paper. Let us affix to ourselves thees tree. She will, without doubt, appear at her window. We shall salute her for good-night.'

'We will do nothing of the kind,' I said sharply. Finding that I was determined, he permitted me to lead him away. I was delighted to notice, however, that he had indicated the window which I knew was the minister's study, and that as the bedrooms were in the rear of the house, this later incident was probably not overseen by the young lady or the servant. But I did not part from Enriquez until I saw him safely back to the sala, where I left him sipping chocolate, his arm alternating around the waists of his two previous partners in a delightful Arcadian and childlike simplicity, and an apparent utter forgetfulness of Miss Mannersley.

The fandangos were usually held on Saturday night, and the next day, being Sunday, I missed Enriquez; but as he was a devout Catholic I remembered that he was at mass in the morning, and possibly at the bull-fight at San Antonio in the afternoon. But I was somewhat surprised on the Monday morning following, as I was crossing the plaza, to have my arm taken by the Rev. Mr. Mannersley in the nearest approach to familiarity that was consistent with the reserve of this eminent

divine. I looked at him inquiringly. Although scrupulously correct in attire, his features always had a singular resemblance to the national caricature known as 'Uncle Sam,' but with the humorous expression left out. Softly stroking his goatee with three fingers, he began condescendingly: 'You are, I think, more or less familiar with the characteristics and customs of the Spanish as exhibited by the settlers here.' A thrill of apprehension went through me. Had he heard of Enriquez's proceedings? Had Miss Mannersley cruelly betrayed him to her uncle? 'I have not given that attention myself to their language and social peculiarities,' he continued, with a large wave of the hand, 'being much occupied with a study of their religious beliefs and superstitions' (it struck me that this was apt to be a common fault of people of the Mannersley type); 'but I have refrained from a personal discussion of them; on the contrary, I have held somewhat broad views on the subject of their remarkable missionary work, and have suggested a scheme of co-operation with them, quite independent of doctrinal teaching, to my brethren of other Protestant Christian sects. These views I first incorporated in a sermon last Sunday week, which I am told has created considerable attention.' He stopped and coughed slightly. 'I

have not yet heard from any of the Roman clergy, but I am led to believe that my remarks were not ungrateful to Catholics generally.'

I was relieved, although still in some wonder why he should address me on this topic. I had a vague remembrance of having heard that he had said something on Sunday which had offended some Puritans of his flock, but nothing more. He continued: 'I have just said that I was unacquainted with the characteristics of the Spanish-American race. I presume, however, they have the impulsiveness of their Latin origin. They gesticulate – eh? They express their gratitude, their joy, their affection, their emotions generally, by spasmodic movements? They naturally dance—sing—eh?' A horrible suspicion crossed my mind; I could only stare helplessly at him. 'I see,' he said graciously; 'perhaps it is a somewhat general question. I will explain myself. A rather singular occurrence happened to me the other night. I had returned from visiting a parishioner, and was alone in my study, reviewing my sermon for the next day. It must have been quite late before I concluded, for I distinctly remember my niece had returned with her servant fully an hour before. Presently I heard the sounds of a musical instrument in the road, with the accents of some one singing or

rehearsing some metrical composition in words that, although couched in a language foreign to me, in expression and modulation gave me the impression of being distinctly adulatory. For some little time, in the greater preoccupation of my task, I paid little attention to the performance; but its persistency at length drew me in no mere idle curiosity to the window. From there, standing in my dressing-gown, and believing myself unperceived, I noticed under the large oak in the roadside the figure of a young man, who, by the imperfect light, appeared to be of Spanish extraction. But I evidently miscalculated my own invisibility; for he moved rapidly forward as I came to the window, and in a series of the most extraordinary pantomimic gestures saluted me. Beyond my experience of a few Greek plays in earlier days, I confess I am not an adept in the understanding of gesticulation; but it struck me that the various phases of gratitude, fervour, reverence, and exaltation were successively portrayed. He placed his hands upon his head, his heart, and even clasped them together in this manner.' To my consternation the reverend gentleman here imitated Enriquez' most extravagant pantomime. 'I am willing to confess,' he continued, that I was singularly moved by them, as well as by the highly creditable and Christian

