

The Project Gutenberg eBook of A Little Girl in Old San Francisco, by Amanda M. Douglas

This ebook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this ebook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you'll have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

Title: A Little Girl in Old San Francisco

Author: Amanda M. Douglas

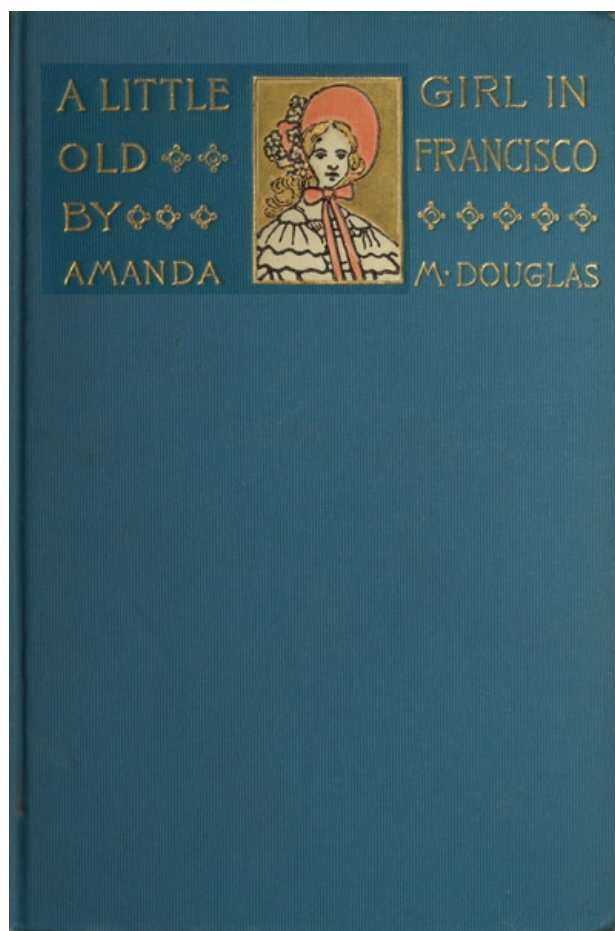
Release date: April 22, 2013 [EBook #42582]

Language: English

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD SAN FRANCISCO ***

**E-text prepared by Melissa McDaniel
and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team
(<http://www.pgdp.net>)
from page images generously made available by
Internet Archive
(<http://archive.org>)**

Note: Images of the original pages are available through Internet Archive. See <https://archive.org/details/littlegirlinolds00dougrich>



A Little Girl in Old San Francisco

THE "LITTLE GIRL" SERIES

A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD NEW YORK
HANNAH ANN; A SEQUEL
A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD BOSTON
A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD PHILADELPHIA
A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD WASHINGTON
A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD NEW ORLEANS
A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD DETROIT
A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD ST. LOUIS
A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD CHICAGO
A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD SAN FRANCISCO
A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD QUEBEC

A LITTLE GIRL IN

OLD SAN FRANCISCO

BY
AMANDA M. DOUGLAS



NEW YORK
DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY
1905

Copyright, 1905
By DODD, MEAD & COMPANY
All rights reserved

Published September, 1905

To
MARTHA REDINGTON

To you who have enjoyed the charms and wonders of the newer city, the old and remarkable may have a charm. Half a century is not much in which to rear the Queen City of the Western Coast.

*With a friend's regard,
The Author.*

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	FROM MAINE TO CALIFORNIA	1
II	OLD SAN FRANCISCO	15
III	MAKING A NEW HOME	27
IV	A QUEER WINTER	43
V	PELAJO	59
VI	A DIFFERENT OUTLOOK	79
VII	A TASTE OF GAYETY	94
VIII	GIRLS AND GIRLS	107
IX	A PARTY AND AN ADMIRER	124
X	ETHICS AND ETIQUETTE	138
XI	IN THE SUNSHINE OF YOUTH	155
XII	NEW EXPERIENCES	174
XIII	BALDER THE BEAUTIFUL	189
XIV	A WEDDING AND A PARTING	205
XV	THE ENCHANTMENT OF YOUTH	223

XVI	IN THE BALANCE	241
XVII	THE DECISION OF FATE	258
XVIII	TO SEE YOU ONCE AGAIN	276
XIX	THE GUIDING FINGER	292
XX	AN ENCHANTED JOURNEY	313

CHAPTER I

FROM MAINE TO CALIFORNIA

It was a long journey for a little girl, so long indeed that the old life had almost faded from her mind, and seemed like something done in another existence. When she was younger still she had once surprised her mother by saying, "Mother, where did I live before I came here?" The pale, care-worn woman had glanced at her in vague surprise and answered rather fretfully, "Why, nowhere, child."

"Oh, but I remember things," said the little girl with a confident air, looking out of eyes that seemed to take an added shade from her present emotions.

"Nonsense! You can't remember things that never happened. That's imagining them, and it isn't true. If you told them they would be falsehoods. There, go out and get me a basket of chips."

She was afraid of telling falsehoods, most of those rigid people called them by their plain name, "lies," and whipped their children. So the little girl kept them to herself; she was a very good and upright child as a general thing and knew very little about her tricky father. But she went on imagining. Especially when she studied geography, which she was extravagantly fond of, yet she could never quite decide which country she had lived in.

2

Through those months of journeying in the big vessel over strange waters, for she had been born in an inland hamlet with a great woods of hemlock, spruce, and fir behind the little cottage, and two or three small creeks wandering about, she had many strange thoughts. Though at first she was quite ill, but Uncle Jason was the best nurse in the world, and presently she began to run about and get acquainted. There were only a few women passengers. One middle-aged, with a son sixteen, who was working his way; a few wives emigrating with their husbands, three women friends who were in the hope of finding an easier life and perhaps husbands, though they hardly admitted that to each other.

She often sat in Uncle Jason's lap, hugged up to his breast. Of course, her mother had been his sister, they had settled upon that, and he did not contradict. She was lulled by the motion of the vessel and often fell asleep, but in her waking moments these were the memories that were growing more vague and getting tangled up with various things.

Her father had taught school at South Berwick the winter she could recall most readily, and came home on Saturday morning, spending most of the time at the store. Woodville was only a sort of hamlet, though it had a church, a school, and a general store. Sometimes he would go back on Sunday, but oftener early Monday morning. Then late in the summer he was home for a while, and went away after talks with her mother that did not always seem pleasant. He took very little notice of her, in her secret heart she felt afraid of him, though he was seldom really cross to her. And then he went away and did not appear again until the winter, when there seemed a great deal of talking and business, and he brought a boxful of clothes for them, and seemed in excellent spirits. He was in business in Boston, and would move them all there at once, if grandmother would consent, but she was old, and had had a stroke, and could not get about without a cane. The old house was hers and she would finish out her days there. Of course, then, her mother could not go. She had a new, warm woollen frock and a cloak that was the envy of the other children, and absolute city shoes that she could only wear on Sunday, and, of course, were presently outgrown.

3

She studied up everything she could concerning Boston, but her mother would not talk about it. In the summer, grandmother had another stroke and then was bedridden. It was a poor little village, and everybody had hard work to live, summers were especially busy, and winters were long and hard. Grandmother was fretful, and wandered a little in her mind. Now and then a neighbor came in to spell Mrs. Westbury, and there was always some mysterious talking that her mother did not care for her to hear. Grandmother lived more than a year and was a helpless burden at the last. After she had gone the poor mother sank down, overwhelmed with trouble. David Westbury had persuaded the old lady to sign over the house for a business venture he was to make in Boston that would put him on the road to fortune. And now it was found that he had decamped, that there had been no business but speculating, and she no longer had a home for herself and her child.

4

They were very poor. People bore straits bravely in those days and suffered in silence. The poor mother grew paler and thinner and had a hard cough. In the spring they would be homeless. By

springs she would be—and what would happen to the child! A little bound-out girl, perhaps.

Laverne was not taken into these sorrowful confidences. She did not go to school, her mother needed to be waited upon. One bright afternoon she went out to skate on the creek. The school children joined her, and it was almost dark when they started for home. The little girl's heart upbraided her, but she had carried in the last armful of wood, and had not told her mother. What would they do to-morrow!

She went in hesitatingly. Oh, how good and warm the room felt and two candles were burning. A man sat beside the stove with a sort of frank, bright, yet weather-beaten face, a mop of chestnut-colored hair, a beard growing up to his very mouth, but with the brightest blue eyes she had ever seen, merry blue eyes, too, that looked as if there was just a twinkle back of the lashes.

"This is my little girl, Laverne," said her mother. "We have always called her Verne, seeing there were three of the same name. And this is"—the mother's tone had a curious tremble in it, as if she caught her breath—"this is Uncle Jason."

The first glance made them friends. They both smiled. She was like her mother in the young days, and had the same dimple in her cheek, and the one in her chin where the children used to hold a buttercup. She put out both hands. They had been so lonely, so poor, and she was glad all over with a strange feeling, just as if they had come to better times.

What a supper they had! She was very hungry. She had been quite used to eating bread and molasses, or a little moist brown sugar. And here was a great chunk of butter on the edge of her plate, and the room was fragrant with the smell of broiled ham.

If she had known anything about fairies she would have believed in enchantment at once. And there was part of a splendid cake, and orange jam, and she could hardly make it real. No neighbor had known all their straits, and the little girl had borne them as bravely as her mother. Then, so many people had pinches in the winter, for crops were often poor.

She helped her mother with the dishes and then she sat down on a stool beside Uncle Jason. Presently, her head sank on his knee and she went fast asleep. She never heard a word of what her mother and Uncle Jason were saying.

At nine o'clock he carried her into the bedroom and laid her on the bed, and she never woke up while her mother undressed her. He went over to the store where he had bargained for a room. The storekeeper, Mr. Lane, had been as much surprised to see Mr. Chadsey as Mrs. Westbury. He had been born in the old town and his romance had blossomed and blighted here.

"Now, I tell you," Seth Lane said to his wife, when the store was shut and they were preparing for bed, "if that scalawag Westbury was dead there'd be a weddin' in this town straight away. My, how Chadsey was cut up over hearin' his mean villainy an' gettin' hold of the house! I never b'lieved the old woman knew what she was about. And Chadsey's come back in the nick o' time, for I don't b'lieve she'll go through March."

Jason Chadsey planned for their comfort, and went to Boston the next day, but could find no trace of David Westbury, dead or alive.

As for the little girl, when she woke up in the morning she thought she had had the loveliest dream that could ever haunt one. But when she saw the bountiful breakfast she was amazed to the last degree.

"Was Uncle Jason really here?" she asked timidly. She was quite sure her mother had been crying.

"Yes, dear. He has gone to Boston and will be back in a few days. Oh, Laverne, I hope you will learn to love him. Some day, when you are older, you will understand why he came back, and he will be your best friend when"—when I am gone, she was about to say, but checked herself, and substituted "all your life. When I was a little girl he was a kind and generous big boy. Then he went to sea, and was back only a few times. For years I had heard nothing from him—he has been round the world, everywhere. And he has a big, tender heart—"

"Oh, I am sure I shall be glad to love him. Why, you seem to go right to his heart;" and the child's face glowed with enthusiasm.

"Yes, yes." She began to cough and sat down suddenly, putting her handkerchief to her mouth.

"The salt, quick, Verne," she gasped.

She lay on the old wooden settee and stuffed her mouth full of salt.

"Oh, what can I do?" cried the child, in mild alarm.

"Run for Aunt Cynthia Beers. Tell her to come quick."

The neighbor, who was the village nurse, came back with the child. Then she was despatched for the doctor. He shook his head gravely.

"Doctor, you must keep me alive a little while longer," she pleaded.

"Oh, you are good for some time yet, only you must not make the slightest exertion. Cynthia, how long can you stay?"

"Ten days or so. Then I have to go over on the Creek," she answered laconically.

"That will do." Then he gave sundry charges to Miss Beers, and left the remedies she was to use, but that lady knew what was meant.

Mrs. Westbury beckoned the nurse to her when he had gone.

"Don't tell Laverne," she said. "Don't say anything about——"

"That's cruel. Why, she ought to know and be prepared."

"No, no; I will not have a word said. I cannot explain, no one can. And if she took it hard, don't you see, it would drive me wild and shorten my days. I'm all worn out. And she will be provided for."

Everybody was kind and solicitous, sending in cooked food, offering to sit up at night, but Miss Beers was equal to all demands. The sick woman really did improve. Laverne hovered about her mother, read to her out of her geography and Peter Parley's history, as well as the sweetest hymns out of the hymn book. Jimmy Cox came over and did the chores, provided the wood, took Verne out on his sled, and the days passed along. Jason Chadsey returned. Miss Beers had to go her way, and a neighbor came in to do what was needed. One day, before the minister and the Squire, she gave her child to Jason Chadsey, who promised to care for her and educate her, and keep her from all harm.

8

"You both know that I loved her mother and would gladly have married her in the old days, but untoward fate intervened. I could find no trace of the child's father. She has no near relatives to care for her, so I shall be father to her, and Heaven may judge me at the last."

He was holding the child on his knee that evening, "You are to be my little girl always," he said, with tender solemnity. "You shall be made happy as a little bird. And if you will only love me——"

"Oh, I shall, I do. And will you stay here? Mother will be so glad. She was longing so to have you come back. You will never go away again?"

"Never from you, my little girl;" and he kissed the child's trust into perfect belief.

There were two more alarms, then the frail life went out peacefully. The child was stunned. It had seemed right for grandmother to leave a world that she was forgetting about, but Laverne could not understand all the mystery. Her mother had always been quiet and reserved, it was the fashion in those days, and the child could not miss the things she had never had. And neither could she ever have understood her sorrow over the great mistake in giving her such a father. But Heaven had helped her to make amends, for the child was the embodiment of her own youth. It was all she had and she gave it to the man who had loved her sincerely, glad and thankful that she was not to be left to the uncertain charity of the world.

9

The frightened child clung very closely to him. The worn furniture and bedding were distributed among the neighbors, a few keepsakes collected, a few good-bys said, and good wishes given, and they went first to Boston and then to New York. Then they were to go to the wonderful land of gold and sunshine, California. They found it on the map. And there was the long, long sail, and the little girl was going far away from the only sorrow of her life, that was so strangely mingled with the only dear love. For while the other had been hedged about with the severe training of the times, afraid of sinfulness in indulging in what was called carnal affections, even in loving a child, now she had the utmost tenderness lavished upon her. She had no one but him, and that was a continual joy and kept his heart at high tide. She was all his.

Later she was to know about the young love between them, and how when her mother was just fifteen he had shipped for three years aboard a merchantman. They had sailed about the Eastern seas, bought and sold, and at last started for home, to be wrecked, and nearly all had perished. Of the few saved there were no tidings of Jason Chadsey. Laverne waited and hoped and came to her twentieth birthday. David Westbury was considered a smart young man. He had been a clerk in a store, he had worked on a newspaper, and taught school, and could turn his hand to a good many things. He had a smooth tongue, too, and a certain polish in his manner above the country youths. Grandmother espoused his cause at once. Jason Chadsey was dead, lovers were not so plentiful in these small places, where the enterprising young men went away. It was hard to stand out against one's own mother, and all the years to come to be taunted as an old maid. And so Laverne married David Westbury, and when her little girl was a month old he came back not altogether penniless, but it was too late.

10

He had roamed about the world a good deal. He had made money, and spent it freely, lost some of it, helped friends in distress. Now, he was going out to that wonderful land that had been the dream of the Spaniard, and another nation had brought the dream true. He would visit the little old village once more, and see how it had fared with his early love and his old friends, and then say good-bye forever. And knowing she was near to death, Laverne Westbury told him her sad story, and he read between the broken sentences that he had been her early love, her only love.

So they whiled the time away, the man's dreams growing more vivid, the child's fading. They passed strange countries, there were seas of peerless blue, seas of emerald green, then strange colors commingled. There were cloudless skies and broad sheets of sunshine that seemed to envelop the whole world in a blaze; there were nights of such glowing stars as one seldom sees on land, there were gray days with sullen winds, and storms that sent a thrill to the stoutest

hearts, when the vessel groaned and creaked and the women cried in terror. But Laverne only crept closer in Uncle Jason's arms and felt safe.

11

They stopped here and there at a port, places they hunted up on the map, cities that seemed marvels to the little girl, shores with waving blooming forests and almost steaming fragrance. Strange birds, strange many-hued fish, darting hither and thither, seaweed that in the sunshine looked like masses of bloom, or living things swimming about. Curious people, too, speaking languages no little girl could understand, then leaving the warmth, and shivering with blasts of cold air, wonderful islands and capes jutting out—some bleak and bare and rocky, others shining in verdure and waving smiles of welcome, it seemed; going safely round the Horn with half their journey done and finding more wonders, great mountain ranges, shores thickly studded with islands, natives swimming about like fishes, queer, half ruinous old Spanish towns, and when they stopped at a port, such a clatter of tongues, such a screaming of voices, such a confusion, one was glad to get out of it to lovely, enchanting peace once more.

Warmer grew the air with a languorous, permeating fragrance. Moonlight silvering the water that leaped softly up and down as if playing hide and seek with the next wave. All the boundless space lighted with it, going round the world, swelling, decreasing, a golden crescent, then a pale gibbous thing and afterward darkness when the ship crept softly along.

If one came in near the shore it was like the blast of a furnace. Then, passing the equator with the queer ceremony among the sailors, and looking across at the little neck of land joining the two countries, past Central America, which the little girl insisted made three Americas. She had listened to the tales of the early explorers and their cruel lust for gold until she had shuddered.

12

"Uncle Jason, are you going for gold in California, and will the people murder whole nations and rob them? I would rather not have the gold."

"No, my little girl; and the country that has the gold belongs to us. But it has many other delightful things as well. It is not like bleak Maine."

"What a strange journey it has been, and oh, how beautiful most of the time. I do not believe I shall ever be afraid of storms again."

"You have made a most excellent sailor. It will seem queer to be on land again. You will keep your sea legs for some time to come."

"Sea legs?" She laughed inquiringly.

"The faculty one acquires of walking with the roll of the ship. Sailors always do it on land. And you will see that you have an inclination to go from side to side as if the street was hardly wide enough;" and he looked at her out of humorous eyes.

He had a way of nearly shutting one eye, which gave an absolutely funny expression to his face. He had buffeted so many storms and narrow escapes that he looked fully ten years beyond his age, which was but thirty-five. He had a tall, vigorous frame, with a little stoop in the shoulders and a way of sitting down all in a heap. The little girl told him he made a cave for her to sit in. Every day she loved him more dearly, and to him she was the one thing that brightened his way and gave him new aims. He had been going to California simply to see a strange and new land. He had not been won by the wonderful tales of gold, he had cared very little for wealth. But now he would make a fortune for her and have it so safely invested that she should not come to want if she lived to be old. He could never forget the afternoon he had come to Laverne Westbury's home, that she had been warned to leave in the spring, and found her almost on the verge of starvation, too proud to keep asking charity, worn out and disheartened, with only the county house looming before her. Little Verne should never know this, never suffer as her mother had done.

13

And this was one reason he led her thoughts away from the old life. She was too young to know that he had loved her mother, she took the relationship for granted. And even on the long voyage there had been so much to entertain her. The only child on board, and a winsome one at that, she had been a universal favorite; and Jason Chadsey hardly less so. The trio, as the three single women had been dubbed, though the married ones often said "the old maids," after a little, established very friendly relations with Mr. Chadsey. Miss Holmes was past thirty, and had worn herself almost out teaching school. A sea voyage had been prescribed to avoid consumption, that scourge of the eastern towns. She had gained in health and strength, and certainly in looks. When she found the little girl and her uncle poring over their old map, she brought out some of her school books, to Laverne's great delight. Among them was the story of the Argonauts that caught the young imagination, and even Dick Folsom became interested in the various explorers who had dreamed of gold and of the straight route to China. Miss Gaines had been a dressmaker until a troublesome pain in her side warned her to seek a different occupation, and Miss Alwood had kept house, done nursing, and they had planned to make better fortunes in the new country, where there were fewer women. Mrs. Dawson was going out to meet her husband, who had been among the "Forty-miners," and now kept a sort of lodging ranch, that with her help could be transformed into a regular hotel, much in demand at that time.

14

And so they had made quite a little colony on shipboard. Slowly they came up the Pacific Coast, past the long peninsula of Southern California, and there, fairly in sight, was the Golden Gate.

15

CHAPTER II

OLD SAN FRANCISCO

Was it any wonder the old explorers missed the narrow outlet from the great bay when the hills from the farther shore cast a great gloomy shadow, and dreary rocks flanked the shore, inhabited by cormorants and auks and gulls, screaming out their discordant music? What if the tide did run out sweeping like a torrent—were they going to breast the danger back of it? Was the great rocky point worth their consideration? In the islands off the shore seals and sea lions had it all their own way and basked and frolicked in the sunshine.

It had changed then, in the early fifties, but half a century has almost forgotten the bareness of it then. And yet it was magnificent in the October sunset as the old ship made its way, puffing from the strains of its long journey. They had nearly all huddled on deck to view their land of promise. There are few enthusiastic emigrants now, everything is viewed with commercial eyes. Afar to the westward stretched the magnificent ocean, a sheet of billowy ranges tipped with molten gold, changing to a hundred iridescent tints and throwing up the gold again in prodigal fashion, sweeping it over to foreign seas. And, on the other hand, the mile-wide gap, the gateway to the wonderful land, tranquil enough now, with frowning rocks like the cave of Scylla on the one hand, that was to be transformed into a wonderful city. They are piloted through to the great magnificent bay that seems endless at the first glance of its seventy miles. Northward long lines of rolling hills, purple and blue and black, with glints of the setting sun fighting the shadows like some strange old gods with their fire-tipped arrows. At the south it fades into misty dreamland. Red Rock stands up defiant. And so they look at their new country and then at each other. There is shipping at the rude wharves, and they find a place to anchor, but it is too late to look for a home and so they make themselves content. But if they thought they were coming to great space, and semi-loneliness they were mistaken and confused by the noise and tumult, the crowds, the bustle of business, the people of all countries it seemed. 16

"Why, I had no idea," the women said to one another. "The place must be overcrowded."

What chance was there then for women who had come to seek their fortunes?

They soon found that San Francisco was the stopping place of nearly every nation, and yet there was room for more, and work for those willing to do it.

Mr. Dawson came down to meet his wife the next morning, and was made acquainted with the little party that had become such friends in their long journey.

"We can take some of you in if you will accept the accommodations," he said cordially. "They might be worse," with a shrug of the shoulders. "Luckily, I escaped being burnt out. Will you come and take a view of our town?" 17

What an odd place it was, built on the hills like Rome. On the ocean side great frowning rocks that suggested fortresses. At the extreme end, the highest of hills, the city began, and it spread out over little valleys and other hills, sloping to the busy, beautiful bay. And it seemed right in the heart of it lay devastation, débris and ashes. Hundreds of men were clearing, laying foundations again, rearing new structures.

"It was an awful fire," explained their guide. "We had thought fireproof bricks and iron-bound structures would at least stay the devastating hand of destruction, and even that proved useless. But for the loss one might have enjoyed the magnificent spectacle of the immense fiery field. The fierce roar of the flames, the shouts and shrieks of the flying people, the glowing crackling mass sending spires up to the very sky, it seemed, was something we shall never forget. It was said to have been visible a hundred miles away."

The ruins were startling even now. Then the party turned, crossed Market Street and came into Spear Street. Here there was a rambling frame building that had been added to several times, two stories for the most part, but a long ell of only one story. The main end bore the name of "Dawson House." It was not a hotel, and had no bar, that usual accompaniment. Round in the next street, Mr. Dawson had a clubhouse that supplied this want, and all games of chance, but this place was of the better sort.

The Farnsworths had gone to friends only a few squares from the wharf. Mr. Dawson made friends at once with young Folsom and offered him a position. 18

"I'm in for the gold fields," he declared with boyish eagerness.

"You'd better consider a day or two," suggested his mother.

"And I'll take the mother, too, if she is as good a housekeeper as she looks to be," Mr. Dawson subjoined laughingly. "If I don't, young fellow, some man will snap your mother up before you'll have a chance to see the color of his eyes."

"Well, here are four husbandless women," she retorted gayly. "He could have a choice."

They were ushered into a spacious room with a painted floor and nondescript furnishing. In one corner was a large desk at which sat a clerk. This opened into a dining room, in which the long table was seldom without a guest. Several were seated there now. On the other side were two

smaller rooms tolerably well furnished, one a sleeping chamber.

"You'll find we're suffering from the want of woman's hands and woman's wit. I could hardly believe my wife had consented to come. You see those who are worth anything are soon offered homes of their own, and the others——" He made a peculiar little gesture, that elicited a shrewd smile from Jason Chadsey.

It was comforting to find a place of refuge so soon, they all thought. On the second floor were lodging rooms for the better class. The ell was fitted up with rows of bunks, and there was seldom a vacancy by midnight.

Laverne kept tight hold of Uncle Jason's hand, and when Mr. Dawson smiled over to her, half hid her face on Uncle Jason's ample frame. 19

"Are we all going to live here?" she asked in a low tone.

"For a little while, I think. We would not want to go away alone. And there must be some one to keep the house when I get one."

"But you know that I helped mother, oh, for a long while. Sometimes I chopped up the wood. And in the autumn I dug the potatoes and husked the corn, but we had to kill the poor hens, after all," and she sighed. "I swept up the house, too. Oh, I can do a great many things."

He took the slim little hand in his and tried to smile over her eagerness, but his heart ached as he thought of her mother, and the hardships he could not save.

"Will it be winter soon?" she inquired.

"Not a Maine winter, my child. I believe there is no real winter."

"Everything looks queer and dried up, yet it isn't cold. And what a great city, it is almost as large as New York."

He laughed at that, then he was grave a moment. "It may be as great, some day. The Pacific will be a big rival to the Atlantic."

"To think we are clear over here! Why don't they build a railroad—just so?" and she made a mark with her small finger.

"No doubt that will come also."

They made arrangements about staying for the present. It seemed queer to the child that the friend she had known so long should be Mr. Dawson's wife. Already she was giving some orders and telling what she wanted done, and did not seem a bit afraid of the portly man who could speak so sharply to the Chinese servants. 20

Laverne thought them very odd. She had only seen pictures of them before. They walked so softly in their pointed slippers, and looked a little like women in their loose blue shirts with hanging sleeves. The long queue twisted around their heads, and their slanting eyes seemed weird enough.

She saw many other queer people in their walk back to the boat. Uncle Jason thought it too long, but she pleaded so to go. There were other curious dark-eyed and dark-skinned men, small and bright Japanese she came to know, and tall Spaniards in picturesque attire with handsome sashes about their waists; Indians, too, and a group of squaws girt about with blankets, two carrying their babies on their backs, and these made her think of the Maine clear across the continent, for you occasionally saw them there.

The old vessel seemed almost like home to her. They gathered up their luggage and that belonging to the ladies and ordered it sent to the Dawson House. Then they went up on Telegraph Hill, and half the world seemed spread out before them. The sun was shining in well-nigh blinding brilliancy. There was the narrow passageway that hardly looked its real width, there was the northern peninsula, Mount Tamalpais, Belvidere, Sausalito, and all the places she was to come to know so well. And there over the bay were the low spurs of the Coast Range, at whose feet were to spring up towns and cities. The bay looked to her like a smaller ocean. But boats were plying back and forth. And they could see the other hills about, and the town spreading here and there outside of the burned district. 21

Suddenly she said she was very tired, and her steps lagged a little. Uncle Jason would have been glad to carry her, he had occasionally carried greater burdens in times of peril, but that would be hardly admissible, they were going downhill too, which was easier. She had not seen all the strange people yet, for they met a group of Portuguese sailors with big hoop earrings, who were gesticulating fiercely, and some Russians with high caps and black, bushy beards. She was glad she had studied so much geography on shipboard, and she began to feel quite wise about different countries.

When she reached their present home she begged that she might go to bed. She did not want to eat even a tempting bit of cake. Mrs. Dawson took her into her room and put a pillow on the lounge, and while the others talked and planned she slept soundly.

"What a pretty child she is," Mr. Dawson said. "You will have to watch her closely that no one steals her."

"Oh!" Uncle Jason said thoughtfully. But in this wild, bustling life few would want to be burdened with a child not belonging to them.

When Laverne woke there was a queer, rushing, rustling sound, and it was dark like twilight. Where was she? What was happening? Then she sprang up and remembered. The ladies were talking in the next room. Oh, it rained and the wind seemed blowing a gale.

22

"Oh, what a nice sleep you have had!" exclaimed Mrs. Dawson. "And now you must be hungry, though we shall have dinner in a very short time. You look rested," and she smiled cheerfully.

"Yes, I am. I don't know what made me so tired." She had not climbed a hill in a long while.

"We didn't have any hills to climb on shipboard, and in all these months we did get out of practice," said Miss Holmes. "I was tired as well. And now the rainy season has begun, and Mr. Dawson has been saying that in a week or two the country will look like spring."

"And won't there be any winter? Though I don't like winter very much," she added naïvely. "Only the sledding and skating."

"I shouldn't care to live in Maine," and Miss Gaines gave a little shiver. "All my life I have longed for a warm winter climate. And if this doesn't suit, I shall go further south."

"You women without husbands are very independent," laughed Mrs. Dawson.

"You certainly can go where you like if you have money enough to take you there," was the reply. "Verne, come sit here and tell me if you like San Francisco as well as the ship and the voyage."

"It's queer and such lots of queer people, and how they can understand each other I can't see, for they all seem to talk different. I'd rather not live on a ship all my life."

"Then do not marry a sea captain. But your uncle may take a fancy to go to China or Japan. It is not so far from here. Grace, have you written any letters this afternoon?"

23

"No," replied Miss Alwood. "I think my friends will not be immediately alarmed."

"And this little girl has left no relatives behind, I heard her uncle say. Haven't you any cousins?"

"My mother had no brothers or sisters." Then she remembered how little she had ever heard about her father.

Mrs. Dawson brushed her hair and they were summoned to dinner. They had the upper end of the table. Two other women came in with their husbands. There were some Spaniards among the men, and a few very dark, peculiar-looking people. There was a great deal of talking in tongues unknown to the little girl, but some of the voices had a soft, musical sound.

The little girl was really hungry and enjoyed her dinner. Afterward most of the party played cards. The other lodgers were of the commoner sort, had a dining room to themselves, and generally sallied out in the evening. Fights were not infrequent and the harmless phases of games degenerated into gambling.

Miss Holmes had not mastered the art even on the long voyage. She took Laverne under her wing now.

"You and I will have to learn Spanish," she said. "Once Spain owned all this country."

"And will we have to learn all the other talk? I know some Indian words, there were two old Indian women in our town, and in the summer some of the tribes would come down. But Chinese—that funny reading that comes on tea chests——" and a knot gathered in her forehead.

24

"We will not take Chinese the first. I have a friend who went out as a missionary and who can talk it fluently. But all down along the coast it is settled by Spaniards, and they were in South America, you know, and it seems as if half the people here were talking it. Then it is a stately and beautiful language. You know you learned some French on shipboard."

"And there are so many things to learn. There were so few in our little place. They spun and knit and sewed, and you made bed quilts in case you were married. Mother had two she had never used, and a great counterpane grandmother had knit."

"Yes. It is a pity they couldn't have been saved for you. I have a chest of heirlooms stored in the house of a cousin at Dorchester, and some Revolutionary relics. My grandfather fought in the war. And I have left them all behind."

Miss Holmes gave a little sighing laugh. She could not tell whether she was glad or sorry that she had taken this long journey to a strange land.

"What did Spain want of America?" queried the little girl.

"Oh, don't you remember how they came to Mexico for the gold. There was Pizarro and Cortez ——"

"And poor Montezuma in South America. Are there any real gold mines here?"

"Not just in the town."

"Then no one will come and fight us and take the gold away," she said with a sigh of relief.

25

Uncle Jason gave a dry smile. There was fighting enough, he had found already.

"Would you care for the gold?" The child raised soft, inquiring eyes.

"Why, yes; I should like to have a share of it. But I do not think I shall go and work in the mines."

"Did they fight very much at the fort. And who did they drive away?" she asked in a rather awe-stricken voice.

"Oh, my child, they did not fight at all. The country belonged to us. The gold was free for any one willing to mine. We shall see the men coming in with their bags of gold dust and nuggets, and though they may talk fiercely and quarrel, they need not disturb us," and Miss Holmes smiled reassuringly.

"Uncle Jason will not go," she said confidently, after quite a pause. Then she glanced over to him and smiled, and was answered in return.

He lost that trick and the next and Mrs. Dawson won his money. It did well enough to play for fun on shipboard, the captain had strictly forbidden gambling, but here one would not dream of such a thing. The stakes were not high, however.

He was thinking of his little girl and whether he had done wisely to bring her here. He had planned this journey before he knew whether the little girl was dead or alive; at any rate he had supposed she would be in the keeping of her own father. And the pitiful story of the woman he had loved, and would have slaved for had she been his, had roused all the chivalrous feelings of his nature. And that she should give him the child who had her smile and her soft, appealing voice, and the pretty eagerness that had cropped out now and then, though it was the fashion to repress it, seemed so wonderful and so sacred to him, and occupied so much of his thoughts that he never dreamed of altering his plans, or whether they would be best for her. Everything was so different, such a hurly-burly, that he wondered if a little girl could be brought up clean and wholesome and happy. A touch of uncertainty was creeping through every nerve. A man's life was so different. And there must be some one to guard her since he had to make the fortune for her. Would Miss Holmes do? They had become great friends. Then Miss Holmes had the Eastern refinement and uprightness.

26

He had not counted on sharing her with any one, his ideas had been vague and impractical and he would have to remodel them.

"Upon my word, I never knew you to play so poorly," laughed Mrs. Dawson teasingly; "I believe you are half asleep."

"I think that must be it. I am a landlubber to-night, so I beg you to excuse me," and he rose.

27

CHAPTER III

MAKING A NEW HOME

It rained three days, not quite like sullen Eastern storms, but in gusts and showers. At times the wind drove it along like a trampling army, then the fog came up and you could hardly see anything but the vaguest outlines. The rainy season had set in.

"Will it rain all the time?" asked Laverne. "And I have no rubbers."

"That is a sad oversight. I don't believe you will find any small ones here," answered Mrs. Dawson. "But I have interviewed some of the old residents, and they say it only rains by spells, but that the spells are rather frequent. I suppose we shall get used to it."

It was mid-forenoon. Laverne had asked questions about everything she could imagine, and heard many wonderful stories. The convent tales interested her deeply. They had found an old volume of the early days, and she had rejoiced in the legend of Father Francis, who had been left out of the list of missions that were to be named after the Saints.

"And no St. Francis!" cried the good missionary, surprised at such neglect. "Is not our own dear Father Francis to have a mission assigned to him?"

The visitador replied loftily, "If St. Francis wishes a mission let him show you a good port and it shall bear his name."

28

They had been discouraged at the rough shores and rocky heights. But they went on and suddenly the gateway opened before them, and the bay came in view. So they entered it, and while they were waiting for the storeship, they cut down timber and began to make a settlement on a fertile plain surrounded by vine-clad hills. When the storeship arrived with cattle, provisions, and some more emigrants, they built some plain houses, and the mission, and on the day of St. Francis it was blessed and consecrated with a Mass, and for music they had a continual

discharge of firearms, while the smoke answered for incense. Then they set about converting the natives who were poor, wandering clans with no religion, but a great fear of sorcerers, and were very easily managed. And now the Mission de los Dolores was but a crumbling ruin, while the good St. Francis lives in the noble name of bay and city.

Then there was the pathetic story of Doña Conceptione, daughter of the Commandant of Presidio. A Russian official visited it, and fell deeply in love with the beautiful girl. But he not only had to return with business matters, but had to lay before the Czar his earnest wish to espouse his sweetheart. Doña Conceptione waited at first in great joy and hope, but no word and no lover came. When her father tried to win her from her love by various devices, she would not be comforted with them. Many a time she looked longingly over the ocean, straining her eyes to see the vague outline of his ship that never came, and so her sweet youth passed, her beauty began to fade, but she would not give up her faith. He was dead, or he would have come. He could not prove false. She went into a convent and prayed for his soul's rest. Long afterward she heard he had been killed on his way home, and her sad heart was comforted by the thought that she had never doubted his love.

29

And then another beautiful girl, whose lover had gone to battle with a fierce tribe of Indians who had attacked one of the lower missions. His horse had found its way back unharmed, and some one who had seen him fall brought back his bloody scarf and his jewelled dagger, picked up from the ground, but the Indians had mutilated his body horribly and cast it away in fragments. When Doña Eustacia recovered from her long illness she would take the veil in spite of her mother's protests, for there was another lover the elder had preferred. And so two years passed away when a poor, dishevelled, footsore man came back, who had not been killed but wounded and taken prisoner, and at last managed to escape. And when the Señor Roldan learned Eustacia's sorrowful mistake he begged that she be released from her vows, and proffered his estate to the mission for her. But the Padre was obdurate and would not listen. Did some bird carry messages to her? There was no need to pray for his soul, and his faithful love was too sweet to give up. So the little bird comforted her, and though she knew she was perilling her soul's salvation she slipped out of the convent one night, and her lover lifted her on his horse and they went away in the storm and the darkness, whither no one ever knew, but the Padre took his estate, and they were both laid under the ban of the Church.

30

"But did it really hurt them?" queried the young listener.

"I should like to think they were very happy," declared Miss Holmes, closing the book, "and we will end it that way."

"Do see!" cried Laverne, running to the window. "Why, it is yellow and purple, and rolling up——"

"The fog is lifting. And the sun is coming out," was the reply.

"The cobwebs being swept from the sky," laughed the child. "But there is no old woman with a broom."

Yes, there was the sun out in all its glory, driving the fog into the ocean, tearing it into tatters, and suddenly everything was glorified. The evergreens had been washed free from dust and were in their metallic tints, other foliage that had seemed brown a few days ago, glowed and shimmered in the crystal-clear air. The change was marvellous. The newcomers glanced at each other in surprise, with no words to express their exhilaration.

"And now we can go out!" cried Laverne. "I want to climb a hill."

Uncle Jason laughed. "Come and see," he replied.

Alas! Rivulets were running down the slopes and the wind was appalling. Some of the streets were simply seas meandering along.

"Never mind, to-morrow it will be nice and you will see it dry up by magic."

Laverne went back to the book of legends and stories. The others had been considering plans. Mrs. Folsom had accepted Mr. Dawson's proposal and was installed as housekeeper to his wife's great satisfaction.

31

"It would be folly for a young fellow like you to go out to the mines," Mr. Dawson said to Richard. "There's gold enough to last ten years or I'll miss my guess. It's no place for a boy. And there is plenty to do right here. I'll take you as a clerk."

"We certainly have fallen in a clover bed," exclaimed his mother; "I don't know how to thank you."

"I guess I need you as much as you need me. And if the boy keeps honest and upright and doesn't take to gambling his fortune is made."

"But I shall go to the gold fields in the end," Dick said to his mother. She was satisfied to have it put off a while.

The rain had not kept Jason Chadsey in the house. He had gone on several inspecting tours. There was work to be had everywhere. Building up the burned district, draying around the bay in every conceivable branch. Every week dozens of men threw up a job and started for the gold fields. Three or four shipping houses almost fought for him when they learned he was a Maine man, and had been half over the world, was indeed full of shrewd knowledge that had been

discriminated by a wide experience, and neither drank nor gambled, the besetting sins of those early days.

Then there was the home. Miss Alwood had found a position. The other two had been friends for years. A needlewoman would readily gain employment, and no doubt teachers would be in demand.

Jason Chadsey ruminated over the matter. Women had hardly begun to make homes for themselves in that chaotic region. What if he made a home for them both and Miss Holmes took care of Laverne? The child was very fond of her.

32

He went about the matter in a straightforward fashion. Miss Holmes accepted at once. She had begun to wonder a little at her temerity in seeking her fortune in this new land. In the older cities it was different. And she had a motherly heart for Laverne. Indeed, if Jason Chadsey had offered her marriage she would have accepted it readily, though it would have been based on respect and friendship.

"You will be head of the interior," he said, in a rather humorous tone. "We may find some one to do the rough part. And if Miss Gaines would like to make her home with you we shall be a cheerful and comfortable family, I fancy."

It was not so easy to find a domicile ready made. Too many of the houses, even among those offered for sale, were flimsy things and held at exorbitant prices. But he struck one presently. The man's wife had died and he wanted to go to the mines, but did not really care to sell. He would rent furniture and all for six months.

The Dawsons were sorry to have them leave. To be sure, their places could be filled easily enough, but they had all been so friendly.

Meanwhile the weather would have been amusing if it had not been so trying. It had come off very hot, and the north wind seemed to be bringing gusts from the desert that scorched the green things with its withering fury. The stars shone out pitiless like lesser suns. Then splendid revivifying showers, and air as balmy as spring, laden with wafts of curious fragrance, touching the hillsides with magic, clothing them with daintiest verdure. Was this winter? Were not the seasons absolutely lost?

33

The little girl was as much interested in the house as if she had been a decade older. It was rather out of the business region, and built on a side hill. Downstairs, even with the street in front, which had a narrow plank sidewalk, there were two rooms; on the next floor four, and you stepped out on the level again at the back. There was a flat rock, then another declivity, but not so steep. Up here there was a magnificent prospect. A little shrubbery grew about, but it was mostly a tangle of vines, where flowers were to run riot in the spring.

It was quite as plain as the little cottage in the Maine town though much less substantial. Sometimes in a strong west wind it seemed as if it might slide to the street below. But houses seldom blew about that way.

Outside a series of rude steps had been laid. Now and then they washed out in a heavy rain, but they could be relaid without much trouble, and sometimes the sticky clay hardened like stone and they remained for a long while. She liked to run up and down them, flying like a gull, stretching out her small arms, to the terror of Miss Holmes.

"You will slip some day and break your neck or some of your limbs, and your uncle will think I was careless about you," she said anxiously.

"Oh, I will tell him that you were always cautioning me. And I do not believe I shall break easily," laughing with a child's glee.

34

Every day changed her it seemed. Her eyes glowed with quivering lights like the bay, her cheeks rounded out, the dimple grew deeper and held a pink tint like the heart of a rose. Uncle Jason put uncounted kisses in it. She would be prettier than her mother, and that gave him a jealous pang. Her father had been esteemed good-looking, but really she was not like him. The coloring and hair resembled her mother's. Ah, if she could be here amid the splendor, and he shuddered, thinking of the bleak little town.

The housekeeping was not arduous. Even in those early days fruits were abundant and vegetables enough to surprise one. Then Jason Chadsey went away in the morning and oftener took his lunch at the Dawsons', not coming home until night. Everything in a business way rushed.

There were schools already, for the American plants his schoolhouse if there are a dozen children. They could see the one down on the Plaza. There were churches, too. Even in 1848 there had been Sunday worship established on the Plaza, and a year later, in spite of all the hubbub, churches were really organized. Then they erected a substantial tent on Dupont Street, until one of their members ordered a church ready to be put together, from New York. There was beside a Congregational Society and this attracted Miss Holmes, for she had always been "orthodox" in Boston. But the long sea voyage and the lawless life all about her were rather demoralizing.

Men and women broadened out, sharp corners of creeds were rubbed off. There was a very

35

earnest endeavor among the better classes for the extension of higher moral purposes, and a purer rule, and all of that mind worked heartily together.

Marian Holmes was much interested in her friend's welfare. Miss Gaines, with true Yankee faculty, was meaning to make a place for herself and some money. Her heart yearned for the intelligence and order of her native city.

"I shall not spend all my life in this riotous, disorderly place where you cannot tell what will happen to you next. Like the men, I want to make some money. It doesn't take so very much to be comfortable in Boston, and there are all the appliances and enjoyments of civilization. I was talking to that Mrs. Latham who has come to the Dawsons for a few weeks while their house is being finished. And she recommends that I shall start an establishment at once, while I am new to the town."

Miss Gaines studied her compeer. She had been talking so rapidly she was out of breath.

"Well?" as Miss Holmes was silent.

"Why, it might be an excellent thing. Only could you get girls to sew? I do not think the young women are of that type. They flock to the restaurants."

"There are two Catholic women Mrs. Latham spoke of—you know their priests keep stricter watch over them. They are of the old Spanish Californian stock. They have sewed for her and are neat as new pins, but have no style. They rent out the lower floor of their house, being in straitened circumstances. Their tenant is to go next week, I believe I shall take the two rooms, and open a shop, emporium, establishment, whatever it is best to call it. They will work for me. And the more bizarre clothes are made the better. I think they will suit these people, who do not care how they spend their money if it is so their neighbors can see it. Then we will all be provided for. Though I think I could have had an offer of marriage last night. A man had just come in from the mines with a pile of gold. He was a Boston man, but sadly demoralized by drink. I felt sorry for him at first, then disgusted."

36

Miss Holmes laughed. "And thereby missed a chance that it is supposed no woman lets slip."

"I certainly shall not take a chance like that. Come with me to see the rooms."

"I must find Laverne. The child grows wild as the wildest thing in town, and yet she is sweet as a rose. There's something in the air that sets all your blood astir. I have not danced for years. I should like to dance. I feel curiously young."

"Marian Holmes! You are in love! But I can't imagine Jason Chadsey dancing. Though you are not compelled to dance with your husband in this lawless place."

"I am afraid it would be love's labor lost if that were the case. He like you has his heart set on making money, but for the child."

She ran out and looked at Table Rock, as they called a large, flattish boulder. Laverne was not there. Then she glanced around. Some distance down the street was a group of little girls, but Laverne's light hair made her distinctive. She walked a short distance and then called.

37

The child hesitated, and the call was repeated. Laverne came with the rush of a wild deer.

"Oh, can't I stay a little longer? I'm telling them about Maine, and the snows and coasting. And it doesn't snow here, at least only a little bit. They are such nice girls, and I am so lonely with only big folks. They talk Spanish and very broken English."

"I want to take you out. Your uncle wouldn't like me to leave you among strangers."

"Oh, but we're not strangers now. We know each other's names. Carmencita,—isn't that pretty,—and Juana, and Anesta, and their voices are so soft, and such black eyes as they have!"

"But you must come with me, dear," and there was a firmness in Miss Holmes' tone.

The child looked irresolute. "Well, I must tell them," and she was off again. These walks about the city always interested her. She made amends by promising to come in the afternoon.

There was not much regularity in the streets save in the business section. Some were little better than alleyways, others wound about, and like most new places, houses had been set anywhere, but there were a few pretty spots belonging to some of the older settlers before the irruption of the horde. And already the Chinese had congregated together, the Germans had a settlement, and the American was everywhere.

This was really a pretty nook, with some wild olive trees about and almonds, while grape vines clambered over the rocks. It had been quite a fine estate, but its day was past. At one end was the adobe cottage of two stories, with a flat roof and small deep-set windows, that made it look like the spur of a mission. At the southern end was a great open porch, the adobe floor stained a dullish red, and vines were climbing over the columns. The little garden in front had some vegetables growing in it.