interest that evidently produced them. At last I opened the window. Leaning out, I told him that I regretted that the lateness of the hour prevented any further response from me than a grateful though hurried acknowledgment of his praiseworthy emotion, but that I should be glad to see him for a few moments in the vestry before service the next day, or at early candle-light, before the meeting of the Bible class. I told him that as my sole purpose had been the creation of an evangelical brotherhood and the exclusion of merely doctrinal views, nothing could be more gratifying to me than his spontaneous and unsolicited testimony to my motives. He appeared for an instant to be deeply affected, and, indeed, quite overcome with emotion, and then gracefully retired, with some agility and a slight saltatory movement.'

He paused. A sudden and overwhelming idea took possession of me, and I looked impulsively into his face. Was it possible that for once Enriquez' ironical extravagance had been understood, met, and vanquished by a master hand? But the Rev. Mr. Mannersley's self-satisfied face betrayed no ambiguity or lurking humour. He was evidently in earnest; he had complacently accepted for himself the abandoned Enriquez' serenade to his niece. I felt a hysterical desire to

laugh, but it was checked by my companion's next words.

'I informed my niece of the occurrence in the morning at breakfast. She had not heard anything of the strange performance, but she agreed with me as to its undoubted origin in a grateful recognition of my liberal efforts toward his co-religionists. It was she, in fact, who suggested that your knowledge of these people might corroborate my impressions.'

I was dumbfounded. Had Miss Mannersley, who must have recognised Enriquez' hand in this, concealed the fact in a desire to shield him? But this was so inconsistent with her utter indifference to him, except as a grotesque study, that she would have been more likely to tell her uncle all about his previous performance. Nor could it be that she wished to conceal her visit to the fandango. She was far too independent for that, and it was even possible that the revered gentleman, in his desire to know more of Enriquez' compatriots, would not have objected. In my confusion I meekly added my conviction to hers, congratulated him upon his evident success, and slipped away. But I was burning with a desire to see Enriquez and know all. He was imaginative, but not untruthful. Unfortunately, I learned that he was just then following one of his erratic

impulses, and had gone to a *rodeo* at his cousin's, in the foothills, where he was alternately exercising his horsemanship in catching and breaking wild cattle, and delighting his relatives with his incomparable grasp of the American language and customs, and of the airs of a young man of fashion. Then my thoughts recurred to Miss Mannersley. Had she really been oblivious that night to Enriquez' serenade? I resolved to find out, if I could, without betraying Enriquez. Indeed, it was possible, after all, that it might not have been he.

Chance favoured me. The next evening I was at a party where Miss Mannersley, by reason of her position and quality, was a distinguished —I had almost written a popular—guest. But, as I have formerly stated, although the youthful fair of the Encinal were flattered by her casual attentions, and secretly admired her superior style and aristocratic calm, they were more or less uneasy under the dominance of her intelligence and education, and were afraid to attempt either confidence or familiarity. They were also singularly jealous of her, for although the average young man was equally afraid of her cleverness and candour, he was not above paying a tremulous and timid court to her for its effect upon her humbler sisters. This evening she was

surrounded by her usual satellites, including, of course, the local notables and special guests of distinction. She had been discussing, I think, the existence of glaciers on Mount Shasta with a spectacled geologist, and had participated with charming frankness in a conversation on anatomy with the local doctor and a learned professor, when she was asked to take a seat at the piano. She played with remarkable skill and wonderful precision, but coldly and brilliantly. As she sat there in her subdued but perfectly fitting evening dress, her regular profile and short but slender neck firmly set upon her high shoulders, exhaling an atmosphere of refined puritanism and provocative intelligence, the utter incongruity of Enriquez' extravagant attentions if ironical, and their equal hopelessness if not, seemed to me plainer than ever. What had this well-poised, coldly observant spinster to do with that quaintly ironic ruffler, that romantic cynic, that rowdy Don Quixote, that impossible Enriquez? Presently she ceased playing. Her slim, narrow slipper, revealing her thin ankle, remained upon the pedal; her delicate fingers were resting idly on the keys; her head was slightly thrown back, and her narrow eyebrows prettily knit toward the ceiling in an effort of memory.

'Something of Chopin's,' suggested the geologist, ardently.

'That exquisite sonata!' pleaded the doctor.

'Suthin' of Rubinstein. Heard him once,' said a gentleman of Siskiyou. 'He just made that pianner get up and howl. Play Rube.'

She shook her head with parted lips and a slight touch of girlish coquetry in her manner. Then her fingers suddenly dropped upon the keys with a glassy tinkle; there were a few quick pizzicato chords, down went the low pedal with a monotonous strumming, and she presently began to hum to herself. I started,—as well I might,—for I recognised one of Enriquez' favourite and most extravagant guitar solos. It was audacious; it was barbaric; it was I fear, vulgar. As I remembered it,—as he sang it,—it recounted the adventures of one Don Francisco, a provincial gallant and roisterer of the most objectionable type. It had one hundred and four verses, which Enriquez never spared me. I shuddered as in a pleasant, quiet voice the correct Miss Mannersley warbled in musical praise of the *pellejo*, or wine-skin, and a eulogy of the dice-box came caressingly from her thin red lips. But the company was far differently affected. the strange, wild air and wilder accompaniment were evidently catching; people moved towards the piano; somebody

whistled the air from a distant corner; even the faces of the geologist and doctor brightened.

'A tarantella, I presume?' blandly suggested the doctor.

Miss Mannersley stopped, and rose carelessly from the piano. 'It is a Moorish gipsy song of the fifteenth century,' she said dryly.

'It seemed sorter familiar, too,' hesitated one of the young men, timidly, 'like as if—don't you know?—you had without knowing it, don't you know?'—he blushed slightly—'sorter picked it up somewhere.'

'I "picked it up," as you call it, in the collection of mediæval manuscripts of the Harvard Library, and copied it,' returned Miss Mannersley, coldly, as she turned away.

But I was not inclined to let her off so easily. I presently made my way to her side. 'Your uncle was complimentary enough to consult me as to the meaning of the appearance of a certain exuberant Spanish visitor at his house the other night.' I looked into her brown eyes, but my own slipped off her velvety pupils without retaining anything. Then she reinforced her gaze with a pince-nez, and said carelessly:

'Oh, it's you! How are you? Well, could you give him any information?'

'Only generally,' I returned, still looking into

her eyes. 'These people are impulsive. The Spanish blood is a mixture of gold and quick-silver.'

She smiled slightly. 'That reminds me of your volatile friend. He was mercurial enough, certainly. Is he still dancing?'

'And singing sometimes,' I responded pointedly. But she only added casually, 'A singular creature,' without exhibiting the least consciousness, and drifted away, leaving me none the wiser. I felt that Enriquez alone could enlighten me. I must see him.

I did, but not in the way I expected. There was a bull-fight at San Antonio the next Saturday afternoon, the usual Sunday performance being changed in deference to the Sabbatical habits of the Americans. An additional attraction was offered in the shape of a bull and bear fight, also a concession to American taste, which had voted the bull-fight 'slow,' and had averred that the bull 'did not get a fair show.' I am glad that I am able to spare the reader the usual realistic horrors, for in the Californian performances there was very little of the brutality that distinguished this function in the mother-country. The horses were not miserable, worn-out hacks, but young and alert mustangs; and the display of horsemanship by the picadors was not only wonderful, but secured

an almost absolute safety to horse and rider. I never saw a horse gored; although unskilful riders were sometimes thrown in wheeling quickly to avoid the bull's charge, they generally regained their animals without injury.