38

The Señora Vanegas came down the outside stairs, she had seen the guests from her window. She spoke quite brokenly, falling into Spanish when she was at loss for a word. Then she called her daughter Jacintha, who had mastered English, but spoke it with a charming accent, and

translated into Spanish that her mother more readily understood the desire of the visitors. Mrs. Latham had sent them. Yes, they knew Mrs. Latham very well. Oh, it would be charming to have some one to take the lead, they did not profess to understand all the art of costuming. But Jacintha brought down some exquisite embroidery and drawn work, and the mother made cushion lace for some of the big ladies. Her brother, it seemed, had owned the whole estate, which had come from their father, and drank and gambled it away, keeping racing horses. Only this little spot was left to them, and they were very poor. The mother would gladly retire to a convent, but the daughters—

"I could not like the life," Jacintha protested. "Perhaps, when I am old and have had no lovers, I might be willing. But while I can work, and the world is so bright," smiling with youth and hope.

"All three of you—" inquired the mother.

"Only Miss Gaines," explained Jacintha. "The others have a home, and Miss Gaines will go there on Sunday. Oh, Señorita, you will find plenty of work, and we will be glad to help. And it will be a great interest." 39

The mother brought in a plate of crispy spiced cakes, and some sweet wine of berries that she always prepared. For berries grew almost everywhere, even if they were not of the choicest kind. A little cultivation worked wonders.

So that was settled. They all went to Dawson House and had luncheon. Mrs. Dawson was really in her glory.

"I was a fool that I didn't come out before," she said, with her heartsome laugh. "Several of my cousins went West and suffered everything, and I had no taste for emigrating. So I said to Dawson when he was smitten with the gold craze, 'Go out and make some money, and get a home to keep me in, and a servant to wait upon me, and then I will come.' But I might as well have been here a year ago. There is money to be paid for everything, no one haggles over the price. So, Miss Gaines, we will wish you success and a fortune."

"Thank you for your hand in it;" and Miss Gaines nodded merrily.

"Hillo!" cried a bright voice, as Laverne stood talking to the beautiful big dog in the hall. "Why, I've not seen you for ever so long. Where have you been?"

"Home—I suppose that's home over there," and she nodded her head, while the dimple in her cheek deepened. "But it is all so queer. Well, when you are over on the other side of the world,—turned upside down"—and she looked half funny, half perplexed. 40

"Are you homesick? Do you want to go back to Maine?"

"But there isn't any one to care for me there," she said a little sadly. "Uncle Jason's all I have. It's so queer for winter, though. No snow, no sliding, no skating, no fun at snowballing. And between the rains things spring up and grow. I've tamed two funny little squirrels, so one of them will eat out of my hand. And the birds come to be fed."

"You can see snow enough up on the mountain-tops. It never melts away. I like the fun and stir and strange people. It makes you believe in Sir Francis Drake and the pirates and everything. But my! how they spend money and gamble it away! I hope your uncle will have a level head and hold on to what he gets."

"I've found three Spanish girls that are just lovely. There are so few little girls about," in a rather melancholy tone. "And Miss Holmes teaches me at home. I'd rather go to school, but it's too far, and uncle says wait until I get older."

"I guess that's best," returned the experienced youth. "Sometimes it is hardly safe for a little girl in the street. There are so many drunken rowdies."

"Oh, I never do go out alone, except over at the cedars. They are sort of scrubby and look like Maine. The little girls live there. I don't quite like their mother; she has such sharp black eyes. Why do you suppose so many people have black eyes?"

Dick considered a moment. "Why, the tropical nations are darker, and the Mexicans, and those queer people from Hawaii and all the islands over yonder. Your uncle will know all about them. When I am a few years older I mean to travel. I'll go up to the gold fields and make a pile, and you bet I won't come in town and gamble it away in a single night, the way some of them do. I'll go over to Australia and China." 41

Laverne drew a long breath. What a wonderful world it was! If she could be suddenly dropped down into the small district school and tell them all she had seen!

Some one called Dick. She sauntered back into the room, but the women were still talking business and clothes. There was a beautiful big hound who looked at her with wistful eyes, and she spoke to him. He nodded and looked gravely wise.

"You've a most uncompromising name," Mrs. Latham was saying. "You can't seem to Frenchify the beginning nor end. You must put a card in the paper." For the newspaper had been a necessity from the very first, and the *Alta Californian* was eagerly scanned.

"Yes," Miss Gaines returned, "Calista Gaines. It has a sound of the old Bay State. Well, I'm not

ashamed of it," almost defiantly.

"And we shall have to get most of our fashions from the States for some time to come. We are not in the direct line from Paris. And I really don't see why we shouldn't have fashions of our own. Here are the picturesque Spanish garments that can be adapted. Oh, you will do, and we shall be glad enough to have you," giving a most hearty and encouraging laugh.

"Fortune-making is in the very air," declared Miss Gaines on the homeward way. "Well, I think I like a new, energetic country. And what a delicious voice that Jacintha has! I wonder if voices do not get toned down in this air. Our east wind is considered bad for them. And it is said a foggy air is good for the complexion. We may end by being rich and beautiful, who knows!" 42

Laverne ran out to look after her squirrels, and chattered with them. Then something bright caught her eye up among the tangles of vines and shrubs. Why, flowers, absolutely in bloom in December! She gathered a handful of them and hurried back overjoyed.

"Oh, see, see!" she cried, out of breath. "They are up here on the hill, and everything is growing. Isn't it queer! Do you suppose the real winter will come in July?"

"If stories are true we will hardly have any winter at all," was the reply.

"And they are all snowed up in Maine. Oh, I wish there was some one to write me a letter." 43

CHAPTER IV

A QUEER WINTER

Christmas and New Year's brought a mad whirl. All that could, came in from the mines. The streets were thronged. Banjo and guitar were thrummed to the songs and choruses of the day, and even the accordion notes floated out on the air, now soft and pathetic with "Annie Laurie", "Home, Sweet Home," and "There's Nae Luck About the House," "The Girl I Left Behind Me," or a jolly song from fine male voices. Then there were balls, and a great masquerade, until it seemed as if there was nothing to life but pleasure.

Miss Gaines came in with some of the stories. But the most delightful were those of the three little Estenega girls about the Christmas eve at the church and the little child Jesus in the cradle, the wise men bringing their gifts, the small plain chapel dressed with greens and flowers in Vallejo Street. Laverne had not been brought up to Christmas services and at first was quite shocked. But the child's heart warmed to the thought, and Miss Holmes read the simple story of Bethlehem in Judea, that touched her immeasurably.

And then there seemed a curious awakening of spring. Flowers sprang up and bloomed as if the rain had a magic that it scattered with every drop. The atmosphere had a startling transparency. There were the blue slopes of Tamalpais, and far away in the San Matteo Range the redwood trees stood up in their magnificence. Out through the Golden Gate one could discern the Farallones forty miles away. The very air was full of exhilarating balm, and the wild oats sprang up in the night, it seemed, and nodded their lucent green heads on slender stems. And the wild poppies in gorgeous colors, though great patches were of an intense yellow like a field of the cloth of gold. 44

Sometimes Jason Chadsey of a Sunday, the only leisure time he could find to devote to her, took his little girl out oceanward. There were the seals disporting themselves, there were flocks of ducks and grebes, gulls innumerable, and everything that could float or fly. Ships afar off, with masts and sails visible as if indeed they were being submerged. What stores they brought from the Orient! Spices and silks, and all manner of queer things. And the others coming up from the Pacific Coast, where there were old towns dotted all along.

Or they took the bayside with its circle of hills, its far-off mountains, its dots of cities yet to be. Angel Island and Yerba Buena where the first settlement was made, growing so slowly that in ten years not more than twenty or thirty houses lined the beach. Or they boarded the various small steamers, plying across or up and down the bay. Miss Holmes did object somewhat to this form of Sunday entertainment. There was always a motley assemblage, and often rough language. Men who had come from decent homes and proper training seemed to lay it aside in the rush and excitement. Yet that there were many fine, earnest, strong men among those early emigrants was most true; men who saw the grand possibilities of this western coast as no eastern stay-at-home could. 45

Was the old legend true that some mighty cataclysm had rent the rocks apart and the rivers that had flowed into the bay found an outlet to the sea? Up at the northern end was San Pablo Bay into which emptied the Sacramento and its tributaries, and a beautiful fertile country spreading out in a series of brilliant pictures, which was to be the home of thousands later on.

And from here one had a fine view of the city, fast rising into prominence on its many hills as it

lay basking in the brilliant sunshine. Irregular and full of small green glens which now had burst into luxuriant herbage and were glowing with gayest bloom, and diversified with low shrubbery; then from the middle down great belts of timber at intervals, but that portion of the city best known now was from Yerba Buena Cove, from North Beach to Mission Cove. Already it was thriving, and buildings sprang up every day as if by magic, and the busy people breathed an enchanted air that incited them to purposes that would have been called wildest dreams at the sober East.

The little girl looked out on the changeful picture and held tight to her uncle's hand as the throngs from all parts of the world, and in strange attire, passed and repassed her, giving now and then a sharp glance which brought the bright color to her face. For the Spanish families kept their little girls under close supervision, as they went decorously to and from church on Sunday; the dirty, forlorn Indian and half-breed children hardly attracted a moment's notice, except to be kicked or cuffed out of the way. More than one man glanced at Jason Chadsey with envious eyes, and remembered a little girl at home for whom he was striving to make a fortune.

46

Jason Chadsey did not enjoy the crowd, though the sails to and fro had been so delightful. Miss Holmes was shocked at the enormity of Sabbath-breaking.

"There is no other day," he said, in apology. "I shouldn't like you to go alone on a week-day, the rabble would be quite as bad."

She sighed, thinking of orderly Boston and its church-going people. Not but what churches flourished here, new as the place was, and the ready giving of the people was a great surprise to one who had been interested, even taken part in providing money for various religious wants. It was a great mystery to her that there should be so many sides to human nature.

"I wonder if you would like a pony?" he asked of the little girl, as they were picking their way up the irregularities of the pavement or where there was no pavement at all.

"A pony?" There was a dubious expression in the child's face, and a rather amazed look in her eyes. "But—I don't know how to ride," hesitatingly.

"You could learn," and he smiled.

"But a horse is so large, and looks at you so—so curiously—I think I do feel a little bit afraid," she admitted, with a flush.

47

"Oh, I mean just a nice little pony that you could hug if you wanted to. And I guess I could teach you to ride. Then we could have nice long journeys about. There are so many beautiful places and such fields and fields of wild flowers. You cannot walk everywhere. And I have not money enough to buy a boat of my own," with a humorous smile.

"I suppose a boat does cost a good deal," she returned thoughtfully. "I love to be on the water. Though at first I was afraid, and when that dreadful storm came. A ship is a queer thing, isn't it? One would think with all the people and all the cargo it must sink. I don't see *how* it keeps up," and her face settled into lines of perplexity, even her sweet mouth betraying it.

"That is in the building. You couldn't understand now."

"Do you know who made the first ship?"

He laughed then. He had such a hearty, jolly laugh, though he had been tossed about the world so much.

She had a mind to be a little offended. "It isn't in the geography," she said, with dignity. "And Columbus knew all about ships.

"Yes, we can go back of Columbus. The first one I ever really heard about was Noah's Ark."

"Oh, Noah's Ark! I never thought of that!" She laughed then, and the lines went out of her face. "I'm glad we didn't have a deluge on our long journey. And think of all the animals on board! Was the whole world drowned out?"

"I believe that has never been satisfactorily settled. And long before the time of Christ there were maritime nations——"

48

"Maritime?" she interrupted.

"Sailors, vessels, traders. The old Phœnicians and the nations bordering on the Mediterranean Sea. Though they went outside the pillars of Hercules, and there were seamen on the Asian side of the world."

"Oh, dear, how much there is for me to learn," and she drew a long breath. "And they thought I was real smart in our little old school. But I could spell almost everything."

"There are years in which you can learn it," he said encouragingly.

"And you have been almost everywhere." There was a note of admiration in her voice. "The stories were so wonderful when you told them on shipboard. I didn't half understand them then because I didn't think the world could be such a great place, so you must tell them over to me."

"Yes. And some day you may go the rest of the way round the world. You've been nearly half

round it and you are still in America."

They paused at the little cottage. Bruno, the great dog, lay on the doorstep, but he rose and shook himself, and put his nose in the little girl's hand.

She had been rather afraid of him at first. Even now when he gave a low growl at some tramp prowling round it sent a shiver down her spine. But he was a very peaceable fellow and now devoted to his new mistress.

Miss Holmes prepared the supper. She had a fondness for housekeeping, and this life seemed idyllic to her. The old weariness of heart and brain had vanished. Miss Gaines told her she looked 49 five years younger and that it would not take her long to go back to twenty. Miss Gaines had made some charming new friends and did not always spend Sunday with them.

Laverne wiped the dishes for Miss Holmes. Jason Chadsey lighted his pipe, and strolled uptown.

"I wish you would read all about Noah's ark to me," Laverne said, and Miss Holmes sat down by the lamp.

The child had many new thoughts about it at this time.

"People must have been very wicked then if there were not ten good ones. There are more than that now," confidently.

"But the world will never be drowned again. We have that promise."

"Only it is to be burned up. And that will be dreadful, too. Do you suppose—the people will be—burned?" hesitating awesomely.

"Oh, no, no! Don't think of that, child."

"I wonder why they saved so many horrid animals? Did you ever see a tiger and a lion?"

"Oh, yes, at a menagerie."

"Tell me about it."

She had an insatiable desire for stories, this little girl, and picked up much knowledge that way. Miss Holmes taught her, for there was no nearby school.

She made friends with the Estenega girls, though at first their mother, with true Spanish reticence and pride held aloof, but interest in her children's welfare and a half fear of the Americanos, beside the frankness of the little girl induced her to walk in their direction one day, and in a shaded nook she found Miss Holmes and her charge. Perhaps the truth was that Señora Estenega had many lonely hours. Friends and relatives were dead or had gone away, for there had been no little friction when California was added to the grasping "States." When she could sell her old homestead she meant to remove to Monterey, which at this period was not quite so overrun with Americanos. But she had been born here, and her happy childhood was connected with so many favorite haunts. Here she had been wedded, her children born, in the closed room where there was a little altar her husband had died, and she kept commemorative services on anniversaries. And then no one had offered to buy the place—it was out of the business part, and though the town might stretch down there, it had shown no symptoms as yet. 50

Miss Holmes was reading and Laverne sewing. She had taken a decided fancy to this feminine branch of learning, and was hemming ruffles for a white apron. Her mother had taught her long ago, when it had been a very tiresome process. But the Estenega girls made lace and embroidered.

Laverne sprang up. "It is Carmen's mother," she said. Then she glanced up at the visitor, with her lace mantilla thrown over her high comb, her black hair in precise little curls, each side of her face, and her eyes rather severe but not really unpleasant.

"I do not know how you say it," and she flushed with embarrassment. "It is not Madame or Mrs. ___" 51

"Señora," answered the Spanish woman, her face softening under the appealing eyes of the child.

Then Laverne performed the introduction with an ease hardly expected in a child. Miss Holmes rose.

"I am very glad to meet you. I was deciding to come to ask about the children. Laverne is often lonely and would like playmates. And she is picking up many Spanish words. You understand English."

"Somewhat. It is of necessity. These new people have possessed our country and you cannot always trust servants to interpret. Yes, the children. I have a little fear. They are Catholics. Carmencita will go to the convent next year for her education. And I should not want their faith tampered with."

"Oh, no," Miss Holmes responded cheerfully. "You know we have different kinds of faith and yet agree as friends." And glancing at Laverne she almost smiled. These Spanish children would be much more likely to convert her to their faith. Would her uncle mind, she wondered? He seemed to think they all stood on the same foundation.

"You have not been here long?" and there was more assertion than inquiry in the tone.

"No," returned the younger woman. And then she told a part of her story, how she had come from the east, the Atlantic coast, and that she was governess to the child, and housekeeper. "Did the Señora know a family by the name of Vanegas?"

"Ah, yes, they were old friends. Two daughters, admirable girls, devoted to their mother, who had suffered much and whose husband had made away with most of the estates. There was an American lady in her house, she rented two rooms."

52

"A friend of mine. She came from the same place, and we have known each other from girlhood."

Then the ice was broken, and Miss Holmes in a certain manner was vouched for, which rather amused her, yet she accepted the Spanish woman's pride. Many of them felt as if they had been banished from their own land by these usurpers. Others accepted the new order of things, and joined heart and soul in the advancement of the place, the advancement of their own fortunes also. But these were mostly men. The prejudice of the women died harder.

The children were in a group at one of the little hillocks, much amused it would seem by their laughter. And the two women patched up a bit of friendship which they both needed, seeing they were near neighbors, and interested in the education of young people, Miss Holmes listened to what the elder woman said and did not contradict or call the ideas old-fashioned. After all it was very like some of her old grandmother's strictures, and she was a staunch Puritan. What would she have said to women who had not yet reached middle life, and had planned to go to a strange land to seek their fortunes!

The Señora was so well satisfied that she asked Miss Holmes to come and take coffee and sweetmeats with her the next afternoon.

Oh, how lovely the hills and vales were as they wandered homeward. For now it was the time of growth and bloom and such sweetness in the air that Marian Holmes thought of the gales of Araby the blest. Truly it was an enchanted land. The birds were filling the air with melody, here and there a farmer or gardener, for there was fine cultivated lands about the foothills, and even higher up there were great patches of green where some one would reap a harvest, garden stuff waving or running about rich with melon blooms, here the blue of the wild forget-me-nots and the lupines. And further on flocks of sheep nibbling the tufts of grass or alfalfa. Some one was singing a song, a rich, young voice:

53

"Oh, Susanna, don't you cry for me,
I'm goin' to California with my banjo on my knee."

Here and there in a clump of trees was a dark shadow, and the long slant rays betokened the coming of evening. It gave one a luxurious emotion, as if here was the true flavor of life.

Miss Holmes was feeling a little sorry for those swept off of their own land, as it were.

"What have they been doing with it these hundreds of years?" asked Jason Chadsey. "Even the Indians they have pretended to educate are little better off for their civilization. And think how the gold lay untouched in the hills! Spain still has the Philippines with all her treasures."

It rained the next morning with a musical patter on everything, and little rivulets ran down the steps. Then it suddenly lighted up and all San Francisco was glorified. Pablo, an old Mexican, came to work in the little garden patch. Laverne said her lessons, then went out to find her squirrels and talk to her birds who came to enjoy the repast of crumbs, and then went hunting bugs and worms for their importunate babies. And at last they were making ready for their walk.

54

"It is nice to go out visiting," Laverne said, as she danced along, for the sunshine and the magnetic air had gotten into the child's feet. "We have been nowhere but at Mrs. Dawson's."

"And Miss Gaines."

"Oh, that isn't really visiting. Just a little cake and fruit on a plate. And now she is so busy she can hardly look at you. I wish we lived farther up in the town. Don't you think Uncle Jason would move if you said you did not like it here?"

"But I do like it. And there are so many dreadful things happening all about the town. And we might be burned out."

"Well, I am glad of the Estenegas, anyhow."

The old place was like some of the other old homes going to decay now, but it was so embowered with vines that one hardly noted it. The chimney had partly fallen in, the end of the porch roof was propped up by a pile of stones. But the great veranda was a room in itself, with its adobe floor washed clean, and the big jars of bloom disposed around, the wicker chairs, the piles of cushions, and the low seats for the children. Little tables stood about with work, many of the women were very industrious, the mothers thinking of possible trousseaus, when laces and fine drawn work would be needed. Carmencita had her cushion on her knees, and her slim fingers carried the thread over the pins in and out, in a fashion that mystified Laverne.

"It's like the labyrinth," she said.

"What was that?" glancing up.

55

"Why, a place that was full of all kinds of queer passages and you did not know how to get out unless you took a bit of thread and wound it up when you came back."

"But I know where I am going. Now, this is round the edge of a leaf. I leave that little place for a loop, and then I come back so. The Señorita Felicia makes beautiful lace for customers. But mine will be for myself when I am married."

"But I thought—you were going to a convent," said Laverne, wide-eyed.

"So I am. But that will be for education, accomplishments. And there are more Spanish men there," lowering her voice, "more lovers. Pepito Martinez, who lived in the other end of the old place, down there," nodding her head southward, "found a splendid lover and was married in the chapel. Her mother went on to live with her. They had no troublesome house to sell," and she sighed.

"Juana," exclaimed the mother, "get thy guitar. The guests may like some music."

Juana rose obediently. She, too, was older than Laverne, but Anesta younger. She seated herself on one of the low stools, and passed a broad scarlet ribbon about her neck, which made her look very picturesque. And she played well, indeed, for such a child. Then she sang several little songs in a soft, extremely youthful voice. Miss Holmes was much interested.

The children were sent to play. There was a little pond with several tame herons, there were two great cages of mocking birds that sang and whistled to the discomfiture of the brilliant green and scarlet parrot. The children ran races in the walk bordered with wild olive trees on the one side, and on the other a great tangle of flowers, with the most beautiful roses Laverne had ever seen, and hundreds of them.

56

"Oh, I should like to live here," declared Laverne.

"Then ask thy uncle to buy. The Americanos have money in plenty. And see here. It is my tame stork. His leg was broken so he could not fly. Diego bound it up and he staid here. But when he sees a gun he dashes away and hides."

He had a number of amusing tricks, but he eyed the strange little girl suspiciously and would not let her come too near.

They went back to the house and swung in the hammock, talking broken English and Spanish and laughing merrily over the blunders. Carmencita put away her lace and began to prepare two of the small tables, spreading over each a beautiful cloth.

Miss Holmes had been taken through the apartments. There were three on the lower floor, the kitchen being detached. The walls were a dark faded red, the windows small, with odd little panes of glass. There was some fine old furniture, and a rug soft as velvet on the floor that long ago had crossed the ocean. Family portraits were hung high on the wall, and looked down frowningly, the brilliancy of their garments faded and tarnished, but Miss Holmes noted that they were mostly all military men. In the next room were several portraits of the priests of the family, and hideous copies of the old Madonnas. In this room a high cabinet of wonderful carving, filled with curios and one shelf of books. The third was evidently a sitting and sleeping chamber, with a spindle-post bedstead and canopy of faded yellow silk, edged with old lace; while the bedspread in its marvellous handiwork would have filled a connoisseur with envy. For two hundred years or more there had been Estenegas here, and then the old part, now fallen down, had its ballroom and its long dining room where banquets and wedding feasts had been given.

57

"There is another branch of the family at Santa Margarita who have not fallen into decay as we have, and as many old families do. I dare say they would be glad to have some of the heirlooms. They have young men, and it would be but right that they should propose to marry one of my daughters."

Carmen summoned her mother and the guest. The tables were daintily arranged with fruit and custards, some sweet fried cakes and bread covered with a sort of jelly compound that was very appetizing, with some shredded cold chicken highly spiced. For drink, tea for the elders, but fruit juice made of orange and berries for the young people. Carmencita was at the table with her mother, the three others together, and they had a merry time.

The Señora and the children walked part of the way with them. Miss Holmes had proposed that they should come up in the morning for lessons with Laverne. The distance to the Sisters' school was too great, and now one dreaded to send young girls through the new part of the town.

"It was very nice," declared Laverne, "only I think I like the little Maine girls better. They understand more quickly, and they have so many thoughts about everything, while you have to explain continually as you talk to these children."

58

"Perhaps it is because they do not understand the language," said Miss Holmes.

59

CHAPTER V

PELAJO

Laverne was about to reply, with the feeling of superior knowledge, "It's because they are not Americans," when she caught sight of Uncle Jason, Pablo, and a pile of rough timber, an excavation made in the side hill, a slope over which she had been training some blossoming vines.

"Oh, Uncle Jason," she cried, with eager forbiddance. "That's my garden. What are you going to do?"

"Build a house for a pony. This seemed most convenient, though he is such a cunning little fellow I think we could have trained him to go up the steps."

His shrewd, humorous smile and her own curiosity disarmed her.

"The pony? Have you really——"

"Well, I had to take him or see him go to some one else. I was afraid he would get a hard master. And he is such a pretty intelligent fellow. He talks, his fashion. And he laughs, too."

"Oh, now you are making fun."

"Well, if you won't have him I can sell him again. He's just fit for a little girl, or some one hardly grown up."

"But who had him before?"

"A young lady. A delicate little body. I've had my eye on him some time."

"If she loved him why did she want to sell him?" and Laverne glanced up with a kind of incredulity.

"She was going away." He had not the courage to say that she was dead, that she had made a vain struggle for recovery, and failed.

"I suppose horses are not quite like people," she returned thoughtfully. "They like those who are good to them."

"Well—they're grateful, and as a general thing appreciate kind treatment. Humans don't always do that."

She had not gone very far in the philosophy of ingratitude, but she was wondering if the pony had been very fond of his mistress.

"This place was the handiest. Then he can go cropping the tufts of grass about here, and we shall not have to lug the feed up on the next round," viewing the sort of natural terraces with a squint in one eye. "I'm sorry about the posies."

"Oh, well—they grow so easily. And here was the spruce tree, and, oh, we ought to have a big veranda to the house, where we could sit and sew and I could study lessons and we could have supper."

"But the place isn't really mine, you know. And I shouldn't want to spend a great deal of money. Some day we may have a house in which we can truly settle ourselves."

Miss Holmes, who had been looking on, smiled now. "The Señora Estenega is very anxious to sell," she said.

"And it is so splendid all around. There are trees and trees and they are full of birds. Oh, you never heard such singing. And the flowers! Why, I wanted to dance all around the paths for very gladness. But it was dull and dark inside, and full of ugly portraits and Virgins and hideous babies."

"They wouldn't want to sell the pictures, they are old family relics," appended Miss Holmes.

"And she asks a fortune for the estate. These old Spanish people have caught on to values mighty quick. But a house for the pony is as much as we can compass now. In a few years you shall have a home to your liking."

Miss Holmes went within, and soon there was a savory smell of fish frying and cakes baking on a bed of coals.

"That will do for to-night, Pablo," Jason Chadsey said. "Come early to-morrow morning and I will show you about the posts."

The Mexican nodded slowly, and walked to the kitchen door, where Miss Holmes gave him a chunk of bread and a fish, and he went his way.

Uncle Jason washed hands and face in true Yankee fashion, with a great splurge. He had enlarged the rude cistern and led a rivulet of clear water down to it. In many of the outlying districts there were but few conveniences, and yet San Francisco had flashed into existence as if

a new Kubla Khan had decreed it. Perhaps no city in the world could boast such rapid advances, or gain in population. Those early years will always sound like a fairy tale. But it had some of the best and most energetic brain and brawn from the East, whose forefathers had settled other wildernesses much less promising.

62

The pony shared interest with the visit and the promise of the Estenega girls coming up every morning. She was a very happy little girl to-night; Uncle Jason thought she had not been quite so bright of late, but now her eyes flashed with an eager light, and her pretty lips melted from one curve to another, while her voice had a bird-like gayety. The day had been so full and taken so much energy, that she laid her head in Miss Holmes' lap and went fast asleep. Jason Chadsey read his paper by the light of the smoky lamp, and Miss Holmes dreamed of clean, orderly Boston even if its streets did run crooked.

The Estenegas were certainly not bright scholars. But the Yankee schoolma'am had seen obtuse children before. They were extremely narrow and incurious as to real knowledge, but anxious to get on with English. Laverne flashed up and down the walk. Pablo set up the frame, put on a rude roof, then filled in the chinks with a common kind of adobe. The pony would not live much indoors, to be sure, but he needed some shelter.

"Do you know what his name is, Pablo?" the child asked.

Pablo shook his head. He was a dried-up specimen, with a skin like leather and small deep-set eyes, quite bowed in the shoulders, which made him no taller than some boys of a dozen years. He had a little hut of his own down in the wilds, and he often lay on the sand when the sun was too hot, and drowsed from pure laziness.

63

Uncle Jason led the pony home at night. He had been well kept, for his coat was smooth, just far enough off of black to be a rich brown. Shapely, with slender legs, a head not too large for his body, a flowing mane, now braided up in tails, flexible nostrils that quivered with every breath, and the most beautiful large, dark eyes that looked as if they could laugh and understand many things.

She had been somewhat dubious all along. She had really felt afraid of Bruno at first, but as she looked at the merry eyes she laughed.

"Yes, I *do* like you," she said. "I'm glad you are not any larger. And his tail almost sweeps the ground," watching her uncle, who was patting his neck and smoothing down to his nose, and talking in a persuasive voice.

"Maybe you won't like his name. He comes of good stock, it seems, and if he was ten years younger would be worth a pile of money."

"Why, he doesn't look old. And his name—"

"Is Pelajo."

She repeated it, and he came a step nearer. She ventured to pat him, and then she reached up and put her arm over his neck. Uncle Jason handed her a lump of sugar, but she drew back as his soft nose touched her hand.

"You must learn to give him tidbits, even a handful of grass or wild oats."

"Oh, I shall like you very much, I know," she declared, in a glad voice, and he seemed to understand, for he rubbed against her shoulder, and this time she did not shrink away. He was used to being caressed. Perhaps he dumbly questioned what had become of his sweet young mistress who had petted him the last year.

64

It was so warm they tethered him and set Bruno to keep watch, for there were many prowlers and thieves about; not quite as many down here perhaps, since horses and money were the only desirable things in their estimation. He was all right in the morning. The first thing Laverne did was to rush out and greet him, and he seemed quite as glad to see her.

She did shake a little when she was perched up on his back, but Uncle Jason walked beside her up and down the gravelly path, and after a little it was really exhilarating. When she had taken two or three lessons she felt quite safe and began to enjoy it. Uncle Jason taught her to ride astride as well; it might be useful, he declared, and certainly was a common-sense view of the matter. So Pelajo grew into the little girl's heart.

On Sunday morning she always went to church with Miss Holmes, and the churches were really well filled if the rest of the day was devoted to pleasure. The lovely spring was now over, though fruit trees were still blooming and laden with fruit. But there had been a few days that seemed to scorch up everything and dry up the small streams and cisterns.

The church bells were ringing in a leisurely, devoted fashion. "Come to church for rest and refreshment," they said, when suddenly there was a wild clangor and each one looked at his neighbor with frightened eyes, or stood motionless, not knowing which way to turn. Then something shot up in the air, scarlet against the sunshine, and the cry of terror rang out, "Fire! Fire!"

65

There had been a fear lest the gang of lawless desperadoes who had half threatened and half laughed about keeping the anniversary of the great fire the year before would make some

endeavor. But June 14th had passed, though there had been unusual watchfulness. After a week the orderly part of the city breathed more freely. And this day seemed almost like a special thanksgiving for safety. Before they had time to voice it the red terror began. Crowds with hymn and prayer books in their hands paused paralyzed before the church they had made such efforts to gain and enjoyed so thoroughly, the brief five months they had worshipped in it. And now they fled up and down the streets, while the fire swept this way and that with a tremendous roar. From Pacific over to Jackson Street, Washington, Stockton, Dupont. Goods and invalids were hurried out to the Plaza, and then the wind swept the fire this way and that, and they had to fly again and save nothing. Buildings were blown up with a horrid din like war. And so for four mortal hours of frantic endeavor with no reservoirs near. And when it had ceased to spread it lay a great mass of charred and smouldering ruins, and several lives had gone with it. That it was the work of incendiaries there could be no doubt. Ruined men invoked the arm of speedy justice if they could not have law.

In one way it was not so disastrous as the fire of the year before, which had taken the business part and immense stocks of goods. This was more of a residential section, but homeless people were running to and fro, wild with the agony of loss of all they had. Parents and children separated, elderly people wandering about in a dazed condition, the scene one of the wildest confusion.

66

Miss Holmes had decided to go over to hear Mr. Williams, instead of the church nearer by, which she usually attended. Then they would go to Mr. Dawson's for lunch, and meet Miss Gaines and bring her home with them. At first she thought she could find a way through, but the fire spread so rapidly over to Montgomery Street, that she did not dare venture. It might go down to the very edge of the bay and on its march take in the Dawsons. She held tight to Laverne, and used strenuous efforts to force her way through, but throngs were coming up, drawn by a weird fascination such as a fire always exercises. The child began to cry. Her hat was torn off. Oh, if anything *should* happen to her!

After a while the way began to grow clearer, but it seemed as if she was in a new place.

"Oh, I'm so tired," cried Laverne. "And my foot hurts. Let us sit down."

They were out of the well-built part. A tall old pine offered shelter. She sat down on the dry earth and took the child in her lap.

"Oh, do you think Uncle Jason will be burned up?" she moaned. "If we could only find him. And will our house go, too?"

"Oh, no, dear. It is in a different direction. That will be safe."

"If we could only get there. Do you think Pelajo will be frightened? And everything looks so strange here. Are you not afraid of all these wild men?"

They seemed, indeed, inhabitants of every clime. And though they looked sharply at the woman and child, no one molested them.

67

"Are you rested now? Shall we go home?"

"Oh, I do hope Uncle Jason is there. What if he had come to the fire and was killed!"

"Hush, dear! Don't think of such a thing."

What would she do alone with the child if any untoward accident happened to him? She shuddered!

They picked their way over strange places, but they still saw the black smoke of the holocaust going skyward. Miss Holmes kept one or two objective points in mind. True, streets had been laid out, but they were overgrown with brush and the rampant cactus, with tangles of vines. In some places they had begun to wither. Rabbits scurried hither and thither, amazed at the steps. Birds were still carolling as if there was naught but joy in the world.

"And I am so hungry! Oh, when will we get home? Suppose we are lost?" complained the child wearily.

"I think we have been lost, but now I see where we are," the elder exclaimed, in a hopeful tone. "It is not far. And then we will have a nice supper. Poor, tired little girl, I wish I could carry you."

"Oh, you couldn't," and there was a sound in her voice as if she had smiled. "But if it isn't much farther—my legs feel as if they would drop off."

"We have come ever so much out of our way. I could not see in the crowd, and it pushed one about so. I never want to see another fire."

"Oh, now I know." Laverne let go of the elder's hand, and in spite of fatigue gave two or three skips. "Could I make Bruno hear, I wonder? Bruno! Bru—no!"

68

Either she made him hear or he had a presentiment. He came bounding through the brush with short, sharp barks of joy, and lunged so against Laverne that she nearly lost her balance.

"Oh, good doggie, good Bruno!" she cried, in joy. "What if there were dogs burned up in the fire, and maybe horses?"

Miss Holmes shuddered. She had seen some men carrying a mattress with a human body, when a fierce blazing brand had fallen in it, and though she turned her head then, she almost screamed now.

They dropped down on the small porch steps and sat there a few moments.

"I must go and see Pelajo," Laverne said, weary as she was.

He whinnied with joy, and rubbed his nose on her small hand.

"Oh, Pelajo, I am so glad you were not in the fire," and she could have kissed him for very thankfulness.

Uncle Jason was nowhere to be seen. When Miss Holmes was a little rested she built a fire and put on the kettle. There was part of the leg of lamb they had had yesterday, and the pie she had baked early this morning. For in spite of all his wanderings, Jason Chadsey had preserved his New England fondness for such pies as a New England woman could make. And there was a great bowl of delicious berries.

They had their meal, being puzzled just what to call it, since it was a little too early for supper. Then they swung in the hammocks while old Pablo came to look after Pelajo, and talk about the fire, which he insisted was still burning. They waited and waited until the poor little girl begged to go to bed.

69

"It hasn't seemed a bit like Sunday," she murmured sleepily.

Then Marian Holmes swung drowsily in the hammock again. Through the opening between two trees she could see the great glowing stars that seemed as gorgeous again as in the eastern skies. There were screams of night birds, the long note of the owl, the tree frog beseeching stridently for rain. Now and then Bruno would flip his ears or straighten them, and at last he gave a sudden rush down the street, and returned with his master, but the clock had struck ten.

He dropped on the step as they had done.

"Were you alarmed when you came from church? Of course you knew about the fire."

"We were really in it," and Miss Holmes detailed her day, leaving out some of the most trying incidents.

"Thank God you came back safely," he returned, with deep feeling. "It was a most awful catastrophe. There has been an indignation meeting held, and some of the miscreants will be brought to justice. Then, there must be better arrangements for fighting fires. It was a terrific sight, and there are hundreds of homeless people. The best provision that could be, was made for them. Generous-hearted people took them in, supplied them with food. Accidents were plentiful. Yet it has been a terrible day, but if I had thought of you and the child being there—"

"Oh, you couldn't, you see. And we came safely out of it all, so don't feel distressed. Will you have some supper?"

70

"Yes. Though I was at the Dawsons' and had a meal. They came mighty near going once or twice, if a dangerous gust of wind had lasted longer. And the crowds that poured in upon them! The courage of these people seems superhuman, but it has been severely tried now. I do not believe any city ever suffered so much by fire and had the pluck to go on again."

She began to busy herself about the meal. He leaned against the flat post and went sound asleep, though he wakened easily. Then leaving her dishes, an unusual thing for her, she retired herself.

For days the fire was the uppermost subject. They had always planned rebuilding before with tremendous energy, but now courage seemed to wane in this direction. But it was taken up energetically in others. The great want of water in the fire department had to be remedied speedily, and at any cost. Money was offered freely.

The other was a more strenuous effort for the punishment of criminals, and a rigorous observance of law.

Among the immigrants had been convicts from different lands, lawless men who formed themselves into bands for plunder and maliciousness. Clark's Point, Broadway, and one end of Pacific Street was called Sydney Town from its great number of convicts and ticket-of-leave men from the Colonies; and to them were added the criminally inclined from the States, who had left their own cities for the city's good. And out of the earnest endeavor to put a stop to the lawlessness and crime the Vigilance Committee was formed. Then an old Mexican law was exhumed that forbade the emigration to California of criminals convicted of crime elsewhere. Notices were served upon many vicious persons and they were compelled to leave the city. And with it all grew a greater regard for law and order.

71

Energy and perseverance did not fail, it is true, and the confidence born of the geographical knowledge that this must eventually be the great highway of trade, and the idea of a glorious future destiny, inspired the really solid portion of the community to continue their efforts to make it the city of the world. Still, many of the middle classes, discouraged by misfortunes, returned to their native cities. Others went further south in the more equable climate and became farmers. Still others wooed by the endless forests further north, and the many advantages for starting new cities on a better industrial foundation, went to seek better fortunes. The city never could recover

from all the evils it was said. But the splendid bay and the magnificent harbor were left, the gold fields were not exhausted. And now arose the demand for a railroad across the Continent, which had a hard fight for many years, but succeeded at length.

At Clark's Point a huge rock was quarried, and removed, and the hill excavated to make room for new streets. Sansome and Battery Streets were carried out and filled up with the débris. The wharves were pushed further out, great warehouses built, and though it was a fact that fewer people came to seek their fortunes, more brought with them the idea of settling. Wherever any tiny stream ran among the sand hills numerous vegetable gardens were laid out, and the fertility was remarkable. Markets opened here and there, the New World Market, enlarged and improved, where it seemed as if one might buy all the luxuries of the world. San Francisco began to lose the characteristics of a Spanish or Mexican town, how could such drowsy ways be tolerated among the adventurous, hard-working people!

72

There came to be an admixture of foreign races—musical Germans; light-hearted, theatre and dance-loving French; some from different Mongolian countries, who looked on with grave faces, seldom affiliating, and the Chinese, who made a settlement of their own, many of them content to be hewers of wood and drawers of water, laundrymen and servants, but others aspiring to the rank of merchants, even bringing their wives later on.

On the opposite side of the bay, settlements were changing into towns, and business seemed to run riot everywhere. There was no lack of employment for those willing to work.

All these things were far away from the little girl's life. She studied because she loved to know about everything, that was a New England heritage. She acquired Spanish rapidly, while the Estenega girls were stumbling over English. The Señora came up one afternoon and they had a sort of high tea, with game of several kinds, a bird pie, and a pudding that would have rejoiced the heart of a far Easterner. It was a wonderful feast for the children, but the Señora shook her head gravely over the superabundance of luxuries.

73

"Was not the little girl going to learn lace-making and drawn-work that she would want presently for her trousseau? And were not the catechism and the prayers, confirmation, music, and languages enough for any girl? And these new Americanos, who dressed in silks and velvets, and trailed up and down the streets nodding and laughing to men!" and the Señora shuddered.

It was very true that stylishly attired women promenaded the two shopping streets where the windows were full of rich goods. For the early settlers had not to spin and weave in this golden country. Vessels were coming in frequently laden with goods from almost everywhere. India and China sent treasures, France and England did not lag behind. So the women went gorgeously arrayed, leaned out of handsome private equipages, as if they were queens. For gold was found in most unexpected places, and miners came in only to waste and gamble it away.

The old Spanish residents shook their heads over this wild extravagance, and clung more closely to their Church and the old ways. Even the natives were often amazed. There were not a few who had Spanish blood, and proud enough they were of it. The emigration of the French began to exercise an influence upon the heterogeneous society. The skilled workman gave a finer air to shops and buildings; the higher classes, lured by the wonderful reports, added their ease and refinement to the society, gradually crystallizing into settled classes.

74

"It is not all the Americans," Miss Holmes said, in answer to the Señora's strictures. "All the Eastern cities I have seen are quite unlike this. They grew slowly, and each from its own peculiar industry. We had no gold mines on the Eastern coast, and you are likely to prize more highly the fortunes you have to struggle for. Here we have every nation, it seems to me, and often the very liberty of choice degenerates into license. But it is hardly fair to blame it all on our people."

"They have invaded us and taken away our land, our rights. Years ago we were happy and content, and now it is all excitement, and if you do not join you are pushed to the wall, driven out. The gold in the hills was all ours."

"But you let it lie there. Yes, you could have discovered it. It was the wild dream of more than one explorer, and yet he never tapped the great secrets the land held."

Now that the hitherto placid Spanish woman was roused she went over the ground with great bitterness, the war, the ceding of the country, the influx of the nations for greed. Half her talk lapsed into her native tongue. Miss Holmes pitied her in a certain way, but was it not the old, old story since De Soto had crossed the Continent and Tonti came down the Mississippi? The weaker nation was always distanced by the stronger. And was supine content a virtue?

Meanwhile, the children had a merry time. Carmen gained courage to mount Pelajo and rode around in fine style. The younger ones wanted their turn. When they were called in to tea their cheeks glowed, their eyes were bright with excitement, and they chattered like a flock of birds.

75

The Señora looked on in surprise.

"Do you always allow so much wildness?" she asked, in a rather disapproving tone.

If they had a little frolic their walk home always sobered them.

"Oh, no," returned Miss Holmes, with a smile. "They have lessons. This is a holiday. And I am glad for Laverne to have companions. We sometimes think she gets too grave."

"Girls," and their mother rapped on the table. What with their laughing, the broken English, and the Spanish they were in quite a whirl. Laverne looked on more calmly. Indeed, the Señora was a little angry that she seemed rather to shame her girls.

"Oh, please, Señora, do not scold them. We were so merry riding the pony. He is almost human. And he understood Spanish. I did not know that before."

Laverne's face was a study, in its sweet pleading. The girls quieted down, and their mother looked less severe, but she was considering a proper penance.

The moon came up early. How magnificently the soft light silvered all the open spaces, until one forgot the drought. Each twig that swayed to and fro in the translucent air seemed alive.

Miss Holmes and Laverne walked some distance with their guests, leaving Bruno to keep watch. They parted with the utmost cordiality.

"We have had such a splendid time," whispered Carmencita. "I wish I was an American girl and had a good indulgent uncle such as thou hast, little one. Then I would not care to go to the convent."

76

Laverne was astonished at the outburst, for Carmen had heretofore rather cavilled at Americans. They walked back in silence until they met Bruno's greeting.

"Didn't you have a nice time with the girls?" Miss Holmes asked.

"Oh, yes! Carmen was—well, I think I have been not exactly afraid of her, but she seemed so much older, and this afternoon she was splendid. And she wished—what do you think—that she was an American girl! And I wish I knew some American girls."

"You will go to school presently. Your uncle was talking of it."

The thought startled the little girl. She was not quite sure she liked it.

"Oh, there he is now," and she ran to meet him. The moon was up higher and it was lighter. Her hands were outstretched, but he caught her under the arms and, lifting her up, gave her several kisses. It was so gratifying to have her always glad to see him.

Then he put her down and she caught his hand in both of hers and went a hop and a skip, giving short, soft laughs.

"I'm late. Did you eat up all the supper?"

"Oh, we had ours early. The Estenegas were here, the mother and all. We had a good, good time," with emphasis. "They all rode Pelajo. Anesta fell off twice, but it didn't hurt any, she asked us not to tell. And oh, how hungry they were!"

"Little girls ought always to be hungry. That makes them grow."

77

"And Carmen wished she had an uncle like you."

"Why—she has scarcely seen me."

"But then I talk about you," the child added, naïvely.

"Well—do you want to give me away?"

"Oh no, no."

"Or shall we adopt her?"

A positive unwillingness sprang up in the child's heart.

"I think her mother would not let her come," she replied evasively.

"But you would like her? You are tired of being alone."

"No, I don't want any one but you for all time," she admitted, a little jealously.

He laughed. He was fond of this confession.

Miss Holmes' supper was satisfactory to the hungry man as well. Afterward they went out and sat on the flat stone step. That always made him think of his boyhood.

"Little one," he began, "how would you like to move? Or are the Estenegas too dear to give up?"

"Move!" in a tone of surprise.

"Yes. We haven't much worldly goods, as these traps do not belong to us. But we can take ourselves, Bruno, and Pelajo."

"Where would we go?"

"Quite far from here. Up on Telegraph Hill."

"Oh, that would be splendid! We could always see the bay, and over the strait to all the mountains beyond. Yes, I should like to go."

"Well, I am glad. It will be more convenient for me, but we would have to go, anyhow. This place has been sold."

78

"Is there a stable? And I think I would like a garden. And at least *one* tree."

He laughed.

"They have been taking down part of the hill. No doubt some day they will take it all down. That is the fashion of cities. But our end not being so high will not be disturbed for some time to come."

"This has been nice," she said retrospectively. "But I shall like the new place, and the bay, and—and——"

"And the change," he laughed. Then he called Miss Holmes, who had put away the last of her dishes.

He had talked this over with her before, but he had not made his bargain until to-day. Then they settled a few of the most important points. There were to be some repairs made, but they could go the next week. And to-morrow he would take them up to see it.

"Will you like to go?" Laverne asked of Miss Holmes as they were preparing for bed.

"Yes, I think I shall. We shall be so much nearer everything. We can often walk down among the stores. And we shall be nearer Miss Gaines. You will miss the Estenega girls."

"But there may be other girls. I'd like to know some new ones," and there was a sound of delightful expectation in her voice.