The Plaza de Toros was reached through the decayed and tile-strewn outskirts of an old Spanish village. It was a rudely built, oval amphitheatre, with crumbling, whitewashed adobe walls, and roofed only over portions of the gallery reserved for the provincial 'notables,' but now occupied by a few shopkeepers and their wives, with a sprinkling of American travellers and ranchmen. The impalpable adobe-dust of the arena was being whirled into the air by the strong onset of the afternoon trade-winds, which happily, however, helped also to dissipate a reek of garlic, and the acrid fumes of cheap tobacco rolled in corn-husk cigarettes. I was leaning over the second barrier, waiting for the meagre and circus-like procession to enter with the keys of the bull-pen, when my attention was attracted to a movement in the reserved gallery. A lady and gentleman of a quality that was evidently unfamilar to the rest of the audience were picking their way along the rickety benches to a front seat. I recognised the geologist with some surprise, and the lady he was leading with still greater astonishment. For it

was Miss Mannersley, in her precise, well-fitting walking costume—a monotone of sober colour among the party-coloured audience.

However, I was perhaps less surprised than the audience, for I was not only becoming as accustomed to the young girl's vagaries as I had been to Enriquez' extravagance; but I was also satisfied that her uncle might have given her permission to come, as a recognition of the Sunday concession of the management, as well as to conciliate his supposed Catholic friends. I watched her sitting there until the first bull had entered, and, after a rather brief play with the picadors and banderilleros, was despatched. At the moment when the matador approached the bull with his lethal weapon I was not sorry for an excuse to glance at Miss Mannersley. Her hands were in her lap, her head slightly bent forward over her knees. I fancied that she, too, had dropped her eyes before the brutal situation; to my horror I saw that she had a drawing-book in her hand, and was actually sketching it. I turned my eyes in preference to the dying bull.

The second animal led out for this ingenious slaughter was, however, more sullen, uncertain, and discomposing to his butchers. He accepted the irony of a trial with gloomy, suspicious eyes,

and he declined the challenge of whirling and insulting picadors. He bristled with banderillas like a hedgehog, but remained with his haunches backed against the barrier, at times almost hidden in the fine dust raised by the monotonous stroke of his sullenly pawing hoof—his one dull, heavy protest. A vague uneasiness had infected his adversaries; the picadors held aloof, the banderilleros skirmished at a safe distance. The audience resented only the indecision of the bull. Galling epithets were flung at him, followed by cries of 'Espada!' and, curving his elbow under his short cloak, the matador, with his flashing blade in hand, advanced and—stopped. The bull remained motionless.

For at that moment a heavier gust of wind than usual swept down upon the arena, lifted a suffocating cloud of dust, and whirled it around the tiers of benches and balcony, and for a moment seemed to stop the performance. I heard an exclamation from the geologist, who had risen to his feet. I fancied I heard even a faint cry from Miss Mannersley; but the next moment as the dust was slowly settling, we saw a sheet of paper in the air, that had been caught up in this brief cyclone, dropping, dipping from side to side on uncertain wings, until it slowly descended in the

very middle of the arena. It was a leaf from Miss Mannersley's sketch-book, the one on which she had been sketching.

In the pause that followed it seemed to be the one object that at last excited the bull's growing but tardy ire. He glanced at it with murky, distended eyes; he snorted at it with vague yet troubled fury. Whether he detected his own presentment in Miss Mannersley's sketch, or whether he recognised it as an unknown and unfamiliar treachery in his surroundings, I could not conjecture; for the next moment the matador, taking advantage of the bull's concentration, with a complacent leer at the audience, advanced toward the paper. But at that instant a young man cleared the barrier into the arena with a single bound, shoved the matador to one side, caught up the paper, turned toward the balcony and Miss Mannersley, with a gesture of apology, dropped gaily before the bull, knelt down before him with an exaggerated humility, and held up the drawing as if for his inspection. A roar of applause broke from the audience, a cry of warning and exasperation from the attendants, as the goaded bull suddenly charged the stranger. But he sprang to one side with great dexterity, made a courteous gesture to the matador as if passing the bull over to him, and, still holding the paper in

his hand, releaped the barrier, and rejoined the audience in safety. I did not wait to see the deadly, dominant thrust with which the matador received the charging bull ; my eyes were following the figure now bounding up the steps to the balcony, where with an exaggerated salutation he laid the drawing in Miss Mannersley's lap and vanished. There was no mistaking that thin, lithe form, the narrow black moustache, and gravely dancing eyes. The audacity of conception, the extravagance of execution, the quaint irony of the sequel, could belong to no one but Enriquez.

I hurried up to her as the six yoked mules dragged the carcass of the bull away. She was placidly putting up her book, the unmoved focus of a hundred eager and curious eyes. She smiled slightly as she saw me. 'I was just telling Mr. Briggs what an extraordinary creature it was, and how you knew him. He must have had great experience to do that sort of thing so cleverly and safely. Does he do it often ? Of course, not just that. But does he pick up cigars and things that I see they throw to the matador ? Does he belong to the management ? Mr. Briggs thinks the whole thing was a feint to distract the bull,' she added, with a wicked glance at the geologist, who, I fancied, looked disturbed.

'I am afraid,' I said dryly, 'that his act was

as unpremeditated and genuine as it was unusual.'

'Why afraid?'

It was a matter-of-fact question, but I instantly saw my mistake. What right had I to assume that Enriquez' attentions were any more genuine than her own easy indifference; and if I suspected that they were, was it fair in me to give my friend away to this heartless coquette? 'You are not very gallant,' she said, with a slight laugh, as I was hesitating, and turned away with her escort before I could frame a reply. But at least Enriquez was now accessible, and I should gain some information from him. I knew where to find him, unless he were still lounging about the building, intent upon more extravagance; but I waited until I saw Miss Mannersley and Briggs depart without further interruption.

The hacienda of Ramon Saltillo, Enriquez' cousin, was on the outskirts of the village. When I arrived there I found Enriquez' pinto mustang steaming in the corral, and, although I was momentarily delayed by the servants at the gateway, I was suprised to find Enriquez himself lying languidly on his back in a hammock in the patio. His arms were hanging down listlessly on each side as if in the greatest prostration, yet I could not resist the impression that the rascal had only

just got into the hammock when he heard of my arrival.

'You have arrived, friend Pancho, in time,' he said in accents of exaggerated weakness. 'I am absolutely exhaust. I am bursted, caved in, kerflummoxed. I have behold you, my friend, at the barrier. I speak not, I make no sign at the first, because I was on fire; I speak not at the feenish—for I am exhaust.'

'I see; the bull made it lively for you.'

He instantly bounded up in the hammock. 'The bull! Caramba! Not a thousand bulls! And thees one, look you, was a craven. I snap my fingers over his horn; I roll my cigarette under his nose.'

'Well, then—what was it?'

He instantly lay down again, pulling up the sides of the hammock. Presently his voice came from its depths, appealing in hollow tones to the sky. 'He asks me—thees friend of my soul, thees brother of my life, thees Pancho that I lofe—what it was? He would that I should tell him why I am game in the legs, why I shake in the hand, crack in the voice, and am generally wipe out! And yet he, my pardner—thees Francisco—know that I have seen the mees from Boston! That I have gaze into the eye, touch the hand, and for the instant possess the picture that hand

have drawn! It was a sublime picture, Pancho,' he said, sitting up again suddenly, 'and have kill the bull before our friend Pepe's sword have touch even the bone of hees back and make finish of him.'

'Look here, Enriquez,' I said bluntly, 'have you been serenading that girl?'