79

CHAPTER VI

A DIFFERENT OUTLOOK

It was almost being in a new town, Laverne thought. They had trotted all over this bluff, to be sure; they had looked over to Sausalito, up and down the bay, and to the wonderful ocean that reached to China. But before they had been rather hidden away in a valley between the ridges, and from the windows you could see very little. She was quite wild at first, running from window to window, and calling on Miss Holmes to see this or that.

Then they had a Chinaman to come in and help them settle, and that amused her very much. He understood, but could not speak much English, and she did wonder why he should tack another syllable to the short words by adding the double e. But he was very handy and obedient, quick to see, and the soft shoes that made no clatter allowed him to go about so quietly that he often surprised one. His name was Ah Ling.

"I think I like Pablo better," she said gravely. "Then he knows so many things about the country and the missions and the priests, and the races of the Spaniards, and they did have bull fights, you know, they have some now. Uncle Jason said he must not tell me about them, they were too cruel. Do you suppose Pablo will come?"

80

Jason Chadsey had made the old Mexican an offer to come and live with them, but he was loath to leave his little hut and his independence. He knew Pablo could be trusted anywhere with the little girl, and that he was a good gardener. He had even offered him a new hut, and Pablo was taking matters into consideration as he lolled in the sun and smoked his pipe. He did not want to be too hard worked, what good did so much money do these Americanos; they went on working and working and hustling the life out of one.

Here was the old Franciscan Mission where the first settlement was made by the Fathers. It might have had the semi-solitude in those early years, for all about was poetic enough. When it became a Mexican province early in the century it had been stripped of its treasures, and was even now a poor unsightly ruin with its few padres eking out their subsistence and saying prayers for the living and the dead in the little Campo Santo. Presently a modern cathedral was to overshadow it, but that had not come yet, with the shops and dwellings that were to crowd it still closer. But now there were outlying fields, tangles of shrubbery and vines run wild. Not so many trees as farther down, but still some that withstood the ocean blasts. And there was Alcatraz and Buena Yerba; almost within a stone's throw, it seemed, in the clear air that often foreshortened space. Laverne never wearied studying the marvellous pictures, and when her thoughts went back to the dreary little Maine village she always gave a shiver.

The house was a newer one, its first story of adobe, as so many were in the early days. It was not nearly so small, to begin with, and there was so much entertainment buying furniture and supplying household needs. Jason Chadsey had picked up a number of curious articles from the ships coming in from foreign ports, some that would have been the envy of a connoisseur.

81

But the early spring was rushing on again and every leaf and spear and weed grew as if by magic.

One morning they had a visitor who came in a carriage, and Miss Holmes glanced out in some surprise.

"Why, it's my friend Miss Alwood—you remember Miss Grace, Laverne. I haven't seen her this long while," and the next instant she was welcoming her warmly.

"We thought you had dropped out of existence. Why, even the Dawsons have heard nothing from you—let me see—you went down to Santa Cruz with an invalid lady——"

"Yes." Miss Alwood gave a short amused sound that was hardly a laugh, and continued: "Well, there was plenty of money, but she was about as queer as they make them. She had come from Baltimore, but she had some of the worst New England features, though I think they do not belong altogether to the Puritan birthright. But it kept one on the alert attending to her whims. When she had been there a month her brother came to see her. He thought she had better go on farther south—I think she had consumption, the sort of wasting away without a cough. While we were making preparations she was taken down to her bed. Mr. Personette had to return here on urgent business matters. Four weeks later she died. So he came back and there was the burial and all——"

82

Miss Alwood paused and a flush with an amused expression passed over her face.

"And so you were released from bondage," suggested Miss Holmes; and she, somehow, smiled, too.

"And accepted another. Mr. Personette, being a widower, made me an offer of marriage. We are to be a not very far-away neighbor, as he owns a house on Mason Street, and is really well-to-do, as we say at home. There is a son of seventeen, a daughter two years younger, and one of twelve. I went to hunt you up, but found the place deserted, then looked up Miss Gaines and have been spending a week over wedding gowns, though it is to be just a quiet marriage in church. He has had housekeepers that were unsatisfactory, indeed, he was afraid the last one would marry him out of hand," and this time she did laugh heartily. "So you see I have made my fortune the first of the trio."

"Let me congratulate you on your good fortune. I suppose it *is* that."

"Why, yes, as far as one can see. I'm not a romantic young girl, and he is just forty, has made one fortune and lost it, and now is—well, he spends money as if there would be no end to it. Do you remember the old story of the bees that were taken to a place where the flowers bloomed all the year round, and ceased laying up honey? That seems the way with so many here. There were people who lost everything in the great fire and in no time were on their feet again. It is in the air, I think, or perhaps the fusion of so many people from everywhere. And now Mr. Personette is prospering, and I am to share the prosperity and have a home of my own, and like the bees, I'm not going to worry about the future. You see I am already a recreant Yankee. Where is your little girl?"

83

The little girl had been sitting on the window ledge of the next room, and remembering the long journey round the Horn, often cheered by the brightness of Miss Alwood. She sprang down now and came forward.

"What a little dot she keeps! Laverne, I am going to be your neighbor, and I am to have a little girl who will be a playmate for you. I can't answer about the other, girls begin to put on airs so soon. Do you go to school?"

"No, I have taught her thus far. But it is rather lonely for a child. There was no one about where we lived, but some distance below a Spanish family which hardly knew whether to affiliate or not."

"They are very brilliant farther down the coast. Monterey is the place to see them in their glory. I wish we had gone there, but Miss Personette hated the strumming of a guitar and the click-clack of the language, as she termed it. And now, can't you leave household cares and come for a drive?"

"I have a splendid pony," said Laverne.

"Why, that is quite delightful. But you will not disdain my carriage, I hope."

Miss Holmes rather hesitated, but Miss Alwood overruled all the objections. And she remembered that Mr. Chadsey said they need not expect him home to dinner. Now that he was so much nearer he came back to an old-fashioned love for a midday dinner.

84

First they went down to Mason Street. There was quite a fine finished block of houses, detached, with gardens on both sides. Down below it was unfinished but the street had been straightened, the low places were being filled up, the hillocks levelled.

"Oh," Miss Holmes began, with a depth of feeling that touched her friend, "you can't think how glad I am this has happened to you. We have had some hard things in our lives, and now we have really gone into a new world."

"And I wish you the same good luck. I did not quite like your being buried down in that out-of-the-

way place."

"There were so few houses to be had when we came."

"Yes; there were people living in tents. There are a few of them now on the outskirts. And building is going on everywhere. Oh, what do you suppose it will be in twenty years?"

That really brought a stretch to the imagination and they looked blankly at each other.

Improvements were going on everywhere with a rush startling to these New England women.

There were new stores opened in the past two months. They passed Russ Garden, one of the public places near the Mission Road, devoted to amusements of various kinds, and thronged on Saturday afternoons. Down by the Plaza the "steam paddys" were levelling the numerous sand hills that lay between that and Happy Valley. Even the burned district of less than a year ago was rising rapidly from its ashes. 85

"I've never had quite such a fine view of the town," Miss Holmes said. "Heretofore we have only taken it in parts. What it will be when finished——"

"Only New England cities get finished. I think I have heard of some places that were fenced in and whitewashed, but they must have been mere country towns," declared Miss Alwood laughingly.

They made a call on Miss Gaines, who now had a workroom full of girls and piles of dazzling material. Nothing was too rich or too expensive for these California dames, whose husbands made fortunes in a month or cleared thousands of dollars in a day. Those early years were an Arabian Nights' tale.

The three friends had a genial time together, and then Miss Holmes and the little girl were set down at their own door. She was very quiet.

"What are you thinking of?" Miss Holmes asked at length.

"Of the little girl Miss Alwood is to have, and whether I shall like her. Of course, she will not be like the Estenegas. And it seems queer to have a new mother who isn't a real mother."

"You will understand that better by and by."

Laverne nodded. She could never have a new mother. She wondered a little about her father. Uncle Jason never spoke of him. Of course he was dead also.

Mrs. Dawson was very anxious to give Miss Alwood a wedding feast, and indeed was fain to have her married in the parlor, but she preferred the church. Mr. Personette was well known, and the church was crowded. The two daughters walked in front and strewed flowers in their path, there were congratulations and good wishes, and a luncheon at the Dawson House, when the new husband and wife took a short journey, and ended the festivities by a reception at their own home. 86

Laverne thought it was very fine to have a new white frock, lace-trimmed, and a knot of blue ribbons on one shoulder, with long streamers. Isabel Personette was tall of her age, and quite a young lady, rather pretty. Olive had large, dark eyes, and shining chestnut hair, was round, plump, and merry-looking.

"Our new mother has been telling us about you," she began, grasping Laverne's hand. "And that you came from Maine with her. What a long, long journey. Weren't you awfully afraid? I looked up Maine on the map. But you had to go round the Horn. What did it look like?"

"It's a cape, you know."

"But—I supposed there was something," in a surprised tone. "Perhaps they blew a horn?"

"They didn't do anything as I remember," and Laverne smiled a little.

"I've never been farther than Monterey. But father went up to British Columbia once. It is desperately cold up there. And there is a Russian country where it is colder still. And you have snows in Maine."

"Oh, dreadful snows that do not go off all winter, and it seems so queer not to have any here. It was such fun to snowball and have sled-rides and build snowhouses." 87

"You didn't live in them?" in surprise.

"Oh, no! But sometimes we brought in dry hemlock branches and brush, and had a fire. It looks so pretty."

"Didn't it melt the house?"

"Oh, yes, a little. But you see it froze again."

"Which do you like best—there or here?"

"Oh, this is the most beautiful, for there are so many flowers and lovely places. And—I think I like the pleasant weather best."

"How many cousins have you?"

"None," answered Laverne rather regretfully.

"Oh, isn't that queer? I have four over to Oaklands. And two in London. And one of father's sisters married a Mexican, and lives way down to Santa Barbara. They have ever so many children with queer names. Aunt Amy died a little while ago, and as she hadn't any children, she left some money to us and the Oakland cousins. But not to have any——"

Olive Personette looked very sympathetic. Presently she said, "How many little girls do you know?"

"Only three, and they are Spanish. There were none where we lived before. It was a kind of wild place. I like this ever so much better."

"Did you love them?"

Laverne considered, while her eyes wandered off into space.

"I think I didn't really *love* them. I liked them. They came up to learn English, and Miss Holmes and I studied Spanish. And we played about. They had a queer old house and a lovely garden, with fruit and flowers, and tame birds, and everything. And I had a squirrel I tamed. We brought him up here, and I kept him two weeks in a little pen, but when I let him out he ran away."

"I'll tell you what I'll do. We'll make believe to ourselves that we are cousins. Mother said she hoped I would like you a good deal. You see, Isabel begins to go with big girls, and they just push you out when they tell secrets, and they have so many to tell. Do you know any secrets?"

Laverne shook her head gravely.

"But sometimes you do bad things and you don't want to tell anybody."

"Why, I tell Uncle Jason everything. And——"

Did she ever do anything very bad? She didn't always study when Miss Holmes told her to, and she sometimes tore her frocks scrambling up or down the hills. She had been brought up to be truthful and obedient, and now these traits were part of her nature.

"Well, it's this way—you must not tell your uncle the things I tell you, and you must find something to tell me—when Miss Holmes is cross to you."

"But she isn't ever cross."

"Oh, yes, everybody has a cross streak in her, or him. I'm cross often. And I do hope our new mother won't scold. Father said she was so good to Aunt Amy, and Aunt Amy was dreadful at times. Then the Mrs. Barr we had for housekeeper was just awful. She said naughty words, too, like the men. No one is good always. You can't be. And when I get in a taking I'm a terror at school. Miss Carson once wrote a note to father, but I begged so she tore it up. I wanted a watch for Christmas and I was afraid he would not give it to me if he knew. That was a secret I've kept until now, but he gave me the watch. I let it fall and it had to go away to be repaired. And I have three rings. See, are they not pretty? That garnet is getting tight. I'll have to give it away," and she laughed.

Her new mother came around to them.

"Are you making friends?" she asked. "That is right. Laverne, are you having a nice time? Come and see the dancing."

They were waltzing up and down the spacious hall. There had been dancing on shipboard among the men, but this was something that fascinated the little girl. The beautiful dresses and sparkling jewels, the delicate laces that floated like clouds, and among the men were two or three young Spaniards. One of them wore a beautiful fringed sash about his waist.

"Do you go to dancing school?"

"No," replied Laverne.

"But you will. I began last winter. Isabel dances. See, some one has taken her out. Oh, dear, I wish I could grow up in a night, just three years. Wouldn't it be funny to have it happen in your sleep?"

Jason Chadsey had been looking about for his little girl. He had insisted at first that he could not come, that he was too old, and such a plain fellow, that he would look queer among the fine people. But Mrs. Personette had written him a special invitation, and he had compromised with Miss Holmes by promising to come for them. He knew Mr. Personette a little in a business way, and he was really gratified at Miss Alwood's good fortune. So he had gone to the tailor's and treated himself to a new suit of clothes, and looked fully five years younger.

Laverne stared at him a moment, then a lovely smile illumined her face as she slipped her hand in his and rather bashfully introduced her new friend.

"I have been making the acquaintance of your brother and your sister," he said. "I hope you and my little girl will be friends."

"Oh, we have promised to," declared Olive. "I am coming to see her pony, and I am very glad to know her."

He nodded and escorted the children about, or rather followed Olive, who gracefully made herself mistress of the occasion and chatted with an ease that amused him. But it was getting late, and as he had performed his round of duties, he proposed now that they should return home. Olive kissed her new friend with much fervor.

"Parties are just splendid," Laverne said, as she danced alongside of Uncle Jason. "Can't you have a party unless you are married?"

"Oh, yes, there are birthday parties and Christmas parties and parties just for fun."

"But you have to know a good many people, don't you?"

"I think I have seen three or four little girls have a party."

"I know four now."

"And perhaps by Christmas you will know four more," returned Uncle Jason.

91

She was very tired and sleepy when she reached home, and they all retired. And it so happened she slept late the next morning and had her breakfast alone. Pablo had found it very lonely without them and had decided to accept Mr. Chadsey's offer. So she ran out now to say good-morning to him and Pelajo.

Something scampered along at her feet, and then made a sudden dash among the vines. Two bright eyes peeped out and there was a peculiar little chatter.

"Why, if it isn't Snippy," she cried. "Snip, Snip!" and she knelt down in the gravelly path. "Snip!"

There was a sudden rush, and the squirrel ran up her arm, across her shoulders, and fairly nestled in the little curve below her ear. And then he began to chatter as if he was telling over his journey and his tribulations and expressing his joy. Surely no squirrel was ever more eloquent to his mate in love-making time. Laverne laughed until the tears came into her eyes, and she had a vague suspicion that she was crying as well, but it was for very joy.

Snippy wriggled out of the warm embrace presently and questioned her with his bright beady eyes, as if the voice might have led him into a mistake. But no, this was his little mistress sure enough.

She gathered him up and ran into the kitchen where Miss Holmes was making a pie.

"Oh," she cried, "Snippy has come back, my dear, darling Snippy."

He had come by his name in a rather unexpected fashion. When Laverne first had him tame enough to come into the house, throw his beautiful bushy tail up his back, and let the feathery end droop over his ears like a bit of Spanish lace, a trick of the Señoras, and eat a fragment of cracker, Miss Holmes said one day, "He looks so pert and snippy one has to smile at his daintiness."

92

They had tried on several names that did not seem to fit. It was easy enough to get something for a dog or a horse.

"Oh, that will just do, Snippy," and Laverne danced around in delight. "Then we can call him Snip when we are in a hurry—he is such a dear little dot, too. His tail is as big as his body; Snippy, Snippy!"

Perhaps there was something in the sound that attracted him, for he glanced up out of brightest eyes and winked as if he approved it.

He did soon come to know his name. Perhaps it was because it became connected with some tidbit, for when the little girl called him she always had a dainty morsel for him.

He glanced about the room now, and then thrust his head under Laverne's arm. Miss Holmes spoke and he peered out. Yes, he knew that voice surely, but the place was strange.

"Oh, Snippy, you can't imagine how glad I am to have you. I've been homesick for you, though I like this place better, and we're nearer the grand ocean, and can look over into the Golden Gate, and golden it is in the sunset. Oh, why did you run away?"

Snippy said something in his own language and struggled to get free. She let him run down her skirt and leap to the floor. He glanced round with sharp, inquiring eyes, then ran to one corner where, in the old place, he used to find nuts and perhaps a crust. Oh, it wasn't the same place. He fairly scolded, up went his tail, and he scampered out of the door. Laverne ran, calling him. Over the path, the rockery Uncle Jason had built for her, plunging into the great ferns that grew as high as her head, and shook off an odorous fragrance at being disturbed.

93

"Oh, Snippy! Snippy!" in a beseeching tone.

The little girl sat down on a stone and cried. Sorrow had followed so on the heels of delight. Bruno came and put his nose in her hand and looked comfort out of great wistful eyes.

Miss Holmes came out presently.

"I think he will come back," she said hopefully. "You see he found the way once and he can again. And now come in and study a lesson. There is nothing like work to lighten sorrow."

"If he only would come back! Bruno, if you see him, come and tell me at once."

Bruno nodded sagaciously.

94

CHAPTER VII

A TASTE OF GAYETY

May was beautiful enough to make the heart leap for joy. Rose-bushes sent up spikes of pink and blood-red blossoms or clambered over hillocks, lilies stood up among the ferns and bushes, and the poppies that grew everywhere seemed to dance with joy, as they flung out their silken leaves in a dazzle, wooed by the wind. Bees were busy enough with their bustle and humming, birds were singing everywhere. Squirrels and rabbits scudded about, little harmless lizards came out and sunned themselves on the stones, and great flying iridescent bugs that shot across the air with golden and green rays. Oh, how enchanting it all was. It stirred the little girl with unutterable thoughts.

"Laverne," Miss Holmes called. Oh, was it lesson time!

"Come, dear, Mrs. Personette has the carriage here, and we are going to take a look at the great German Mayday festival. Come quick, and slip in another frock."

For what with building dams for waterfalls, making paths and rockeries and flower beds, the little girl was not always in company trim.

"Oh, Uncle Jason was talking about that, and he was so sorry he could not get away, but some vessels were coming in. Oh, yes, I'll hurry."

95

There were baths and sundry conveniences in many of the houses in this new city. Perhaps no place in the world had ever worked such marvels in five years. But Jason Chadsey had not come to luxuries yet. However, the little girl did very well without them. She washed and dressed in a trice.

Mrs. Personette and Olive were in the big carriage. Isabel and Howard had taken the buggy. She greeted them cordially. Olive made room for Laverne, or rather beckoned her to her own seat.

The Germans were holding a grand festival at Russ's Garden. There was a big flag flying from the great marquee, and numerous lesser ones. There were the park of shade trees, the houses of refreshment, the arches wreathed with flowers, and German flags vying with the Stars and Stripes. Gay beds of flowers were interspersed that lent richest coloring. The broad driveway was thronged with carriages already, but none were allowed inside.

The *Turner Gesang Verein* was really the leader of the festivities. The members were dressed in brown linen, loose and baggy, and marched from their headquarters with banners flying and the band playing inspiring airs from Vaterland. And when they all assembled before the marquee, "*Das Deutsche Vaterland*" swelled out on the balmy air in a most rapturous manner. They were in their home atmosphere again, they hardly remembered the land giving them shelter. The grand choruses went up in a shout. The instruments seemed fairly to beat waves of music on the air.

96

It appeared, indeed, as if all the Germans in the city had gathered there, and even at this time there were about two thousand. And then the games began. They leaped and balanced, they performed various athletic feats, the victor being crowned with shouts, as well as winning a prize. They danced, the boys and men with each other, many of them in native garments of the provinces from which they had emigrated, and some were amusing in motley array.

Outside there were booths with tables for refreshments, where wives and children congregated, and the place was patrolled by policemen to keep roughs away. The onlookers drove around or were on horseback; among them were the old Californians in leggings, sash, and sombrero, and a few Spaniards, who looked on haughtily at these people who were fast superseding the old stock.

There were not many places of amusement really proper for women and children of the better class. The circus had been the pioneer entertainment, then the theatre. Even at a concert of vocal music given by the favorite, Stephen C. Massett, where front seats were reserved for ladies, only four were present. A neat little theatre had been destroyed by fire; the Jenny Lind had shared the same fate, until a Mr. Maguire erected a large stone theatre destined for first-class amusements and that had been taken for the city hall. But the year before Mr. and Mrs. Baker, fine actors, had succeeded in establishing a new era in the Californian drama, and given it a style and excellence, and catered to the best class of people, who had begun to give tone to society.

Laverne hardly heeded Olive's chatter, she was so interested in the gay scene. There had never been anything like it to her. And the music stirred her wonderfully. They drove slowly round and

97

round, watched the athletes and held their breath at some of the daring feats.

"Oh, you should hear Howard talk of the circus performers and what they do," exclaimed Olive. "There's a flying leap when a man comes over the head of the audience, and catches a big hoop on the stage, and hangs suspended while the audience applauds, and a woman that rides on two horses, changing about, and sometimes stands up. She's a foreigner of some sort."

"I should think they would be afraid;" and Laverne shuddered.

"Oh, no; they're trained, you see. And the races are splendid. We can go to them. And they used to have bull-baits at the Mission, but they don't allow it now."

"Bull-baits?" echoed Laverne.

"Oh, bull-fights," laughed Olive. "That's real Spanish, you know. Why, it seems all right to them, of course. And there are dog-fights and cock-fights here—I don't see much difference, only the bulls are bigger and stronger."

Then a Turk halted at the carriage which had been stopped in the press. He had a great clapper, which made a hideous noise, and a voice that went through your ears. A tray was suspended from a leathern strap that passed around his neck. He wore a gay fez, and a jacket embroidered with gold thread much tarnished, and full Turkish trousers of red silk so soiled one could hardly tell the color. His swarthy skin and long, waxed mustache gave him a fierce look.

98

"Oh, mother, get some candy," cried Olive, "I'm just dying for some."

Fortunately it was done up in a kind of soft Chinese paper, and so kept from the dust. Then in a jar he had some curious shredded stuff that looked like creamy ravellings.

"Oh, we will drive around and get some at Winn's," said her mother.

"Oh, Laverne, don't you want some real Turkish candy?"

Laverne looked undecided.

"Oh, do, do," pleaded Olive, and Mrs. Personette yielded.

The ravelly stuff was very funny and melted in your mouth, and the candy seemed saturated with all flavors.

"Of course, Winn's is much better," declared Olive, with an air. "Oh, mother, can't we go to Winn's and have some lunch!"

"I've been considering that," returned her mother.

The two friends had so much to talk about that the children's chatter had not really reached them. Old times and beliefs that seemed of some bygone century rather than a decade or two, so utterly had this Western coast outgrown them.

"Have you seen Howard anywhere?" asked Mrs. Personette.

"No," returned Olive. Then in a lower tone—"They're off, having a good time, I know. Let Isabel alone for that; mother needn't think she'll know everything," and the girl laughed.

99

They drove around once more. Now a good many were seated at the refreshment tables, smoking, drinking beer, and laughing over jokes of the old fatherland. Of course, before night they would be rather uproarious. They had seen the best part of the celebration.

"I do wish we could find the children," said Mrs. Personette. "We might have lunch together."

At Washington and Montgomery Streets was the new establishment of Mr. Winn, who had been twice burned out and had not lost his courage. It seemed the fate of nearly all of the old settlers, and would have ruined and discouraged a community with less pluck. For, after all, while there were no end of toughs and roughs and adventurers, there was still some of the best blood of the Eastern cities, full of knowledge and perseverance.

Winn's was a large refectory of the highest order. It was furnished in the most elegant and tasteful manner, and the service was admirable. Indeed, it had come to be quite a calling place for the real society people, where they could meet a friend and sit over their tea or coffee and exchange the news of the day, which meant more really than in any other city. For every twenty-four hours something stirring was happening. Every fortnight now a steamship came in. New people, new goods, letters from the States, messages to this one and that from friends thousands of miles away.

The large rooms were connected by arches with costly draperies. Tables here and there for guests, sofas, easy-chairs, a stand for flowers, the papers of the day and magazines that had to be old before they reached these Western readers. Silks and satins rustled, skirts were beginning to be voluminous, bonnets had wreaths of flowers under the brim, and it was the day of shawls, India, cashmere, and lace. Now and then a dark-eyed Señorita wore hers in some graceful folds that made a point over the curls on her forehead. But women mostly had their hair banded Madonna-wise that gave some faces a very serene and placid look. Long ringlets were another style. Demi-trains were also in vogue, and at Winn's at luncheon time, it had the appearance of a fashionable reception. Children wore stiffly starched skirts and gypsy hats with wreaths of

100

flowers. Laverne's were forget-me-nots, with streamers of blue ribbon, and her soft light hair was braided in two tails, tied with a blue ribbon about halfway, the rest floating loose.

They had a dainty luncheon. Mrs. Personette received nods from this one and that one, for already she was becoming quite well known.

"Oh," she said presently, "do you know the school children are to have their walk on Monday, a Mayday walk, quite an institution, I believe. And Laverne ought to go to school, do you not think so? And this is to be quite an event. She must see it, and you as well."

"Alice Payne is to be Queen of the May, and seven maids of honor from the different schools," said Olive. "Why, I could take Laverne with me. You'd have to wear your white frock, that's all."

Laverne glanced up eagerly, with a dainty flush. Could she really take part in it?

It was true Jason Chadsey had not been very anxious to push his little girl forward. They had lived too far from schools before, and she was too much of a stranger to go around alone.

101

"It will be just splendid! And you will see so many girls. Of course, we have lived here a long while and know almost everybody."

"Of all the thousands," appended her mother, rather humorously. "Then you must be a 'Forty-niner.'"

Olive colored. "We're older than that," she answered, with some pride. "Father is a real Californian."

"And you children will belong to the old aristocracy when birth begins to count. I suppose that will come in presently."

"It always does," returned Miss Holmes. "Think of the pride of Boston over her early immigrants."

They drove around the garden and then took the two guests home. Miss Holmes expressed her pleasure warmly.

"Oh," laughed Mrs. Personette, "when we were on our long journey, coming to a strange land, who could have imagined that in so short a time I should be riding round in my carriage! And I seemed to have no special gift or attraction. Truly it is a Golden State."

Laverne had a great deal to tell Uncle Jason. She was so bright and happy, and had seen so much. And then there was the procession for Monday. Could she go?

Certainly, it was not possible to deny the eager, appealing face and pleading voice.

After supper, when she was in bed and Uncle Jason reading his papers, Miss Holmes broached the subject of school.

102

The first schools, as happens in most new places, were private enterprises. The earliest of all had been among the old residents before the great influx, and in 1847 the old plain little schoolhouse was erected on Portsmouth Square. It was used for many purposes. Religious bodies held their first meetings here, and the early public amusements were given, even political and benevolent assemblies. It was dignified as a Court House under Judge Almond, and at length turned into a station house until it went the way of transitory things. To this effort for education succeeded a real public school, with a board of trustees of prominent men, there being sixty children of school age in a population of a little over eight hundred, including Indians. Then suddenly the gold fever swept the town like wildfire, the public-school project was dropped, and the Rev. Albert Williams collected twenty-five pupils into a pay-school. In the spring of 1850, Mr. and Mrs. Pelton, who had succeeded the clergyman, and gathered in a large number of pupils, applied to the city for adequate recompense, and it was virtually made a public school. In January, a beautiful lot at Spring Valley, on the Presidio Road, was purchased, and a school was built in a delightful road of evergreens.

Soon after this the city started again and in time had seven schools, though several private schools were in a very flourishing condition. But many children were sent East to finishing academies, or to Monterey and other Southern towns to convent schools. Still the cause of education began to demand more attention, as the necessity for good citizenship became more strenuous.

103

Uncle Jason glanced up from his paper when Miss Holmes spoke of the school.

"Not that I find it at all troublesome to teach her, and she is the most tractable child I ever saw. Then she is so eager to get to the very foundation of things. Why, you would hardly believe how much she knows about botany. I found an old book—but the flowers here are so different. And I really love to teach now that I am well and strong. I could almost go in school again."

"Oh, don't think of such a thing. We couldn't do without you," he exclaimed earnestly. "But you think—a school——" and he paused, his eyes fixed on the floor as if he was ruminating.

"Laverne needs the companionship of children, comparing thoughts with them, playing, the harmless rivalry of studying together. When it comes to that, I could have a small school. You see she will be growing older all the time."

"Frankly, which would be best? You are more capable of deciding, since you have had a wider

experience in this matter."

"Oh, the school. You see she must take a place with other people. She has no relatives, and friends must stand in their stead."

He turned back to his paper, but he was not reading. The little girl was all his. He had a feeling when they left Maine that nothing and no one should come between them. Every thought, every desire should cluster about her. He would make a fortune for her. His first plan in going to California was to start to the gold fields for the sake of adventures. He would cut loose from all old recollections. He would leave Laverne Westbury a comfortable and satisfied wife and mother. He had no bitterness against his rival now. It had all been so different. Many a night on shipboard he lived over those few sad weeks and hugged to his heart the consolation that she had loved him, and that fate had been cruel to both. And then, conscious of the finer strain of fatherhood that had so long lain fallow in his soul, the child slipped into the place, and aims were changed for him. There would be enough for him to do in the new town where everything was needed, and he could turn his hand to almost anything. But he must keep to her, she was the apple of his eye, and he would go groping in sorrowful darkness without her.

104

He had a curious feeling at first that he must hide her away lest her father should start up from somewhere and claim her, and was glad to light on that out-of-the-way place. The long voyage had been like living in the same village with these people. The New England reticence of Miss Holmes appealed to him in a peculiar manner, he was reticent himself. Then the child took the greatest fancy to her. She was rather timid about this new world while the others were ready for adventures. And when he offered her a home for the care of the child she was very willing to accept it for the present. Her belief was that when she was rested and in her usual health she should teach school again.

Her two friends had teased her a little about finding a possible lover in Jason Chadsey. She had the fine feminine delicacy that shrank from the faintest suspicion of putting herself in the way of such a possibility. He was a sturdy, upright, plain-spoken fellow, not at all her ideal, and she still had the romance of girlhood. She came to know presently by her womanly intuition that marriage had no place in his thoughts, that were centred in the little girl. Perhaps, her mother was his only sister, a deserted wife, she gathered from childish prattle of Laverne's. She knew so little about her past. Uncle Jason had come when they were in great want, and her mother had died. And now, Jason Chadsey knew it would be best for this idea to gain credence. He would always be her uncle.

105

But he had some duties toward her. She could not always remain a child, a plaything. That was the sorrow of it. There must be a rich, delightful life before her. She must have the joys her mother had missed, the prosperity that had not come to her.

He looked up from the paper presently.

"About the school," he began. "Yes, I have been considering it. And you will have quite enough to do to keep the house and have the oversight of her; I will make it an object for you to stay. We get along comfortably together, though sometimes I feel I am a queer unsocial Dick, much occupied now with business. But it is all for her. She is the only thing out of a life that has been all ups and downs, but, please God, there'll be some clear sailing now. I like San Francisco. I like the rush and bustle and newness, the effort for a finer civilization that has strength and purpose in it. Heaven knows there is enough of the other sort, but the dross does get sifted out and the gold is left. It will be so here, and these earnest men ten years hence will be proud of the city they are rearing."

106

He glanced at her steadily, forgetting he had wandered from the main question.

"You will not leave us——"

"I? Oh, no;" yet she colored a little.

"There will be enough to do if the child does go to school. And you can walk down for her in the afternoon, wherever it is, and have little outings. I am glad you are so fond of her, and she loves you. She isn't the kind to strew her love broadcast."

"Yes, I am very fond of her," was the reply.

107

CHAPTER VIII

GIRLS AND GIRLS

They rambled over the hills on Sunday, for Miss Holmes had given her ankle a little wrench and was applying hot fomentations. Up there was the Presidio, and over here the beautiful ocean, blue as the sky to-day, except where the swells drove up on the rocks and, catching the sun, made spray of all colors. The ground squirrels ran about, scudding at the slightest sound of

human beings, which they seemed to distinguish from the rustling and whispering of the trees, or the tinkle of a little stream over the stones. It ran under a crevice in the rock that was splitting apart now by some of Nature's handiwork and came out over west of their house where it dropped into a little basin. Here was a blasted pine that had been struck by some freak of rare lightning, then piles of sand over which cactus crept. And here was a deer-trail, though civilization had pretty well scared them away.

But the birds! Here was the jay with his scolding tongue, the swallows darting to and fro in a swift dazzle, the martins in bluish purple, the tanager in his brilliant red, the robin, thrush, meadowlark, the oriole, and the mocking birds that filled the air with melody this May Sunday. And nearly every foot of ground was covered with bloom. Now and then the little girl hopped over a tuft that she might not crush the beautiful things. Great clouds of syringas and clusters of white lilies filled the air with a delicious fragrance. And the wild lilac with its spikes of bloom nodding to the faintest breeze. Wild barley and wild oats, and a curious kind of clover, and further down the coarse salt grass with its spear-like blades. 108

They sat down on some stones and glanced over the ocean. There were two vessels coming up the coast and some seamews were screaming. It was all wild and strange, almost weird, and no little girl could have dreamed that in a few years streets would be stretching out here. As for trolleys going to and fro, even grown people would have laughed at such a thing.

They talked of the great procession that was to be the next day. And then Uncle Jason wondered how she would like going to school regularly.

"I shall like girls," she said. "There are no boys where Olive goes. She thinks boys are more fun."

"But you don't go to school for the mere fun."

"They make so much noise in the street. And some times they sing such funny songs. But they were nice about sledding back home, only there's no snow here."

"Are you ever homesick?"

"You know I was sick sometimes on the ship."

"But to go back, I mean."

"There wouldn't be any one—I've almost forgotten who were there. Mother, you know——" with a pitiful sort of retrospection.

"Yes, yes," hurriedly.

"Would you want to go?" 109

"Oh, no, no!" with some vehemence.

She came and leaned against his knee, put her arms about his neck, and her soft cheek against his weather-beaten one.

"I should never want to go anywhere without you," she replied, with grave sweetness.

"You are all I have, my little darling."

"And I haven't any one else. Olive has such a lot of cousins. She goes over to Oaklands to see them."

There was a long pause and the wind rushed by laden with perfumes. They heard the lapping of the surf against the rocks. The strange beauty penetrated both souls that were not so far apart after all.

"Uncle Jason, did you ever have a wife?" she asked, with a child's innocence.

"No, dear." Sometime he would tell her the story of his love for her mother.

"Then you won't want to marry any one?"

"Marry! I?" Had that Personette girl put some nonsense into her head about Miss Holmes? He colored under the weather-browned skin.

"You see, Mr. Personette's wife had died, and I suppose he had to marry some one again to look after the children."

"Would you like me to marry some one to look after you?" in a half humorous tone.

"Why, Miss Holmes can do that," she returned, in surprise.

"She seems to do it very well." There was a lurking smile about the corners of his mouth.

"I like her. No, I shouldn't like any one else coming in. Perhaps she would not stay. No, Uncle Jason, I don't want you to marry any one," she said, simply. "And when I get old I shall not marry, though Carmen means to. And we will live together always. Oh," with a bright little laugh, "let's promise. Put your little finger—so." She hooked hers in it. "Now, you must say: Honest and true, I love but you!" 110

He uttered it solemnly. He had said it to one other little girl when he was a big boy.

Then she repeated it, looking out of clear, earnest eyes.

After that she gathered a great armful of flowers and they rambled off home.

"Who do you think has been here?" inquired Miss Holmes, with a laugh in her very voice.

"Who—Olive, perhaps. Or, maybe, Dick Folsom."

"No. Guess again."

She cudgelled her wits. "Not Snippy?"

"Yes, Snippy. He actually came into the house and looked so sharply at me that I told him you would be home about noon. Then I gave him a bit of cracker, and when he had eaten a little he scampered off with the rest. I think he has been planning a house near us."

"Oh, wouldn't that be splendid! I'm just going to scatter a path of cracker bits as Hop o' my Thumb did."

"But if he eats them up how much wiser will you be?"

Laverne looked nonplussed. "Well, he will have them at any rate," and she nodded her head with satisfaction.

Pablo had built a stone fireplace and was roasting some ducks out of doors. He was sure he couldn't do it any other way.

111

"I must go and view the camping process," and Uncle Jason laughed. "How is your ankle?"

"Oh, quite on the mend," she answered.

Pablo had built a stone fireplace and was roasting the ducks over a great bed of coals that he was burning at one side. It might be wasteful, as when the Chinaman first roasted his pig, but it was filling the air with a savory smell, and they were browned to a turn.

"They look just delicious," announced Laverne. She took the platter out and Pablo carried them in with a proud air.

And delicious they certainly were. The little girl was hungry, and Uncle Jason said he had not enjoyed anything so much in a long while. She insisted she should wash up the dishes while Uncle Jason took his usual nap. Then she went out and dropped some cracker crumbs and strictly forbade Bruno to touch them.

"If you would like to go down to the Estenegas I will get one of the horses," Uncle Jason said. His Sundays were always devoted to her.

So she went out and talked to Pelajo while Pablo harnessed him. He said very plainly that she had quite neglected him of late and he did not like it. He did not want to be thrown over for new friends.

All along the road the beauty of the May met them, and it stirred both riders, making them respond to the joy of motion and the sweetness of all blooming things, the merriment of the birds, the touch of the wind in the trees as a voice playing on a flute. He thought it was all the delight of owning the little girl who would always be his. How he would care for her in old age, and he quite forgot that he would be there decades and decades first. But he suddenly felt so young, with all these signs of youth about him, the magnetism of the air in this wondrous land.

112

Here was the old house. They were straightening the road, digging away hills, filling up hollows, and a corner of it had tumbled down. There seemed a damp, marshy smell of the newly turned earth, and two trees had fallen and begun to wither up. The wood doves were calling plaintively.

"Oh, I wouldn't come back for anything!" cried Laverne. "Did we have nice times here, and did we really like it?"

"This is the hand of improvement. Sometime, when we are trotting over a nice level road, with pretty houses and grounds, we shall admire it again."

But it was lovely enough at the Estenegas, out of doors. The children were wild with delight. It seemed as if Carmencita had suddenly shot up into a tall girl. And in the autumn she was to go to Monterey, to the old convent, where Doña Concepcion de Arguello had gone after her Russian lover had been killed, and where she had finally become Mother Superior and lived to old age, always praying for his soul.

"But I am going only for accomplishments. And it seems the distant cousin of the Estenegas wishes a wife who will grace the great house and carry on the honors. Mamacita is very proud that he made the offer. And the children will go up to the Mission to stay all the week at the Sisters' School."

113

"And they must visit me sometimes. The new home is so much pleasanter. I am going to school also, and I have some new friends. It is splendid to be in the heart of the city." Then she told them about the day at Russ's garden, and that on to-morrow, Monday, she was going out to walk with hundreds of children.

The Spanish girl's eyes grew larger and larger at all the wonders. They walked up and down with

their arms about each other and were full of childish happiness. Then Señora Estenega summoned them to refreshments on the balcony, now a wilderness of roses. Uncle Jason did not care much for the Spanish sweetmeats and candied fruits, the freshly ripened ones were more to his taste and he had been quite spoiled again by New England living. But he knew how to be polite.

It was quite dusk when they reached home. Olive Personette had been over. They would call for her to-morrow, and she was to be dressed in white, sure. It would be a greater thing than the German Festival.

And great it surely was! There had never been such an event in San Francisco. There were over a thousand children, and each one carried a bouquet of flowers. Miss Holmes had found some white ribbon and trimmed her gypsy hat, and the little girl with her fair hair looked like a lily. There were crowds of people in the streets to see them, proud mothers and aunts. Each school had a distinctive banner, and there was a band of music. The Queen of May wore a wreath, and so did her maids of honor.

When they had gone through the principal thoroughfares and been cheered enthusiastically, they moved to the schoolhouse on Broadway, where they had a little sort of play dialogue, and sang some beautiful songs. A few brief addresses were made, and San Francisco declared itself proud of its children that day, the children who were to be the future men and women of the city.

114

Then there was quite a feast, which the young people enjoyed mightily. How they laughed and talked and declared they would not have missed it for anything.

Afterward they dispersed. The Personette carriage was waiting, with instructions to take home all it would hold, so they crowded in. And at the gate stood Uncle Jason.

"Oh," the little girl exclaimed, with a tired sigh, "it was just splendid. If you had only been there!"

"Do you think I would have missed it? I came up to see the procession and I picked you out, walking with Olive. Why, I was as proud of you as if you had been the Queen."

"But the Queen was lovely. And the play! I couldn't hear all of it, there was such a crowd, and I had to stand up to see. Wasn't it good of Olive to ask me! And she wanted to take me home to dinner."

"I couldn't have eaten dinner without you." He kissed her over and over again. He was so glad to see her happy. Not that she was ever a sad little girl.

Miss Holmes was very much improved and regretted she could not have gone out to see the procession. Snippy had called, and all the cracker bits were gone, but she had seen the wood doves carrying off some of the crumbs.

"I guess Snippy has moved for good," said Uncle Jason. "It's rather funny, too. You must have charmed him."

115

She gave a pleased laugh.

Nearly midnight of that happy day the bells rang out with their dreadful alarm. Uncle Jason sprang up, and before he was dressed he saw the blaze. Citizens turned out *en masse*. The Rasette House on Sansome Street was in a sheet of flame. A fine five-story hotel, full of lodgers, who had to flee for their lives. The firemen were quite well organized now and made great efforts to keep it from spreading, remembering the former big fires. In this they were quite successful. Other generous people were taking in the four hundred homeless ones, and it was found the next day that no lives had been lost, which was a source of thanksgiving.

A little later there were some imposing ceremonies near the Presidio, just at the foot of the hill. This was the commencement of the Mountain Lake Water Works, a much-needed project. There were various artesian wells, and water was brought in tanks from Sausalito, but the supply was inadequate in case of fires and the city was growing so rapidly. The rather curious Mountain Lake was not large, but a short distance from its northern margin a stream of water gushed through the ground, which was a great spring or a subterranean river from the opposite shores. It was begun with great rejoicing, but like all large undertakings it had progressed slowly.

Indeed, San Francisco had so many things on its hands. There were plans for the State Marine Hospital and other benevolent institutions. Churches too were urging demands on a generous people who felt they must make an effort to redeem the standing of the city. The toughs had been somewhat restrained, but the continual influx of miners with their pouches of gold, ready for any orgies after having been deprived of the amenities of social life, and the emigration from nearly all quarters of the globe constituted a class very difficult to govern, who drank, gambled, frequented dance houses, quarrelled, and scrupled not at murder.

116

But of this side the little girl was to hear nothing, though Uncle Jason was often shocked in spite of all his experiences. He was having a warehouse down on the bay, fitting out vessels, disposing of cargoes, and keeping the peace with one of those imperturbable temperaments, grown wise by training of various sorts, and the deep settled endeavor to make a fortune for the Little Girl. It did not matter so much now, but when she grew up she should be a lady and have everything heart could desire.

In a short street that came to be called Pine afterward, and was at the head of the streets that

were to be named after trees, there stood quite a substantial brick building with some fine grounds. Here a Mrs. Goddard and her sister, Miss Bain, kept a school for young girls and smaller children, and had a few boarding scholars. The Personette girls had gone there because it was near by, and out of the range of the noisier part of the city. Howard was at the San Francisco Academy, kept by a Mr. Prevaux, in quite a different direction. There was a plan for a new public school on Telegraph Hill, but these were more largely filled with boys, as is often the case in the youth of towns.

117

So the little girl went to Mrs. Goddard's and quite surprised her teachers by her acquirements and her love of study. Perhaps, if she had not lived so much alone she would have been more interested in play and childish gossip. And her walks with Uncle Jason had brought her into companionship not only with trees and flowers, but with different countries of the world, and their products. Uncle Jason had grafted upon a boy's common education the intelligence that travel and business give, and though a quiet man he had taken a keen interest not only in the resources of countries, but their governments as well, and these things were the little girl's fairy stories. She would find the places on the map, the Orient, the northern coast of Africa, the country of the Turks, Arabia, India. A trading vessel goes from port to port.

She liked her school very much, though she was rather shy of the girls. Some of them called her a little prig because she would not talk and was correct in her deportment. She found in the course of a few days that Olive "squirmed" out of some things and did not always tell the truth. Back in Maine children had been soundly whipped for telling falsehoods and it was considered shameful; Miss Holmes was a very upright person, of the old Puritan strain.

She was not finding fault, but she did want to know if a prig was something rather disgraceful.

"It is never disgraceful to be honest in word and deed, to obey whatever rules are set before you, to study honestly and not shirk. I think the prig would set himself above his neighbors for this, but you see he would only be doing his duty, he would have no extra claim. But when he set himself up to be better than his neighbors and triumphed over them, he would be a prig."

118

Her delicately pencilled brows worked a little.

"Some of them are ever so much prettier than I am," she said innocently, "and they say such funny things, and their clothes are very nice. Well, I like them. We have such fun playing at recess."

He remembered about the clothes and spoke to Miss Holmes.

"I do not think it best to dress a child so much for school. What will she have afterward? And it does fill their heads with vanity."

He had given her a pretty ring for a birthday, and she had her grandmother's string of gold beads that had come over from London with some great, great-grandmother.

Snippy had settled himself quite comfortably, just where they could not tell, and he had evidently coaxed his wife to emigrate. She was not quite as handsome as he. Dick Folsom, who ran up every now and then, said he was what was called a hare squirrel, on account of his splendid feathery tail, though why, he couldn't see, as hares had scarcely any tail at all. Snippy was so tame now, or else he was so glad to be near the little girl, that he was not much afraid of strangers if they did not offer to touch him. He would run around Uncle Jason, and nose in his pockets until he found nuts or crumbs. But he didn't like tobacco a bit and scolded in his funny way when he came across that.

Pelajo was not forgotten, though he sometimes complained a little. Uncle Jason said Miss Holmes must learn to ride. The big dray horse was not fit for a lady, and though the Mexican and Indian women rode mules and were very expert, they were not considered quite the thing.

119

There was a stream coming out in a sort of split rock up above the place, and it made a kind of pool just below. In the autumn rains it ran along down the slope of the ground, tumbling over the stones that were in its way. Pablo and the little girl had made quite a pretty waterfall and a new pond where the ducks could swim about. The upper one they covered over and had for family use. Springs were not very plentiful, and Uncle Jason believed this a little underground spur of the Mountain Lake, as it never quite dried up.

And one Saturday, when Laverne was working at her stream, meaning to make it more extensive when the rainy season set in, a great white something fell at her very feet and gave such a screech that she started and ran. It lay on the ground and fluttered and cried, so she knew it was some kind of a bird and came nearer. It looked up at her out of frightened black eyes, rose on one foot, flapped one wing, and fell over again. Was it really a gull?

She called Pablo.

"Yes, Señorita, it is a gull. I never could get nearby one unless it was shot. They are the wildest things. This have a leg broke," and he picked up the limp member.

"Oh, the poor thing," softly stroking it.

"And wing too, see? Better kill it."

"Oh, no, no! Poor thing," she cried, full of sympathy.

120

"What then? He must die. He starve."

"No, we can feed him."

"But he eat fish."

"So do we. There is plenty of fish. And you catch so many. Can't you do anything for him?"

Pablo lifted the leg again, and examined it.

"No—shot!" he exclaimed, shaking his head.

"Why couldn't you do it up in splints?"

"Not worth it," and he shook his head decisively. "And the wing too. Yes, that's shot."

Laverne patted the poor thing, who screeched and tried to rise. How soft the feathers were and snowy white, except about the neck that had the faintest shade of blue. Then, suddenly, she picked it up in her skirt, though it struggled. How light it was for such a large thing. She had taken off her shoes and stockings while she was paddling in the stream, and she ran down to the house not minding the rough path.

"Oh, see this poor gull!" she cried. "It just dropped down—out of the clouds, I guess. There were no others around."

She laid it down on the patch of grass Miss Holmes took great pains with for a bleachery.

"Poor thing!" said the lady pityingly.

"Better end him," and Pablo took hold of his neck.

"No, no, no! You shall not kill him. Poor fellow!" she cried.

He was gasping now, and then he lay quite still, exhausted.

"You could splint up his leg," said Miss Holmes. "You did the duck, you know."

"That good for something. He squak and squak."

121

"Yes, you must splint it up," Laverne said, with decision. "I can find some cord, and—what will you have?"

Pablo shrugged his shoulders and said something just under his breath in pure Mexican, not quite the thing for a little girl to hear.

"And when Uncle Jason comes home we will see about the wing. Won't this old basket make splints?"

Pablo went about his job unwillingly. Laverne wrapped him up so that he could not kick with the other leg, and presently they had the wounded member bandaged. The gull lay quite still, but Laverne saw the frightened heart beat through the feathers.

Pablo raised the wing and shook his head dubiously.

"Uncle Jason is coming home early with the horses, you know," she said to Miss Holmes. "Oh, my shoes and stockings!" and off she ran to the spot where they had been at work. "Pablo can go on clearing this out," she said to herself. "It will be all ready when the rainy season sets in. Oh, the poor flowers! Sun, why do you scorch them up so! And in Maine the summer is so delightful. But the winter, oh!" and she made a half wry, half amused face.

She was all ready when Uncle Jason came up the street on one horse and leading the other; and all eagerness, she was telling her story while he dismounted and fastened them both.

"That's funny," he said. "Next a black bear will come knocking at your door. Or you might snare a silver-gray fox and have a tippet made of his skin."

"As if I could be so cruel!"

The gull had hardly moved. Now, it seemed frightened at the strange face and struggled. Uncle Jason spoke softly, and lifted the wounded wing which was considerably shattered.

122

"I suppose it *could* be mended, but there are hundreds of gulls."

"This one came straight to me. Why, he fairly asked me to take pity on him;" and she drew an eager breath.

She was a very sympathetic little girl, and he smiled.

Some shot had better be taken out. He opened the small blade of his knife. It was not a really fresh wound, for the blood was dry. He picked out the shot, scraped the pieces of bone a trifle, and studied how they were to go together, Pablo holding the body tight. He pulled out some of the downy feathers, pinched the skin together, wound it with threads of soft silk and then bound it up with splints.

"Poor thing," he said.

"Don't you believe he will get over it? Oh, what if he never could fly again."

"Then he will have to live with you."

"Oh, I should like that if he would only be content."

Then they put him in a tub so he could not flounder around much, and laid some bits of meat near him. Pablo was to keep watch so that no evil would happen.

Miss Holmes had hardly mounted a horse since girlhood. She did feel a little timid.

"She's a lady's mount and very gentle. Old knowledge soon comes back to one," Uncle Jason said, with an encouraging smile.

They took their way up on the cliff, where there was a pretence of a road that long afterward was to be magnificent. From here the town was a succession of terraces to the bay. The houses were in many instances hidden, but here and there a high one, or a church, loomed up.

123

On the ocean side it was simply magnificent. The wave-washed rocks glinting in the brilliant sunlight, the seals diving, swimming about as if they were at play, then coming up to sun themselves, the flocks of gulls, the terns, the murrets, and the fulmars, who expertly catch fish from the gulls, the auks, diving and swimming about. To-day almost every variety seemed out.

The air was like the wine of a new life and made the blood tingle in the veins. The midday heat was over, the west wind bore the tang of the broad ocean. Miss Holmes wondered if she had ever known before this just what life was, and the joy of living.

124

CHAPTER IX

A PARTY AND AN ADMIRER

When the sun dropped into the ocean the world for a time seemed ablaze. Certainly, here was the place for sunsets. And as they went on they crushed the dying ferns and foot-high evergreens into penetrating fragrance. Down below the Estenegas they turned around and took a lower road that had little in it except the whispering trees and plaintive bird songs, until houses came into view, and human figures moving about. They did not go down in the city, there was always more or less carousing on Saturday night. A strong young voice was shouting out a favorite song:

"Oh, Sally, dearest Sally; oh, Sally, for your sake,
I'll go to California and try to make a shake;
Says she to me, 'Joe Bowers, you are the man to win,
Here's a kiss to bind the bargain,' and she hove a dozen in."

There were musical voices, too. A square below them a wagon load were singing to the accompaniment of an accordion. Lights were flashing out, throngs began to gather in the streets, and they were glad to canter away to quiet.

"It is the most splendid thing of my life," Miss Holmes said.

"And you have done exceptionally well. You and Laverne can take many an hour's enjoyment when I am busy."

125

Pablo took the horses down while Miss Holmes spread the supper, and the two went to look after the gull, who seemed very well content, and allowed his neck to be stroked without demur.

"And we saw a great bird snatch a fish from one of your kind," Laverne told him. "And such lots of your relations!"

Bruno looked on curiously.

"Don't you touch him. And don't you let any wild cat or fox come after him. Mind, now."

Bruno beat his tail on the dry grass.

If there were nations from almost every corner of the globe, they all joined in celebrating Fourth of July. This year there was a fine military parade, and Sutter's Rifles from Sacramento City came up and passed in review before the old true-hearted pioneer, Major-General John H. Sutter, rapturously applauded by the crowd. Then they marched to the Russ Garden, where they were presented with a set of colors. Irish and German were alike patriotic. There were singing and speeches; booths on corners dispensed simple refreshments to the weary and the children. Carriages were ornamented with small flags, and filled with the better class, who cheered as heartily. It was really a gala day. They had been invited to the Personettes, where tea was set out on the lawn, and as there was no moon it was hung with Chinese lanterns. There were some schoolgirls, and they had a table to themselves, and some dancing. Several of the young people gave the fancy dances they had learned at the classes the winter before.

Vacations had generally commenced. There were picnics to San José and mountain climbs; there were excursions up and down the bay and to the towns opposite up to San Pablo and Mare's Island, over to Sausalito. And on Sunday, the road to the old Mission Dolores was always thronged with pleasure-seekers, elegant open carriages filled with finely-dressed ladies, equestrians of all kinds, and the Spanish señors often disported themselves in all their bravery. Miss Holmes was rather startled at first, and to her it was Sabbath-breaking, but Jason Chadsey was so used to the cosmopolitan order of the day, and she met the people who had been to church in the morning.

126

The hot sun and lack of rain had not dried up everything. There were fogs on the coast that dripped like fine rain, and fairly drenched bush and faded grass. There were fine green hills and fields of flowers, and the new crop of wild oats and barley.

And then autumn came in again, schools opened, business stirred up, there were blessed rains, and it was like a later summer.

The little girl had been much interested in her gull and he had grown very fond of her, eating out of her hand, and hiding his head under her arms as the squirrel did. She had traced Snippy to his home, and sure enough he had a companion. There was an old scrubby dead pine in which there was a hollow, or they had gnawed it, and thither they carried nuts and crusts of bread that Laverne pretended to lose.

"Uncle Jason," she said one day, "did you ever see an albatross?"

"Yes. Not very often. They are in the Northern Pacific."

127

"They are not like gulls."

"Oh, much larger."

"There is a story about one. Miss Bain has it in a beautiful book. One day she read it."

"Oh, 'The Ancient Mariner.'"

"Do you know about it?" Her face was alight with pleasure. "And is it true? Did he kill the bird:

"Who, every day for food or play,
Came to the Mariner's hollo."

"It's a queer story. No, I don't suppose it was really true. But it is always considered bad luck to kill one. I must get the book for you."

"Oh, if you would," in her pretty, coaxing way. "Pablo wanted to kill the gull. Then we might have had bad luck. And now we can't find any name for him."

"That's bad, too."

His leg had mended nicely and the splints were off, though it must be confessed he had tugged a great deal at them, and could not be brought to understand their benefit, though it was explained over and over again. But his wing did not seem to be just right, and his efforts to fly were not successful.

"But I wish he could. He would look so lovely sailing about."

"And fly away!"

"Oh, I don't really believe he would."

Uncle Jason brought home a fine illustrated copy of the "Ancient Mariner" from an English press. In the early fifties, even in vaunted New York, Boston, and Philadelphia illustrating had not reached the high point of art it was destined to later on.

128

She was delighted and in a little while knew it all by heart. She grew very fond of poetry. She used to read to the gull until he seemed hypnotized, and presently would nod, sometimes put his head under his wing.

In September, there was another great celebration on the opening of the first electric telegraph. This was between San Francisco and Point Lobos, and was erected by Messrs. Sweeny and Baugh to give early information of shipping arrivals. They had a station on Telegraph Hill in which they used various signals, but this was of immeasurably greater service.

Early in November, there was the anniversary of the founding of the Mission of Dolores. There were a number of Catholic children in the school, and a holiday was given.

"Oh, come, go," Olive coaxed. "Eulogia Garfias and her mother are going, and we are great friends. You've never been in a Catholic Church?"

"No; but I know some Catholic girls, and one has gone to a convent to be educated. Oh, and the two little ones were to come up to the Sisters' School."

"Why, maybe they will be there."

She had not been to the Estenegas in a long, long time; since the day she and Uncle Jason had

ridden down there.

Miss Holmes made no objection. People grew broader in this grand air. There were many points in which all denominations worked together for the city's welfare.

129

It was constructed of adobe, partly whitewashed. It had been very grand in its day, and had a capacious interior. The walls and roof roughly painted still held saints and angels and sacred subjects much faded by the seventy-five years. The damp earthen floor struck a chill to one. Some of the ornaments of the great altar had been carried away, and those left were of no great value. But on this occasion every year there was a large accession of worshippers, even Spanish and Mexican men as well as women, kneeling reverently on the floor, and that seemed strange to Laverne, who glanced up with great awe to the figure of the Christ on the cross between the two oriel windows. At the side was a female figure with hands clasped, the Virgin. Tall candles were burning on each side of the altar.

The service was mostly in Latin. The congregation went out reverently, some to walk in the small graveyard. Yes, there were Juana and Anesta and several other girls, attended by a sister. They were delighted to meet Laverne, and were full of confidences as they walked out to the street. The house was shut up, their mother had gone to Monterey, and they were staying at school all the time. They liked it so much. And, if they were allowed, they would be so glad to visit Laverne. Eulogia Garfias knew the sister and introduced her schoolmates; that made the sister soften somewhat to them, and listen to their plea.

So Laverne had quite an eventful morning.

"But the little girls look sad, I think," she commented. "And the old church isn't a bit pretty, it looks faded. And no seats to sit on. It didn't seem at all like church."

130

What with lessons, her pets, and her rides, the days were all too short. Her gull still remained and now could fly a short distance. It really seemed to love the shelter of the house, and this amused Uncle Jason very much. Then it never flapped its wings, but seemed to rise slowly and float about with a serene air. It enjoyed the stream and the new lake Pablo and Laverne had made. For now the frequent rains swelled all the streams, and the bright bracing northwest winds brought the fragrance of spring. Everything grew by bounds. The little girl could hardly believe it was winter. The bluest skies, the golden sunshine that flashed in streams of brilliance, the bay a sea of silver bearing on its bosom treasures of every land.

And so came in a Merry Christmas, with pleasure in every home; a children's festival, with not so much religious significance as now. They went to a grand dinner at Mrs. Personette's, Miss Gaines with them, who looked splendid in her satin gown, and who was coining money rapidly. Lines were not very closely drawn; the aristocrat of to-day riding round in his carriage was the workman of last year. The poor mechanic lucky enough to find a nugget of gold brought his wife in the front rank and dressed her in velvet, loaded her with jewels. The keeper of an ordinary restaurant branched out presently in a very respectable hotel. It was difficult to keep up with all the changes. Then, it must be admitted, that many of these people were from the East and had good educations, had, indeed, been accustomed to the refinements of civilized life, but the thought of making a fortune in a few years had given them courage to breast the vulgarity and rough life until they could advance themselves to the old standard.

131

The children had a party in the evening. Howard had gone to a preparatory school in the East, as his keen-eyed stepmother found he was in a rather dangerous circle of young men—girls, too, for that matter—who were likely to lead one astray, and this had also influenced Isabel and was bringing her forward much more rapidly than was judicious. So they were principally schoolgirls, with the cousin from Oaklands and the young sons of a few friends and neighbors. At first Isabel was rather stiff and important, but she thawed presently. Mrs. Personette remembered her own youth and how much these pleasures had been to her, and really exerted herself in a delightful manner to keep them well entertained.

Victor Savedra, one of the cousins from Oaklands, took a great fancy to the shy little girl, and asked her to dance.

"I don't know how," she said, flushing and drawing back.

"Why—don't you dance?" in surprise.

"Just a little, with the girls at school. But—I am afraid——"

"Why, I'll take you through. This is just the plainest quadrille. Oh, Aunt Grace, don't you think this—" little girl, he was about to say—"your name is Laverne, isn't it—can't she dance? She looks as if she could—she's as light as a feather."

132

"Oh, you can never learn younger. All the children dance here. I think it comes natural. But you are too late for that. And, Victor, you might be explaining the figures to her and be ready for the next one."

Victor led her a little to one side. "Aunt Grace is just a trump," he said. "We thought at first we shouldn't like her, some of the Yankees are so queer, and talk so outlandish and all that, through their noses, you know, but she is just a lady all through, and full of fun. Now, look at this—it's an easy figure—balancing to corners, turning your partner and a galop down the middle——"

"Why, it's like the fairy rings you read about—I have a splendid fairy book uncle brought me, and on moonlight nights the little people go out and dance on the green. The Irish stories are just enchanting. They love the little people."

Her eyes had been following the dances and she moved her head faintly as if she was keeping time. Then the fiddles gave a sharp staccato and stopped.

"Oh," she exclaimed, in bewilderment.

He laughed at the startled look.

"They'll tune up and begin again." Oh, what eager eyes she had. Why, she was really very pretty, with that soft rose flush and fair hair. Olive had called her "a plain little thing."

Sure enough that was long ago, remember, before we heard of Strauss and Sousa. Many a quadrille has begun with "Life let us cherish." Victor took her hand and fairly impelled her out on the floor. "Now, I'll tell you everything, and you just mind and don't feel afraid."

133

She never knew whether she minded or not. She was thinking of Nora of the Mill when she stepped in the magic ring, and Laudeen, with the blue coat and a firefly for each button all the way down, just whisked her around until the air was full of fireflies. It was splendid.

"Oh, you've done very well," Victor said, in a delighted tone. "You didn't mind the mistakes at all, but just kept on, and that's the way to do. But you must learn to dance regularly. And I hope we shall dance together often. You are just like a fairy. That Larkin girl trod on my foot about every other step. Oh, that is the Cheat. That's rare fun. Now, see—when it is 'All hands round,' and your partner turns the other girls, come straight back to him, to *me*, will you? The fellows left out get laughed at. Now, you'll see."

When the Cheat came he told her again. She turned away from the outstretched arms and looked for Victor, whose face was flushed. For he felt he had been really rude to one of the best dancers in the room. And in the next Cheat some one picked up Laverne, almost lifting her off her feet, while Esta Collins paid him back with interest and a triumphant smile.

"I didn't do it right," Laverne said ruefully. "He was so big and strong, and I never saw him——"

"Oh, that's a good deal of the fun when you know all about it. The girls flirt awfully, but now and then one gets left in the lurch. The next is the Spanish Galop, and then the refreshments. Who is going to take you in?"

134

"Why—I don't know——" hesitatingly.

"Then I will, and we will have this galop."

"Victor," Isabel said, rather sharply, in the pause. "You take Miss Payne in for refreshments."

"Can't, my dear cousin. I wouldn't dare poach on Leon Sturges' manor."

"Victor!" But he had gone.

"Just see how that little thing holds on to Victor! Olive, you put a stop to it as soon as supper is over. I didn't think Victor would make such a fool of himself. He's danced three times with her. And she's just crazy over it. She's making a sight of herself."

Olive nodded. She had had all the attention she wanted, and had never once thought of Laverne, or Victor either.

Victor was asking if Laverne didn't most blow away up on the hill where she lived, and if she didn't get lost in the dreadful fogs. And she told him about her squirrel and the gull.

"Why, I thought they were the shyest, wildest things, and that you couldn't touch them while they were alive. And he really stays with you?" in amaze.

"He can't fly very far. You see, his wing isn't quite right, though he can raise it, but it doesn't seem strong. Still he flies so beautifully a short distance it is a pleasure to see him. Sometimes I make believe he is an albatross. And I tell him about the 'Ancient Mariner.'"

"Oh, do you know that queer old thing! And do you love verses? We're reading the Iliad at school. It isn't verse exactly, but it's poetry all the same. There are some splendid heroes in it."

135

She didn't know exactly what it was, but she liked reading about heroes and her eyes kindled.

"Do you think I might come to visit you and the gull? Are there any more pets?"

"Oh, yes, a splendid big dog; and I never feel afraid with him. And the loveliest Mexican pony. Then the birds are very tame. There is the sauciest mocking bird, and we whistle to each other. He will come for crumbs, and when the weather is very dry we put out a pan of water and it is fun to see them bathe. And the jays chatter and scold so."

"How much you must love everything!"

"Well—there are no children near by. Though now I go to school."

"And you came from Maine, Aunt Grace said, all the way round the Horn. Do you know they are talking of a railroad across the Continent? Oh, what lots of things we would have to talk about. I'll

ask father to let me come over here and then I'll come up and see you—some Saturday."

"Oh, I shall be just delighted." The little face was all rosy eagerness.

"You're not eating anything. Oh, here are the mottoes. Now, we'll have some fun."

They were prizes to children in those days. A candy in a pretty colored fringed paper, with two or four printed rhymes, sometimes very funny, at others sentimental. Victor had numbers sent to him by different girls, who were beginning to think the little Maine damsel was getting more than her share of him.

Olive stood ready to pounce upon him. But Miss Holmes was there at the doorway.

136

"Uncle Jason has come," she said, in a low tone. "Are you not tired and almost ready to go home?"

Laverne took the outstretched hand.

"Remember," Victor said, "I shall come before long."

"Really," began Olive tauntingly, "you seem very fond of small fry."

"Why—she is your friend. You have told us ever so much about her. And she's a nice little thing."

"Oh, a mere child! A flower of the field sort of thing," rather disdainfully.

He thought her very ungracious when she had been quite eloquent over Laverne at Oaklands.

She leaned against Miss Holmes' shoulder and talked of the dancing, while two or three men discussed the prospect of a road across the continent. The hardships of the overland journey were almost incredible. Congress could hardly be roused on the subject. Daniel Webster, broad statesman as he was, opposed it with energy. The Great American Desert was a formidable thing. And there were the Rocky Mountains. The gold fields might give out—it was not an agricultural region—how could manufactures ever be established so remote from every centre! Spain and Mexico had tried their hands. There was enough to do nearer home.

The little girl listened with a curious interest. It was a wonderful country to her. Maine had nothing to compare with it. And though she began to feel sleepy now that she was quiet, she winked her eyes hard so as not to lose a word.

137

"We must go," Miss Holmes said at length; so they rose and wished their host good-night.

What a glorious night it was! There was no moon, but the wide blue vault was studded so thick with stars, great golden, twinkling globes, that seemed to keep Christmas as truly as when they sang to the shepherds on the plains of Judea. All the air was spicily fragrant, for there was just enough fog over on the ocean side to make a dew and distil sweetness. Some of the newly whitewashed houses glistened like marble, and the brick ones threw a weird kind of shade. There were clumps of trees, and the little girl half suspected Indians or wolves lurking behind them.

"Did you have a nice time, little one?" asked her uncle, in a fond tone.

The cool, fresh, inspiriting air had wakened her.

"Oh, it was splendid! And I danced. Don't you think I might go to dancing school? All the children do. Olive's cousin was so nice to me, and he wants to come and see the gull. And he has a pony, too. He is going to ride over some day. He's nicer than Dick Folsom; that is—he is polite and gentle, and has such a sweet voice. Oh, I liked him so much. And there were so many pretty and finely dressed girls—maybe it was because I didn't have any brother or cousin that he was so good to me."

Jason Chadsey gave a soft little sigh.

138

CHAPTER X

ETHICS AND ETIQUETTE

It was midnight, and the bells rang out for 1854. The streets were full of people. Banjos were being strummed, accordions lent their music. Singers really made bedlam, but above all you heard every little while the refrain from a chorus of voices:

"The days of old, the days of gold,
The days of forty-nine."

Was San Francisco getting old in its scarcely more than childhood? For in August of that year, John W. Geary, who had been the last alcalde of the town, was elected its first mayor, and the city had her charter in due American form. It had stretched up and down the bay, the wharves were crowded with shipping. Had ever any other city such a marvellous story!

Yet in 1854, the world was still a little old-fashioned and friendly. Never was there a more peerless day. Over the hilltops came streams of brilliance with the rising sun that drove the fog before it into the ocean. The lowlands were alive with the slant rays that wavered and wandered about like seas of gold. Flowers seemed to have sprung up in the night. Flags were flying. The streets were full of men and boys; one would have thought it a grand procession. For New Year's calls were then the great fashion. The day was given over to the renewals of friendships. Men put on their Sunday best, and went from house to house with joyous greetings. And within doors were groups of women to welcome them, and rooms presented a gala aspect. Lovers found an opportunity to say sweet things, friends clasped hands, business was laid aside.

139

No doubt there were orgies here and there, quarrels over cups, and fights, but even among the lower ranks there was a great deal of jollity.

Then everybody went back to business. The great Express Building was opened, having been more than a year under way, and a big banquet given in the evening.

The weather underwent a sudden change. Ice froze in the pools about the streets. Icicles hung from the roofs of the houses and children thrashed them down, and went about eating them like sticks of candy. There was veritable snow on some of the hills, and those at Contra Costa were white and glittering in the sun. The old Californians, who were fond of lazing about in the sun, and smoking a pipe, laid it to those Yankee devils who had turned everything upside down. There would be no more good times in "Californy." Even the miners came in and grumbled. The rains in the fall and winter had been slight, then a sort of freshet had swollen the rivers, which were too full for "wet diggings," as the hill sides had been too dry for "dry diggings."

It seemed as if a series of misfortunes happened. The fine new clipper ship *San Francisco* missed her bearings and struck on the rocks on the north side of the channel. Some lives were lost, and a storm coming up, scattered much of the cargo. Added to this was a very general depression in business, but in all new cities there are lean years as well as fat ones.

140

The little girl had said nothing more about dancing school, although there was a very nice class that met twice a week not far from the school. She and Olive had a little "tiff," and now hardly spoke. She would have liked to consult some one, but Miss Holmes and Mrs. Personette were now very cordial friends, and she was not sure that she had been exactly right herself. She could not quite make up her mind to be blamed. She had said to Uncle Jason that she had changed her mind, she did not want to go to dancing school just yet.

"There's plenty of time for that," he responded cheerfully. "And I guess dancing comes kind of natural to little girls. You can put on the fancy touches by and by."

Then he gave her such a hug that she knew he was pleased with her decision, though down in the depths of her heart she really would have liked it. Sometimes she danced around out of doors, going through whatever figures she could recall.

This was what had happened: She had spoken cordially to Olive the first morning school had begun again, and Olive had given her head a toss, and mumbled something. Then at recess she had joined some of the larger girls. The Personette girls went home to luncheon; Laverne brought hers. There were several smaller children that she liked very much, and they had a nice play together. Olive generally claimed her, but for several days she took very little notice of her. She had a feeling that Laverne would feel hurt and want to know the reason. But the latter was too much afraid of a rebuff to advert to it.

141

"I suppose you think it's queer that I'm acting this way," Olive began, when her indifference seemed to pass unnoticed. "But, really, you were so forward at my party—"

"Forward!" Laverne gasped. "Why, I—I was almost frightened at first. I had never been to a real party before."

"Well, you made yourself very conspicuous. Esta Collins thought you bold enough."

Laverne's face was scarlet. "What did I do?" she asked in a tremulous tone, trying to keep down a great throb that wanted to rise in her throat.

"What did you do, Miss Innocence? Well, I declare! You didn't dance three times with my cousin, and then march in to supper with him, and talk and laugh just as if you didn't mean to let him look at another girl. And you had never met him before! It was shameful!"

"But—he asked me!"

The tears did come now. She tried very hard to wink them away.

"Oh, yes! But he never supposed you were going to hang on him that way. And there were girls who had known him long before, just waiting to be asked. You see, as he was *my* cousin, he was—well, almost like the host, and should have gone around. You're a regular flirt, Laverne Chadsey, and you will never get asked to any party of mine again."

142

"You didn't ask me this time," said Laverne, with spirit. "It was your mother. And it wasn't altogether your party."

"Well, it was *my* cousin."

"She is Isabel's cousin also."

"Well, she did not like it, either."

Laverne wanted to say she was sorry. No one had ever quarrelled with her before. But was she really at fault? There came a sudden flash of spirit.

"It was mean in your cousin to ask me to dance so many times when he knew it wasn't quite proper. He was used to parties, I wasn't. I shall never want to go to parties again; I just hate them."

With that Laverne turned away, holding her head very high. She missed in one lesson that afternoon, and asked Miss Bain if she might not stay in and go over it; she knew it then, but she was confused by something else. Her uncle was always so proud of her marks that she did not want to disappoint him.

"Why, yes," returned Miss Bain smilingly. "I wish all little girls were as careful."

She was rather grave at home that afternoon. She told Bruno about it and he gave her a world of sympathy out of large, loving eyes.

Then there were several smaller girls that she found very companionable. One of them discovered a way to walk together for some distance by making the circuit just a little longer. Her mother was French and had been born in New Orleans. There were five children; she, Lucie, was the oldest. Her father was one of the old California residents, and had fought in the war. Last summer they had gone down to Santa Cruz and had a lovely time. She had only one little sister, the baby. So they made quite a friendship.

143

After the cold snap it seemed as if spring had come in earnest. Everything took to growing. Miss Holmes and Laverne had delightful rides about on Saturdays. And one morning the child watched a lad coming up the somewhat crooked road. He waved his hand—yes, he smiled, too. Why, it couldn't be Victor Savedra!

But it was, though. Laverne hardly knew whether to be glad or sorry. But she was glad down in the bottom of her heart, and ran a few steps to meet him, then paused in pure bashfulness.

"Are you glad to see me? Don't you remember that I told you I would come? I was at uncle's a fortnight ago and meant to beg Olive to come up with me, but behold!" and he laughed.

It was such a gay, infectious sort of laugh, and he slid down from his pony and threw the rein over his neck, then took both of her hands, while she colored scarlet, and her eyes had merry lights in them.

"I dragged it all out of Olive. Did you have much of a fuss with her? Girls are so queer! It was because I danced two or three times with you. Why, I thought you were such a dainty little thing. I liked you. Some of the girls are so—well, so sentimental—silly. Olive has a temper, though. And now—*are* you glad. Father knows your uncle a little. And he said I might come over; father, I mean. I always tell him where I go on Saturdays."

144

"Yes, I am glad," Laverne replied. "Oh, we were going out to ride."

"We? Who?" and the bright young face fell a little.

"Why, Miss Holmes—who takes care of us."

"Oh, yes, that's all right. Girls always do have some one, you know. And I remember her. She is Aunt Grace's friend."

"Yes, Pablo is bringing the horses." She led the way with a springing step and smiled without knowing just what made her happy.

"And the gull! Father thinks it really odd, that you should tame him and he should want to stay."

"And he can fly quite well. Just a bit of the wing droops down. Oh, here he is! We had such a time to find a name for him. And once Uncle Jason was up the coast of Norway and learned about the gods, and I liked the story of Balder so much, Balder the beautiful, and then I called him that. But Uncle Jason calls him Jim."

"Did your uncle come for the Golden Fleece?"

"I think they find it here, if anywhere," she returned, smiling. "Here, Balder," and she held out her hand.

He was not exactly graceful in his walk. But he came and put his head in his little mistress's hand.

She stroked his neck, "Pretty Balder," she said. "Did Pablo get you some fish?"

Balder glanced rather suspiciously at the newcomer. And just then Miss Holmes came down. After the first glance she remembered the young fellow, who explained a certain amount of curiosity had drawn him hither, and since they were ready for a ride he begged to accompany them.

145

"Oh," she said, "why didn't you bring the girls and we should have had quite a party."

"I am afraid if I had gone there first I should have missed you, they would have had so many

plans. And this excursion has been in my mind some time. I wanted to see these remarkable pets."

"Snippy seems quite busy in these days providing for his family; I think, too, he is rather jealous of Jim."

"There are some such cunning little squirrels, but Snippy keeps them closely at home, down in the hollow of the tree."

"If you would like to walk about a little—the rains have given us quite a picturesque aspect, and the weather has brought us into spring."

"Will Miss Laverne be my guide?"

"That sounds just like school. When you get in the highest class, where your cousin Isabel is, you are called Miss—whatever your last name happens to be. I don't like it so well."

"But you will when you get to be a young lady."

"I like girls the best," she said simply.

He thought they would be quite charming if they all resembled her.

They took the winding path up to the spring, if it were that; Pablo, under Uncle Jason's direction, had made quite a basin of it. Then it trickled down to the next level, and this was Balder's pool. It was arranged so that it irrigated quite a little garden. There were some orange trees, but they had been nipped by the frosts.

146

"They are rather bitter and sour and full of seeds," said Laverne, "only they are beautiful with their glossy leaves, and the blossoms are sweet. Everything is wonderful here."

"It truly is." He was glancing about. "Father ought to see this. But you know we think Oaklands the garden spot of all as you go on down the Bay. It's much wilder going up, and here it doesn't seem a bit promising, but you have made it so. I wonder what about it charmed your uncle?"

She remembered the old home in Maine was rather rocky and wild. She rarely thought of it now.

"Here is where Snippy lives. Though there are plenty of squirrels about and rabbits and everything, it seems to me. Snippy," she called, "Snippy."

A sharp nose and two bright eyes appeared above the hollow and dropped down at once. "Snippy! Oh! you needn't be afraid." She threw some bits of hardtack down. Then there was a sudden gray flash, and he was out on the ground, caught on her frock and ran up to her shoulder. He looked saucily over to Victor Savedra as if he questioned what business he had there.

The boy laughed. "We have some fine birds, and beautiful tame deer. I suppose I could tame a squirrel. But the funny thing is that he should have decided to move up here."

"We brought him first, you know. I didn't think about his having any folks then. And there is getting to be quite a colony of them. Uncle Jason will not have them shot. Though Pablo shot a wildcat not long ago. And the birds do not seem afraid any more. I know where there are several quails' nests."

147

"I expect you understand bird language."

They turned to go down. Pablo had given Victor's pony a drink. Miss Holmes stood patting her horse's neck.

"I've done up a little lunch," she announced. "Are you quite sure you have time to devote to our picnic?"

"Oh, yes! I have a whole day to spend. And I am delighted that you permit me to accompany you. I hope you will come to Oaklands and allow me to be the host."

They went down on the westerly path. Part of the way it was a rather rough road, and they had the ocean at their side. Here was a kind of depression in the rocky barricade, and down by the shore a herd of deer were sniffing the ocean breezes. How pretty and graceful they looked, startled, too, as the wind wafted the sound of voices to them. Then they suddenly vanished as if the ocean had swallowed them up, and the three looked at each other with surprised and laughing eyes.

Miss Holmes found young Savedra a very entertaining companion. He expected presently to go to England for his education. There was a rather delicate girl next in age to him, who had not been strong enough to come over to the Christmas party. Then a rollicking hoyden, and last of all a second son. It was evident he cared a great deal for his mother. His sister had one of the nervous musical temperaments, and was fond of solitude. The Personette girls were very different, more like their father.

148

He was really entertaining for so young a person. He knew many of the older stories of the country, the Missions, the Indians, and the lower-class Mexicans. They turned into quite a new road for them, that seemed hidden away by an edge of woods, and presently came to a charming spot where he tethered the horses, and they ate their lunch. Little did they dream that one day even this solitude would be invaded by the resistless hand of improvement. Shy, wild things were

running about, birds sang in every sort of key. Gulls swooped down for fish, a great cormorant went sailing slowly along, and seals frolicked almost like children.

"I suppose we could go across here and come up to the eastward," Miss Holmes said. "This has been delightful. We keep to the beaten paths when we are alone, but on Sunday, with Mr. Chadsey, we make farther ventures. We must bring him here, Laverne, if we can remember the way."

"I'll make a diagram for you," he laughed. "I might have 'blazed a trail,'—isn't that what you Yankees call it? But there are so many beautiful roads. And farther down everything is lovelier still. I suppose the eastern world is quite different, with its long, cold winters."

"But to the southward we have pleasant lands, where there is not much winter, and where vegetation is almost as wonderful as here, where roses bloom and tropical fruit ripens. Oh, the Atlantic has many fine points and great cities."

149

"I should like to see them. I hope some day to travel round the whole world. Miss Laverne, don't you want to go to India?"

"I don't know," and she made a little gesture of aversion. "Uncle Jason has been to many of the seaport towns. And he did not like the natives over well. He thinks them indolent and cruel and all that. And there are tigers and poisonous snakes—no, I do not think I want to go."

"I should like to talk with your uncle. You know we larger boys are studying up curious vestiges of the old civilizations and races. There were people here before the Indians, and it is supposed they came across Behring Strait from Asia."

She opened her eyes wide.

"Why, I thought the Indians were the first race."

"They must have driven out some other people, or driven them down to Mexico, perhaps. But I suppose girls don't need to know all this;" and he laughed. "Oh, look at this picture before we go."

The curve of the path down toward the rocky shore made a striking perspective. There was no wind, but the far-off waves had a golden crest that came nearer and nearer, as if bearing the treasures of the Orient; the air was full of spice and sweetness; wild grape, fern, cedar, and pine, fluttering butterflies, almost like small birds, made swift dazzles, or seemed to hang poised in the still air as if considering which way to take. The sea was marvellously blue, so was the sky overhead, but round the edges where it touched the sea there was a soft gray mistiness, here whitening, there taking on an azure tint.

150

He was mysteriously touched by beauty, though he was a whole-hearted boy, and occasionally dipped into fun of the unorthodox sort. Who could help it in such a wild country?

Miss Holmes nodded, she, too, was deeply moved. They turned about, the road was narrow and carpeted, one might say, with countless wild roses, flaming lilies, others as yellow as the palest sulphur color; little juniper trees, with their pale green shoots that had never yet seen sunshine; blackberry vines, that were in bloom at least six months of the year, with their starry crowns, and berries of all ripening colors. The horses kicked them aside, they were meet food for the birds.

They came farther inland through tall woods, great stretches of wild oats and barley, meadows that would presently be brown with burnt roots of vanished things. Here and there an adobe house, small children playing about in cotton shirts, and shouting with the same riotous glee that informed the bird's song.

Pelajo gave a whinny as they came in sight of the house that looked as if set among the rocks. Bruno rushed out. Balder gave a cry of welcome. They had all missed the little girl, who talked to them in a language they understood and loved.

"I hardly know how to thank you for such a delightful day," Victor Savedra said, in his refined manner that was hearty as well. "I had not thought of so much pleasure when I came. And I do hope to return it. You see, I haven't felt quite like a stranger, Aunt Grace has talked of you so often. We all like her so much. And at first we felt quite startled at the thought of uncle marrying a Yankee woman," and he smiled, with a sort of gay retrospection. "Yet, she had been so good to the aunt that died. But it is largely in the cultivation, don't you think? Many of those first Eastern people were of good birth, and they were fine pioneers, we can't deny that. And we shall plan for you to come over on some Saturday with her and the girls, for I want you to see mother."

151

Miss Holmes thanked him cordially, and the little girl said the same thing with her eyes and her smile.

Yet, after she had made the round of her pets, had a splendid drink of water, and seen Pelajo munching his wisps of alfalfa—Pablo would not give him too much at a time—she came in and sat down in her favorite low chair, while Miss Holmes was making some supper preparations, beating-up an old-fashioned cake of which Uncle Jason was very fond, and that suggested to him the weekly bakings in the old ovens back in Maine.

The little girl was quiet so long that Miss Holmes said presently: "Are you very tired?"

"Oh, no; I was thinking," and for an instant the rosy lips were compressed. "Is it—do you think it

wrong to have secrets?"

Miss Holmes was alarmed and studied her anxiously.

"It depends on what they are, and with whom," she answered gravely.

"Long ago, when we first knew her, Olive Personette said girls always had secrets. They were mostly about other girls. And I only knew the Estenegas, and there wasn't anything about them except the queer old house and Carmen going to a convent. She didn't care about that. Then there was the party."

152

"Yes," encouragingly.

"Olive was very angry because—because her cousin was so nice to me."

Then the whole story came out, how Olive had scarcely taken any notice of her, and had her seat changed and played with the larger girls. But, after awhile, it had blown over, and now they were good friends again.

Miss Holmes had remarked an estrangement, but she was not in love with Olive herself, and had made no comment.

"I didn't want to tell Uncle Jason——"

"Oh, no, no," interrupted Miss Holmes quickly.

"And—I should have liked to know whether it was quite right to dance so much with Victor, but you see it was all done, and—and——"

"On the whole, you were a very discreet little girl. You did not know, of course. Olive should have been more attentive to her guests. That wasn't a very harmful secret, but I think your uncle would have been quite vexed with Olive."

"I was afraid he would," she returned gravely.

"It is better to keep a secret than to stir up strife," Miss Holmes remarked.

"But now there's another secret," and a look of distress clouded the fair face. "It's been such a lovely day. I didn't ever suppose he would come without the girls, but he has, and they do not know. Olive will be angry, I am afraid."

Miss Holmes smiled inwardly, so as not to pain Laverne. Even these little girls began to have troubles and jealousies about the boys. She had been in it herself during childhood, she had seen a great deal of it later on. And childhood should be such a sweet and simple thing—a season of pure enjoyment.

153

"I think you had better say nothing about to-day. I'll explain the matter sometime to Mrs. Personette."

"Oh, that will be splendid! It was just a glorious time, wasn't it? And I should be sorry to have it spoiled."

Her face was joyous again with relief.

"But I can tell Uncle Jason?"

"Oh, yes."

She would have felt much relieved if she had known that the young fellow went straight to the Personettes and found his aunt home alone. The girls were out driving with some friends.

"Aunt Grace," he said frankly, after the first courtesies had passed, "I've been up there on the hill where the Chadseys live, getting acquainted with the pets; and what an odd, pretty place it is. I like Miss Holmes very much. I wish Isola had just such a friend instead of that half-French governess. And Miss Laverne is a very charming little child, isn't she? Can't you bring them over some Saturday and I'll do my best to entertain you. I've told mother a good deal about them—well, so have you;" and he laughed with boyish gayety.

"Yes, I've been thinking of it. And now everything is at its best. I'll be over in a day or two and we will settle upon the time. I should like your mother to know Miss Holmes. And, oh, what a treat it will be for that little Laverne. She might almost as well be in a convent, but she is happy and bright as a lark. She's a really charming child, but it would be a pity to make an early 1800 girl out of her when we are passed the middle of the century."

154

They both laughed at the idea.

155

CHAPTER XI

IN THE SUNSHINE OF YOUTH

There was a great talk about hard times. Some discouraged people returned east, convinced there was just as good a chance for prosperity there. But the city went on laying out streets, paving some, erecting large business buildings, discarding old oil lamps, for now gas was introduced. And in April, a branch Mint was opened by the Government on Commercial Street, which had been a great necessity, though there had been allowed a private coining establishment. The payment of many transactions had been in gold dust or nuggets. There was also an earnest endeavor to awake interest in a through railroad service. The overland route was hazardous, painful, and expensive, that round the Horn tedious, and across the isthmus difficult.

There were also several filibustering expeditions that came to grief, and some quite noted citizens were tried and punished. Riots, too, were of frequent occurrence, but, on the whole, a spirit of improvement was visible everywhere. The long-neglected Plaza was regraded, a fence placed around it, a flagstaff raised, and it became quite a favorite resort, the drive around it being thronged by carriages on pleasant afternoons.

The Vigilance Committee had done good work and rendered the city much safer. Manufactures were started. True, coal had to be brought from some distance, and there was a great need of really skilled labor.

156

The little party that had taken the "Hazard of new fortunes" were prospering. Now and then Dick Folsom had been seized with a mining fever that had required all the ingenious arguments of his mother to combat. Then, seeing an opportunity, and having good backers in the Dawsons, she had opened a sort of Home Hotel that at once became a great favorite on account of its excellent bread and rolls, and now Dick had business enough on his hands, though it did not quench his longing for a more adventurous life.

Miss Gaines, too, had extended her borders. She had taken a place on an attractive street and opened a real business of dressmaking and millinery, and was largely patronized, Boston being considered really higher style than New York. Jacintha Vanegas had married, and Miss Gaines had persuaded the mother to sell her old house as the lot was needed for an important improvement. So Señora Vanegas came to keep house for her, and Felicia to be her right-hand woman.

"It's worlds better than teaching school," she explained to Miss Holmes. "When you once rise to a positive dictum in style, people give in to you and pay you any price. I'm not going to spend all my time on furbelows. After a few years I shall retire and take some journeys about the world. One of my cousins is anxious to come out and I shall send for her. As for marrying—I certainly shall not take a man to hang on to me, as one might easily every month in the year."

157

The hard times had touched Jason Chadsey rather severely, but he held up his head bravely. For he saw that San Francisco must be the brain of the outlying country. The treaty with Japan would open up new ventures. There was to be a line of mail steamers from San Francisco to Shanghai. And all up and down the coast from Puget Sound to the Isthmus vessels were plying, bringing the treasures of other lands.

The visit to Oaklands had been beautifully arranged. Mrs. Savedra had sent a written invitation to her sister-in-law, enclosing a note to Miss Holmes. They were to come early in the morning, at least the big carriage would meet the boat at ten. It was across the bay, to be sure, but only like a ferry.

Olive took upon herself the real significance of the visit. They were *her* relatives, not even her stepmother's. Her aunt was quite French still and talked with a pretty accent, and was really very charming, though she did not go much into society.

"Of course, you've seen Victor—you can't help liking him, you know. Isola is only a year younger, but she's a queer, fretful sort of girl, who always has a headache if she doesn't want to do the things you choose. Elena is a little witch, good and bad, sweet and sour all in a minute. Then some children died, and Andrea is a sweet, big, spoiled baby."

Laverne laughed.

"If Isola was like most girls we could have lots of fun. I hate half-sick people, don't you? I want them to be ill enough to stay in bed, or else able to have some fun. She plays beautifully on the organ, though, and the piano."

158

"Oh, I do love music," declared Laverne. "I could listen forever."

"Then you and she will get along. Victor will entertain Isabel, of course. You can't have him all the time," with a touch of malice.

Laverne turned scarlet.

Up and down the bay seemed alive with vessels of every kind and degree, and some sailboats keeping out of the way of the larger craft.

Victor had the big family carriage with its three seats.

"I'm going to sit with the driver," announced Olive.

Victor assisted the ladies in, expressing his pleasure that it was a fine day and that they could all come. The two handsome horses flung up their heads and pawed the ground a little. They went somewhat south-easterly, passed the streets that already had quite a city aspect, and then turned into a road bordered with magnificent trees and almost paved with great violets of all colors, and farther back a wild profusion of bloom. Geraniums like small trees, brilliant in scarlet, rose, and pink. Magnificent palms, shining olive trees, and oranges that had been cultivated to perfection. Laverne drew long breaths of the perfumed air.

All at the southern side was an immense garden. At the north it was protected by a great belt of woods. How different from their rocky mound, but she recalled the fact that Victor had found some points to admire.

The mansion was broad and low, the centre reaching up two stories with a sharp peak, the wings but one story. A porch ran the whole length of it, shaded by heliotrope trained as a vine and full of purple bloom, and passion flowers in lavender, purplish red and white, with touches of grayish purple. These climbed over lattices, leaving spaces between that looked like French windows reaching to the ground. It was really a succession of rooms. Easy chairs, lounging chairs (one on wheels for Isola when she felt indisposed for walking), small tables with books and papers, or a work-basket, and down one end a large one with various dishes of fruit. 159

Mrs. Savedra welcomed them in a most cordial manner. She was hardly medium height; indeed, she looked short beside these taller women. Her black hair was a bed of ripples with curling ends, her eyes a soft dusky black, and her complexion a rather pale sort of olive with a dash of color in the cheeks.

Victor could hardly be said to resemble her, and yet he had taken some of her best points.

Isola stood beside her mother, almost as tall, but slim as a willow wand, and sallow as to complexion, with a deep shade under the eyes. Her hair was a duller tint, and her eyes a gleam that in some lights would have a suggestion of yellow.

There were also two young gentlemen—one a visitor who had come with his father on some business, the other a schoolmate of Victor's that the Personette girls had met before, Vance Lensam. Louis Alvarado was older than either of them, a handsome young fellow, with blue black hair and eyes that seemed to look through one.

Victor had asked his friend Vance, so that, he said laughingly, his cousins would not pull him to pieces. 160

"And this is the little girl we have heard about, who took the long, long journey around Cape Horn," Mrs. Savedra said, holding her small fair hand and glancing smilingly into the deep blue eyes. "I took one journey from New Orleans with my husband, and it seemed endless, though we had many pleasures by the way and some dangers. Once we lost our way and had to sleep in the woods, and we heard the wolves howl."

"There were no wolves on shipboard and we couldn't get lost," returned the child, in a soft tone.

"Oh, you might have been blown out of your course by a storm," commented Victor.

"I think we were once or twice. But they all said it was an exceptional passage," returned his aunt.

Then they were seated on the porch while the maids took their hats and mantles, for one never quite knew when a strong west wind would come up. And for a few moments there was a confusion of pleasant voices. The servant brought a great stone pitcher of delightful fruit beverage and filled the glasses. It was ice-cold and most grateful. There were some queer crispy cakes with scalloped edges that were very nice, Laverne thought.