He shrugged his shoulders without the least embarrassment, and said: 'Ah, yes. What would you? It is of a necessity.'

'Well,' I retorted, 'then you ought to know that her uncle took it all to himself—thought you some grateful Catholic pleased with his religious tolerance.'

He did not even smile. 'Bueno,' he said gravely. 'That make something, too. In thees affair it is well to begin with the duenna. He is the duenna.'

'And,' I went on relentlessly, 'her escort told her just now that your exploit in the bull-ring was only a trick to divert the bull, suggested by the management.'

'Bah! her escort is a geologian. Naturally, she is to him as a stone.'

I would have continued, but a peon interrupted us at this moment with a sign to Enriquez, who leaped briskly from the hammock, bidding me wait his return from a messenger in the gateway.

Still unsatisfied of mind I waited, and sat down in the hammock that Enriquez had quitted. A scrap of paper was lying in its meshes, which at first appeared to be of the kind from which Enriquez rolled his cigarettes; but as I picked it up to throw it away, I found it was of much firmer and stouter material. Looking at it more closely, I was surprised to recognise it as a piece of the tinted drawing-paper torn off the block that Miss Mannersley had used. It had been sharply creased at right angles as if it had been folded; it looked as if it might have been the outer half of a sheet used for a note.

It might have been a trifling circumstance, but it greatly excited my curiosity. I knew that he had returned the sketch to Miss Mannersley, for I had seen it in her hand. Had she given him another? And if so, why had it been folded to the destruction of the drawing? Or was it part of a note which he had destroyed? In the first impulse of discovery I walked quickly with it toward the gateway where Enriquez had disappeared, intending to restore it to him. He was just outside talking with a young girl. I started, for it was Jocasta—Miss Mannersley's maid.

With this added discovery came that sense of uneasiness and indignation with which we illogically are apt to resent the withholding of a friend's

confidence, even in matters concerning only himself. It was no use for me to reason that it was no business of mine, that he was right in keeping a secret that concerned another—and a lady; but I was afraid I was even more meanly resentful because the discovery quite upset my theory of his conduct and of Miss Mannersley's attitude toward him. I continued to walk on to the gateway, where I bade Enriquez a hurried good-bye, alleging the sudden remembrance of another engagement, but without appearing to recognise the girl, who was moving away, when, to my further discomfiture, the rascal stopped me with an appealing wink, threw his arms around my neck, whispered hoarsely in my ear, 'Ah! you see—you comprehend—but you are the mirror of discretion!' and returned to Jocasta. But whether this meant that he had received a message from Miss Mannersley, or that he was trying to suborn her maid to carry one, was still uncertain. He was capable of either.

During the next two or three weeks I saw him frequently; but as I had resolved to try the effect of ignoring Miss Mannersley in our conversation, I gathered little further of their relations, and, to my surprise, after one or two characteristic extravagances of allusion, Enriquez dropped the subject, too. Only one afternoon, as we were

parting, he said carelessly: 'My friend, you are going to the casa of Mannersley to-night. I too have the honour of the invitation. But you will be my Mercury—my Leporello—you will take of me a message to thees Mees Boston, that I am crushed, desolated, prostrate, and flabbergasted—that I cannot arrive, for I have of that night to sit up with the grandaunt of my brother-in-law, who has a quinsy to the death. It is sad.'

This was the first indication I had received of Miss Mannersley's advances. I was equally surprised at Enriquez' refusal.

'Nonsense!' I said bluntly. 'Nothing keeps you from going.'

'My friend,' returned Enriquez, with a sudden lapse into languishment that seemed to make him absolutely infirm; 'it is everything that shall restrain me. I am not strong. I shall become weak of the knee and tremble under the eye of Mees Boston. I shall precipitate myself to the geologian by the throat. Ask me another conundrum that shall be easy.'