The elders began to talk on the subjects of the day. There was never any lack of news in the various papers, though there were few telegraph connections and no cables to flash around the world. Vance Lensam came round to Isabel's side. He had been to the theatre a few nights before and seen a remarkable young actress, Miss Heron, in the play of "Fazio," and it was superb.

"I want so to go to the theatre," declared Isabel. "Father will not allow us, he declares it is no place for young people." 161

"Anybody might see this play, I think. And the audiences have grown more respectful and respectable. We are getting to be quite a staid and orderly city," and he laughed with a little irony.

"And just as soon as a girl is married she can go anywhere," Isabel declared.

"With her husband—yes."

"And I want to go to a real ball. I have outgrown children's parties. Oh, there are to be some splendid picnics when school closes. I hope we can go. Mother has so many engagements all the time. We ought to have a summer governess."

"That would be a good idea. One as manageable as the Señorita's," and he half nodded in Isola's direction.

"But she never wants to do anything worth while. Oh, dear, it isn't a nice thing never to be real

well."

"No, I wouldn't like it."

"Do you know that Mr. Alvarado?"

"I only met him yesterday. They are Spanish Cubans, I believe."

"Come down and talk to him. Oh, I do get on so slowly with French and Spanish. Mother wishes she could send me to a good Eastern school, where they make girls study."

"You wouldn't like it?" enquiringly.

"Do they lock them up and keep them on bread and water, or beat them? I'd like to see the teacher who could make me study."

"Are you so very obstreperous?" he laughed.

"I don't see the use of so much of it. You marry, and that's the end of learning. But I wish I was a good French scholar. I was quite ashamed the other night. Father had a French visitor come in about something, and he didn't understand English very well, so he asked me to translate, and I couldn't."

162

"Moral!" Vance said sententiously.

They had been moving slowly down to the young man, who now gave them a nod of welcome, and began to air his rather lame English.

The nurse brought out the baby, a charming child of four, and Laverne's face lighted up with joy.

"You are fond of babies," said the mother, in a glad tone.

"Oh, yes, and there are so few of them, except the dirty street children."

"Where is Lena?" asked Olive.

"One can never tell for five minutes where she is," said the mother.

"I'm going to hunt her up; she's such fun."

But Olive went no further than the group shaded by the passion vine, and the four were in the midst of something amusing, to judge by their merry laughs.

"Why, I didn't know Alvarado could be so gay," declared Victor. "He doesn't talk very well, and last night I hardly knew how to entertain him. His father is to send him North to one of the cities in the autumn. We need some of this work here, high schools and colleges."

"That will come. Think how young you are. I am amazed at the progress," declared Mrs. Personette.

"I suppose San Francisco is an old, young city. The Americanos have really overpowered us. But, Aunt Grace, did you ever stand in the street a few moments and listen to the jargon? You can imagine what the Tower of Babel must have been. I think we have gathered all the nations of the earth within our borders. And the Chinese are the oddest. Oh, mother, I am glad you were not a Chinese woman."

163

"I think your father would not have been allowed to marry me," she said smilingly. "And I did not know a word of English then. I had been in a convent. We thought it a barbarous tongue."

"It's going to conquer the world some day."

"Will everybody speak English, do you think?" and Laverne glanced up. The baby's arms were tight about her neck.

"Oh, baby!" cried the mother. "Nurse, you had better take him."

It was funny to hear the baby scold in French.

"Victor, you might take the little girl—Laverne, is it not? and show her the garden. I heard about your pets. You must have a charm."

Laverne smiled. They walked down the porch and Victor paused a moment to invite his friends to join them. They did not at once, but the two kept on. They turned down a wide alley, under some orange trees. The late blossoms had fruited, the early ones been killed by the unusual frost of the winter.

"Oh, it is so beautiful, so very beautiful!" she exclaimed, with almost the poignancy of joy. "I never supposed there was all this beauty such a little distance from us. Why didn't they come over here and build the city?"

"You will not ask that twenty years from this time. San Francisco will be one of the great cities of the world, the gateway of the Western coast, the link of everything splendid! Think of the Golden Gate, of the magnificent bay, where no enemy could touch a ship. And that rocky coast, a defence in itself."

164

"Twenty years," she repeated musingly. "Why, I shall be quite an old woman," and a look almost

of terror flashed up in her face.

He laughed at her dismay. "I am not quite seventeen. Then I shall be thirty-seven, and I hope to have a home and be just as happy as my father is, and shall endeavor to be just as prosperous. But I wouldn't want you to call me an old man."

She flushed under his eager eyes.

"Everything grows finer here than in San Francisco. Even at the Estenegas it was not luxuriant like this."

"For fifteen years father has had it cultivated. There are two gardeners working all the time. He is so fond of beautiful things—trees, and flowers, and birds. No one is allowed to molest them. Oh, listen!"

They both stood still. She clasped her hands, and her eyes were lucent with mistiness.

"Oh," she cried, "it is like this:

"How they seemed to fill the sea and air,
With their sweet jargoning."

Certainly they were a gay and happy lot, singing for the very love of melody, it seemed. Then they passed masses of flowers, beautiful groups of trees again, wound around unexpected corners.

165

"I wonder you found anything to praise up there on the hill," she said in a low, rather disheartened tone.

"Oh, I came to see you, and the gull, and Snippy, and to have the nice ride. And I did have a fine day. Now, you are not going to envy your neighbor's garden!"

"Why, no; I wouldn't want to take it away if I could, for there are so many of you to enjoy it, you see, and only so few of us."

"And your uncle will be rich enough to give you everything you want some day."

She had never thought about his being that.

A sudden shower of olives dropped down upon them like a great pelting rain.

"Oh, Elena, where are you, you little witch! Ah, I see you. Shall I shake you down out of the tree?"

A gay, rippling laugh mocked him.

"Lena, come down. The little girl is here who has the squirrel named Snippy, and the gull."

"I thought it was Olive. I was going to crown her with her namesakes. Why did they give her that name, like hard, bitter fruit?"

"Why are girls named Rose and Lily?"

"Oh, they are pretty names, and sweet."

"Well, you see, no one consulted me about it. Please, come down."

She laughed again, like the shivering of glass that made a hundred echoes. Then there was a rustling among the branches, and a lithe figure stood before them, looking as if she might fly the next moment.

"Lena! Lena!" and Victor caught her by the shoulder. "What did you promise this very morning—that you wouldn't torment Olive, but behave discreetly."

166

"This isn't Olive," and she gave her elfin laugh.

"But you meant it for Olive. This is the little girl who lives over on the rock, where we go to see the seals and the great flocks of birds. You know I told you of her."

Elena stared at the visitor. She had a curious, gypsy-like brilliance, with her shining, laughing mischievous eyes and the glow in her cheeks. She was very dark, a good deal from living in the sun, and not a bad-looking child either. And now an odd, coquettish smile flashed over the eyes, mouth, and chin, and was fascinating in its softness. She held out her hand.

"Victor likes you so much," she said, and Victor flushed at the betrayal of confidence he had used to persuade her into cordiality. "I think I shall like you, too. Let us run a race. If I beat you, you must like me the most and do just as I say, and if you beat I will be just like your slave all day long."

"No, Lena. You must not do any such thing."

"She is like a little snail then! She is afraid!" and the black eyes flashed mirth as well as insolence.

"I am not afraid." Laverne stood up very straight, a bright red rose blooming on each cheek. "Where to?" she asked briefly.

"Down to the fig trees."

"Will you count three?" Laverne asked of Victor.

He smiled and frowned.

"Count!" she insisted authoritatively.

They started like a flash, the shadows dancing on the path. Elena gained. Victor grew angry, and came after them; then Laverne gave a sudden swift swirl and turned on her antagonist.

167

Lena stopped with a laugh. She was not angry.

"How you can run!" she exclaimed. "I wish you lived here. We would have races twenty times a day. And—can you climb trees?"

"Oh, yes."

"And swim?"

"No," admitted Laverne frankly.

"Then you can't do everything that I can."

"And she can do something you cannot. She can read French and Spanish, while you really can't read English; she can do sums and write letters, and—and sew," he was guessing at accomplishments now.

"There are the women to sew."

"But you might be wrecked on an island where there were no women, and tear your frocks, as you generally do."

Laverne smiled. How find a needle and thread on a desolate island? Lena did not see the point, and looked rather nonplussed.

"Oh, well, I shouldn't care then," she retorted.

"Come, let us go to the aviary. Miss Laverne will like to see the birds."

There was a large space netted in from tree to tree in which there were many rare birds of most exquisite plumage, and quantities of tiny South American love birds, gossiping with each other in low, melodious tones.

"Oh, how wonderful!" Laverne exclaimed.

"It's a great fancy of father's. Sea captains bring him birds from all countries. After a while, when they get really acclimated and can protect themselves, he lets them out to settle in the woods about. Do you see those two with the beautiful long tails? They came from the island of Java. Do you know where that is?"

168

"Oh, it is one of the Sunda Islands down by the Indian Ocean. Uncle Jason has been to Borneo and Sumatra. And coffee comes from Java."

"How do you know? Have you been there?" questioned Elena.

"Father knows, and he has not been there," returned Victor. "He could tell you a good many things if you did not like to learn them out of books."

Laverne walked round the inclosure in a trance of delight. And though the voices now and then made discord, on the whole it was a fascinating orchestra.

"Couldn't you tame some of them?"

"It would take a long time, I think. Those bright Brazilian birds are very wild. Every one cannot charm birds, and father is a pretty busy man."

Elena soon tired of the birds, and inquired if Laverne had a pony. Then they might ride after luncheon.

"And it must be nearly that now. Come, let us go up to the house."

Elena chattered like a magpie, and danced about, now and then hopping on one foot, and running to and fro.

"You will think we are a rather queer lot," Victor said, half in apology.

"Oh, *you* are not queer. I like you very much." She raised her clear, innocent eyes, and it seemed a very sweet compliment to him.

"There isn't much training. Mamacita could not govern a cat, though, for that matter, I don't believe cats are easily governed. Cats are queer things. But school straightens up one, I suppose. Elena will go to a convent to be trained presently. Isola cannot, so she has a governess to teach her music and a few things. You must hear her play on the organ. All she cares about is music."

169

"Is she very ill?"

"Oh, not very, I think. But she won't ride, which the doctor thinks would be good for her, and she goes about in that wheeling chair when she ought to walk, and lies in the hammock. Mamacita would like her to be gay and bright and entertaining to the young men, as Isabel is, because all girls are expected to marry. Mamacita was only fifteen when papa met her at a ball at New Orleans. That must be a very gay place, without the crime and rough life that San Francisco has. I do hope sometime we will be civilized, and not have to take in the off-scourings of all lands. I want it to be a splendid city, like Rome on its seven hills. And there is the grand sea outlook that Rome did not have, though she made herself mistress of the seas."

The little girl watched him with such intelligent eyes that it was a great satisfaction to talk to her. She was different from any one he had known. For those of the Southern blood were coquettes from their very cradle, and wanted to talk of pleasure only. Of course, she was being brought up by a great traveller, even if he had never risen higher than mate of a trading vessel. And then the eastern women were somehow different.

Elena ran on, and announced with a shout "that they were coming." The porch was set out with little tables. Mrs. Personette was the matron of the one that had her daughters and the two young men. Mrs. Savedra took charge of Elena and Isola, and left Miss Holmes to Laverne and Victor.

170

There were flowers and fruits, dainty summer viands, and much gay chatting, since they were near enough to interchange with each other. Laverne was very enthusiastic about the aviary.

"Oh, you must go out and see it," she said eagerly.

Victor was thinking of the great difference between Miss Holmes and Mam'selle Claire. Of course, she could talk about musicians, she seemed to have them at her tongue's end, and some French writers. He was not of an age to appreciate them; young, energetic souls were quoting Carlyle, even Emerson had crept out here on the Western coast. In a way there was a good deal of politics talked, and a rather bitter feeling against the East for turning so much of the cold shoulder to them. Even the suggestion of war with England over the northern boundary did not seem very stirring to these people. It was their own advancement, the appreciation of all they held in their hands, the wonderful possibilities of the Oriental trade. And though it seemed quite necessary to study French, when there were so many French citizens, the young fellow considered the literature rather effeminate. But Miss Holmes was conversant with the march of the Carthaginian general over the Alps, and later, that of Napoleon, and the newer scheme that had set their wisdom at naught, and that the railroad was a necessity if the Union was not to part in the middle. He liked Miss Holmes' admiration of California. Mam'selle Claire thought it rude and rough.

171

There was lounging in the hammocks afterward, the sun was too hot to drive about. Isola went in the room presently, and played some soft, low chords on the organ. Laverne crept in, enchanted. She liked the voluntaries in church when they had no grand crushes in them. Victor was talking with Miss Holmes, so she slipped away, for Elena had found the quiet irksome, and there were always dogs to play with. The dogs she thought better company than most people.

Laverne had never been near an organ. This was not a very large one, but sweet-toned for parlor use. She crept nearer and nearer, and almost held her breath, while the tears came to her eyes. It seemed the sad story of some one, the story the ocean waves told at times, or the wind in the trees, when twilight was falling, and now it was darkness, and you could almost hear the stars pricking through the blue. Then one faint call of a bird, and a far-off answer, and lower, lower, until the sound wandered away and was lost.

"Oh," she breathed, "oh!"

"You like it?"

Laverne drew a long breath. "Oh, that isn't the word," she said. "We may like a good many things, but they do not all go to your heart."

Isola took the fair face in both hands, which were cold, but the child did not shrink, she was still so impressed with the melody.

"Let me look at you. Oh, what beautiful eyes you have—sometimes you find that color in the sky. But music goes to the soul, the brain, and I wish I could see yours. Did you feel as if you could swoon away?"

172

"I wanted to cry," Laverne said, in a tremulous tone. "But it was not from sorrow nor joy; you sometimes do cry when you are full of delight, but—at times when I hear the right music in church, I think that is what heaven will be like."

"What was that like—not heaven?"

"It was night when I am sitting out on the step, and not thinking, but just watching the stars come out."

"Oh, you little darling. I wish you could stay here always. I wish they, your people, would fancy Elena, and we could change. She laughs, and it goes through me like a bolt of lightning, and leaves me numb. I'd like to have some one who listens that way. Mam'selle declares the playing is wrong because I do not follow the notes, and one day when she insisted, I flung myself down on

the floor and cried until I was sick. And now I am let to play what I like most of the time. I hate books—do you like to study dry, prosy things? What does it matter whether the world is round or square?"

"Why, it might not revolve in quite the right way, and I guess the ships couldn't sail as well." She smiled at the thought of the corners.

"Now, we will have morning."

First it was a wind rustling among the trees. The sort of metallic swish of the evergreens, the whisper of the pines, the patter of the oaks; then a bird singing somewhere, another answering, hardly awake; young ones peeping a hungry cry, then a gay, swinging, dashing chorus, with a merry lark going higher and higher, until he was out of hearing. Sounds growing discordant, impatient, harsh.

173

"That's the world," she explained; "morning down on the bay; the people working, scolding, swearing; don't you hate all that?"

"We are not near enough to hear it."

"But if you have heard it once you can imagine it. And some music isn't much better. Mam'selle plays things that set my teeth on edge. Do you know what your soul is?"

Laverne was startled. "Why," hesitatingly, "it is the part that goes to heaven."

"Well—heaven must be sweet and soft and fair, if it is full of angels. And why don't we keep to the soft and lovely sides of everything if we are to go there. Is kneeling on a hard stone floor in a convent at all like heaven?"

"I should think not."

"Mam'selle considers it useful discipline. Why, it is being dead to be shut up in a cold, dark cell. And I think you are taken up in strong, tender arms, and wafted above the clouds, like this——"

Then she began to play again. The sound stole along softly, halting a little, murmuring, comforting, entreating, floating on and on to sounds so sweet that the tears did overflow Laverne's eyes, and yet she was not crying.

Victor glanced through the wide doorway.

"Why, that child has even found a way to Isola's heart," he said.

"I have been listening. Your sister is really a musical genius," Miss Holmes replied.

174

CHAPTER XII

NEW EXPERIENCES

Mr. Savedra came home early to have a share in the guests. It was pleasant now for riding and driving, for the wind was coming from the ocean, and wafting with it the inspiration that started the pulses afresh. There were ponies and saddle horses. Laverne must ride.

"I will go if she can sit by me in the carriage," said Isola.

Laverne gave a quick breath. She would rather have had the mount, but the almost melancholy eyes decided her. She held out her hand with a smile, and she saw that it pleased Mr. Savedra also.

Victor had a little of his mother, but he had taken most of his good looks from his father.

"Aunt Grace, won't you go with them?" he said persuasively. "I want Miss Holmes. Both of us will be needed to keep watch of this monkey."

"As if I didn't go alone often and often!" Elena retorted, wrinkling up her face in a funny fashion.

They took their way to the eastward, and were soon in the open country, with the great Sierra Range towering in the distance. Summer had not scorched up the fields or the woods. Hill and valley were spread out before them, here glowing with flowers, there still green with herbage, where Mexican shepherds were letting their flocks browse. Some pastures had been eaten off to the roots and glistened in golden bronze. Tangles of wild grapes, with their pungent fragrance, reaching up and climbing over clumps of trees. The far-off points seemed to touch the very sky that was like a great sea with drifts one could imagine were an array of ships bound to some wondrous port. Laverne thought of the weird experiences of the "Ancient Mariner."

175

Yellow wings, blues of every shade, black and gold and iridescent, dashed here and there or floated lazily as if the butterfly had no body.

Isola held the child's hand, but did not say anything, she hated exclamations. Mrs. Savedra smiled to herself, she knew her daughter was enjoying her companion. Laverne felt half mesmerized by the hand that had been cold at first, and was now gently throbbing with some human warmth. She seemed to have gone into a strange country.

The sun set gorgeously as they were returning. There was a tempting supper spread for them, and some lanterns were lighted at the edge of the porch. Then Mr. Savedra insisted upon sending the party home in the carriage.

"I hope you have had a nice time, Laverne," Mrs. Personette said, in a most cordial tone. "I don't know what the Savedras will do with that daughter. I'd like to shake her up out of that dreaminess. She'll be in a consumption next. As for you two girls, I think you have had your fill of attention to-day," and she laughed. "You have a stepmother out of a thousand, and I hope you will never do her any discredit." 176

They certainly had enjoyed their day wonderfully, never imagining Victor had planned it so that he could be left at liberty.

The little girl sat out under the rose vine that trailed over their little porch, thinking of the beautiful house, the garden, the grounds, the birds, and, oh, the organ with its bewildering music.

"An organ must cost a good deal," she said, in a grave tone, but there was no longing in it. "And then if you couldn't play—I like the things that are not tunes, that just go on when you don't know what is coming next, and the voices of the birds and the sound of the waves and all sweet things. It was like fairyland, only I don't believe fairyland could be quite so satisfying, and this is all real and won't vanish when you wake up." She laughed tenderly in her joy. "Mr. Savedra must be very rich," she continued.

"Yes, he is," said Uncle Jason.

She leaned her head down on the broad breast where the heart beat for her alone.

"And you had a happy day?"

"Oh, so happy. If you had been there!"

She should have all these things some day. He was working and saving for her. And times had changed very much. He and her mother could have been happy in a little cottage where the sharp north winds rushed down, and the drifts of snow hedged one in half the winter. She busy about household work, he wresting scanty crops from the grudging earth. Yet if she could have seen a world like this! Well, the little one should have it all, and see strange lands and no end of beautiful things, for the world kept improving all the time. 177

He began to feel a good deal more secure about her. At first, when he saw men from every State in the Union, men who had committed various crimes, tramps, and scamps, he had a vague fear that somewhere among them David Westbury would come to light. He would not know him, only the name. And he wished now he had changed his in this new western world. But he would know nothing about the child unless he went to the old home, and that was hardly likely. But if some day, stepping off a vessel or wandering around the docks, a man should clap him on the shoulder and say, "Hello, Chadsey, old man, I never thought to find you here!" he would shake him off, or pay his way somewhere else.

It had never happened, and was not likely to now. He could go on planning this delightful life for the little girl. Presently they would make another move, have a better house and finer furniture. He had lost nothing through this snap of hard times, neither had he made, but business looked brighter. Occasionally he had a longing to go to the mines. Several times he had dreamed of finding a great nugget, and once he dreamed that in stumbling over rocks and wilds, he had lost her. Night came on and all through the darkness he called and called, and woke with great drops of cold perspiration streaming down his brow. No, he could not go to the gold fields and leave her behind. 178

The weeks and months passed on. There was vacation when she went over to Oaklands, and had splendid times again, and was fascinated by Isola and her music, and they took up a peculiar friendship that seemed to rouse the dreamy girl and delight Mrs. Savedra. Then Mrs. Personette was going down to Monterey with her two girls for a fortnight, and nothing would do but Miss Holmes and Laverne should accompany them. It was not the Monterey of forty years later, but a queer old Spanish town with its convent, where they found Carmencita Estenega, who did not look like a joyous, happy girl, though next year she was to be married.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mrs. Personette; "it seems the same thing everywhere, just lovers and marriage. There is really no career for girls here but that, and the convent people are as anxious to marry them off as any one else. To be sure, they can become sisters, which covers the obloquy of old maidism. And so many of the husbands are not worth having, and desert their wives on the slightest pretext. I'd counted on taking some comfort with my girls, but here is Isabel considering every young man as a matrimonial subject, wanting to leave school and go into society, and her father saying, 'Why not?'"

Miss Holmes smiled a little.

"We used to think a girl ought to look at marriage in a serious light, and get ready for the important step; now it is fine clothes, an engagement ring, and a wedding gown. But I suppose in this wonderful land where your fruit buds, and blossoms, and ripens in a night, girls do mature sooner."

179

Some weeks later she saw her friend again and announced that she had been compelled to yield.

"Isabel would not go to school," she said. "If there had been a good boarding school anywhere near, I should have pleaded hard for that. But her father would not listen to her being sent East. She has a smattering of several branches. She can converse quite fluently in French and Spanish, she dances with grace and elegance, she has correct ideas of the fitness of things that are certainly attractive, and is quick at repartee. She reads the fashion magazines when they arrive, and the newspaper bits of arranging a table, cooking odd dishes, giving luncheons and dinners. She is really a fashionable young lady. And we are to give a ball for her, and after that I must see that she is properly chaperoned. My dear Marian, we *do* belong to the past generation, there is no denying it. And I half envy you that you can live out of the hurly-burly."

"I am glad myself," Miss Holmes returned. "So far as most things go, we could be living in some quaint old Puritan town. I don't know whether it is really best for the child, but it suits her uncle to have it so. Now she is going over to the Savedras two afternoons a week to study piano music. They think Isola improves by the companionship. And those French children, the Verriers, are very nice and trusty. They are up here quite often. She likes some of her schoolmates very well, and she and Olive have friendly spells," laughing.

"Olive blows hot and cold. She takes up a girl with a certain vehement preference and for a while can think of no one else. Then she finds her friend has some faults, or fails in two or three points, and she is on with a new admiration. Girls are crude, funny creatures! Do you suppose we were like them?" she questioned with laughing, disavowing eyes.

180

"No, we were not," returned Marian. "Times have changed. Life and its demands have changed. We were taught to sew, to darn, to do fine needlework; here a Mexican or a Spanish woman will do the most exquisite work for a trifle. Every country lays its treasures at our feet; it would be folly to spin and to weave. And there is money to buy everything with. How careful we were of a bit of lace that our grandmother had! The women of the street flaunt in yards and yards of it, handsomer than we could ever have achieved. We are on the other side of the country, and are topsy-turvy. We have begun at the big end of everything. Whether we are to come out at the little end——" and she paused, her eyes indecisive in their expression.

"Would you like to go back?"

"I'd like to see dear old, proper Boston, and really feel how much we had changed. But the breadth and freedom here are fascinating. It has not the hardships of new settlers. Even the men who sleep out on the foothills with the blue sky for covering may be rich six months hence, and putting up fine buildings. And when you come to that there is no lack of intelligence. Haven't we some of the best brain and blood of the East, as well as some of the worst? Our papers are teeming with news, with plans, with business schemes, that would craze an Eastern man. No, I do not believe I should be satisfied to take up the old life there again."

181

"And now I must consider my daughter's entrée into society. Think of the mothers in the old novels, who took their daughters to Bath or to London, and looked over the list of eligibles and made two or three selections. Our young women will select for themselves in a half-mercenary fashion, and one can't altogether blame them. Poverty is not an attractive subject."

Miss Holmes was out for a little shopping expedition, and went in her friend's carriage. Every year saw great changes. Fire destroyed only to have something grander rise from the ashes. There was already an imposing line of stores, and a display of fabrics that roused envy and heart-burning. Where there had been one-story shanties filled with the miscellany of a country store, only a few years ago, now all things were systematized and compared well with some Eastern towns, not as much, but certainly as great a variety. It had taken San Francisco only a few years to grow up. She sprang from childhood to full stature.

Then one drove round the Plaza to Russ's, mingling in the gay cavalcade until a stranger might have considered it a gala day of some sort. Then to Winn's for luncheon, tickets, perhaps, to the theatre where Laura Keene was drawing full houses of better-class people.

The little girl was not in much of this. She went to school regularly; she found some very congenial friends. She never could tell how much she liked Olive, and she was accustomed to be taken up with fervor and then dropped with a suddenness that might have dislocated most regards, and would if she had set her heart on Olive. She had a serene sort of temperament not easily ruffled; she had brought that from Maine with her. She talked over her lessons with Uncle Jason, who seemed to know so many things, more she thought than Miss Holmes, though she had taught school in Boston.

182

She had a host of squirrel friends now, though Snippy was amusingly jealous, and at times drove the others off. There were flocks of birds, too, who would hop up close or circle round her and occasionally light on her shoulder, and sing deafeningly in her ear, trills and roulades, such as Mam'selle played on the piano—she was not so fond of the organ, it was fit only for church and convents in the Frenchwoman's estimation.

It was funny to see Balder follow her about. During the rainy season he found so many puddles in which to stop and rest and disport himself, but in the dry times they filled a tub for him, and he was content. Pablo caught fish for him, and it was his opinion that Balder lived like some grand Señor. She never tired of the flowers, and was always finding stray nooks where they bloomed. She and Miss Holmes often went over to the ocean and sat on the rocks, looking, wondering.

"Sometime Uncle Jason is going to take me way over yonder," nodding her head. "We shall go to the Sandwich Islands, which he says are still more beautiful than California. And then to China. Perhaps then all the gates of Japan will be open and they will let us in. I'd like to see the little girls in Japan; they don't drown them there, they never have too many. And then there will be India, and all those queer islands. You wouldn't think there would be room for Australia, which is almost a continent by itself, would you? The world is very wonderful, isn't it?"

183

Sometimes they watched magnificent sunsets when the whole Pacific seemed aflame with gorgeous tints, for which there could be no name, for they changed as quick as thought. Then they noted a faint pearl-gray tint just edging the horizon line, it seemed, and then spreading out in filmy layers, growing more distinct and yet darker, marching on like an army. Gulls circled and screamed, great loons and murrees gave their mournful cry, cormorants swept on, hardly stirring a wing until, with one swift lurch, they went down and came up triumphant. Then the sky and sea faded, though you knew the sea was there because it dashed upon the rocks, though its tone was curiously muffled.

"Come," Miss Holmes would say, "we shall be caught in the fog."

"I'd just like to be damp and cold. It has been so dry that one wants to be wet through and through."

"We shall have to pick our way."

It would sometimes come up very fast, woolly, soft to the skin, at others like a fine cutting mist, when the west wind drove it in. And now it was all gray like a peculiar twilight that made ghosts out of the rocks, piled about and shut out the Golden Gate and the peaks beyond, but they drew long breaths of the sea fragrance that were reviving. The ponies stepped carefully down this way, and across that level, and then on the road Pablo was making for his mistress. The ponies shook their heads and whinnied for very gladness. Bruno gave his cheerful bark. Balder made a funny grumbling noise as if he were scolding.

184

"Oh, you know you like the fog. You are dripping wet," with a hug of tenderness.

They were dripping wet, too, but they soon found dry clothes. Miss Holmes kindled up the fire, for Pablo kept them well supplied, though sometimes he went long distances and came home with a great bundle on his back that almost bent him double.

"Now you look just like a German peasant," Laverne would declare; and Pablo would shake his head mysteriously. The young Missy had seen so many wonderful things.

Wood was a rather scarce article in this vicinity, and was expensive. Coal likewise, though now some had been discovered nearer home. The charcoal venders were familiar figures in the streets. Wild indeed would he have been who had ventured to predict a gas range, even the useful kerosene stove.

The fog storms were all they would have for a time in the summer, and it was wonderful how in a night vegetation would start up.

Then Uncle Jason would come in puffing and blowing, fling off his long, wet coat, and stand before the fire and declare that Maine people said:

"An August fog would freeze a dog,"

which always made Laverne laugh.

Miss Holmes did not go to the ball given in honor of Miss Isabel Personette, but Miss Gaines was among the grown people. It was at one of the fine halls used for such purposes, and was beautifully decorated with vines and flowers and American flags. The greatest curiosity was the really splendid chandelier with its branching burners and glittering prisms. Few of the real boy friends were invited—there were enough young men very glad to come and dance their best. No one had to entreat them in those days. Indeed, dancing parties were the great entertainment for young people. True, women played cards and lost and won real money, but it was done rather privately and not considered the thing for any but the seniors.

185

It was very gay and delightful, quite an ovation to Miss Personette, and the banquet part eminently satisfactory to the elders. Of course, Victor Savedra was included, being a cousin, and went, and it brought freshly to his mind the party when he had danced with the sweet, fair-haired, little girl, who had no knowledge, but infinite grace, and how happy she had been.

Even with politics, city improvements, vigilance committees, quarrels, and crimes, there was found space in the papers of the day for the social aspects of life, and though "sweet girl graduates" had not come in fashion, débutantes were graciously welcomed. Miss Isabel felt much elated. She had shot up into a tall girl and was very well looking. Miss Gaines had transformed her into beauty.

Olive considered it very hard and cruel that she could not go, but she was quite a heroine at school for several days. It was truly the next thing to a wedding.

"And to think of all the splendid things that come to real young ladies!" she complained, yet there was a kind of pride in her tone as well. "Two theatre parties, and she goes to Sausalito to a birthday ball, and stays three days with some very stylish English people, friends of father's. I just hate being thought a little schoolgirl! And I want to go to the Seminary."

186

And then she said to Laverne:

"I don't see what you find in Isola to be so devoted to her. I wouldn't go over there twice a week and bother with her for all the music in the world. And those cold hands of hers make you shiver. They're like a frog."

"They have grown warmer. She goes to ride every day now. And we read French and English, and —verses. I like the music so much."

Olive was still secretly jealous of Victor. But presently he was going away to finish his education. And she knew several boys who went to the Academy that she thought much more fun. Victor was growing too sober, too intellectual.

They had all become very fond of the little girl at the Savedras. Even wild Elena, in a half-bashful way, copied her. She could run races and climb and ride the pony with the utmost fearlessness, she did not squeal over bugs and mice and the little lizards that came out to sun themselves. Lena had thrown one on her, and she had never told of it. She was not a bit like Isola, although she could sit hours over the music and reading of verses. And she knew so much of those queer countries where tigers and lions and elephants lived.

"But you have never been there," the child said with severe disbelief.

"You study it in books and at school."

187

"I hate to study!"

"You will love it when you are older. Some day your father may take you to France, and then you will want to know the language."

"I know a little of it, enough to talk."

"Mam'selle will be glad to teach you the rest."

"And Spanish—I knew that first."

"And I had to learn it, and French, with a good deal of trouble."

"But you knew English," rather jealously.

"Just as you knew Spanish—in my babyhood."

That seemed very funny, and Lena laughed over it.

"Then you really were a baby, just like Andrea, only whiter. Will your hair always be goldy like that?"

"I think so. Uncle Jason likes it."

She asked dozens of inconsequent questions.

"You must not let her trouble you so much," Mrs. Savedra said. "She will have more sense as she grows older."

Laverne only smiled a little.

Isola found her such a companion, such a listener as she had never known before. Isabel did not care for music; Olive teased her, and she put her stolid side out. She would not get angry and satisfy them. And then it seemed as if Victor suddenly cared more for her, and she half unconsciously did some of the things he suggested. She did not know that Laverne had said to him, "Oh, you ought to do the things that please her, and then she will love you. I wish I had a sister."

She wondered a little whom she would want her like? It was a serious matter to have a sister who would be with one continually. She was used to Miss Holmes, and that was more like—well, like an aunt. Sometimes she tried to think of her mother, but the remembrance was vague. She could seem to see her old grandmother much easier, fretting and scolding.

188

Victor was glad and proud that she had found a way to all their hearts.

There were Christmas and New Year's with all their gayety. And in a month spring, that had run away from the tropics.

"It goes on too fast," she said to Uncle Jason. "And do you see how I am growing? Miss Holmes says something has to be done to my frocks all the time. I don't want to be big and grown up."

He studied her in amazement. He did not want her to be big and grown up either. These years were so satisfying.

189

CHAPTER XIII

BALDER THE BEAUTIFUL

They were planning at the school for a May Celebration. They would go clear up the bay in a boat to San Pablo, and have a picnic and a dance out of doors, and come home in the moonlight.

So it was a little late, and Bruno stood watching out for her. "Good old fellow!" she said, with a pat. Miss Holmes had a visitor, she saw through the open window. She went round by the kitchen.

Bruno tugged at her skirt.

"What is it, Bruno?"

His eyes had a sorrowful look, she thought. "What is it, what do you want?"

He tugged again at her skirt.

"Well, come on. Though I've stacks of lessons to learn. Look at all those books."

She dropped them on the step, and followed the dog. Up the winding path, and now there was water enough for a musical trickle over the stones.

There was Balder's basin, where he was so fond of disporting himself after the rains filled it up. Oh, what was that lying on the side, that still white thing glistening in the sunshine!

"Bruno?" She stamped her foot and looked upbraidingly at him. Had he been playing roughly with her pet? Oh, what was the meaning of these blood-stained feathers about his neck! She flung herself down beside him. The eyes were dull and partly closed. She stroked the white feathers with tender hands.

190

"Bruno, I shall never love you again, never! Oh, how could you!"

He took a few steps away. Then he dragged some tumbled gray thing to her feet. Why, that was a fox, with his bushy tail. They had been hunted a good deal and were giving civilization a rather wide berth.

She looked at the dog, who told the story with his eyes as he glanced from one to the other. She reached up and put her arms about his neck.

"Oh, Bruno, I'm sorry I blamed you. I thought perhaps you were a little rough, but you cared so for my beautiful Balder that I might have known you couldn't hurt him! And that wicked, wretched fox! Well, I am glad he has his deserts. But that will not bring back my dear Balder. Oh, have you gone to join the old heroes in Valhalla? For I can't think you were just a common bird. You would have gone back to your kind if you had been. I ought to write a lament for you."

Pablo was coming up the road with a back load of brush. But he dropped it in dismay as she called.

Bruno pawed the fox, then gave it a push, and glanced up at Pablo.

"You see—the fox must have crept up here, and seized my dear Balder by the neck and killed him. And Bruno made him pay for it."

When Pablo was deeply moved or amazed, he went back to his Mexican patois, that Bruno had come to understand very well, and nodded sagaciously.

191

"The thief! The murderer! Last year, you know, your uncle and I shot two of the bloody thieves over the ridge there, and I've not seen one since. Bruno seized him by the throat, and has torn him well. Look at the brush—why, a lady could put it on her tippet. And the skin—I'll have that. We'll throw him out to feed the hawks. Oh, the poor gull! He was like folks, Missy, you had all trained him so much. Oh, don't cry so, Missy."

Bruno came up and rubbed her shoulder, licked her hand, and gave a low, mournful lament of sympathy.

Laverne rose and took the dead bird in her arms. The visitor had gone, and Miss Holmes stood out by the door, wondering. The procession took their way thither.

"The mean, sneaking brute, that he should have come just when I had gone. The bird was so fond of paddling round there. Strange that he never wanted to go with his kind, but most things want to keep by you, Missy."

They told the sad story over. Laverne laid the gull down tenderly on a bit of matting.

"Pablo, will you wash his neck and have him all clean and white?"

"My dear," Miss Holmes said, and clasped the child in her arms, letting her cry out her sorrow. She and Bruno went down to meet Uncle Jason presently. No grief, hardly a disappointment, had come near her until now. How could he comfort his darling? And he felt with Pablo that the bird had been almost human.

192

"I wonder," he said in the evening, "if you would like to have him mounted. There's an old Frenchman down in Rincon Street who does this to perfection. The birds look alive."

Laverne considered. "No, I believe I would rather have him buried. I should think how the sly fox crept up and dragged him out before he could turn to defend himself. We will put him in a box and bury him. Oh, Balder, I shall miss you so much."

"I think I could capture one easily."

"To be sure you could. They're stupid things," subjoined Pablo.

"But he wasn't. Uncle Jason, I think some wicked fairy changed him from something else, for he used to look at times as if he had a story in his eyes. No, I don't want another. And I should always be afraid of a fox."

He snuggled her up with his arm close about her. So they sat until the stars came out, twinkling like live spirits in the cloudless blue. It was warm, with all manner of odors in the air, and the hum of the city, lying below them, came up faintly. Oh, how he loved her. And he prayed there might never come any deeper sorrow to touch her tender heart.

Pablo dug a grave the next morning, and they buried Balder the beautiful. All day she dreamed of the Norse gods, and of Hermod, who took the journey to the barred gates of Hell, at Frigga's earnest persuasion, and how every rock, and tree and all living things wept for him, except one old hag, sitting in the mouth of a cavern, who refused because she hated him, and so Balder could not return. She was a little absent, and missed two or three questions, and Miss Bain asked her if her head ached, she made such an effort to keep the tears from her eyes. 193

So Balder slept under a straight young pine near the little lake they had made for him. Pablo skinned the fox with great zest, and made of it a fine rug, with a strip of black bearskin for a border.

She wondered whether she ought to feel merry enough to go on the May party. But the children insisted. The boat was a fine strong one, and there really was no danger; Uncle Jason was assured of that. Then it was such a glorious day. There was a fog early in the morning, and the fight between the golden arrows of the sun and the gray armor that came up out of the sea. Sometimes it did conquer, and came over the city, but this morning it was pierced here and there, and then torn to tatters, driven out beyond the strait, into the ocean.

Miss Bain took supervision of her scholars, and Miss Holmes had many charges not to let the little girl out of her sight a moment. There were a number of schools, but some of the children preferred the May walk, and the treat afterward. They started off with flags flying, and the young Geary Band had volunteered their services. There were a drum, two fifes, a cornet, and a French horn, and the boys began with the stirring patriotic tunes. But even here the old negro melodies had found their way, many of them pathetic reminders of the cotton fields of the South, that seemed to gain melody from the stretch of bay.

They passed Fort Point and Alcatraz Island, where the government was beginning magnificent defences, its high point looming up grandly. Angel Island, then almost covered with a forest of oak, yet oddly enough containing a fine quarry, where laborers were at work, hewing into the rock, almost under the shadow of the waving trees. Yerba Buena, with its fragrant odors blown about by the wind, smaller islands, big rocks rising out of the sea, the inhabitants being chiefly birds; vessels of nearly every description, and intent mostly upon trade, plied hither and thither. Here was another strait opening into San Pablo Bay, into which emptied creeks and rivers, the Sacramento washing down golden sands; and the San Joaquin. And up there was the wonderful land where the Argonauts were searching for treasure with less toil and anxiety than the elder Jason, though here, too, there were treachery and murder. 194

Almost by the strait there was a beautiful point of land jutting out in the water, and nearly covered with magnificent trees, that had grown so close together that the branches interlaced and made arches, while underneath were aisles, carpeted with fallen leaves and moss, that made you feel as if you were walking over velvet. You could see San Raphael and San Quentin, and the mountain range with the one high peak, as you looked westward; eastward there was, after the woodland, meadows of richest verdure, with their thousand blooms nodding gayly to each other, and softly gossiping, perhaps about these strange newcomers, who were presently to disturb their long, long possessorship. There the great, grand Sierras, that looked so near in the marvellously clear air.

They found a choice spot, and built a fire—it would not have been a picnic without that. There were boys, of course, though a girl was restricted to a brother or cousin. I fancy some cousins were smuggled in. They ran about; they were even young enough to play "tag," and "blind man in a ring," and "fox and geese," which was the greatest fun of all. Then they spread out their tablecloths on a level space, and though real paper plates and thin wooden ones had not come in yet, they had made some for themselves that answered the purpose. They were merry enough with jests and laughter. 195

Olive Personette was quite the heroine of the day. Miss Isabel's engagement to Captain Gilbert, who had been appointed to take some charge at Alcatraz, and had come of an old Californian family, beside being educated at West Point, was still a topic of interest, because there had been two other aspirants for her hand who had quarrelled and fought a duel, which was quite an

ordinary matter in those days, though frowned upon by the best people. So neither had won her heart. One was lying in the hospital, the other had fled northward. But it had made quite a stir.

Of course, she had asked Victor, importuned him, though he had meant all the time to come. He was a fine, manly fellow now, and the girls *did* flock about him. He had such a grave, courteous manner, and never descended into rudeness, though he was quick enough at fun, and it does not need an intricate order of wit to amuse before one is twenty.

Olive picked out the most prominent girls for him, and kept him busy enough. But he managed now and then to pass Laverne and say a word to show that she was in his mind.

196

"I think Isola wanted to come very much," he announced to her once. "She's taking such an interest in the pleasures that girls have, and she has grown stronger. Father is planning some day to take a sail all around the bay, just a little party of us, and we want you and Miss Holmes."

That was such a delight. She did not refuse to talk to other boys, but she liked the girls better. Her rather secluded life had not given her so much interest in hunting and fishing and ball-playing and race-running. Then on Sunday there was always horse-racing up on the track by the old Mission. Church-going people, not really members, but those who considered it the proper thing to pay a decorous attention to religion, went to church in the morning and drove out in the afternoon. Throngs of fine carriages, and handsomely dressed ladies, men on horseback, with enough of the old-style attire to stamp them as Mexican, Spanish, or the more than half Old Californian. Many of the more successful ones began to plume themselves on a sort of aristocracy.

The boys knew the favorite horses, some of their fathers owned a fast trotter. But somehow she did not care much to talk about them, though she had gone out occasionally with Uncle Jason, and it was exciting to witness the trials of speed. But she liked better to jog about on Pelajo and talk in the lovely by-paths they were always finding.

After the repast they swung in hammocks and talked over plans, or rambled about, then the band played for dancing. No gathering would have been perfect without that. Of course, they flirted a little, that was in the young blood, but they came home merry, and had not disputed unduly about their respective admirers.

197

Victor found time to say that he should come over next Saturday. "We'll have a nice time, all to ourselves," he whispered, and she glanced up with delighted eyes.

All her life thus far had been very quiet, in spite of the fact that she was in such a turbulent place, and with all sorts of people, gathered from the ends of the earth; where seldom a day passed without some tragedy. And it seemed as if the city was coming nearer and nearer, though it went southward, too, and all along the bay, docks and wharves and warehouses were springing up in a night.

Victor came over the following Saturday as he had promised. They sat under the pine tree and wrote verses to Balder's memory. Victor had found a volume of Scandinavian legends and poems, and they were fascinated with it.

"Of course, we can't write anything like that," she said simply, "but you notice these do not rhyme. Do you not think it really grander, tenderer?"

"I heard a voice that cried
'Balder the Beautiful
Is dead, is dead!
And through the misty air,
Passed like the mournful cry
Of sunward sailing cranes.'"

"You repeat poetry so beautifully," he exclaimed, enchanted with the pathetic voice, that could express so much, yet was so simply sweet.

198

They were not born poets. He had great trouble about his Latin hexameters. He could feel it floating through his brain, but it was very elusive, vanishing before it was caught. She made a few little lines without rhyming.

Then he told her of the other god that had ruled a realm of lovely thoughts, until, as the legend ran, when Christ, the Redeemer of mankind, was born, a great groan was heard all over the isles of Greece, the rushes bowed their heads, and the waves shuddered when it was proclaimed that Olympus was dethroned, and Pan was dead.

"And that dismal cry rose slowly,
And sank slowly through the air,
Full of spirit's melancholy
And eternity's despair
As they heard the words it said—
Pan is dead, great Pan is dead—
Pan, Pan is dead."

And then, as they listened, the gulls' cry came to them, toned by the distance, softened by the murmur of the wind into a requiem for the dead Balder.

After all he did not tell her what he had meant to. He would put off the evil day.

Everybody—children, I mean—was anxious about examinations. Very few really longed for them, but there was the vacation beyond.

She had been wandering about one afternoon, Bruno keeping close to her side, though there was little to call strangers up this way. The view was finer from the Presidio, and the principal fishing ground was farther down below. So, when Bruno gave a growl, she started and glanced about, and saw some one toiling over the rocks with a cane. A very old woman it seemed, as she leaned upon her stick, and hardly knew which way to go.

"Hush, Bruno, hush!" she commanded.

The figure came nearer. Bruno was not at all pleased with it.

The rough hair was a grayish white. A flowered handkerchief was tied over it with a knot that hid the chin. The garments were coarse and faded, the short skirt of a Mexican woman, and clumsy shoes.

"It is Laverne Chadsey." Something in the voice connected it with the past. And now that she straightened herself up, she was quite tall.

"But I don't know you," Laverne said, rather hesitatingly.

"Then the disguise must be very good. I am an old—shall I say, old friend? We were not very warm friends when I knew you."

Was it a school friend playing a prank?

"I am so tired." She dropped down on a stone. "I wanted to see you first—I am a little afraid of Miss Holmes." Then she pulled off the headgear, afterward the gray wig.

Laverne stood astounded. "It isn't, it surely isn't Carmen Estenega!"

"Why—yes; you know you saw me last at the Convent."

"And you were going to be married."

"Oh, what a blind idiot I was! But it was considered a great thing, and I didn't know how any one might love then. I know now. I have run away. I would kill myself sooner than marry Pascuel Estenega."

Laverne drew a long breath. Yes, this really was Carmen. The eyes, the mouth, when she talked, but there was a fire in the face that had not been there in childhood, and a spirit that half frightened Laverne.

"I want to see your uncle. I have a note to him, from—from a person he has confidence in. And I want to tell him my story. I think men take a different view, of some things, at least I believe he will, and another person thinks so."

She blushed as she uttered this.

"You ran away—from the Convent?"

"Yes. It was very skilfully planned. They were not quite so strict—I was to be married in a month, there in the chapel, and they allowed me time to myself. I had a—a girl devoted to me, who did embroidery and sewing, and she carried notes. Then there was a place in the old garden where the railing was broken, but it was hidden by the shrubbery. A girl had seen a snake there, and no one would go near it. We used to meet there when his vessel came in. And it was all planned."

"He—who? Not——" and Laverne hardly knew how to put her question.

"Oh, not Pascuel Estenega. He love a girl!"

The face seemed to quiver with scornful indignation, and the eyes fairly blazed.

"He is an American. He is in the employ of your uncle, and he will be good to us both. Perhaps in his youth he knew what love was. We are going to trust him. He comes up with the trading vessel on Saturday. He put me on another, the *Lulita*, an old Spanish thing, and I was an old Mexican woman. No one suspected. We came in at noon, and I walked off. Gracious! how the world has changed. I had to ask the way; no one paid any attention to an old woman with a stick, and bent in the shoulders."

She gave a triumphant laugh.

"But—your marriage——"

She seemed to study Laverne from head to foot, and the girl shrank a little.

"Holy Mother, what a child you are! Not in long skirts yet! And you know nothing about love; but you may some day. Not like the heat that is in the Spanish blood, when it is roused, but many a woman is given in marriage who knows no more about it than a child. Papa Estenega came to see me when I had been in the Convent some months. I do not understand, but mamacita has some old portraits and archives and jewels, that came from Spain, and we are the last of the two houses. He was very anxious for these, and mamacita had no son. So when she came they signed

a marriage contract. Pascuel had been ill, and the doctor had taken him away for his health. We went out to the estate. It is a splendid old place. I was very proud then of being chosen as its mistress. Well, perhaps I held my head too lofty. Then I heard that years before Pascuel had wedded a young girl, and when her baby was born dead, he treated her very bitterly, and one night she threw herself down an old well, though it was said she had gone out of her mind. He came to the convent after a while, and I thought I should faint when I saw him. He was a shrunken-up thing, a good head shorter than his father. Oh, I do believe I could have married Papa Estenega more willingly. His eyes were small and cruel, he had a great mustache, over a hanging lip, and his hair was already turning white. Then I began to place some credence in what one of the girls said, and repeated it to mamacita. Panchita was sent away from school the next week, and no one knew just why. Mamacita would not hear a word, and said it was sheer envy; that any girl would be proud of reigning there, and being the mother of an Estenega heir. And then I saw Señor José Hudson, the American, and my heart seemed to go out of me at once. We talked with our eyes, and then he sent me a note. He came to church two or three times, but of course we hardly dared look at each other. He found this broken place, and I used to steal down there. Oh, it was delicious! I told him all the story, and he said we would run away and that I should be his wife. He had no estate, but he could make enough money to take care of me, and that we would go farther north, and be, oh, so happy with each other. So I seemed to give in, and fretted mamacita no more, and they began with the trousseau. Señor Hudson planned it all, and brought me the wig and the garments. And one day, just dusk, I slipped out, a lame old woman, and a servant took me to the boat. He was waiting there, and we had a talk. You see, it would not have been best for me to come on his boat. When he asked me if I had any trusty friend in San Francisco, I spoke of you, and he said, 'Oh, that is my master. Jason Chadsey owns the boat. I have worked for him two years. Go straight to him and he will befriend you.' So he wrote the letter I have in my hand. I could not seek him in that busy place, where there were crowds of men around, so I found my way up here. Juana had written me about it, though I was frightened at every step. And I found you. I saw you up here with the dog. You know in that old time I did not care much for you, we were taught that the Americanos were interlopers, and would sweep us out of our homes, drive us, heaven only knew where, but now, because I have found one so sweet and noble and tender, I can see the virtues and graces in you all. And I know you will befriend me."

202

203

She knelt suddenly at Laverne's feet, and snatching her hands, covered them with kisses. Isola Savedra sometimes did this. The child was confused, helpless.

"And the Señor Chadsey will be good to me for the sake of Señor Hudson. It will be only two days. And will you beseech your Señora to be kind and pitiful, and to pardon this attire, as if I was a beggar?"

A bell rang then. It was Miss Holmes' call for a return home, a warning that it was near supper time.

"Come," Laverne said. She was still bewildered, but led the way. And there, turning round the corner, she saw Uncle Jason, so she ran forward with outstretched arms, her light hair flying like a cloud.

"Well, little one!" smiling fondly.

"Something so queer has happened." She was out of breath, and flushed, for her heart was beating tremendously. "Carmen Estenega is here and she is going to marry the man you have talked about, Joseph Hudson."

204

"Why, the vessel has not come in, will not be in until Saturday."

"Yes. She wants to wait here for him. Oh, Uncle Jason, you will be good to her. She has run away from the convent, and it is like a story from a book. Come!"

Carmencita stood where Laverne had left her. For the first time she began to feel frightened. "Oh," she cried, "have pity on me; do not send me away until Señor Hudson comes, and you will see that my story is true."

"What is all this?" He looked from one to the other. Miss Holmes came out. Then Carmen turned scarlet, remembering her attire.

"It is—" Miss Holmes looked her over.

"Carmencita Estenega, who asks shelter for two days, and prays that you will not betray her to a cruel life. Oh, like the other poor lady, I should drown myself."

"You have run away from a convent?"

"Oh, let me explain!"

She told the story over again as they stood there, now her voice athrill with love, now piteous with entreaty. And it did move Jason Chadsey's heart. Besides, he had found the young fellow trusty, and liked him, and his note was very straightforward.

"We will talk more at length about it," he said gravely, "and I dare say supper is ready."

205

CHAPTER XIV

A WEDDING AND A PARTING

Miss Holmes led her guest to her room, where she might refresh herself, and provided her with some garments, as they were nearly of a size. Carmen was too excited to be hungry. She did not attempt to disguise her dislike and fear for the man chosen to be her husband, but Chadsey knew family fortunes were often united that way, and girls had little voice in the matter. That she loved young Hudson was quite apparent. Miss Holmes smiled. She had thought Carmen a rather proud, stolid girl, quite captious about Americans.

Jason and Miss Holmes considered after the girls had gone to bed. It was a rather risky thing to harbor her and consent to a marriage, but the escape had been so well managed, they would hardly look for her in the city. Telegraphs did not flash news from everywhere then.

"But suppose this young man is not quite trustworthy?" said prudent Miss Holmes.

"Oh, you don't know Hudson. He is straight as a yardstick. And, somehow, I hate to spoil the romance and the love. We can wait until Saturday. Yes, I think that will be better."

Laverne was not to go to school the next day, lest she might inadvertently touch upon the adventure. And so the two girls steeped themselves in Romance. Carmen had heard more than one confidence within the cloistered walls that had never gone to confession. There were girls with their destinies mapped out before them as hers had been, sent there to keep them from the grasp of another love which had already caught them, girls praying for husbands with the life of a nun before them. They went out and sat under the pine tree.

206

"Oh," said Carmen, "if you have had no greater love and no greater sorrow than that for a bird, your life has flowed evenly enough. But you Americanos are so much colder of blood."

In the main, it was a wonderful day to Laverne, but she felt that she did not need any other love than that of Uncle Jason.

"You are such a child," Carmen said almost pityingly. Yet it was an unknown childhood to her.

Miss Holmes brought down one of her frocks, that, with a spasm of economy, she had meant to make over for the child. She had grown a little stouter in this wonderful climate, and could not wear it. She glanced at the slender virginal form, and decided what could be done. Carmen was handy with her needle, there had been need enough in her straitened life.

No one came near them. Pablo had forgotten about the Estenegas, or thought of them vaguely as children, and this was a friend of Missy's.

Jason Chadsey was much puzzled what course to pursue. The right way seemed to be to send word to the Señora Estenega. But the tidings could just as well be sent if he found Joseph Hudson untrustworthy. The vessel came in Saturday afternoon. The master was watching out, and saw Mr. Chadsey on the pier. He waved his broad-fronted tarpaulin, and was answered by the return wave of a hand. There were some orders to give, the boat was made fast, and Hudson sprang ashore. And as the elder man looked full into the young, trusty face, his heart went out to the lovers, and he resolved to befriend them.

207

So he brought him home to supper, and it was planned that they would go over to Sausalito on the morrow and find a priest to marry them. Then he must secure a vessel going northward, and be out of the way some months at least, for he knew Spanish vengeance was quick and sharp. He had heard a few stories about Pascuel Estenega's treatment of servants that were rather chilling. The matter had been so well managed that he had not been suspicioned at all, and when the vessel left Monterey, the disappearance had not been whispered outside the convent walls. But that was not to say no search had been made.

Jason Chadsey accompanied them, and stood as sort of sponsor for the marriage. The priest was old and not inquisitive, or perhaps the fee in hand convinced him that all things were right. The sponsor was curiously touched by the unalloyed delight of the young couple, who seemed now so perfectly content that they made love in the most unabashed fashion, while before, Carmen had appeared shy and in terror.

They returned to the home that had sheltered them, and Hudson thought it best to take some trip up northward, perhaps settle there for a while. Already there was much trading up to the Columbia River. Chadsey hated to give up so trusty and capable a man. He might fit out a vessel with miscellaneous stores; indeed, that was the way to carry trade to strange places. He would put Joseph Hudson in as captain, and leave the bargain-making in his hands.

208

Miss Holmes did some shopping for the young wife, as it was not deemed prudent for Carmen to venture out. She longed ardently to see her little sisters, and begged that Laverne might go and call on them. The latter had not seen them for a long while, the watchful sister had discouraged any intimacy.

Laverne had begun school on Monday with many injunctions from Miss Holmes to be most watchful over herself. She had a wonderful secret now. Olive Personette never had had anything like it, for her sister's engagement had been announced at once. And she was so full of that, and

the marriage in the early autumn, that she could hardly steady her mind sufficiently to pass her examinations. Then she was going to the Academy next year. They were all young ladies in the department, you had nothing to do with little girls. There were to be three bridesmaids, and their attendants were to wear full military costumes.

"Don't you think I might go over to the sisters?" Laverne pleaded. "I would be very, very cautious. Carmen wants so to hear about them."

Miss Holmes was almost afraid, but the pleading eyes conquered.

She went after school. There was the long, bare corridor, with one table and a big registry book, two wooden benches, and a few chairs. The adobe floor had been painted gray, like the walls, and it looked cheerless to the American girl. 209

Sister Anastacia was not quite sure. The children were busy with the study hour. But Laverne pleaded with the same eyes that she had won Miss Holmes, and presently the sister brought the children in, and seated herself at the table with some needlework.

They were full of quiet joy, and squeezed Laverne's hands with the old friendliness. And they had so much to tell her. Carmen was to be married soon, the wedding gowns were being made, and they were beautiful. The old home had been dismantled, the city was to cut streets through it. They did not care, it was a lonely old place. They were going to Monterey to live, and they were so glad. Carmen would be a great lady, and live on a fine estate, ride around in her carriage, and give balls, and they would all be so happy.

Juana resembled her mother in face and figure. But Anesta had shot up into a tall girl, and suggested Carmencita, carried her head rather haughtily.

The sister rapped on the table with her thimble, raising her eyes.

"You are too noisy and too frivolous," she said, with severity.

They kissed each other good-by.

"I wish we could come over and see you," Juana whispered. "We always had such a good time. Perhaps you will come to Monterey," wistfully.

"Oh, I think I shall," was the hopeful reply.

Carmen was so glad to hear about them, and how they looked, and if they seemed happy. She had considered writing letters to them a great hardship, now she felt she could fill pages and pages. She wondered how it was that her heart was so overflowing with love. And the thought that she might never see them again filled her eyes with tears. 210

"Oh, I do wonder if Pascuel will desire to marry either of the girls?" she cried in half affright.

"But if he is so old——"

"That doesn't seem to matter where there is money. And Papa Estenega wanted both branches of the family united. And if I had not had a son!"

She shuddered, thinking of the poor wife who had drowned herself.

It was not until the last of the week that Captain Hudson was ready to start with his venture. Carmen packed her plain trousseau, and was most grateful for all the kindness.

"I shall see you sometime again," she said, in a broken voice, "but not in quite a while. It will be best to stay until they have forgotten about me. I shall be cast out, you know. They will take my name off the books, and excommunicate me, I think. But I shall be an American, and you do not fear such things, so I will try not to. Oh, how good you have all been to me. I can never repay, but I shall pray night and morning, and you will live in my thoughts."

They started out Saturday afternoon. Jason Chadsey pressed a roll of money in the bride's hands. In those days wedding gifts were pure friendship. There would be a full moon, and they could sail all night, for a full moon on the Pacific Coast was something really beyond description. Jason Chadsey sat out on the step enjoying it. He always felt beauty keenly, though he had no words for it. This was why he delighted in the child's prattle. She had so much imagination. 211

Had he been young once and loved like that? Young people of to-day put their love in passionate words, rapturous kisses. They were not afraid of making it the best thing of life, as it was. And his love had only sipped the dregs.

Was Laverne crying? "What is it, dear?" he asked.

"The house seems so lonely, just as if some one had been buried, as it did when Balder was killed. Uncle Jason, couldn't we go somewhere? Or if something would happen again. I liked Captain Hudson so much. And Carmencita has grown so sweet. Oh, it has been such a lovely week, but it went so rapidly. Does the time pass quickly when you are happy, and slowly when you are a little dull?"

"But you have me," he said jealously.

"I couldn't live without you." She nestled closer.

"I want you always, always."

"And sometime we might go up North. It is a queer, wild country, grand, but not as beautiful as the southland, with its millions of flowers. Something like Maine, I reckon."

"I've almost forgotten about Maine."

"Up there the mountain peaks are covered with snow the year round."

"Then it is like the Alps."

"And the great Columbia River. No towns to speak of, but stations, hunters, and trappers, and fur animals, and wildness of every kind, game of every kind."

212

Something of the old adventurous life stirred within him. But he had the little girl. And when they began their travels, she would be older and have a taste for beautiful things.

Yes, the house *did* seem lonesome, but Laverne was very busy, and events began to happen. Mrs. Folsom made another move, this time to quite a fine family hotel, and she gave a housewarming on going in. Old friends, there were not many of them, and new friends, of whom there was an abundance, for she was a favorite as a householder. Dick had grown up into a jaunty, well-looking young fellow, and had not plunged into ruinous excesses, partly because his mother had kept a sharp oversight, and the rest his clean New England stamina, the wrecks had filled him with disgust and repulsion.

All the old friends met, of course. Mrs. Dawson was rosy and plump, and had retired to a stylish house with servants and carriage. The Dawson Café was one of the better-class institutions of the town, and coining money. Miss Gaines stood at the head of fashionable modistes, and there was no appeal from her dictum. You could accept her style or go elsewhere. There had been offers of marriage, too, she laughingly admitted to her friends. "Ten years ago I should have accepted one of them gratefully; now I value my independence."

Dick Folsom went over to Laverne.

"I haven't seen you in so long and you have grown so, I hardly knew you," he said. "May I beg the honor of your hand for this quadrille?"

She was quite longing to dance and accepted.

213

"We oughtn't forget each other after that five months' journey together," he remarked in one of the pauses. "Does it ever seem queer to you, as if it was something you dreamed? I can't make it real. But they've improved the overland so much, and when we get the railroad—presto; you will see a change! If we were only nearer England. But there's China, if we are not swamped by the pigtailed and pointed slippers! How queer they are! We don't need to go to foreign lands to study the nations. I sometimes wonder what the outcome of all this conglomeration will be!"

"We are so far off," she replied in a sort of tentative fashion. "It's almost like another town."

"Yes. They'll tumble you down presently, as they did before. You wouldn't know the old place, would you? They've carted away stones and débris to fill up the marshy edges of the bay. And there's a long, straight street, a drive out to fine country ways. Is there any other land so full of flowers, I wonder!"

"And they are so royally lovely. Think of great patches of callas in blossom nearly all the time. Miss Holmes said when she was at home she used to nurse up one to blossom about Easter. If she had two flowers she thought it quite a marvel."

What a soft, musical laugh the child had! They used to run races on the boat, he remembered, and he had enough boyish gallantry to let her win. They ought to be dear old friends.

"Do you ever go out to drive on Sunday afternoon?"

214

"It's Uncle Jason's day, the only leisure he has. And we spend it together."

"He's had stunning luck, too. Getting to be a rich man."

"Is he?" she said simply.

"Is he? Well, you ought to know," laughing.

"He doesn't talk much about business."

"A great country this is for making fortunes! The trouble is that you can spend them so easily. But I'm bound to hold on to mine, when I get it made."

Some one else took her. He looked after her. She would be a pretty girl presently and quite worth considering. He had a good opinion of himself, and was not going to be lightly thrown away.

They trudged up the hill just after midnight. Laverne was gay and chatty, recounting her good times. It seemed as if she had as much attention as Olive from the younger men, and Olive was always so proud of that.

Uncle Jason gave a sigh.

"Oh," she cried, "you look tired. Don't you like parties? I thought it splendid!"

"I'm getting old, dear——"

"Oh, you mustn't get old!" she interrupted impulsively. "Why can't people turn back a little somewhere along, and be young again? For, you know, I can't get old very fast, and I think—yes, I am quite sure I don't want to. I'm having such a splendid time since you were so lovely to Carmen, and made her happy. I sometimes think if you had sent her back to Monterey—but you couldn't have done that, could you?"

215

"No, dear," he answered softly.

He had heard a point discussed this evening that did trouble him a little. They were talking of lowering Telegraph Hill again. He was not ready to go yet. In two years maybe. She would not have any lovers by that time, and then they could start off together. He must not grow old too fast.

The next happening in their little circle did interest her a good deal. Howard Personette had finished his year's term at college, and come home quite unexpectedly, when his father had intended him to finish and take a degree.

"I'm not a student, I'm convinced of that," he announced rather doggedly. "I don't see any sense in keeping at what you don't like, and don't mean to follow. I want the stir and rush of business instead of splitting hairs about this and that. I've been awfully homesick the last year, and dissatisfied, but I knew you would not agree to my coming home, so I just came. And if there's nothing else for me to do, I'll go to work on the streets."

Students were expected to study in those days. Athletics had not come in for their diversion. Mr. Personette was disappointed. He wanted to make a lawyer out of his son, and to lay a good foundation for the years to come.

Mrs. Personette rather sympathized with the eager young fellow, who was ready to take up any active life.

"The East is so different," he explained. "Perhaps if I hadn't been born here and breathed this free, exhilarating air all my life, I might have toned myself down and stayed. But I had begun to hate books, and what was the use maundering away several years?"

216

Olive thought him quite a hero. Captain Franklin said if there was any lack of employment in the city he could come out to Alcatraz. They would be very glad to have a fellow who was not afraid to work.

"Why, I should feel proud of him, shouldn't you?" Laverne asked of Uncle Jason.

"That depends," he answered, with a shake of the head.

But if one came home from an indifference to study, another was going to take a greater absence. Four years without coming home at all! The journey was long and expensive, and there seemed a better use for vacations.

This was Victor Savedra, who had many student longings. And so one afternoon the two sat out under the pine, their favorite place, and he was explaining to Laverne his plans for a few years to come.

"Father wanted me to go to Paris," he said. "If I meant to be a physician, I think I would. But first and last and always I mean to be an American citizen. I suppose I might go to Yale or Harvard, but that seems almost as far away, and my choice appears more satisfactory all around," smiling a little. "We like the new, but we have a hankering for the old civilizations, and the accretions of knowledge."

They both looked out over the Golden Gate, the ocean. There were dancing sails, jungles of masts, cordage like bits of webs, tossing whitecaps in strong contrast to the blue, and over beyond, the green, wooded shores. The old semaphore's gaunt arms were dilapidated, and it was to come down. But it had thrilled hundreds of hearts with its tidings that friends, neighbors, and greatest joy of all, letters from loved ones in lands that seemed so distant then.

217

Now the lack of rain had dried up vegetation, except the cactus and some tufts of hardy grass. The little rivulet was spent, there was only a bed of stones. But they had managed to keep something green and inviting about the house. A riotous Madeira vine flung out long streamers of fragrant white blooms that seemed to defy fate laughingly. Down below they were levelling again, this time for a last grade, it was said.

"It will all be so changed when I return. I wonder where you will go? For you cannot climb up to this eyrie. You would be perhaps a hundred feet up. They want the sand and the débris to fill in the big piers they are building. Why, they will almost sweep the great hill away, but they will have to leave the rocks by the sea. It will be a new San Francisco."

"Why, it is almost new now," and she smiled.

"Everything will have changed. And we shall change, too. I shall be twenty-three when I come back."

Laverne looked at him wonderingly. They had all been big boys to her, and she had been a little

girl. True, he had grown to man's estate in height, and there was a dainty line of darkness on his upper lip. It had been so imperceptible that just now it seemed new to her.

"And I shall be—why, I shall be past nineteen then," she commented in surprise.

218

"And—and married," he hazarded. The thought gave him a pang, for that was new, too.

"No," she returned, looking up at him out of innocent eyes, while the faint rose tint in her cheek never deepened. "No, I shall not be married in a long, long time. Presently Uncle Jason and Miss Holmes and I are to set out on a journey, just as they do in some of the stories. We shall go to the strange lands he tells me about, we shall see the people in their native element," and she smiled at the conceit, "where we see only a dozen or two here. What do you suppose draws them to California?"

"Why, the stories of gold, of course." Their coming and going did not interest him. "I wonder if you will be in London?" he inquired.

"Oh, of course. I want to see the Queen and the palaces, and Edinburgh, and Holyrood, and all the places those proud old Scots fought over, and poor Marie Stuart! And Sweden and Norway, and the midnight sun, and the Neva, and St. Petersburg——"

She paused, out of breath.

"London is what interests me," he interposed. "And if you could come over next summer——"

She shook her head. "No, it won't be next summer, but it may be the year after," she returned gravely.

"And if it was my vacation. Then I might join you for a few weeks."

"That would be splendid." Her soft eyes glowed.

"I shall keep thinking of that."

"Oh, will you? Then I will think of it, too. And it is queer how time runs away. You hardly notice it until the bells ring out for New Year's."

219

"I wonder—if you will miss me any?" and his voice fell a trifle, though he tried to keep anxiety out of it.

"Miss you? Why, of course!" She was full of wondering, and to him, delicious surprise. "We have been such friends, haven't we? Ever since that night you showed me about the dancing? I've been amazed since that I had the courage, when I hardly knew a step, but after all it was very much like dancing to the singing of the birds, and I had often done that. Olive didn't like it. We were not good friends for ever so long afterwards."

"Olive wants to be head and front of everything, and have the main attention. I'm sorry not to stay to the wedding—it will be a grand affair. And no doubt next year Olive will go off. You haven't many girl friends, have you?"

"Well,"—she hesitated delicately and smiled in a half absent but adorable fashion,—"I do not believe I have. You see, we seem to live a little apart up on this hill, and there have been lessons, and riding about on the pony, and going over to your house, and most of the girls are larger——"

"The children all adore you. Oh, I hope you will go over often. I don't know what Isola would do without you."

"Yes, I shall," she said. "I'm so fond of music. If I were a poet, a real poet, you know," and she flushed charmingly, "I should write little songs to her music. They go through my brain with lovely words, and I can see them, but they don't stay long enough to be written down. Oh, yes, I shall go over often. And we shall talk about you. Of course, you will write to your father, and we shall hear."

220

"Yes." Something, perhaps not quite new, but deeper and stronger than any emotion he had ever known before, stirred within him. If he were going to stay here he would insist upon being her best friend, her admirer, her—— He choked down some poignant pain that was delicious in spite of the hurt. He hated to think of leaving her behind, two long years. She would be seventeen then; yes, old enough for any man to marry—but she did not mean to marry, that was the comfort. And he believed it because he wanted to so very much. She was such an innocent child. If this tumult within him was love, it would frighten her, she would not know what it meant.

She slipped her hand in his. "We shall all be so sorry to have you go, but then you *will* return. And perhaps—oh, yes, I shall beg to go to London first," she cried eagerly.

He was different from an impulsive American. He had been trained to have great respect for the sacredness of young girls, and he owed a duty to his father, who had planned out a prosperous life for him.

The sun was dropping down into the ocean, and the fog, creeping along, sent gray and soft purplish dun tints to soften and almost hide the gold. And, oh, how the birds sang, freed most of them from family cares. The meadowlark, the oriole, the linnets, and the evening grosbeak, with a clear whistling chorus after the few melodious notes of his song. They both rose, and went scrambling down the winding path that defied Pablo's efforts to keep in order. The shifting sand

221

and the stones so often loosened and made rough walking, so he held her up, and she skipped from one solid place to another.

Down below they were moving some houses on the newly cut street, so as to prepare for the next.

"They ought to begin at the top," she said, "but I am glad they didn't. What a great city it is!"

"And if one could see the little town it was twenty years ago!"

He would not stay to supper—he did sometimes. He wanted to be alone, to disentangle his tumultuous thoughts, and wonder if this thing that had swept over him was the romance of love.

The next fortnight was very full. They went over to Alcantraz to view the foundations for the new fortress. They went up to Mare's Island, where, in days to come, was to be the splendid navy yard, and then on a day's excursion down the bay. There was no railroad all along the coast line, though it was talked of. And after a little they left the shipping and the business behind them. All along were little clusters of houses that were some day to be thriving cities. Then long stretches of field where sheep were browsing, the wheat and oats having been cut long before, clumps of timber reaching back to the mountain ridge, clothed in a curious half shade from the slanting sun.

They left the boat at the little cove, and found a fine level where they spread out the luncheon, and decorated it with flowers, wild geranium, or rather geraniums growing wild, some of it in tall trees. Vines creeping everywhere, grapes ripening, figs and fruits of various kinds, that later, under cultivation, were to be the marvels of the world.

222

Isabel and her betrothed, Olive and a young lieutenant, were chaperoned by Mrs. Personette. Mrs. Savedra, the governess, and all the children, with the two from "the Hill," and Isabel's dearest friend and chosen first bridesmaid. And now Olive cared very little for her cousin, if he was a handsome young man. He was going away, and she would be married before his return, then he was too much of a student, although an elegant dancer. So he could well be apportioned to his sister and Laverne, neither in the realm of real womanhood, or society.

They sailed up the western side of the bay, following some of the indentations, and in the clear air the Pacific did not seem so far away. The elders had enjoyed the converse with each other. The young people were merry, not even the lovers were unduly sentimental. Mrs. Savedra watched her daughter and noted a great improvement.

"If we could have Miss Holmes and Laverne all the time," she thought.

223

CHAPTER XV

THE ENCHANTMENT OF YOUTH

They went to wish Victor *bon voyage*. Laverne was learning to play on the guitar, and another event happened to interest her very much. Mr. Chadsey had used his influence to obtain a position of first mate on a vessel bound for Shanghai for Joseph Hudson, who was expected in daily with his wife. No word had come from the Estenegas. The two children had been sent to Monterey, the old house dismantled, and now swallowed up by the fine street that would some day make a great driveway. For anything else the world might have swallowed them up.

Mrs. Hudson had been quite Americanized, but was more deeply in love than ever. There was a certain piquancy and dainty freedom that was very attractive, quite unlike her former stiffness. She was not afraid to go anywhere with José now—to the very ends of the earth if there was need.

Captain Blarcom was delighted to secure the services of so trusty a man and good seaman as Joseph Hudson for his first mate. Being a trading vessel, they might be gone two years or more.

"I shall send mamma a letter, and tell her the whole story," said Carmen. "I have been so happy I think she will soften her anger and not curse me as mothers sometimes do. And perhaps, when I come back, she may admit me to her again, since I was married lawfully and by a priest of our Holy Church. For in quiet moments one longs for the mother of all one's earlier years. Only the life here is so much broader and earnest, and every one seems working to some end, not trifles that become monotonous."

224

"Yes," Miss Holmes returned, "I should write by all means."

They kept her very close; indeed, she was rather afraid to venture down in the town. And at last, the ship was laden and ready, and another friend went out of Laverne's life for a while at least.

Nearly a year later they heard the sequel of the Estenegas' fortunes. Pascuel Estenega had been most savagely angry that this young bride should have slipped out of his reach, and left no clew. He blamed the Convent Superior, he threatened vengeance on any daring lover who had

circumvented him. But no lover or maiden was found, they had covered their flight so securely. He grew more and more ill-tempered, until hardly a servant would accept a position with him. And on one occasion, for some trifling fault, he had beaten his coachman so severely that he himself had fallen into a fit, and never recovered consciousness, dying a few days after. Then the Señora and her daughters had gone to care for the elder man, who had been made quite ill from the shock.

Isabel Personette's marriage was one of the events of the early season. Even Major Barnard honored the occasion with his presence, and the younger military men were in their most notable array. There was an elegant reception afterward, and Olive was in her glory as the only Miss Personette. Howard's bent was mechanical, and his father presently admitted that he had chosen wisely.

225

Indeed, there was much call for ability in every direction. A railroad had been projected to Sacramento. Congress had established a line of mail steamers between San Francisco and Shanghai. Between the city and the Hawaiian Islands there was frequent communication. Coal was being brought now from Bellingham Bay, gas was furnished about the city, there were rows of handsome dwellings. The new Merchants' Exchange was begun, the Custom House would be massive and beautiful. The shipping and mercantile part of the city seemed to settle itself about Clark's Point, on account of the great advantages it offered for wharves.

Then there were several fine theatres and a large music hall, erected by a Mr. Henry Meiggs, where people of the more quiet and intellectual order could patronize concerts, oratorios, and lectures. Private balls were quite the thing, and people struggled to get within the charmed circle, where an invitation could be secured.

If the little girl had lost one friend, two came in his place. Howard Personette constituted himself her knight when they met at any gathering, and brought them tickets for concerts, and new books or magazines, when he found Miss Holmes was much interested in them. There was indeed a library association that readers found very useful, and the daily papers were good news purveyors.

226

Richard Folsom felt he had something of a claim on her friendship, and was importuning them both to come to dinner and go to some entertainment.

"You show the result of your quiet life and freedom from care," Mrs. Folsom said to Miss Holmes. "You're younger looking to-day than when we met on shipboard. I half envy you your easy time, and I occasionally wonder if the money one piles up is worth the hard work and anxiety. Only I had a son to look after and place in the world. He was crazy to go to the gold fields, but I think he saw enough at the Dawsons. It's hard work to keep a boy from going to the bad in a place like this, but Dick has grown up into a pretty nice fellow. Now, if he can only marry a sensible girl, one of the home kind, who isn't all for show and pleasure! I wouldn't mind if she hadn't anything but her wedding clothes. An early marriage steadies a fellow."

But Dick wasn't thinking particularly about marriage. He couldn't have told just why he liked to climb Telegraph Hill an hour or so before sundown and chat a while, bringing some rare fruit, or a new kind of flower, and have a talk and a ramble about. There were girls that were lots more fun, girls who jumped at a chance for a drive behind his fine trotter, Hero, and who didn't even disdain the Sunday drive to the races. Miss Holmes never went to these.

Sometimes of a Sunday they all went over to Oaklands. Mr. Savedra was much interested in the quaint, intelligent man who was not only making a reputation for honesty and fair dealing, but fortune as well. The place was so lovely and restful.

227

The agricultural resources of the outlying places were beginning to be appreciated. Gardens and farms were found to be largely profitable since people must be fed. Fruit, too, could be improved upon and bring in abundant returns.

After several conversations with Miss Holmes, it was deemed advisable to have an English governess, since French and Spanish were as native tongues to the children. Isola was improving in health, but quite backward for her age, except for her really wonderful gift in music.

"I can't seem to make up my mind to send either of them away," she said to Miss Holmes. "We miss Victor so much. And a mother's joy centres largely in her children. I could not live without them. If I could find some one like you."

"There are some still better adapted to the undertaking than I should be," Miss Holmes returned with a half smile. "I sometimes feel that I have been out of the world of study so long, that I am old-fashioned."

"That is what I like. The modern unquiet flurry and ferment annoys me. And pleasure continually. As if there were no finer graces to life, no composure, nothing but dress and going about. And you have made such a charming child of Miss Laverne. How pretty she grows."

And now she was growing tall rapidly. Miss Holmes wondered occasionally what would happen in a year or two, if, indeed, the idea of travel was a settled purpose. Mr. Chadsey seldom spoke of it, except to the child. He was very much engrossed with his business. But presently she would need different environment. She could not always remain a little girl. And she *was* pretty with a kind of modest fairness that had an attractive spirituality in it, yet it did not savor of convent breeding. It was the old New England type. She seemed to take so little from her surroundings, she kept so

228

pure to the standard.

They were at Mrs. Folsom's to dinner one day. Uncle Jason had found it necessary to be away late on business, and would come for them. He did not quite like to leave them alone in Pablo's care, though Bruno was a good keeper. But an evil-disposed person might shoot the dog. He began to realize that it was more exposed up on the hill now that there were so many rough workmen about. Another year of it, and then——

They had a delightful little dinner in a "tea room," there was a great deal of coming and going in the large dining room. And Mrs. Folsom said:

"I'm going to ask a guest in to share your company. She's rather lonely, as her husband is away on some business. They have been here a fortnight or so. Laverne will like to hear her talk. She's been most all over."

So she brought in Mrs. Westbury, and introduced her.

"I hope I haven't intruded," the newcomer said, in a peculiarly attractive voice. In a young girl it would have been pronounced winsome. "I have been taking some meals in my own room; I tired of going to the public table when Mr. Westbury was not here. But I do get so lonely. I generally go with him, but this was up to the mines, where the roughness and wickedness of the whole world congregates, I believe."

229

"You are quite welcome," Miss Holmes replied, with a certain New England reserve in her voice.

"You came from the East?" with an appreciative smile, as if that was in her favor.

"From Boston; yes." Miss Holmes was always proud of that.

"And I from southern New Hampshire; we're not so very far apart. I married Mr. Westbury in New York, but we have been about—almost everywhere," in a tired voice. "I had wanted to travel, and I've had it."

Laverne's eyes kindled. "And were you abroad?" she asked rather timidly.

"Well—yes," smiling. "I've lived longest in London. And there's been Paris and Berlin, and, oh, ever so many German towns, where they're queer and slow, and wouldn't risk a dollar a month if they could make ten by it. Most of the Eastern cities, too, but I think this is the strangest, wildest, most bewildering place I ever was in; as if the whole town was seething and had no time to settle."

"I think that is it. You see, we are used to age in our New England towns; permanent habits, and all that. Yet, one would hardly believe so much could have been done towards a great city in a dozen years."

Mrs. Westbury raised her brows. "Is it as young as that?"

"And we have people from everywhere who will presently settle into a phase of Americanism, different from all other cities. Most places begin poor and accumulate slowly. San Francisco has begun rich."

230

"And the newly rich hardly know what to do with their money. You have some fine buildings, and queer old ones, that look as if they had stood hundreds of years."

There was something peculiar in the voice, and that had been born with the girl, and had needed very little training. It had an appealing quality; it indicated possibilities, that fixed it in one's memory. She might have suffered, had strange experiences, but one deeply versed in such matters would have said that she had come short of entire happiness, that hers was not the tone of rich content. She had a delicate enunciation that charmed you; she passed from one subject to another with a grace that never wearied the listener.

Mrs. Folsom came in to see if all was agreeable. She had taken a fancy to Mrs. Westbury, she had such an air of refinement and good-breeding. Mr. Westbury seemed a fine, hearty, wholesome man, prosperous yet no braggart. That was apt to be the fault out here. He had commended his wife to Mrs. Folsom's special care, and paid liberally in advance, besides depositing money at a banker's for his wife's needs.

They were having a pleasant, social time. When the dinner was through they retired to Mrs. Folsom's private parlor. In the large one there were card playing and piano drumming and flirtations going on.

Perhaps Mrs. Westbury did most of the talking, but she made sundry halts to give her listeners opportunity to answer, and she never seemed aggressive. Laverne listened, charmed over the delightful experiences.

231

She had learned that these were more attractive than one's troubles or perplexities, and she had set out to be a charming woman. There was only one terror to her life now—she was growing so much older every year. She had kept her youth uncommonly, but alas, no arts could bring the genuine article back.

Some lives go purling along like a simple stream that encounters nothing much larger than pebbles in its course, others wind in and out, tumble over rocks, widen and narrow, and take in

every variety. She had been a mill hand, pretty, graceful, modest. After having been a widower two years and married to a woman older than himself, a bustling, busy worker who lived mostly in her kitchen, Mr. Carr, the mill owner, married this pretty girl, installed her in the big, gloomy mansion, and made her the envy of the small town where many of the families were related to him. He had some peculiar views in this marriage. He meant to rule, not to be ruled; he hoped there would be children to heir every dollar of his estate. He succeeded in the first, but in the twelve years there were no children. She was miserable and lonely; there were times when she would have preferred the old mill life. Her only solace came to be reading. There was a fine library, histories, travels, and old English novels, and it really was a liberal education.

Then Mr. Carr died suddenly, having made a will that tied up everything just as far as the law allowed. She was to live in the house, a brother and a cousin were to run the mill on a salary that was made dependent on the profits. A shrewd lawyer discovered flaws, and it was broken. The heirs paid her very well to step out of it all and have no litigation. She was extremely glad. She took her money and went to New York, and for three years had a really enjoyable time. 232

She was thirty-seven when she married David Westbury, who was thirty-five. She set herself back five years and no one would have questioned. After several years of ill-luck, fortune had smiled on him and whatever he touched was a success. He bought up some valuable patents and exploited them, he formed stock companies, he had been sent abroad as an agent, he was shrewd, sharp, long-headed, and not especially tricky. Honesty paid in the long run. And now she had enjoyed seven happy, prosperous years. She had proved an admirable co-partner, she had a way of attracting men that he wanted to deal with and not lowering her dignity by any real overt act. Her flirtations never reached off-color. But of late she felt she had lost a little of her charm. She was not inclined to play the motherly to young men, nor to flatter old men. Those between went to the charming young girls.

"Oh, dear, I'm so sorry to go," Laverne exclaimed, when word was sent up that Mr. Chadsey was waiting for them. "I've had such a splendid time listening to you. It's been like travelling. And to see so many celebrated people and places, and queens."

"I'm glad you enjoyed it. I hope you will come again. Oh, I like you very much," and she leaned over and kissed her, though she was not an effusive woman.

Jason Chadsey had been sorely bothered. A young fellow he had had high hopes of had proved recreant and gone off with considerable money. He had been straightening accounts, and trying to decide whether to set the officers on his track or let him go—to do the trick over again on some one else. So he only half listened, glad to have his darling gay and full of delight. He really did not notice when she said "Mrs. Westbury." 233

That lady had a talk with Dick the next morning. He thought she was "quite nice for an old girl," so far off does youth remove itself. Could she get a carriage and ask Miss Holmes and her young charge to go out with her?

"Why, I'll take you, ma'am, and be glad to. Oh, yes, we're such old friends. It's odd, but we may be called old settlers, really. A party of us came round the Horn just at the last of '51. She was such a little thing, the only child on board. And we all stayed and are settled just about here. Tell you what I'll do. We'll stop at school for her and take her home, and then go on."

"But, Miss Holmes"—hesitatingly—"she ought to have notice," smiling deprecatingly.

"Oh, that won't count. You just take my word, Laverne will be glad enough."

He was glad enough. He had a vague idea somehow that Miss Holmes rather fenced him out. This time he would have Laverne on the front seat with him. Not that he really was in love with her now, but in time to come—

His plan worked admirably. Laverne was delighted and greeted her new friend cordially. They drove around a little at first, then up to the hill, and now the road was broken up unless one went a long way round. 234

"I can run up," Laverne said eagerly. "I won't be many minutes," and she sprang out.

"They're going to lower this hill," Dick explained. "They started it once, but land! only a goat can climb it now."

"Say a deer or an antelope," with a light laugh, as both watched the child threading her way in a zig-zag fashion, the shortest.

"It must be awfully lonely up there."

"But the prospect is wonderful. And there is Golden Gate and the ocean. Still, I should like to be more with folks. Chadsey doesn't mind. He's a queer Dick, and his mind is all on making money."

"She is his niece. Are there any others?"

"No, I guess not. I never heard of any. All her folks—family are dead."

"And Miss Holmes isn't related?"

"Oh, no."

They watched and saw them coming down presently, but they took a better pathway. Miss Holmes seemed pleased with the plan. Laverne sprang in beside Mrs. Westbury.

"Perhaps the ladies——" Dick was disappointed.

"I want to sit here," the girl said rather imperiously. "And you know you won't let me drive."

"You'd be like that fellow you told of driving the chariot to the sun, I'm afraid. I don't dare trust any one except Nervy, the jockey, to ride her. It was immense on Sunday. You saw that she won. Mother's against having me enter her, and I don't do it often. But jimini! I'd like to. And ride her myself."

Mrs. Westbury had seen the Derby, where all the style of London went, and fortunes were lost and won. Dick was fascinated by the account.

235

They turned oceanward. Sandhills, stones, patches of verdure where one least expected, tangled depths of laurels and alder, manzanita, vines scrambling everywhere and such a wealth of bloom, then barren rocks and sand. Now you could see the glorious ocean, the great flocks of sea birds swirling, diving, flying so straight and swiftly that not a wing moved. Cries of all kinds, then from the landward side a strange, clear song that seemed to override the other. Seals thrusting up their shiny black heads and diving again, sunning themselves lazily on the rocks.

"Is there another country in the world like this?" exclaimed Mrs. Westbury. "And all down the coast! I stayed at Monterey before. We crossed the Isthmus and came up. It is wonderful."

Dick kept them out quite late to see the gorgeous sunset, and then would fain have taken them home with him. Laverne had her hands full of flowers that she had never seen before, and her eyes were lovely in their delight.

"I shall be spoiled. I shall want to see you every day. I wish there was no school," Mrs. Westbury said. "Oh, can't I come and visit you?" and the entreaty in her voice would have won a harder heart.

"Our home is so very simple, and now the streets are in such a state, almost impassable. But if you have the courage we shall be glad to see you," responded Miss Holmes, curiously won.

"I shall come, most assuredly, although I have rather begged the invitation. But you are so different from the women of the Hotel. I do tire of their frivolity. I even go out alone to walk, though at first I was afraid. Could I meet my little friend at her school and come up?"

236

"Oh, yes, she will be glad to pilot you."

It was late that evening when Jason Chadsey came home. He looked tired and worn. Indeed, the farther he went in the matter the worse it appeared. And the culprit had made his escape. So there was nothing to do but to pocket the loss.

"Shall I make you a cup of tea?" inquired Miss Holmes.

"If you please—yes. Then I shall go straight to bed; I must be up betimes in the morning. Is Laverne in bed?"

She answered in the affirmative.

Friday Mrs. Westbury sent a little note to Laverne, asking if Saturday would do for the visit. Every other Saturday the child spent at Oaklands. So it was the next week when the visit was made. She stopped at the school for Laverne, and Dick Folsom was to come for her in the evening.

"It is very queer," she declared, laughing. "It seems a little like Swiss châlets built in the mountain sides where you go up by wooden steps. Only—the sand. I should think you would slip away."

"They are not going to take another street until next year. Of course, we shall move; I think down in the town. But it has been so delightful up here. And it did not seem so queer at first. But since they have been putting up such splendid buildings in the town, and making such fine streets, it has given us a wild appearance. Presently there will not be anything of Old San Francisco left. A good part of it has burned down already."

237

Miss Holmes welcomed her guest warmly and brought her a glass of delightful fruit sherbet. The place was plain enough, and yet it gave evidence of refined and womanly tastes in its adornments. And the clustering vines and bloom made a complete bower of it.

Mrs. Westbury espied the guitar. She was really glad there was no piano. Was Laverne musical?

"I've been learning the guitar. And I sing some. But you should hear my friend at Oaklands. Her voice is most beautiful. If mine was not a contralto I shouldn't venture to sing with her."

"You don't look like a contralto. A pure blonde should be a soprano."

"Perhaps I'm not a very pure blonde," with a merry light in her eyes. "I've heard concert singers who could not compare with Miss Savedra, but her people would be shocked at the idea of her singing in public. I was telling her about you. We are great friends. She is odd in some ways and foreign; they are Spanish people, but I love her better than any girl I know."

"And this Olive?" questioningly.

"Oh, Olive. She took a great liking to me in the beginning—we were quite children. She and the Savedras are cousins. And her father married a friend of Miss Holmes, but she is a delightful stepmother. Only now Olive seems so much older and has lovers. Yes, we are friends in a way, but we do not really love each other."

238

"And you haven't any lovers?"

"Oh, no." She flushed at that. "I don't want any. Why, I am not through school."

Mrs. Westbury found that she could not only read, but talk French and Spanish, and that she was being sensibly educated. But that was not the chief charm. It was a simplicity that defied art, a straightforwardness that was gentle, almost deprecating, yet never swerved from truth, a sweetness that was winning, a manner shy but quite captivating. And though she told many things about her life up here on the hill, there were no indiscreet or effusive confidences such as she had often listened to in young girls.

When Mr. Chadsey met the guest as they were coming in from the arbor, he simply stared at the name, not realizing that he had heard it mentioned before. A fair, somewhat faded woman, so well made up that she could still discount a few years. Her attire and her jewels betokened comfortable circumstances, indeed wealth, for besides some fine diamonds she had two splendid rubies.

Twice since he had been in California he had been startled by the name. Once by a young fellow of two or three and twenty, looking for a chance at clerking. The other had been a miserable, disreputable fellow, who had failed at mining and was likely through drunkenness to fail at everything else. He questioned him closely. The man had left a wife and family at Vincennes, and would be only too glad to get back to them. He had been born and raised in Indiana. So he had helped him on his way, praying that he might reach there. And here it had cropped up again. It sent a shiver through him.

239

He questioned the guest adroitly, carefully. She was proud of her husband and his successes. She had met him in New York; she thought him a native of that State.

Surely the David Westbury he knew could never have had all this good fortune. So he dismissed this case from his mind, and smiled over Laverne's new friend, who would be one of the transient guests of the heart.

Mr. Westbury sent word by a messenger that he would be detained longer than he expected. He hoped she found her quarters satisfactory, and that she would take all the entertainment she could. He had struck a new opening that would in all probability make a millionaire of him. When he returned they must go at once to London, and they might remain there for years, since it was one of the places she liked.

Yes, she did like it, and had made some very nice friends there. But—if she had a daughter like this girl to draw young men; she should always yearn for the young life that had never been hers, and a girl to dress beautifully, to take out driving in the "Row," to have one and another nod to her, to take her calling—that was the way mothers did in England, to give dainty parties for her, to let her tend stalls at fairs, to have her some day presented to the Queen, and at last to marry well. Her daughter might have such a fortune. David Westbury had been lucky in a good many things and he seldom made a mistake.

240

She dreamed this over and over again. She had never cared for babies or little children, and she had felt glad there had been no children to tie her to the old New Hampshire town, where she must then have spent her life. She had had so much more enjoyment, larger liberty, and oh, worlds more money. Travelling, hotels, meeting delightful people. But now her day was about over. If there was a young blossom growing up beside her to shed a charm around, to attract, to fill a house with gayety, so she could go through with it all again. Then lovers and marriage. She should want a pretty girl, one with a winsome manner. A little training would do wonders with this one, who was just the right age to be moulded into success.