He seemed idiotically inflexible, and did not go. But I did. I found Miss Mannersley exquisitely dressed and looking singularly animated and pretty. The lambent glow of her inscrutable eye as she turned towards me might have been flattering but for my uneasiness in regard to Enri-

quez. I delivered his excuses as naturally as I could. She stiffened for an instant, and seemed an inch higher. 'I am so sorry,' she said at last in a level voice. 'I thought he would have been so amusing. Indeed, I had hoped we might try an old Moorish dance together which I have found and was practising.'

'He would have been delighted, I know. It's a great pity he didn't come with me,' I said quickly; 'but,' I could not help adding, with emphasis on her own words, 'he is such an "extraordinary creature," you know.'

'I see nothing extraordinary in his devotion to an aged relative,' returned Miss Mannersley, quietly, as she turned away, 'except that it justifies my respect for his character.'

I do not know why I did not relate this to him. Possibly I had given up trying to understand them; perhaps I was beginning to have an idea that he could take care of himself. But I was somewhat surprised a few days later when, after asking me to go with him to a rodeo at his uncle's, he added composedly, 'You will meet Mees Boston.'

I stared, and but for his manner would have thought it part of his extravagance. For the rodeo—a yearly chase of wild cattle for the purpose of lassoing and branding them—was a rather brutal affair, and purely a man's function; it was

also a family affair—a property stock-taking of the great Spanish cattle-owners—and strangers, particularly Americans, found it difficult to gain access to its mysteries and the *festa* that followed.

'But how did she get an invitation?' I asked. 'You did not dare to ask—' I began.

'My friend,' said Enriquez, with a singular deliberation, 'the great and respectable Boston herself, and her serene, venerable oncle, and other Boston *magnificos*, have of a truth done me the inexpressible honour to solicit of my degraded, papistical oncle that she shall come—that she shall of her own superior eye behold the barbaric customs of our race.'

His tone and manner were so peculiar that I stepped quickly before him, laid my hands on his shoulders, and looked down into his face. But the actual devil which I now for the first time saw in his eyes went out of them suddenly, and he relapsed again in affected languishment in his chair. 'I shall be there, friend Pancho,' he said, with a preposterous gasp. 'I shall nerve my arm to lasso the bull, and tumble him before her at her feet. I shall throw the "buck-jump" mustang at the same sacred spot. I shall pluck for her the buried chicken at full speed from the ground, and present it to her. You shall see it, friend Pancho. I shall be there.'

He was as good as his word. When Don Pedro Amador, his uncle, installed Miss Mannersley, with Spanish courtesy, on a raised platform in the long valley where the rodeo took place, the gallant Enriquez selected a bull from the frightened and galloping herd, and, cleverly isolating him from the band, lassoed his hind legs, and threw him exactly before the platform where Miss Mannersley was seated. It was Enriquez who caught the unbroken mustang, sprang from his own saddle to the bare back of his captive, and with only the lasso for a bridle, halted him on rigid haunches at Miss Mannersley's feet. It was Enriquez who, in the sports that followed, leaned from his saddle at full speed, caught up the chicken buried to its head in the sand without wringing its neck, and tossed it unharmed and fluttering toward his mistress. As for her, she wore the same look of animation that I had seen in her face at our previous meeting. Although she did not bring her sketch-book with her, as at the bull-fight, she did not shrink from the branding of the cattle, which took place under her very eyes.

Yet I had never seen her and Enriquez together; they had never, to my actual knowledge, even exchanged words. And now, although she was the guest of his uncle, his duties seemed to keep him in the field, and apart from her. Nor,

as far as I could detect, did either apparently make any effort to have it otherwise. The peculiar circumstance seemed to attract no attention from any one else. But for what I alone knew—or thought I knew—of their actual relations, I should have thought them strangers.

But I felt certain that the *festa* which took place in the broad patio of Don Pedro's casa would bring them together. And later in the evening, as we were all sitting on the verandah watching the dancing of the Mexican women, whose white-flounced *sayas* were monotonously rising and falling to the strains of two melancholy harps, Miss Mannersley rejoined us from the house. She seemed to be utterly absorbed and abstracted in the barbaric dances, and scarcely moved as she leaned over the railing with her cheek resting on her hand. Suddenly she arose with a little cry.

'What is it?' asked two or three.

'Nothing—only I have lost my fan.' She had risen, and was looking abstractedly on the floor.

Half a dozen men jumped to their feet. 'Let me fetch it,' they said.

'No, thank you. I think I know where it is, and will go for it myself.' She was moving away.

But Don Pedro interposed with Spanish

gravity. Such a thing was not to be heard of in his casa. If the señorita would not permit *him*—an old man—to go for it, it must be brought by Enriquez, her cavalier of the day.

But Enriquez was not to be found. I glanced at Miss Mannersley's somewhat disturbed face, and begged her to let me fetch it. I thought I saw a flush of relief come into her pale cheek as she said, in a lower voice, 'On the stone seat in the garden.'

I hurried away, leaving Don Pedro still protesting. I knew the gardens, and the stone seat at an angle of the wall, not a dozen yards from the casa. The moon shone full upon it. There, indeed, lay the little grey-feathered fan. But close beside it, also, lay the crumpled, black, gold-embroidered riding gauntlet that Enriquez had worn at the rodeo.

I thrust it hurriedly into my pocket, and ran back. As I passed through the gateway I asked a peon to send Enriquez to me. The man stared. Did I not know that Don Enriquez had ridden away two minutes ago?

When I reached the verandah, I handed the fan to Miss Mannersley without a word. 'Bueno,' said Don Pedro, gravely; 'it is as well. There shall be no bones broken over the getting of it,

for Enriquez, I hear, has had to return to the Encinal this very evening.'

Miss Mannersley retired early. I did not inform her of my discovery, nor did I seek in any way to penetrate her secret. There was no doubt that she and Enriquez had been together, perhaps not for the first time; but what was the result of their interview? From the young girl's demeanour and Enriquez' hurried departure, I could only fear the worst for him. Had he been tempted into some further extravagance and been angrily rebuked, or had he avowed a real passion concealed under his exaggerated mask and been deliberately rejected? I tossed uneasily half the night, following in my dreams my poor friend's hurrying hoof-beats, and ever starting from my sleep at what I thought was the sound of galloping hoofs.

I rose early, and lounged into the patio; but others were there before me, and a small group of Don Pedro's family were excitedly discussing something, and I fancied they turned away awkwardly and consciously as I approached. There was an air of indefinite uneasiness everywhere. A strange fear came over me with the chill of the early morning air. Had anything happened to Enriquez? I had always looked upon his extravagance

as part of his playful humour. Could it be possible that under the sting of rejection he had made his grotesque threat of languishing effacement real? Surely Miss Mannersley would know or suspect something, if it were the case.

I approached one of the Mexican women and asked if the señorita had risen. The woman started, and looked covertly round before she replied. Did not Don Pancho know that Miss Mannersley and her maid had not slept in their beds that night, but had gone, none knew where?

For an instant I felt an appalling sense of my own responsibility in this suddenly serious situation, and hurried after the retreating family group. But as I entered the corridor a vaquero touched me on the shoulder. He had evidently just dismounted, and was covered with the dust of the road. He handed me a note written in pencil on a leaf from Miss Mannersley's sketch-book. It was in Enriquez' hand, and his signature was followed by his most extravagant rubric.

'Friend Pancho: When you read this line you shall of a possibility think I am no more. That is where you shall slip up, my little brother! I am much more—I am two times as much, for I have marry Miss Boston. At the Mission Church, at five of the morning, sharp! No cards shall be

left! I kiss the hand of my venerable uncle-in-law. You shall say to him that we fly to the South wilderness as the combined evangelical missionary to the heathen! Miss Boston herself say this. Ta-ta! How are you now?' Your own ENRIQUEZ.'

THE END

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