Of course, her uncle would never give her up, and one could not coax her away. A man's journeying about would have no society advantages. Miss Holmes was very nice and sensible, but there were some old-maidish traits. She was rather narrow. She really pitied the girl's life between them. It would lose the exquisite flavor of enjoyment that by right belonged to youth.

Of course, all this was folly. But she did like the child so much. And she wanted a new adoration, which she believed she could win easily.

241

CHAPTER XVI

IN THE BALANCE

Agnes Westbury had listened all the early part of the evening to her husband's enthusiastic plans. Good fortune expanded him in every direction. It was true that quicksilver had been discovered at Alameda, also that the new process of separating gold was a great saving. Working mines had been most extravagant and wasteful. Some of the old ones had been deserted that no doubt would pay again. He had taken options for the London Company, he had two or three for himself. Luck had surely come his way. Now they must leave as soon as possible.

Had she enjoyed herself? Had the landlady been satisfactory? Had she gone about and seen much, made any pleasant friends? San Francisco was a strange and wonderful place. It had risen up in a night, as it were. It was in the line of the Eastern trade, it would be the great mart of the world. What was Congress thinking about not to establish a through route, but depend on this miserable overland accommodation for the crowds who would come! Its very wildness and sublimity outdid Europe. Some day it would be a worldwide attraction for tourists. Such mountains, such a range of climate, such a profusion of everything, such a seacoast line.

242

David Westbury was pacing up and down the apartment with a light, springy step. He had been in his youth a tall and rather lanky down-easter. Now he had filled out, was fine and robust, with a good clear skin. In those days his nose had been too large, his mouth wide, with rather loose lips. Now the rest of his face had rounded out, his lips had grown firm-set, decisive, and his mustache was trimmed in the latest style. Just at the corners of his mouth his beard had begun to whiten a little, his lightish hair had turned darker. Prosperity had made a man of him. He had grown sharp, far-sighted, but he had an amiability that was more than pleasing—attractive. He had learned to use his own phrase, "not to buck against the world." Where he had been rather credulous and lax in early life, he had become wary and shrewd, and did not hesitate if he could turn the best of the deal his way.

"Yes, she had enjoyed herself very much. Mrs. Folsom and her son had been most attentive, there had been some star players at the theatres and a noted singer or two. She had met some nice people, there was a good deal of crudeness and display, but on the whole it was very fair for a new place. And some odd, quaint individuals, some really refined women from Boston, and such a charming young girl that she coveted; she wished she had her for a daughter."

"That's a queer wish; too, I thought you were not fond of children."

"Well, I am not generally. I'd like them full-grown, and attractive," laughing.

243

"I wouldn't mind a fine, upright, sober, honorable son that one could trust in all things, but they are scarce."

"David, what will you do with your money?"

"Well,"—he laughed a little. "Let me see—endow a hospital perhaps, or build a college. But we must have all the pleasure we desire."

She gave a little sigh.

"About this girl, now?" he queried.

"She's the dearest, sweetest, simplest body, not foolish, not sentimental, but like water in a ground glass globe, if you can understand. She's one of the old settlers, and that's laughable, came in '51, round the Horn, from Maine, I believe, with an uncle and some friends. He is a Mr. Chadsey, and keeps a big warehouse, shipping stores and what not, and is, I believe, making a fortune—to take her journeying round the world."

"Chadsey," he said thoughtfully. "Chadsey. What is the girl's name?"

"Oh, Chadsey, too."

"Ah!" nodding, yet he drew his brows a little.

"I suppose he was her mother's brother. Her mother died just before they came out here."

He made a brief calculation. "Yes, it was in '51 that *she* died. And Jason Chadsey was there, he took the little girl away. At Boston all trace was lost, though he had *not* searched very exhaustively for her. He had a feeling that she would be well cared for."

David Westbury glanced at his wife. Her elbow was on the window sill and her cheek rested on her hand. There was a touch of sadness in her face, a longing in her eyes. He loved her more now than when he had married her. She was a little exacting then. She had been very fond of pleasure, theatres, balls, fine dinners at hotels, journeys, dress, jewels. He enjoyed them, too, with the zest that generally comes to one who has been deprived of them in early life, and whose training has been to consider them reprehensible.

244

They had taken their fill. Now his mind was all on business; he liked to surmount difficulties, to bring success out of chaos. He had to leave her alone a good deal. She used to find entertainment in conquering the admiration of young men, but these last few years she had found herself less attractive, except as she listened to their love troubles and begged her for advice. He did not understand this at all, only he felt he had an engrossing business and she had nothing but looking on.

"You like this girl very much?"

"Yes, I can't tell just why, except that she is so honestly sweet, so ready to give of her best without expecting any return. Do you remember Lady Westmere and her two daughters? They were fine girls and devoted to her. I had not considered it much before, but I understood then what an interest and solace a young girl of the right sort would be. You know I had Gladys Wynne to stay a month with me when you were over to Paris. I had half a mind to engage her as a sort of companion, and she would have been glad enough to come. But I found she had some mean, underhand tricks, and was looking out for her own advantage while she was trying to persuade you that it was yours. And she told little fibs. So I gave up the idea. A maid, you know, is no company, though one must have her abroad. But we couldn't coax or kidnap this girl," and she sighed in the midst of a sad smile.

245

He still paced up and down. How long since he had thought of that old life. He had always said to himself that he had been a fool to marry Laverne Dallas, but he had taken a good deal of satisfaction then in "cutting out" Jason Chadsey. What fools young fellows were!

"Agnes," he began, "before I married you I did not tell you my whole story. I said I had lost my wife and child, that ill luck had dragged me through those early years. She had another lover, Jason Chadsey, a seafaring man, of whom she had not heard in a long time, when she married me. Some years later I was at a low ebb and away, trying to make money for them as well as myself. When I had a little success I went back. She was dead and buried. Chadsey had come back, it seems, and taken the child, since there were no near relatives to say him nay. At Boston I lost trace of them."

"Oh, David!" She sprang up and flung both arms about him. "You don't think—this Laverne—why, what if she should be yours!"

"She came here late in '51. Her mother died early in the spring before. She must have been about eight. Why, it's quite a romance for this prosaic world."

"If you are her father, you have the best right. Oh, David, I should love her and be so good to her. She should have everything, and I would be so happy. Oh, you *must* see to-morrow."

246

There was a hysterical catch in her voice, and a great throb at her heart.

"There, don't get into a fit. Why, I didn't suppose you could care so much. Yes, I know you will be good to her. Chadsey may kick about giving her up, but I doubt if he took any steps toward legal adoption. Oh, I think there will not be any real trouble unless she will not come."

"But she ought to have some regard for her father! And he isn't really her uncle or guardian. Why, it wouldn't be quite the thing for her to travel round the world with him."

They talked it over until their plans seemed most reasonable. And then they wondered at the strangeness of it. He had no real compunctions of conscience about the past, though of course he would have accepted the responsibility of his daughter if he could have found her. He had a practical business way of looking at matters. And while Agnes Westbury lay awake, and had vague visions, dropping now and then into snatches of dreams, he slept soundly and awoke with a resolve to settle the question with just the same purpose as if he had resolved to buy his wife thousands of dollars' worth of jewels.

They had begun the necessary sea wall that was to safeguard the piers and the shipping that grew more extensive every year. Here was the old Fisherman's Pier, then steamers, trading vessels, queer foreign ships, business places of all sorts, many of them quite dilapidated, fringed East Street. Here, where Clay Street ran down, almost meeting Sacramento, there were warehouses, packing houses, boxes and bales and general confusion. The one-story place with the sign "J. Chadsey" over the wide doorway, not much handsomer than that of a barn, but strengthened with iron bars and great bolts, had stretched out and out, and now they were packing in stores from the Orient, stores from the Isthmus, that were being unloaded from two vessels. Jason Chadsey had been giving orders here and there, setting men at work, and was warm and tired when word came that a gentleman wanted to see him in the office. They made distinctions in those days, even if the country was new and rough.

247

That was no strange summons. He pulled out his handkerchief, and wiped the sweat and grime from his face, listened a moment to the wrangling, swearing, strange Chinese chatter, songs in various languages, then turned and went in, hardly able to see at first from the glitter of the sun that had drenched him. This was a place just now with two big desks and a clerk writing at one. The inner office had a window on the street side and two wooden stools, one dilapidated leathern chair before another desk.

A man rose up and faced him. A well-dressed, well-kept man, with a certain air of prosperity and authority, and if he had any scheme to exploit it would no doubt have some advantage in it. But he was a stranger.

"You are Jason Chadsey?" Westbury would have known him anywhere. Except to grow older, to be a little more wrinkled,—weatherbeaten, he had always been,—and his hair slightly grizzled at the temples, he was the same. There was honesty, truth, and goodness in the face that had not changed either.

248

"Yes," Chadsey replied briefly.

"And you don't remember me?"

Chadsey tried to consider the voice, but that had grown rounder, fuller, and lost all the Maine twang. There had been so many faces between youth and this time.

"Well, I am David Westbury."

Jason Chadsey dropped on a stool and stared, then mopped his face again, while a shiver passed over him that seemed to wring his very vitals, turn him stone-cold.

"It's odd how things come about." The man of the world had his rival at a disadvantage. "I'd had runs of hard luck," in an easy, almost indifferent tone, being where he could laugh at the past, "and I'd tried about everything in vain. I was too proud to come back to Laverne empty-handed. Then, when I had made something, I turned, hoping to ease up her hard life, and found she was dead and buried. You had befriended her; thank you for that. But you took my child. I traced you to Boston. After that my search was vain. I have looked over lists of vessels, thinking to strike your name as captain or mate, and finally given up search. Business brought me here, perhaps fate, too, had a hand in it. My wife has seen and known the child, and already loves her. I am grateful for your care all these years, but I would rather have had her in my keeping. I am a rich man—if I was a poor devil I would put in no claim, no matter how dear she was to me, but a father has the best right."

249

Jason Chadsey rose. For a moment he had murder in his heart. The man's evident prosperity and effrontery stung him so. The past came rushing over him.

"Do you know how I found her?" he began hoarsely. "I had resolved to come out here. I was getting tired of seafaring. I went to Munro to say good-by to a few old friends. I expected to find her a happy wife and mother, with little ones about her. Instead it was a virtually deserted wife, who had heard nothing of her husband in a long while, who had used up all her little store and was in debt besides, who was suffering from cold, want, heartbreak, and dying, knowing no refuge for her child except the poor farm or to be bound out to some neighbor."

"No, she would not have been," was the almost fierce interruption.

"The dying woman did not know that. She had some comfort in her last moments," and his voice softened curiously with remembered pathos. "She gave me the child. I have been father and mother to her. You cannot have her."

"I believe the law gives the parent the right to the child until she is of age. You had no consent of mine. You could not legally adopt her, at least, it would not hold in law."

Jason Chadsey turned pale under the tan of years. Why, he had not even thought of any legal protection for his claim. It rested only on love and care.

"You see," continued the confident voice, "that my right has been in no way jeopardized. I am Laverne Westbury's father, amply able to care for her in an attractive and refined manner, place her in the best society, to give her whatever education and accomplishment she needs, the protection of a mother, the standing of a father, travel—we are to go to England shortly—and it would be worse than folly to stand in her way."

250

"She will not go," Jason Chadsey said sturdily.

"She will if the law directs."

"She will not when she knows the struggle of the last year of her mother's life. Why, you robbed *her* mother, the poor, old, helpless woman, of the little she had. You persuaded her to take up money on the house—it was not worth much, but it was a home to shelter them."

"Laverne was as anxious to get out of the place as I. What could I do there? She was willing that I should try. I was unfortunate. Other men have been—you find wrecks everywhere. I struggled hard to recover, and did, even if it was too late for her. We thank Providence for our successes—doesn't the same power direct reverses? It wasn't my fault. Luck runs against a man his whole life sometimes."

"You could have written. That would have cheered her solitary hours. She would have told you she was dying, and begged you to come. When I think of what that dreary winter was to her——"

"You were there to comfort her." There was a half sneer on the face. "See here, Jason Chadsey, you were her first lover, not a very ardent one, I fancy, either. I was a fool to persuade her to marry me, though I think her grandmother had a strong hand in it. You were there those last weeks. Did she confess her mistake, and admit that you had held her heart all these years? What confidences took place?"

251

"None that you might not hear. Nothing but some truths that I guessed, and wrung out of her—your neglect. You would not dare to stain the mother's memory to the child. If you did I think I could kill you. Any one who knows aught about those New England women, brought up among the snowy hills like nuns, would know it was a base lie!"

"Come, come, we won't slop over into melodrama. We will leave it to the law if you agree to abide by the decision."

"The law will not force her to go."

"I think she will be convinced. You are no kin to her. Now that she is grown, it is hardly the thing

for her to go on living in this fashion. You may mean to marry her. That would be monstrous!"

"Go your way, go your way, David Westbury," and he made an indignant gesture as if he would sweep him out of the place. "I have other matters on hand. I have no time to parley."

Then Chadsey turned and, being near the door, made a rush for the street, plunging the next minute into the thick of business. Westbury laughed a moment, lighted a cigar, and sauntered out at his leisure. Up in a more respectable street he glanced about, finding a lawyer's office, and though he guessed the opinion must be in his favor he wanted an assurance.

"If there had been an assignment under belief that the father was dead, he could recover, if it was proved he was the proper person to have the care of the child, and amply able to support it." 252

Jason Chadsey worked furiously. He would not think. It was high noon before he found a respite. Then he went in the office instead of going to lunch. He could not eat.

The shadow that would hang over him now and then, that he had always managed to drive away, had culminated at length in a storm that would sweep from its moorings the dearest thing he held on earth, that he had toiled for, that he had loved with the tenderness of a strong, true heart, that had been all his life. Without her it would only be a breathing shell of a body, inert, with no hope, no real feeling. Ah, if they had been ready to go away a few months ago! If Laverne was of age! If he had a legal adoption, they might make a fight on that. He had nothing. But she would not go, she would not go.

Ah, how could he tell her? Perhaps her father and yes, that soft-spoken, insinuating woman, was her stepmother, and Laverne had a young girl's fancy for her—perhaps they would go and lay the case before her, persuade, entreat—oh, no, they could not win, he felt sure of that. How could he ever go home! What would the home be without her! What would life be—the money—anything!

It was quite late when he climbed the ascent, growing worse and worse. There had been two landslides. Why, presently they would be swept away.

"Oh, how late you are!" cried the soft, girlish voice. "How did you get up? Isn't it dreadful! Have you had a hard day? Was there a steamer in? Do you suppose we shall ever have a letter from the Hudsons?" 253

Nothing had happened. Perhaps David Westbury did not dare. He almost crushed the slim figure in his arms.

"Oh, what a bear hug!" she cried, when she could get her breath. "And you are so late. We had such a splendid big fish that Pablo caught and cooked, and it was delicious. And I made a berry cake, but you like that cold, and we will have the fish heated up. Was it an awful busy day?"

"Yes, a vessel in, and another to be loaded up."

His voice shook a little.

"Oh, you dear old darling, you are tired to death. Here's a cup of nice tea. And if you were a young lover, I would sing you the daintiest little Spanish song. Isola and I made it up. You see, things don't sound quite so bare and bald in Spanish, and you can make the rhymes easier. The music is all hers. We are supposed to sing it to some one gone on a journey that we want back with us."

"Well, I'm an old lover; sing it to me!" Then she would not notice that he was not eating much supper.

The guitar had a blue ribbon, and she threw it over her shoulder and shook her golden hair about. Tinkle, tinkle, went the soft accompaniment. She had a sweet parlor voice, with some sad notes in it, wistful, longing notes. He wondered if she was thinking of any one miles and miles across the water.

"It is tender and beautiful," he said, "sing something else."

"You are not eating your cake."

"But I shall." He must choke down a little.

Afterward they strolled about the hill. There was no moon, but the stars were like great golden and silver globes, and the air was sweet with a hundred fragrances. Nothing had happened, and he wondered a little at it. Suddenly she said: 254

"Oh, you must go to bed after such a hard day's work. And I am cruel dragging you about."

He could not tell her. Oh, what if he should never need to tell her! How could he give her up? Was life all sacrifice?

Something odd had happened to her. She sat by the window living it over. She had gone around by Folsom House to see Mrs. Westbury, thinking how she should miss her when they went back to England. She ran up to her room. There was a thin lace drapery in the doorway to bring a breeze through and yet shield the occupant from the passer-by.

"Oh, you sweet little darling! Did you dream that I was wishing for you? I've been just crazy to see you all day."

She was in a dainty white silk *négligée*, with cascades of lace and some pale pink bows. She wore such pretty gowns, Laverne thought.

"Do you know that in about a week we shall go away? And I shan't know how to live without you. I love you so! Why do you suppose I should be always longing for you, thinking about you? Last night——"

She gave her a rapturous embrace and kissed lips and brow and eyelids. Sometimes Isola Savedra caressed her this way. But Isola was just a girl, musical, vehement, Spanish.

"I couldn't sleep for thinking of you, longing for you. Shall I steal you and take you away? Oh, if you loved me well enough to come, you should have everything heart could desire. I am so lonesome at times."

255

"I shouldn't come for the things," she returned, coloring. "And if I loved you ever so much——"

"No, don't say you wouldn't. Oh, to-morrow I shall have something strange to tell you, but now I say over and over again I want you, I want you!"

Laverne drew a long breath. She was half magnetized by the intensity, by the strange expression in the face, the eager eyes.

"I shall be sorry to have you go." She hardly knew what to say. Sorrow did not half express it.

"Don't mind me—yes, it is true, too. But I heard a story last night that suggested such a splendid possibility. I couldn't sleep. And I can't tell you just yet, but when you hear it—oh, you'll be tender and not break my heart that is so set upon it. Something you can do for me."

"I will do anything in my power."

"Remember that when I ask you."

She was fain to keep her longer, but Laverne had a curious feeling that she could not understand, a half fear or mystery. And then she had some translation to make for to-morrow. She was studying German now.

She worked steadily at her lessons. Then she had a race with Bruno, and waited out on the steps for Uncle Jason. What would happen to her to-morrow? It might be an elegant parting gift. How strange Mrs. Westbury had been. No one had influenced her in just that way before.

Then she went to bed and fell asleep with the ease of healthy youth. Jason Chadsey tossed and tumbled. What would to-morrow bring? How would Laverne take it? Must she go? Would she go? How could he endure it?

256

"One," the solemn old clock downstairs said. "Two." He had half a mind to get up. Hark, what was that? Or was he dreaming? Oh, again, now a clang sharp enough to arouse any one. Fire! Fire! He sprang out of bed and went to the window. Was it down there on the bay? He stood paralyzed while the clamor grew louder, and flames shot up in great spires, yellow-red against the blue sky. And now an immense sheet that seemed to blot out the middle of the bay, as if it could run across. "Clang, clang," went the bells.

"Oh, what is it, fire?" cried Miss Holmes.

"Fire down on the docks. I must go. Do not disturb Laverne."

Let her sleep now. She would know sorrow soon enough.

He dressed hurriedly and went out. The stars were still shining in the blue sky, though round the edges toward the eastward there were faint touches of grayish white. But the zenith seemed aflame. Up went the great spires grandly, a thing to be admired if it brought no loss. He went stumbling down the rough ways in the semi-darkness. Once a stone rolled and he fell. Then he hurried on. Other people were out—you could discern windows crowded with heads. Was San Francisco to have another holocaust? There were shrieks and cries. The noise of the engines, blowing of horns, whistles, boats steaming up, others being towed out in the bay, wooden buildings hastily demolished to stay the progress of the red fiend. Crowds upon crowds, as if the sight were a new one.

257

On the corner of Davis Street he sat down on a barrel, close by a stoop, overwhelmed by the certainty. Why go any nearer? The rigging of a vessel had caught, the flames twisted this way and that by their own force, as there was no wind, fortunately.

All the labor of years was swallowed up, her fortune, her luxuries, her pleasures. Another twelve months and it would have been secured. But, alas! she would not be here to share it. Did it matter so very much? His soul within him was numb. Since he had lost her, what need he care for a prosperity she could not share?

The hot air swept his face. Pandemonium sounded in his ears. Men ran to and fro, but he sat there in a kind of dumb despair that all his life should have gone for nought, labor, and love as well.

258

CHAPTER XVII

THE DECISION OF FATE

Pablo told them the heart-breaking news. But about eight o'clock Uncle Jason returned. The fire was out, there were only heaps of smoking ashes and smouldering brands. Jason Chadsey had been warmly sympathized with, proffered assistance to rebuild, to recommence business, and would have been deluged with whiskey if he had accepted. That was still a panacea for all ills and troubles. But he refused, and wandered about in dogged silence. No one knew the whole loss.

In the farther office desk he had slipped a box with a string of pearls for his darling's birthday. Some one had said pearls were for blondes, and in spite of much out-of-door living, she had kept her beautiful complexion. Then crushed by the astounding news, he had forgotten about it.

"Oh, Uncle Jason!" Grimed as he was with smoke and cinders, she flew to his arms, and sobbed out her sorrow.

"There, there, dear." His voice had the stress of fatigue and great emotion. "I am not fit to touch. And I can't talk now. I am tired to death. Give me a cup of coffee."

"I don't believe I will go to school to-day," she said, with fine disregard of rules. "And yet I ought. There are the translations to be handed in."

259

"Yes, do go. I must get some rest."

"I'll come home at noon," kissing him fondly.

He nodded. He was a broken old man in what should have been the prime of life. He drank his coffee, then took the whiskey he had refused down on the dock, went to his room, and after a good cool wash, threw himself on the bed.

The fire was on everybody's tongue. Not that fires were a rarity. But this might have been much worse, yet it was bad enough for Jason Chadsey. The air was still full of smoke, there was a dense fog and a cloudy sky. Everywhere you heard the same talk.

The lessons at school went on well enough, though Laverne's nerves were all of a tremble. Just after eleven as recess began she was summoned to the reception room.

David Westbury had been out to the fire and come in again.

"Gad!" he exclaimed. "It's that Chadsey's place! And he had a tremendous stock, a new shipload just in, some others waiting to be loaded up. This is a queer town where every so often there's a big fire. The only amends is that it is rebuilt better. Half of the old rookeries ought to come down, they look so forlorn and ancient."

"Oh, David. Well, if he has lost everything he will be the more willing to give up the girl."

"He will give her up, anyhow," in a determined tone. Some things Chadsey had said still rankled in David Westbury's mind.

He went downtown again. Yes, it was ruin sure enough. Being prosperous now, he could afford to pity the unfortunate ones. Chadsey had gone home. The police were in charge, to keep off the roughs and the thieves.

260

"We must have the matter settled to-day," he declared to his wife.

"I know where she is at school. Let us go there."

"Excellent. I should like to see her alone. It is right that she should hear my story."

So to the school they went. Laverne came in a little flurried, and yet bewitching in her simple girlhood. Her bodice was rather low about the throat, with some edging around, and a band of black velvet encircled her white neck. Her skirt was ankle length, and the man noted her trim, slender feet, with the high arch of the instep.

Mrs. Westbury kissed her with warmth and tenderness. Her eyes were luminous this morning, and the flushes showed above the delicately tinted cheeks; her whole air was pleading, enchanting.

"You know I said there was a strange story for you to hear," she exclaimed, when they had talked at length about the fire. "Mr. Westbury will tell you."

He began to pace up and down, as was his habit, so slowly that it gave him an air of thoughtfulness. Mrs. Westbury had her arm around Laverne.

"Yes, a rather curious story, yet numbers of these instances crop out along life. Friends, often relatives are reunited, tangled threads are straightened, mysteries explained. In a little village in Maine lived a girl and her two friends, they were a little too old for real schoolmates. Her name was Laverne Dallas."

261

Why, that was her mother's name. And Maine. She began to listen attentively, just as one pieces out a dream that has nearly escaped from memory. And Westbury! Why, she had forgotten she

ever had any other name than Chadsey—it was her story as well, and now she looked at the man, who certainly had nothing repellant about him, and the story of those early years was pathetic as he lent it several appealing embellishments. She really could not remember him with any distinctness. The death of her grandmother, the pale, reserved mother, coughing and holding on to her side, the coming of Uncle Jason, who it seemed was no uncle at all, her mother's death, and all the rest was school and play.

"Oh! Oh!" she cried, and hid her face on Mrs. Westbury's shoulder.

"So you see you are my little daughter. Your own mother is not here to care for you and make you happy, but here is a new mother, who has learned to love you unaware. And now we are returning to London, and will take you with us, and give you the life that rightly belongs to you ___"

"Oh, no, no," she interrupted with poignant pathos. "I cannot go. I could not leave Uncle Jason in this sad loss and trouble. He has been so good, so kind, so tender—"

"As if an own father could not be that! Laverne, my darling, my own little girl!"

If he had been poor he would have thought any child a great burden. He was not the sort of man to make sacrifices for any one. They would have irked him terribly. But in prosperity he was very indulgent. There are many such people. Jason Chadsey would have shared his last dollar, his last crust, ungrudgingly.

262

They began to set the matter before her in a reasonable, practical light. Henceforward she would be a burden on Mr. Chadsey, who had already done so much for her. She would have in her parents' care accomplishments, travel, society, a lovely home, pleasures of all kinds, and now she was old enough to enjoy them. And they wanted her. Her father had the lawful right, would have until she was of age.

"I must go home," she said at length. "It is so strange. I must think it over. And if Uncle Jason wants me—"

"And we want you." Agnes Westbury gave her a tender embrace, as she wiped the tears from her own eyes. They could not be allowed to run riot down the cheeks as Laverne's were doing.

She rose unsteadily.

"Have you no word for me, your father?"

She went to the outstretched arms and hid her face on his breast. She could not love all at once. She could not break Uncle Jason's heart.

"I know it must seem strange, but I think Mr. Chadsey will recognize my right in you. We must see him—"

"To-morrow, then," she interrupted. "Let me have this afternoon to consider, to talk."

Her voice trembled from exhaustion. She took a few unsteady steps. The noon bells began to ring, and again she said she must go.

They importuned her to accompany them to the Folsom House to dinner, but she would not consent. Then her father insisted that she should have a hack, but she refused that strenuously. They walked together some distance.

263

"Arrangements must be made to-morrow morning," her father said authoritatively. She felt as if she had been metamorphosed into some other person. Laverne Westbury! it made her shiver. She liked the old personality so much better. Must she go away? This was all the real home she had ever known, this strange, odd, ever-changing Old San Francisco. Why, over here there was a row of tents when they first came. And the queer little one-room and two-room adobe houses, and the tangled-up streets that ended at some one's house. How plainly she could see it all!

She began to climb the hill wearily. Then some one came to meet her, helped her tenderly over the rough places. They did not pause at the house, but took the winding path up to the pine tree that grew more beautiful every year, with its shining needles and gray-green, fuzzy buds, almost like little kittens rolling and tumbling in the wind. Balder the beautiful was resting here. Here Victor had really said good-by to her. Why, Victor was in London. And suddenly London seemed to emerge from the gloom of the Tower, and the execution of King Charles and a hundred other melancholy reminiscences.

"Laverne!" her uncle began.

"Oh, I know! I know! They both came to school. They told me everything. But I shall not go. Do you think I could be so ungrateful, so heartless now in all this trouble? And I love you. It is years of love between us, and only a few weeks with them. Oh, no, no!"

264

There was a long silence. A vireo came and sang his merry lilt in the tree overhead. The fog and a good deal of the smoke had cleared away, and the sun was shining.

He was very glad of the love. It would comfort him all the rest of the weary way.

"Listen, child," he said at length, and he went carefully over the ground. The strongest point of all was that the law would give her to her father the next four years. And now he would have to start

in anew and make another fortune. "I am not too old," he declared, with a little pride.

A word had caught her, just as one catches a ball with a chain at careless throw.

"Four years," she said. "Why, then when I am twenty-one I could come back. Four years only! Will you be waiting for me? I shall surely come."

She would be married before that. A pretty young girl with a fortune was not likely to be left on the bush. He caught at it, too. It would smooth the way since the parting had to be. He had nothing; Westbury had it all.

"Oh," she cried impulsively, "I can think how you loved my mother. Was she happy there at the last with you? But you two should have been married, and I should have been your child. Why do things, wishes, events go at cross-purposes?"

Alas! no one could tell. It was one of the great world's mysteries.

Miss Holmes summoned them to dinner presently. She had heard the story, and though it was hard, they had to admit that the child belonged to her father while she was under age.

265

Half the night Laverne thought she would defy them all and stay. Would her father want to drag her away a prisoner? What was a father's love like? Wasn't the playing at it better and holier; the sense of loss somewhere else making it diviner, giving it a yearning that a full right could never quite embody? She did not like the full right to be taken, she would rather be coaxed a little and led along. And she could not positively decide about Mrs. Westbury. Some girls she found were quite extravagant in their protestations and then forgot. Olive was one; there was another very sweet girl in school who wanted always to be caressing the one she liked. Isola was not always demonstrative. They did have some delightful quiet times. Were not women girls grown larger and older?

It was strange, Laverne thought, how nearly every one was ranged on Mr. Westbury's side. The Personettes admired him, Mrs. Folsom considered him a gentleman, and at that time the term was a compliment. The schoolgirls envied her the romance and the going abroad. Even Miss Holmes thought it the right and proper thing to do. Uncle Jason did not discuss the right, with him there was nothing else to do.

Other matters troubled him. Property had been queerly held in the city. There had been squatters, there had been old Mexican deeds, claims coming up every now and then to be settled with difficulty. Jason Chadsey had leased the ground and the waterfront when it had not been very valuable. He had bought one building, erected others. In a year more the lease would expire. Already large prices had been offered for it. He could not rebuild, though generous friends had proffered him any amount of money. He felt unable to take the stir and struggle for no end, that he could not explain. Like a wounded animal, he wanted to go off in quiet and seclusion and nurse his hurts. He had been worsted everywhere, let him give up.

266

Mrs. Westbury had wisdom enough not to make her claim at all onerous. There would be plenty of time on the long journey. Every day her old friends seemed dearer to Laverne. At Oakland they bewailed the separation, but recognized its rightfulness, its necessity. To Isola it was a joy that she would see Victor, and she sent no end of messages.

Mrs. Savedra said to Miss Holmes, "If you desire to make a change, we shall be more than glad to have you."

David Westbury drove his wife and pretty daughter about with a proud, satisfied air. Agnes shopped for her, "just enough to make her presentable," she said when Laverne protested. But, after all, the parting was very hard.

"You must not come and see me off, Uncle Jason." She could not renounce the dear, familiar name. "If you did, I should give one wild leap and land on the wharf, and you would have to keep me. Four years—it's a long, long while, and there will be room for a great many heartaches in it, but one day they will be healed."

267

He obeyed her, and did not come. There were many friends who did. So she went sailing out of the Golden Gate on as fair a day as she had first entered it. Oh, how the sun shone and tipped the waves with molten gold. Never were skies bluer. Even the rocks, and the clefts, and the crannies brought out their indescribable colors, browns that deepened through every shade into purple and black, grays that were pink and mauve and dun, blues that ran into sapphire, and green and chrysoprase. Telegraph Hill and the old, time-worn semaphore. Oh, farewell, farewell, dear old San Francisco!

There was some trouble getting insurance matters straightened up and paying debts. Jason Chadsey had lost the spring of ambition and life. He would take a voyage up north with some of the explorers, then he would think of the next thing. Four years. Oh, no, she would never return. The bright, laughing, gay world would swallow her up.

Marian Holmes pitied the man profoundly through this time. They had been excellent, sensible friends. There had been two or three occasions when she would have married him if he had been really in love with her. She knew now why his love-day had passed. She enjoyed her own life, her own neat ways, her liberty. She and Miss Gaines were still very warm friends, and the latter would have liked her to come with her.

"I have a fancy to try it at Oaklands, and help Americanize these charming people, perhaps spoil them. It will be very easy and delightful. The daughter will be a rather curious study. If she were poor, she would have a fortune in her voice. She has quite a gift of poetry. I shall try to keep her from morbidness and a convent, now that she has lost her friend. And her mother wants her fitted for marriage. How these foreigners harp on that!" laughing a little.

268

Laverne Westbury cried herself to sleep many a night, though in the daytime she took a warm interest in all about her, and tried to be agreeable, tried to draw near to her father. He was proud of her prettiness, of her refined ways, the delicacy that had come down to her from the New England strain. It was English, and she would "take" over there. Then he was glad to have Agnes so happy. It was like a girl with her first doll. Often Laverne would rather have been left alone, but she tried not to be ungracious.

They crossed the Isthmus, quite a new experience. They went up to Washington, where David Westbury had an excellent scheme to exploit that did get taken up afterward. Then to Liverpool. The little girl never dreamed there would come a time when one could cross the continent in a week, the ocean in another, and her father's expectations seemed quite wild to her.

There was a visit over to Paris. Eugénie was at the height of her popularity, but now she had to take a little pains with her beauty. Still she was the mother of a future Emperor, she was a favorite daughter of the Church, she set the fashions and the manners of the day and did it most admirably.

It was not possible for a girl to be unhappy or cry herself to sleep amid such charming surroundings. Her French was very useful, she had been so in the habit of using it at home that she did not take it up awkwardly.

269

Then they must go to London and get settled. They would have a real home, an attractive place where they could entertain. Mr. Westbury would be away a good deal on flying trips, and now he would not mind leaving his wife with her pleasant companion. He really grew fond of Laverne in a proud sort of way. He liked women to have attractions. He was not jealous, he had found his wife too useful to spoil it by any petty captiousness.

Laverne was really amazed. A simple little home, Mrs. Westbury had said, but it seemed to her quite grand. A pretty court, the house standing back a little, a plot of flowers and some vines, a spacious hall with rooms on both sides, a large drawing room, smaller delightful apartments, sleeping and dressing rooms upstairs, a man and several maids, and a carriage kept on livery.

On one side of the hall were an office and a smoking room devoted to the gentlemen who called on business, and there were many of them, but they did not disturb the ladies.

Some old friends came to welcome Mrs. Westbury back, and this was Miss Westbury, who had been at school in the "States" while they were travelling about, and now would remain permanently with them. Mrs. Westbury sent out cards for a Sunday reception and presented her daughter to the guests. She was something delightfully fresh and new, a pretty, modest girl who might have been reared in any English family, and who was not handsome enough to shine down the daughters of other mammas.

It was her very naturalness that proved her greatest charm. And Mrs. Westbury found she had not made any mistake in desiring her. Young men sought her favor again. Older men lingered for a bit of bright talk. Laverne felt at times as if she were in an enchanted world. How could youth remain blind to the delight?

270

Then all the wonderful journeys about to famous places, art galleries, concerts, drives in the parks. It seemed as if there was no end to the money. Since prosperity had dawned upon David Westbury he had made it a rule never to want twice for a thing be it indulgence of any reasonable sort, once when he had, and once when he had not. His plans were working admirably. A golden stream was pouring in and he was in his element. A few years of this and he could retire on his competency.

She wrote to Miss Holmes and heard from her the current news about every one. Olive Personette was well married. Isola had a music master, an enthusiastic German, who insisted such a voice should not be hidden out of sight and hearing. Her father had been persuaded to allow her to sing in St. Mary's Church, recently completed in a very fine manner, on Ascension Sunday and there had been great enthusiasm over the unknown singer. Elena was growing up into a bright, eager girl who rode magnificently and danced to perfection, and was already drawing crowds of admirers, much to her mother's satisfaction, and would make amends for Isola's diffidence and distaste of society. Dick Folsom was still flirting with pretty girls. Nothing had been heard from Mr. Chadsey, except that he had gone up to the wild Russian possessions. There was inclosed a letter from Mrs. Hudson, who was a happy mother, and José was the best of husbands.

271

Laverne wondered at times how it was possible to hear anything of Victor Savedra. Girls were so hedged about here, everything they did inquired into. It would not be proper for her to write, and if she had an answer Mrs. Westbury would know it. She kept an excellent watch over her pretty daughter. She was really glad no one heard from Jason Chadsey. In this round of pleasure Laverne would soon forget that crude life, and not care to go back to it.

She did find many things to interest. But the Westbury society was not of the intellectual type.

Then there were no stirring questions about one's own town. London seemed a great agglomeration of small places, and was to a degree finished. There was no especial Steamer day, there was no influx of miners, no great bay with its shipping at hand, and, oh, no great ocean with its multitude of denizens to watch.

Yet, of course, there were other wonderful things, the galleries, with their pictures and statues, only it seemed to her that people went quite as much to see each other's fine clothes. There were the churches, the palaces, the great piles of learning that had trained Englishmen hundreds of years. Mr. Westbury took them to the House of Commons to a debate that he was interested in, but she felt a little disappointed. Somewhere at Oxford was Victor Savedra, but what was one amid the great multitude?

They went over on the French coast for a summering and Laverne found herself quite a favorite at once. She was so modest and unassuming. American tourists had not invaded every corner of Europe. And a young American who knew French and Spanish people at home, where no one supposed they could be found, where they looked only for wild Indians, was indeed an unusual personage.

272

Mrs. Westbury was proud of her stepdaughter. She was so tractable, it was so easy to keep her out of the reach of undesirable admirers. Indeed, she thought she should be jealous when Laverne came to have lovers.

Then back to London again, visiting at country houses where there were hunts and much fine riding, pretty evening balls, queer old women, titled and bejewelled, to whom every one seemed to bow.

And it was while they were at Thorley that Lord Wrexford came home from the Continent, where he had been trying to live cheaply for a while. He was five and thirty, very well looking and agreeable, and though he had taken on some flesh he was not too stout for dancing, so he was invited out considerably, though he was not esteemed a catch in the matrimonial market. For it was well known that Wrexford Grange was nearly covered with mortgages. The old lord was helpless from paralysis, not able to sign his name, and too infirm in mind to consent lawfully to any measures looking to the disposal of the old place. Indeed, his death was looked for almost any time.

He came with a purpose beside dancing. A friend had said: "See if Westbury can't do something for you, or put you in a way to help yourself. He has some companies under way that are simply coining money."

273

"Why, I thought he went to America."

"He did and has been back a year perhaps. Lord Elsdon is in one company. It has something to do with quicksilver, and there's a gold mine. You used to be quite cronies."

"Yes, he was a good fellow. He helped me out of one difficulty."

So he went to Thorley Wold not only to dance, but the day after the ball he took David Westbury over to Wrexford Grange and they went through papers and debts, some to the Jews that had been ruinous and were now pressing.

"You see," the younger man said, "if I stood alone I should let the place go. You must know of chances to make money out there in the new countries. I'd start off to-morrow if I could, and hunt up a gold mine."

"They are not always to be found," smiling with a touch of shrewdness. "And mining isn't just the thing for—"

"A scion of nobility. What did I read the other day?—some lucky fellow unearthed a nugget worth thousands."

"Yes—that does happen," nodding rather incredulously. "Well, if you want me to, I will take these papers to London with me and see what I can do for you. It's a fine old estate."

"And nothing to keep it on. Oh, I shall get out of it fast enough when the poor old Governor is gone. It's a good thing he's past worrying over it, or knowing it, for that matter."

So they returned to Thorley in time for dinner, and in the small dance that evening among the house guests, he took Laverne Westbury out twice, and heard part of her story.

274

Mrs. Westbury did not think particularly of the matter until Lord Wrexford had been at the house several times and paid her some marked attention, invited her and her daughter to visit Grosvenor Gallery and see an especially handsome portrait, the work of a friend of his who was coming rapidly up to fame.

"The fur on her wrap is so beautifully done that it seems as if you might blow it about with a breath. And she is an extremely handsome woman, was one of the court beauties a few years ago."

Mrs. Westbury was very much pleased with her escort. A title did go some distance in her favor, though she never made any vulgar snatch at it.

"What about that Lord Wrexford?" she asked of her husband one of the evenings they happened

to be alone.

He looked up from the stock list he was going over.

"The man or the estate?" with a short, rather brusque laugh.

"Well—both." Her smile might have been that of an arch conspirator. A sudden thought occurred to him. There were many business proffers made to him in these days.

"He's trying to stave off some business until his father has gone. He was willing to cut off the entail, but the question arose as to whether his father was capable, and the lawyers declare he is not. Some parties are to bring suit unless certain claims are met. The indebtedness is enough to swallow up the whole thing. A fine old estate, too."

275

"It is a pity the title cannot go with it," she remarked longingly, with a meaning look.

"The young man can," and he laughed.

"I wonder some one hasn't——" and she made a suggestive pause.

"He might marry the daughter of a rich tradesman, I suppose. He is really a better class fellow, and would shrink from a lot of vulgar relations. Most of these Commoners have such large families, and the other class seldom have fortunes for their daughters. The Jews will get the estate in the end, I think, and I am really sorry for him."

"And he wants some help from you?"

"To tide over the present, he imagines. But it will be for all time. Now, if you want a handsome estate right in among good old families. You know we heard about it at Thorley. It wouldn't be a bad speculation if one wanted to live there. It's not such a great distance from London."

"If one could buy the title," and she sighed.

He gave a short laugh and then returned to his list.

She leaned back in her luxurious chair and dreamed. They really had something wherewith to purchase the title.

276

CHAPTER XVIII

TO SEE YOU ONCE AGAIN

Mr. and Mrs. Westbury had gone to Wrexford Grange. Laverne was glad to have a few days to herself. At first she wrote a long homesick letter to Miss Holmes. Already she was tired of her new life. Yet more than a year had passed—three years more and she would be free. But how long it looked!

After Uncle Jason's tender love she was cruelly hurt by her father's indifference. He was deeply immersed in business and proud of his successes. Indeed, why should he not be? He was shrewd enough to take no honor in coming up from the ranks. He preferred to have his patrons think he had always been quite high on the ladder of fortune. Making money was now his chief enjoyment, his one ambition. Laverne was a pretty enough girl, but not the sort that drew men irresistibly to her side. His wife was much more attractive. And then Laverne brought some remembrances that he wished strenuously to forget, that he had once dismissed from his mind. He had made a little romance of it for his wife's ears, and he had a vague fear that Laverne might recall some disagreeable fact that it would not be so easy to disavow. She never had, but he was not sure how much might linger in her memory.

There was always a gulf between the father and the child. He had demanded her mostly to please his wife, the rest to satisfy a little grudge against Jason Chadsey that he had happened to possess himself of the episode not at all to his, Westbury's, credit. From the bottom of his heart he wished Chadsey had come back in time to marry Laverne. It had been a most unfortunate step for him, he reasoned.

277

Laverne had been in a way fascinated by Mrs. Westbury's protestations of affection. She had appealed to all that was sweetest and finest in the girl's nature, all these years she had been studying men and women on the emotional side, she was not capable of any intellectual analysis. And though she could assume so much, at heart she had very little faith in her fellow beings, as she measured them mostly by herself. An attractive young girl would draw young people, and she sunned herself in the enthusiasms of youth, they were a tonic to her. She did not mean to grow old, but she had a quality rare in the people who cling to youth, she made no silly assumption further than to use all the arts and aids that she persuaded herself were quite as necessary as a good diet to conserve health. She enjoyed her world, her wealth, her little elusive pretexts and inventions, and was amused to see how easily people who pretended to discrimination were ensnared.

At first Laverne had been a new toy, a plaything, a puppet that she could draw in any fashion that she thought best. But presently she was amazed at the child's utter honesty, her shrinking from dissimulation, the surprise at some things she read in the clear eyes. It had been pleasant, but now she was tiring of her toy. Would she be the sort of girl who would draw lovers to her feet and dismiss them with a wave of her fan?

278

There was marriage, of course. This was really her first season. The daughter of a rich man would not lack offers. She wished she was a little less cold, self-contained, indifferent.

And now a new scheme had presented itself. Why should not Laverne be Lady Wrexford? If her father became the virtual owner of Wrexford Grange, why would it not be a fine dowry? And they could manage that Lord Wrexford should be judicious in expenditures. It might be best that the entail should not be meddled with.

Laverne did enjoy the solitude. She was coming to feel that she was watched continually, criticised gently, of course, but often it hurt. And she had not gone down to the real heart of anything. Was there a heart or was it all surface living?

She went out to take her drive each day with her maid. Several young friends had called.

One afternoon Preston brought up a card. "Mr. Victor Savedra," Laverne read.

"He requested especially to see you," Preston said. "I was not sure—" and she glanced inquiringly. "It is all right, quite right," the girl made answer, but her heart was in her throat, her voice husky. She stood there some seconds, fingering the card. Truth to tell, she felt hurt that Victor had made no effort to see her through all this time, knowing from his own family she was in London. It was hardly her place to appeal to him. Indeed, she had soon learned her old friends were not subjects of pleasure to her new relatives. And now she had quite given up hope with a sad heartache.

279

Laverne walked slowly down the broad staircase, lingered a moment, while she felt her color coming and going in great bounds. Then there was a step, a figure emerged from the reception room, and caught both hands in his. Neither of them spoke, but simply glanced in each other's eyes. He had changed, matured, and was a really handsome young man in the somewhat brilliant Spanish style. But the soft eyes had not lost their olden tenderness.

"Oh," he began, "I was afraid I should never see you again," and the glance seemed almost to devour her.

"You have been in London all this time." There was the faintest touch of reproach in her tone.

"And you? It seems to me if one can credit society news you have been very gay."

She flushed, and her eyes were downcast, the brown lashes making a shadow on her cheek.

"You must not upbraid me. I made some effort to find you. I was so amazed at the strange turn of affairs. Isola and mother wrote to me and begged me to call on you. At last I did learn where you were and sent you a note, directed to your father's care. It was answered by Mrs. Westbury, who explained that you were not in society, a gentle suggestion that I might have been rather forward, also that you were going to some French watering place, but no hint that I might be welcome on your return," and he half smiled.

"I never saw the note—I never heard. Oh, did you think I could forget an old friend when all things were so strange and I so lonely?"

Now the lashes were gemmed with tears. He longed to kiss them away. An infinite pity stirred his heart.

280

"Have you been lonely and unhappy? Forgive me, but I thought of you as gay and full of pleasure. I have not been much in ladies' society. I have made some fine friends among men, and it has been study, study, but I have achieved most of my plans and pleased the best of fathers. Last summer with some friends I made a walking tour of Switzerland. This summer I return home. I like America best. And how San Francisco will look after four years' absence! Nothing of the kind could happen in this staid old world. I wonder sometimes if I have not dreamed part of it. And if I have not dreamed about you! Oh, what a brute I am. Come and sit down and let us talk it all over. And your poor uncle—what do you hear from him?"

She wiped the tears from her eyes and in a broken voice said: "Nothing."

"Oh, poor child!" All his heart went out to her. He had thought nothing of love before. He had been but a boy, but he knew he loved her now with a man's love, and with a sudden resolve he determined to take her back with him even if it had to be his wife without his parents' blessing and God speed.

"No one hears, I believe," she replied when she had recovered her voice. "Only—I promised to come back to him when I was twenty-one and free, and he will be waiting for me, I know."

Then this new relationship had not been happy. He had besought Miss Holmes to tell him about it, but she had been very non-committal. He gathered from that she had not been favorably impressed with either Mrs. or Mr. Westbury, although under the circumstances there was nothing else to be done.

281

When they had recovered self-possession a little they began to talk of the old times, the old days that had been full of delight, it appeared, now touched by the enchanter, memory. The first time they had danced together when she was a little girl, his Saturday at the old house, and the ride they had taken down the coast. Snippy, and the verses they had tried to make for the dead Balder. How he had hated to tell her *he* was going away for four long years, and how glad he had been to get Isola's extravagant letters, "for you know she simply adored you," he confessed, with a smile.

"It has all changed," she said mournfully, "There will be no more San Francisco. The hill has been lowered so much, and our old house has gone with it. Olive was married in the autumn, you know."

"And Howard is turning into a fine young business fellow, father writes. Uncle Personette may well be proud of his children, who have had the kindest of stepmothers. I always liked Aunt Grace and your Miss Holmes. Mother thinks she couldn't do without her. And it's queer," laughing a little, "she declined a very nice offer of marriage that a friend of father's made her, the captain of a vessel going up and down to the Isthmus. She was very fond of you."

The sweet eyes filled with tears again. Had she left all love behind in the grand city guarded by the Golden Gate?

The room grew dusky. The maid came in to light up, and glanced sharply at them.

282

"Oh, what an unconscionable visit I have been making," and yet he laughed lightly, not at all troubled by the proprieties that he had really outraged—and he knew better.

How very charming he was, standing up there, just medium height, with one of the figures that is often likened to Mercury or Ganymede. The rich tinted Spanish complexion, the dark melting eyes, when he smiled—could they ever look fierce? the narrow mustache, leaving the red line on the short upper lip, the chin rounded out with youth and health, the hands dainty enough for a lady. They reached over and held hers, the eyes smiled into hers, but all the same there came a sharp pang at his going.

"For the next two weeks I shall be awfully busy," he explained. "Then come the Christmas holidays. I didn't have any last year. I just stayed and ground in the mill. I was bound to reach a certain point. But now I shall spend a week in London. I think I can persuade Mrs. Westbury to admit me."

Why should she not? Laverne thought.

A happy girl sat down to her solitary meal. She was no longer lonely. Christmas was near. Of next summer she would not think.

A letter came from Mrs. Westbury with news that scarcely touched Laverne, and perhaps after all had not much of real sadness in it. They had gone to Wrexford Grange to settle some important business, and before it was finished the poor old paralytic, who for the last year had been scarcely conscious of anything but breathing, had passed out of life. Lord Wrexford had insisted upon their staying until after the funeral. Would she mind if she gave up the Liscombes' dance? Mrs. Leigh would be pleased to chaperon her, but it would be in better taste to remain at home.

283

Laverne did this cheerfully. To be sure, the days were rather lonely, but the driving and a little shopping and going to some picture exhibitions with Mrs. Leigh filled them up.

There was a pile of notes and invitations on Mrs. Westbury's desk when she returned. Laverne often answered the least important. Between them she sandwiched Wrexford Grange. It was an old, old estate, the title dating back for more than three hundred years, and though it had been neglected of late could be put in excellent order again. Such grand rooms, such a splendid hall, such a great stone stairway with oaken railing. Family portraits and a copy of the First Charles,—the Wrexfords had been royalists,—but all these things had been hidden away until the accession of the son, with the old family silver, rather clumsy, she thought, but she was wise enough to know that age redeemed it.

"Oh," she began suddenly, "the Doncasters want you for their Christmas Bazaar. The Thorleys are coming up—yes, I think you must go. It is for the doctor's pet charity, those crippled babies. I think it would be a mercy if the Lord took some of the poor things out of the world, but while they are here they must be taken care of. It is only one day and evening. We must give a luncheon to Florence and Claire Thorley. I'm sorry Lord Wrexford must be counted out of the Christmas gayeties. Yes, write an acceptance."

When she came down to the bottom she glanced over the cards, smiling, then frowning, not sorry to have missed some of the calls.

284

"Victor Savedra," she exclaimed, "why—"

"It is those Spanish people at home, at least, the son is here at Oxford, and he called."

She confessed it very quietly, without a change of color or embarrassment.

"Oh, yes—let me see—he asked permission to call—I think I told you—sometime in the early summer—we were going away."

These little half truths annoyed Laverne, but she made no comment.

Mrs. Westbury had accomplished one step toward what she thought would be the crowning point of her life, and she was amazed that it had been done so easily. As Laverne was an important factor in it she was prepared to be very sweet.

"He is still at Oxford?"

"Yes, he will be through in June, and then he will return to America."

She was not even troubled when Preston told her the young man had stayed two good hours. In fact, Laverne was rather surprised at her amiability and indulgence. She saw very little of her father, but he, too, seemed awakening to a new interest in her. There were business and board meetings and dinners of directors, but he was always in excellent spirits. He sometimes wondered himself how it was that fate seemed to send everything his way. He was very lavish with Christmas money to his wife and daughter.

So she went to the Bazaar in the best of spirits. She really liked Amy Doncaster, though she was finding that the type of Olive Personette was by no means an uncommon one. Amy was deeply interested in her brother's hospital, and often visited it and made garments for the poorer patients.

285

It was quite a pet charity in one circle. There were hundreds of other things in the great city, but they had their share of patronage. The hall was dressed with evergreens, and though some of the half-hidden flowers were paper they looked quite as pretty and did not wither in the heat and light. Tastefully arranged tables, with handiwork both useful and ornamental, attractive for Christmas gifts; young girls in simple white attire, the fashion of those days, older ones with more elegance keeping supervision and adding dignity. Carriages came and went before the broad doorway, and visitors seemed generously inclined.

She was very happy, this charming American girl. At the middle of the century there were not so many of them to share and often fight for triumphs. Then, Mr. Westbury had won a standing of his own and was paving a golden path. It was not trade, something that was held in higher esteem. Miss Westbury might be quite an heiress. There was no older brother to demand a share. For we had not outgrown the idea that the brothers must be provided for first of all.

When the hall was lighted up and the young men began to throng in, the scene was brilliant and the moneychangers brought out their best charms and sweetest smiles. Mrs. Westbury had been in during the afternoon and had gone to a "high tea" at old Lady Carcroft's. So in the early evening she came again.

Fred Doncaster, who had elected the Church for a profession, since there was a very excellent living in the other branch of the family, and he being a second son, brought in his friend Victor Savedra.

286

"He is a Spaniard," explained Amy Doncaster to a group of girls. "And isn't he handsome! Fred brought him over once, they are great chums, and he has the most charming manners. Oh, Miss Westbury, he lives—well—it isn't far from that wonderful San Francisco where you came from, and they must be very rich, Fred thinks, though he never boasts of it, but it must be something like a big English estate. Oh, they are coming over here."

They made their way through, and Victor's face lighted with intense satisfaction. Laverne flushed "celestial rosy red." He reached over and took her hand, exclaiming, "What a pleasure! I am so glad to see you here."

"Hillo!" and Fred gazed from one to the other.

"We have been friends from childhood—isn't it?" smiling out of his delight. "And Miss Doncaster—I came almost purposely to buy some of your wares," glancing at that lady.

"Oh, thank you," she returned gayly.

The rest of the introductions were given and the party fell into a social chat. Mrs. Westbury entered the hall at that juncture with Mrs. Doncaster. A spasm of something like anger shot over her. Yes, she was quite sure that must be Victor Savedra. Was Laverne making secret engagements with him?

"Oh," Mrs. Doncaster began, "there is Fred's friend, a young Spaniard, who has been over here for his education. We were all charmed with him when Fred brought him to dinner one night, and wished we had made his acquaintance earlier, since he leaves us in the summer. The Spaniards, I believe, were some of the old settlers on the western coast. I don't quite understand all the distinctions of American people."

287

Mrs. Westbury recalled the fact that she had met the elder Mr. Savedra, who had come to say farewell to Laverne and to assure her that they would do their best to make Miss Holmes happy. Then she was formally introduced to the young man, who had a notably distinctive charm, partly due no doubt to his foreign air.

Fred certainly was in high spirits, and helped the girls in their sales, even if he did call them shopkeepers. Then he insisted that Miss Westbury should accompany him around to "spy out the nakedness of the land," he said, which in this case meant an accession of funds for the Hospital. "My brother *would* study surgery," he said, with a half protest. "Minturn is a born philanthropist, so between us both we shall care for bodies and souls. I'd worlds rather have my profession."

Amy and Savedra were talking just in front of them, now and then pausing at a booth, where the girl proudly introduced her companion. Some stalls were already sold out; indeed, every one seemed jubilant over the success. In a little rather private corner groups were having some refreshments, and at one they found Miss Doncaster and an admirer, who made room for them, and they had a merry time. Victor sat on one side of Laverne, and they exchanged bits of talk mostly satisfactory to each.

Savedra had accepted an invitation from the Doncasters. It was true Londoners were rushing out to country homes, or to holiday house parties, but there were hosts of them left. 288

"I had no idea the Doncasters knew you," Victor said. "I am glad we have a mutual friend. I shall spend all the holidays in town, and we must see a good deal of each other to make up for the lost time."

Her eyes drooped and a delicious flush overspread her face. How shy and sweet she was! He would not think of the time when he must go away and leave her behind.

Mrs. Doncaster accepted a seat in Mrs. Westbury's brougham. The young people would walk home, as the doctor headed the party. The girls had planned to have a little dance the night after Christmas, just an informal, suddenly arranged matter, and Laverne must be sure to come. They were to go to a Christmas dinner, but there was no engagement for Friday evening.

After they had set their companion down at her own door, Mrs. Westbury still commented on the success of the Bazaar and the prettiness of the girls.

"And I thought that young Savedra quite *épris* with Miss Amy, didn't you? He was devoted to her."

"They all like him very much." She was so happy there was no room in her heart for jealousy. Indeed, gladness forbade the thought of possession.

"And English girls don't mind marrying and going to the ends of the earth. That Miss Morven went to Canada to marry her betrothed, who was in some government position, and couldn't leave. And Lady Estee's daughter went out to India. Of course, Laverne, you will not give a second thought to Fred Doncaster. It will be two years before he can be ordained. And there's such a family, six children!" 289

"Oh, no," returned Laverne cheerfully.

She had it in her mind to say: "Your father has other views for you," but caution intervened. Still, when she glanced her over in the light of her room as she was saying good-night, she thought how really pretty the girl looked to-night, her soft eyes shining, her mouth settled in the curves of a half smile that would tempt any lover to kiss, the clear, beautiful complexion, the long bronze lashes that seemed to play with the dainty color on her cheek, as the sun over dimpling waters. Yes, she wanted the excitement of pleasure.

Laverne went to the dance with great gladness of heart and a strange freedom. Victor danced with the Doncaster girls first, they were the hostesses. Then it came Laverne's turn, and they had a delightful time between the figures.

"Oh, do you remember how frightened you were that night at Uncle Personette's? I really made you dance, didn't I? I wonder that you were not vexed. Was I worse than importunate?" laughing.

"Oh, I thought you were so good, so delightful, to take the trouble. And I was such a child. There were so many big girls. How could I have been vexed? That would have been ungrateful."

"We have always been such friends. And now I shall venture to call on you. I had a fancy that Mrs. Westbury didn't quite like—well, of course, you were not in society. Customs are different." 290

"You are going back so soon." She said it with a most adorable little sigh.

"There will be the Easter vacation, and we must make the best of this. When I am away I shall think of you half the time. Let us see. Can't we make a plan—just at twilight, let us say. No matter where we are we will send a thought to each other. There's a queer new belief, magnetism or some such thing, that you *can* send an influence to your friends across any space, that if you sit still a few moments and think of them they will respond."

"Oh, that is a most felicitous thought!" Could she make Uncle Jason or any one think of her in that manner?

"Let *us* promise—just at twilight."

Some one took her in the next figure. What a slim, graceful girl she was. How like a bird she skimmed along when she ran races with Elena! And how they had scrambled over rocks and sat on the summits overlooking the ocean! There were no such fascinating memories with any other human being. There was no one quite like her.

And they did have a merry, delightful time. A week of going somewhere every day, of chances to slip in bits of charming confidences, of strolls in the old Museum and other famous places, and then it came to an end.

Fred and Savedra, friends as they were, dropped in to say good-by. Mrs. Westbury was present.

He went over and took her hand—what magnificent rubies those were!

"I want to thank you for a great deal of courtesy," he said, "and much pleasure. And now we must both return to our old pastures and dig away at the dry roots and forget about everything but the exams." 291

He shook hands quietly with both ladies. 292

CHAPTER XIX

THE GUIDING FINGER

Agnes Westbury watched her stepdaughter closely when the two young men were gone. She did not droop. She was happy and serene, compliant with whatever was proposed. She made some visits to the hospital with Miss Doncaster; that was safe enough. Charity had not come to be a fad then, though there were many earnest workers.

Mr. Westbury and Lord Wrexford took a run over to Paris. After that he was a frequent visitor. Mrs. Westbury had a curious charm for him. She was so intelligent that he sometimes forgot it was like talking to a man.

"You American women know about your husband's business and never seem to think it a bore," he said one evening. "Ours do take an interest in politics when their husbands are up. And you have the art of making attractive homes. Now, the average person would have a certain stiffness about this place——" The belongings were of the regulation sort, and individual taste was hardly comprehended.

She had added some easy chairs, an odd and pretty table, with a series of shelves to hold books of engravings, and portraits of celebrated authors and artists, several fine vases disposed around, and these articles announced with an air "we belong to the present mistress," the furniture belongs to the house. 293

"I like to take some comfort and not be continually fretted with surroundings. As we are living in furnished houses mostly, I can't suit myself. I don't pretend to. I just have a little and dream of what will be when we are permanently settled."

"I wonder if that will be here—in London?" tentatively.

"I think I shall not go back to America, 'the States,' as you call it," smiling a little. "I shall have Laverne to keep me company if Mr. Westbury has to take a business journey. I confess to a fondness for the older civilization. Our land is still in an undeniably crude state. But so were you a few centuries back."

This woman had a curious charm in her frankness, that was never rude even in its most truthful moments. There was something about her that he could not define, and that kept him studying and full of interest, watching the next turn. If it was art, it was the most judiciously managed. If it was due to temperament, then, indeed, she had a many-sided nature. She kept young, but it was not the shy simplicity of her daughter, she seemed to have a wide range of knowledge, but she was not pedantic, not obtrusive. There were dainty concessions that flattered a man, little embellishments that seemed an understanding of a man's mood, too delicate for him to pick to pieces, if he could. Then there was a mysterious charm about her attire, a French adaptiveness of style, of something made different from most women, with a touch of color, a bow or a flower. She was a pleasant study. 294

Now and then she delicately drew Laverne into the talk. She asked her to bring over the portfolio of Albert Dürer's engravings they had bought only a few days before, and draw up the small buhl stand. Then they discussed them and Holland; she had been reading up a volume of travels that very morning, and was as fresh as if she had just come from there. Laverne was appealed to for this or that. She was not kept in the background, but she seemed always flying there with adorable shyness.

Afterward in his own room, smoking his pipe, he thought the matter over, as he often did. He had been rescued from an *esclandre*, his father had been buried as became one of the old line of Wrexfords. He could go back to the Grange with a certain prestige. He might be asked to stand for Chediston. There would be no more straits and pinches of poverty, and he had suffered a good many during the last three years. All this smooth sailing was conditioned on his marrying Laverne Westbury. She was a nice enough young girl, but he had had a surfeit of young girls. It would be hard to bridge over the seventeen years between them, very hard for her.

If it was the mother instead! Not being her own daughter she was hardly likely to resemble her more as time went on. He had a vague feeling that the child was something less than money-making in her father's life. All this matter was largely in her mother's hands, and if the threads were not wisely pulled, Wrexford Grange would be in her hands, too. Yes, if *she* were single.

For the present he was out of society proper. He went to his club, he called on a few old friends, and he was taking a rather curious interest in one of the new companies. He really might be a rich man again.

295

So passed away a month or two. Mrs. Westbury had meant to push Laverne into society, perhaps have her "presented" at some Court drawing room in the season. But as Lady Wrexford it would have a much greater effect. There could be a marriage four or five months after the old lord's death.

Was Laverne ignorant of the trend of all this? She was thinking that at Easter she should see Victor again, and that would be another bit of the old life to sustain her exile. So she listened with only half attention to hints and suggestions. She knew her father had invested a good deal of money in Wrexford Grange, and that her mother liked Lord Wrexford, that as they were not very gay he enjoyed dropping in, that he was their attendant on various occasions of the soberer sort.

David Westbury said to his wife: "You had better state the case to her. She has some of that New England obtuseness. Well, she is very young. We have grown much wiser in the world's ways since that early period of our lives. It is the gain of experience," with a short, brusque laugh.

Then he kissed her. She always exacted that, and it was generally freely given.

"I may not be back until late to-night," he said.

It was a miserable day, with a blinding fog that had better have been a rain. Laverne practiced two hours instead of one, then she read aloud in a novel of the day. There was luncheon; some dawdling and scolding about the weather.

296

Once Mrs. Westbury put her arms about Laverne and looked into her eyes with an intense expression.

"I wonder how much you love me?" in a caressing, pleading tone. "I'm trying to do all the nice things I can for you; what would you do for me?"

"Why—there is nothing I *could* do," with a delicate emphasis. Surely she could not spend all her life with Mrs. Westbury—making that mental reservation.

"You *could* do something that would repay, that would give your father and myself the greatest happiness."

She was not destined to hear it just then. Some styles had been sent from the dressmaker's, would Mrs. Westbury look them over and choose which suited her?

She was having a lavender satin made, and here were also patterns of lace for the trimming. So they discussed them. Then the postman, a few invitations to answer. It was so dark the house was lighted up. Laverne went to the piano again and tried to catch some of the elusive things she had learned from Isola Savedra. She could see the lovely, half-tropical home, hear the sweet voices, smell the fragrances of a hundred blooms. Ah, how lovely it must be on that Pacific slope. She could have cried with rapture and pain.

Dinner, then a long evening. No one came in. Laverne read, hardly taking in an impression.

"Put up the book, Laverne." The voice was persuasive, but it struck a chord of fear in the girl's soul. "Your father wished me to lay a subject before you that is very near his heart, that would really crown his endeavors for wealth and standing. And it is *my* desire as well. I think I have always studied your welfare from the time I snatched you out of that crude, half-barbarous life. And a third person's happiness is at stake."

297

Laverne shivered. A sudden light broke in upon her. She had half fancied that she had been used as a sort of blind that her mother might enjoy Lord Westbury's society, but if it should be—

"What an odd girl you are, not a bit curious? So I must put my story in plain terms."

It was embellished. In business statements Mrs. Westbury could come to the point quickly, but she did somehow dread this a little, for she began to mistrust the girl she had fancied would be easily convinced. She went briefly over the commercial side, and suggested this had been done because Lord Wrexford had taken a great fancy to her the first evening he had met her at the Thorleys. For her sake and for her advantage her father had rescued Wrexford Grange. Any girl would be proud of such an opportunity. Lord Wrexford was getting impatient, and desired to make his proposal, though the marriage would not be hurried unduly.

"I saw you were not dreaming of such a thing, and your father thought I had better prepare you a little. Think, Laverne, a simple American girl becoming Lady Wrexford!"

Laverne threw herself at Mrs. Westbury's feet, and buried her face on the elder's lap, shuddering in every limb.

"Oh, I cannot! I cannot!" she cried passionately. "No, do not ask me. I cannot love him, he does not love me. Why, it is like being sold——"

298

"Hush, you silly girl. There is no being sold about it. He has asked for your hand honorably. It is a chance out of a thousand. Any girl would jump at it. Your father put his money in the Grange for you, and you will be a most ungrateful daughter not to accede to his wishes. When you have

made up your mind you will find Lord Wrexford most agreeable. It can be a late spring marriage, and you really will be the envy of many a high-born girl when you step among them. You can be presented at the last drawing room, Lady Wrexford! Why, you would be worse than an idiot to refuse it."

Laverne rose. "No, I cannot—I cannot," shuddering.

"Your father will have his say to-morrow. There, no words. You can go to your room, and resolve that you will pay due respect to your father. You are under age."

She was glad to go. Oh, yes, she had been blind. For the last month Lord Wrexford had really been *their* devoted admirer. Most of his conversation had been addressed to Mrs. Westbury. Yet he had watched her closely, she recalled that now. He had shown a delicate solicitude in many things. Oh, could it be possible that he really cared for her! That would make it so much harder. And how could she meet her father, how defy him! Yes, she was really afraid of him. Oh, if he would only be angry and send her back to California!

She opened the window as if she could look across to the old home. The fog was absolute blackness, chilling, penetrating every nerve. She shut it down again, but the breath of it seemed to strangle her. She did not cry, her terror and dread were too deep for tears.

299

She would hear him come home presently, his full, strong voice, and they would talk it over. So she listened and listened. The clocks inside struck midnight, then the small hours. Would she never get to sleep!

Somewhere toward dawn there was a sharp clang of the bell, and strange voices. Then hurried steps up and down, Mrs. Westbury giving a shriek, crying out confusedly, calling the maid, going downstairs, then a carriage driving away, and the servants still talking. She opened her door.

"Oh, what is it, what is it?" she asked.

"We were not to disturb you, Miss Laverne."

"But I was awake. I heard—has Mrs. Westbury gone away? Oh, did something happen to father?"

"Yes, Miss. He was hurt, knocked down somehow, and taken to the hospital. But I guess it will all be right. It's natural he would want Mrs. Westbury."

Laverne threw herself down on the bed, shocked. One would never think of associating death with that active, robust physique. Oh, no, it would not be that, only some hurt. And if he should be ill and ask this great sacrifice of her!

There was no word the next morning. The butler had even forgotten to inquire what was the name of the hospital. Laverne did not want any breakfast, she wandered from room to room, she sat down at the piano and played a few melancholy tunes. How hard the uncertainty was! Her very fingers grew nerveless.

300

At noon Lord Wrexford came. He was so gentle and sympathetic that her heart almost went out to him. He told the story with a tender gravity. Whether in the dense fog Mr. Westbury had missed his carriage or slipped and fallen no one knew. An oncoming horse had stepped on him, and the injury was severe. There had been an operation—

"But he will not die! He cannot die! He is so strong—Oh, surely, surely——" and her voice broke.

"My dear child, we must wait and see. I am going back. Mrs. Westbury will stay——"

He had not the courage to say that a few hours would end it all. The young, grief-stricken face touched his heart. Yes, he would make her a good, kind husband. If he were free to choose he would not select her from all the women he knew, but now the marriage would be imperative, and he would do his best.

That evening he brought Mrs. Westbury home. She would not see Laverne, but went at once to her room. He told the child the story as far as any one could learn the particulars. A horse's hoof had injured the skull, crushed it in so that there was only a very faint hope from the first, but he worded it delicately, and stayed in the library all day, receiving the body when it came, seeing various people, and having one interview with Mrs. Westbury. After that she sent for Laverne, and they wept together in each other's arms. Laverne thought she must have loved him, she was so shocked by his fate.

301

It was a distressing occurrence to all his friends, and he had won many. Beside there was the great question of what the two companies were to do without the working head. Lord Wrexford proved himself invaluable through these troublous days.

A sad Easter it was. The Doncasters and others brought their warmest sympathy. Victor Savedra came, and the pale girl in her deep mourning went at once to the heart that had thought of her daily and kept tryst. Ah, how should she tell him that since that fatal night she had not! For now she began to understand the great reason why she could never come to care for Lord Wrexford. He had not asked her to marry him, but somehow he had taken a lover's authority.

Mrs. Westbury had many subjects to revolve in her mind, and was alarmed at first lest matters might go wrong. So she accepted and acted upon the fact that Lord Wrexford should be her son-in-law. She would not give up the chance of this connection with nobility. Besides Lord Wrexford

was necessary.

Affairs were found in excellent order, and Mr. Westbury gained in the esteem of the directors. But now the company must assume the responsibility.

The new method of separating ore had been patented in both countries, and was invaluable. Lord Wrexford, it was assumed, had been a kind of confidential secretary and his knowledge must be devoted to the company. Mrs. Westbury had large interests, he was made her agent at once.

Now, it was found that he had willed everything to his wife, who was to make such settlements on his daughter as she considered best. And she held the right to Wrexford Grange.

302

She demanded the utmost affection and sympathy from Laverne.

"Of course, you cannot understand all that he was to me. Marriage interprets one to the other. And you have only known him such a brief while. Then, I think these placid natures cannot love and suffer like the more intense ones. The shock has nearly killed me. Oh, do comfort me! You are all I have left."

Laverne tried earnestly. But she noted that she quickly overcame a paroxysm of grief when Lord Wrexford or the lawyer came, and could spend hours over the business.

"Of course," she said, a few weeks afterward, "the marriage must be put off a while, but it is more necessary than ever. Your father felt you were too young to be made independent. The Grange was to be your dowry on your wedding day—to you and your children. The marriage can be rather a quiet one, and in six months, under the circumstances, you can lay your mourning aside. Meanwhile we may be considering the trousseau. We can go to Paris——"

Laverne threw herself at her stepmother's feet, and clasped her hands in entreaty. "Oh, do not, do not compel me," she cried, in anguish. "I do not care for the Grange nor the money. If you will only send me back to America——"

"I shall not send you back. I am your natural, lawful guardian now. I shall do what I consider best for you, and in the years to come you will thank me for it. There, we will have no discussion."

303

What should she do? A dozen plans came and went through her brain. She remembered how Carmen Estenega had run away from a hateful marriage. But she had an ardent lover. This would be such a long journey, and she would have no friends on the way. Should she appeal to Victor? Oh, no, she could not. Yet she had a consciousness that he would respond at once.

She was coming to have a strange fear of Mrs. Westbury, as if she might dominate all her life. Surely she would if this marriage should take place. Oh, it could not. She would not consent even at the last moment. No one was forced to marry. Ah, would not Carmen have been forced?

Lord Wrexford came and went. There were visits from lawyers and directors, and calls of condolence. A certain kind of peace, but it seemed like an armed truce. And Laverne realized more thoroughly every day that there had never been any true and tender love for her in Mrs. Westbury's heart. She was older now, and could see more clearly, had more discrimination, yet she did wonder why her father's wife had been so exigent. She could not understand the vanity, the selfish desire for the admiration of this young soul. And she also saw that Mrs. Westbury sought her own advantage in this marriage. To be allied to the higher orders, to be the mother-in-law to Lord Wrexford, to have the entrée into the charmed circles. How had she grown so wise!

She thought of her father with infinite pity, that he should have been wrenched out of the life he enjoyed so much. She felt that he had never truly loved her, and that she had not succeeded in loving him. Always her heart was turning back to Uncle Jason. Yes, that was the sweet, tender, and true life, finer and nobler than this striving and subterfuge, this greediness for wealth and high places.

304

Lord Wrexford came one afternoon, quite a custom with him now. Mrs. Westbury had been sent for to some important meeting. He walked in with the easy familiarity that characterized him, and passed a few pleasant conventionalities. How many times she had thought if she could see him alone, and now that the opportunity had come she trembled with a certain kind of fear and shame. What could she say to a man who had not yet asked her to marry him?

He began to perceive that she was unduly excited. The color wavering over her face and the quivering lips touched him. He was not a heartless man, and every day he was feeling this was more of a dilemma for him.

"My child," he began, rather blunderingly, realizing all the years between them, and then he saw that her eyes were overflowing.

"Lord Wrexford," she tried to steady her voice, but it trembled noticeably, "I believe I have been offered to you as—as—an equivalent——"

"No, don't put it that way," he interrupted quickly. "Your father was very honorable."

"I do not know much about marriage, but it seems as if——"

"As if youth and love should go hand in hand? Middle age and money may make a dicker. But if there were love, or if the title won you in any degree," and he knew there were some who would have been won even by poverty and a title with the background of the Grange.

305

"I do not love you," she said simply. "It seems ungrateful when you have been both kind and patient. Indeed, I have been trying——" There was such a wistful cadence to her tremulous voice that it touched him, man of the world as he was. The slow tears dropped from her lashes, but she could not raise her eyes, though there was entreaty in every line of her slight figure, even in the limp hands that hung by her side.

"And a love that is forced is no love at all. But you must realize the sacrifice you will make, and consider. It will be more than giving up a title. Everything is in your mother's hands——"

"Oh, I have told her that I do not care for the money. I remembered so little of papa that he seemed an utter stranger to me, and—some one had loved and adopted me before. She knows I wish to go back home——"

Her voice faltered and broke.

"You are a brave little girl," he exclaimed admiringly. "An honest and true one, and you deserve to be happy, to love some one who has love and youth to give in return." Did she know such a one? "I think you are not taking root here."

"You know mamma is not any real relation," she began as if in apology. "She has been very kind and indulgent to me. I would like to please her. But, oh, I would so much rather have been left in San Francisco. My dear uncle would not have gone away. We should have been poor, for he had just lost everything in a dreadful fire, but I wouldn't have minded——"

306

"My dear child, you shall not be sacrificed." He wanted to take the drooping figure in his arms, and kiss away the tears that rolled silently over the softly rounded cheeks. She looked so fragile in her black frock. If she could be his little sister! But he had nothing to dower her with, he would even lose the Grange himself. But he said, "Do not give yourself any further uneasiness, I will see Mrs. Westbury."

"Oh, thank you a thousand times!" She did not know how adorably her face lighted up. Yes, if she had loved him it might have done. And if the race of Wrexford died out with him what matter?

Laverne felt so much more friendly toward him that she could not help showing it. Mrs. Westbury hailed this with delight.

"Have you asked, and has she accepted?" she inquired one afternoon when they were alone.

It was a warm day, and she defied custom sufficiently to lay aside heavy crapes indoors. Her gown was of some thin black stuff, trailing and cloud-like. Her arms, that were well shaped, showed through in their whiteness, and she often used them in a caressing sort of manner. Her throat had the delicate prettiness of art, and she looked really younger in this half simplicity. The fragrance and quiet of the room seemed to be a perfect setting for her, and it made her suggestive, attractive to the verge of fascination.

"Neither," he said, drawing nearer. "We understand each other. When the time comes, a year hence or less, perhaps, I am going to ask you to accept the title to Wrexford Grange. It will suit me worlds better. I have outgrown the bread and butter period."

307

She was very little rouged, and a color flushed up in her face. She had cultivated the trick of this. She was versed in men's meanings and knew this was no idle compliment. But she was surprised.

"Yes, a year or so," in a slow charming manner with becoming hesitation.

"Meanwhile be good to the poor little thing."

"Since you plead for her. I confess I have been somewhat disappointed in her. Perhaps no child can be quite like your own. She wants to go back to America—shall I send her?"

She did not care for a daughter now. As Lady Wrexford she would rather have all the homage. The girl had been useful. There are people who can drop one easily when no longer needed. Laverne Westbury was too honest to be a comfortable companion. And then—what if Lord Wrexford should come to consider a younger wife preferable? Men *did* change in many of their views, she had learned by experience.

In a way she had loved David Westbury. He was fond of caresses, but she had never tired him of them. She was proud of his successes, yet she had a conviction that it was her money that had been the keynote of prosperity. He was one of the men who dropped an unsuccess very soon, and did not spend his energies fighting his way through. For the first weeks she had been crushed by the loss, and this she said to herself was because of her deep love for him. When she found that affairs were in a good shape, that she was a rich woman, to be consulted by the directors, that she still held many things in her hands, and that she would have still more prestige by being the mother-in-law of a lord, who had about sown all his wild oats, and found the crop unprofitable; Laverne was of use to her. And now with a better understanding the child had become something of a trial. She was no longer a half-blind worshipper.

308

"What friends has she there?" he asked after some consideration.

"Oh, I suppose the man who adopted her is somewhere—he was a lover of her own mother. And there was another family connected with the Savedras—why, there *is* the young man. I half suspected he was a rival about Christmas time. And I'm not sure now——"

"He was here at the Easter holidays. Well, that would be more appropriate. May and December, you know," with a vague smile.

"You have a long later summer and autumn before you reach December," and she raised her eyes with a look of appreciation, and that admiration which always touches a man's vanity. "I will not have you growing old too fast. And I think almost any young girl would fall in love with you, unless there was some prior claim. Perhaps there was."

"He returns home in July. Well, why not give him the opportunity?" smiling softly.

She looked undecided.

"At least give her a choice. I *do* admire her sincerely. Many girls would not have refused a title." 309

She knew that. And Laverne's refusal was going to bring her the best of good fortune. So she could afford to pardon her high conscientiousness.

"I will have a talk with her. If we cannot make her happy here, and I think she is not suited to this sort of life, it would be cruel to keep her."

The reluctance betokened some affection on Mrs. Westbury's part, he thought, though he could not divine the secret joy this new aspect had brought her. She was not desirous of sharing her right in him with anybody.

Laverne waited in a state of tremulous fear and expectation. Mrs. Westbury was quietly gracious at dinner. Afterward they retired to the library.

"Lord Wrexford came to me this afternoon when you had dismissed him," she began rather severely.

She did not mean to be too lenient with the girl.

"You have been most foolish and short-sighted," she said. "And knowing that it was your father's dearest wish, his plan for a splendid future. The money he put in Wrexford Grange was for you. He would not have risked his money merely for the young man."

"I—I couldn't have married him. Oh, you do not understand——"

"You are a little fool. I suppose that young Savedra stood in the way?"

Laverne was silent. She was glad she had her scarlet face turned away.

"You pride yourself on truthfulness and honor, yet you have been underhand and deceitful. You have carried on an intrigue with a lover while you assumed a sort of ultra conscientiousness toward Lord Wrexford——" 310

Laverne rose and came forward in the light. Now she was very pale, but her face wore a high, serene expression.

"You accuse me unjustly, Mrs. Westbury," she began with quiet dignity, that awed the older woman. "I have carried on no intrigue. No word of love has been uttered between us. He has not asked me anything that you and Lord Wrexford might not hear. He wrote me a letter of condolence—if you would like you can see it. It called for no answer. We had been friends since childhood. The home at Oaklands was like a second home to me. If Victor Savedra had been engaged to Amy Doncaster I should have felt just the same toward Lord Wrexford. Oh, I think he understands it better than you do."

"You needn't be so tragic about it. I *am* disappointed in you. I hoped to have a daughter who would love me tenderly, sincerely. If I had been opposed to the plan, your father would have left you there in that wild land among barbarians, who do not know what to do with their gold, when they have dug it out of the ground."

No, it was not for any real love for her, she had known that this long while. And now she understood that she and her stepmother were on lines that were too dissimilar for friendship even. She was an alien and a stranger, she would drift farther and farther away.

"You seem to have made up your mind that you cannot be happy here, that my regard is worth very little. Matters have changed with me somewhat. I shall not keep this house, I must get away from the remembrance that my dear husband has lain dead in it, after the awful tragedy. And if you have any choice——" 311

"Oh, I have, I have! Send me back home, that is all I ask. And—I do not want the money. My father's wish that you should have it all was right enough. You see, I never seemed like a real child to him. I do not think he cared much for my mother. Yes, let me go——"

The voice with its pathos did pierce Agnes Westbury's heart, but there were so many motives ranged on the other side, and she persuaded herself that the child really had been ungrateful and was incapable of any ardent or sustained feeling. It would be much better for them to part.

"I will consider," she said languidly. "Now go, I have a headache, and these scenes are too much for me in my weak and excited state. I have had so much sorrow to bear."

"Good-night," Laverne said. She did not offer the kiss that after it had failed to be tenderness,

remained a perfunctory duty, but now had ceased to be even that.

"Good-night, to you. Mine will be wretched enough, they always are."

But after a few moments' thought, and when Laverne had dismissed the maid on the upper landing, she stepped briskly over to the desk, turned up the light, and wrote a letter to Victor Savedra.

312

Fate or Providence had played into her hands always. She would be very decorous and observe the strictest propriety, but she counted up the months that must elapse before she could be Lady Wrexford. She had her lover in her own hands.

313

CHAPTER XX

AN ENCHANTED JOURNEY

Was it a happy dream Laverne Savedra kept asking herself, out on the broad ocean with no land in sight and the great vault overhead, that by night filled up with myriads of stars, that by day was a great unknown country over which other ships went drifting to ports beyond mortal ken. It was a much longer journey then, but going round the world would not have been too long for all the confidences she and her husband never wearied of exchanging.

She felt a little confused that he should have appeared so suddenly, with such a brave air, and in the long talk told all his doubts and fears, the whisper he had heard that she was likely to marry Lord Wrexford, and that he found he had loved her since that first evening they had danced together. And when he heard that, he felt he had no right to keep a tryst with her in the twilight, but still he could not put her out of his thoughts. And to him Lord Wrexford seemed quite a middle-aged man, and he wondered if the Grange, said to be one of the fine old estates in that shire, had won her with perhaps the persuasion of her parents. Then her father's sudden and terrible death had deterred him from a wild dream of coming to press his claim, for he was not sure her regard was more than a childish preference. And he, too, had been brought up to respect parental authority. Then, there were so many regulations in English society that he feared to transgress, and he was desperately busy with examination papers, and now all that trouble was ended, and he should rejoice his father's heart by his degrees. But there never would be any place to him like his beloved California, so rich in treasures of the God-sent kind, if she could not boast great universities and picture galleries and libraries. They would all come in time.

314

Mrs. Westbury had insisted upon one condition. He was to destroy her letter and never make any mention of it. For Laverne, with her ultra delicate notions, might resent being offered to another lover. He was to come as any friend might and learn for himself.

She had thought of the difficulty of sending the child on such a long journey with only a maid. It was not merely crossing the ocean—for then there was no cable and even telegraph communications were apt to be interrupted. But if she could be really married and in a husband's care, the way would be clear.

Victor Savedra had hesitated a little. They would hardly fail to accord Laverne a warm welcome; but when his father had been so indulgent to him, to take such an important step without his knowledge! But there was no other course.

"I'll give you a generous trousseau, Laverne," she said, "but your father's property is so tied up in stocks and various things that I hardly know where to turn for money for myself."

315

"Oh, please do not think about the money. I am glad you are not displeased about—about——" and she colored deeply. "Indeed, I never thought of Mr. Savedra as a lover. We had been such friends——"

"To have you Lady Wrexford would have been very flattering to me, seeing that you were hardly in society. But your refusal was so decided, and I must say, he took it in a very gentlemanly manner. It might have cost me my friend, even, and I should hardly have known what to do. He has been most kind and useful."

"I do not think he really loved me," Laverne answered, with some spirit.

"The acquaintance had hardly been long enough for that. And a man at his time of life has lost the impetuosity of youth," the elder returned rather dryly.

Laverne had made one protest about the marriage. She wanted to see Uncle Jason first. In a way she belonged to him. If he were poor and unfortunate he would need her so much the more.

"But you see you could not search for him alone. We will both try to find him. And I think he is dearer than your father was. I always liked him so much. And his home shall be with us always."

"How good you are," Laverne murmured with deep feeling.

It was not merely crossing the ocean, that was done by even an unattended woman, it would be the remainder of the journey, and that would prove simply impossible. But Mrs. Westbury was determined to have some reflected distinction in her stepdaughter. This marriage had an aureole of romance about it. She could wash her hands of Laverne in a very satisfactory manner.

316

So it was a very pretty wedding in church, with the Doncaster girls for bridesmaids and a quiet reception to say farewell to friends as they were to sail on the morrow. Mrs. Westbury was modest in her white crêpe dress with the plainest of adornment. The bride was charming, the groom a proud and handsome young fellow. Lord Wrexford bestowed upon her a handsome necklace of pearls and gave her the best of wishes. Mrs. Westbury parted with some jewels she cared little about, but to enhance their value she said with well-assumed emotion:

"They may be dear to you, Laverne, as mementoes of your father. He was a good judge of such articles, and would have the best or none. And in times of prosperity he was most generous. Of course, he had not always been as successful as during these last few years."

The parting was very amicable, tender, indeed, with the hope that Laverne and her husband would find their way abroad again. It was hardly likely *she* would ever visit America.

They began their new life as lovers indeed, but the hopes of both were centred in the old place where they had first met. Dozens of fresh recollections came to light every day. His memory went back farther than hers, and now they said "Old San Francisco." He wondered how much it had changed in the four years, and she supposed Telegraph Hill had been cut down still more. Probably the old house was no more. Pelajo had been sent over to Oaklands—would he be alive? And had the squirrels all been driven to other wilds by the march of improvement?

317

A long, long journey it proved. All her life she was to be a great traveller, but she thought then these two journeys were enough to satisfy any one.

And at last the Golden Gate came in view. Oh, had it ever been so grand and imposing before! Here was the rocky frowning coast line with its few breaks. The sun was not shining, but the soft, low clouds floating in silvery gray, turning to mauve with here and there a high light just edging them, gave the gray brown rocks all manner of indescribable tints that blended with the gray green lapping waves. There was no stormy aspect about it, but a splendid, serene peace. Even the gulls seemed to float in the mysterious ether, the under side of their wings matching the prevailing tint. And nothing screamed, or cried, or disputed. Clusters were settled sleepily in the recesses of the rocks. And way up above they could see Mount Tamalpais with vales and woods and great sandheaps between, and here was Sausalito, Point Bonito, Point Lobos, as they entered in. They had reached the Promised Land. Laverne glanced up with eyes full of tears. The joy was too deep for words.

Here were streets running out to the newly begun sea wall. Here were new piers, the Old Fisherman's Pier made over. Why, Telegraph Hill had stepped from its lofty estate, though there were still some terraces left, some houses perched up high with winding paths. Streets straightened down to Market Street, which seemed to cut the city diagonally in two. The old islands, the opposite shores, the towns that had sprung up. How strange and yet how familiar. But now going and returning was such an ordinary occurrence that there were no great crowds to welcome travellers. And every one seemed so intent upon business that it almost confused Laverne.

318

There were three who came to greet them. Mr. Savedra, Miss Holmes, and Elena, a tall girl now, with flashing black eyes, a saucy scarlet mouth, and brilliant complexion. And Miss Holmes was no longer young, to Laverne's surprise, who had always held her in mind as she had appeared on that first voyage, and who had never noted any change in her when she saw her day by day.

Victor had apprised his father of his marriage and Laverne found herself tenderly welcomed, as a foretaste of what was awaiting her on the opposite side of the bay. So a little of the luggage was collected, to follow them the next day, and they left the fine, new mail ship for the ferry boat. The same old diversity of people that looked strange now to the young girl. And the whirl, the bustle, the confusion of tongues, the jostling of rough and refined, how queer it seemed.

"You have hardly changed," Miss Holmes said when she had studied her for some time.

"Haven't I?" with the old girlish smile. "Sometimes I feel as if I had lived a hundred years in these two. Oh, I shall have so much to tell you."

And yet she had an oddly pretty air and self-possession of wifehood gained in these months when the world of travel had held only each other, when every day had brought new revelations.

The remainder of the family were out on the porch with open arms and kisses that it was worth crossing the ocean to win. For it was early spring again, with everything a vision of beauty, though they had left midwinter behind somewhere. Oh, the fragrance in the air, had she ever breathed anything so delicious since she said good-by to the old place!

319

They were very glad to have her, if the marriage had been out of the usual order. Isola had a mind to be quite jealous of Victor, and that amused him greatly. She had improved a great deal under Miss Holmes' sensible care and training, and had an exalted, spiritual kind of grace and expression. Laverne felt as if she had gone into a new world, and the atmosphere was

enchanting.

There was so much to say that midnight came before they had half said it. And it was not until the next day she had the courage to inquire if anything had been heard of Uncle Jason.

Miss Holmes smiled. "Mr. Savedra has a story for you," she answered. "I will not spoil it."

He was walking up and down the path with Victor when she ran out to him, eager-eyed and breathless.

"If you have missed one fortune, you seem in a fair way for another," he began smilingly. "I have been telling Victor." He put his arm about her and drew her close. "Jason Chadsey's love for you is one of the rare affections seldom met with. You know we were all surprised to learn that you were no kin to him. But your mother did wisely when she bequeathed you to him."

"Oh, you have heard, you know——" she interrupted vehemently. "He is living. I—we," coloring, "must go and find him. He was more than a father to me. Oh, tell me," and he felt her pulse tremble. 320

"You need not go. He will be only too glad to come to you. Two months ago I was surprised when he entered my office. At first I could not place him. But his voice and his eyes recalled him. He had gone through a variety of adventures. He admitted that he had been eager to get away from the town and forget his losses, though friends would have been ready enough to help him in business again. He wandered up to British Columbia, and all the land between he thinks marvellous in its capabilities. It is like a romance to hear him talk. Then he came down again, sometimes trying the wilds and forests, and at last returning to an old resolve that had taken possession of him before he saw you—to go to the gold fields. And thither he found his way about six months ago. At first he was not much prepossessed. It seemed as if everything worth while had been claimed. Then he fell in with a poor young man dying with consumption, whose claim had been very promising in the beginning, but some way had failed, but he had not lost faith in it from certain scientific indications. They worked together for a while. This Jarvis, it seems, had been at the School of Mines in New York. But at the last he went very rapidly, and bequeathed his claim to your uncle. A week after he had buried the poor fellow he unearthed the secret again, and it was just as he was about to give it up. He made no comment, but worked steadily, burying his gold every night instead of taking it to his cabin, and adroitly hiding the real lode. His companions laughed and jeered, one after another left the gulch. Then, as I said, he came down to me with two or three small bags of gold nuggets hidden about his person. Upon assaying, they turned out first-class. So he left them in my possession and went back again, delighted that he was at last on the sure track of your fortune. He had the utmost confidence that you would return to him when you were of age——" 321

"Oh, poor, dear Uncle Jason! His life has been devoted to me! But he must not take all this toil and trouble. I do not care for the fortune. Oh, you must believe that if I had not been compelled to go, I should never have left him in adversity. It almost broke my heart," and she paused in tears.

"My dear child, no one could blame you. There was no other course then. I understand how he felt about it."

"And now I must go to him at once——" raising her lovely eyes, full of entreaty.

"My child, it will be better to send for him. It is a rough journey, and a miner's cabin will not afford much accommodation for a lady," he returned, with gentle firmness.

"But, I cannot wait. Why, I could fly to him," and she looked in her beautiful eagerness as if she might.

"And Victor promised——" glancing at him.

"We can send a messenger at once, to-day, and a man can travel more rapidly, put up with hardships. Neither can we lose you, when we have hardly seen you. Think how patiently he is waiting, almost two years more, he believes." 322

Laverne did yield to persuasion at length. For that matter not half the experiences had been told over. They were all so glad to have her that she felt it would be ungracious not to be joyous and happy. Elena wanted to hear about London. Yes, she had seen the Queen and some of the princesses, but she had not been presented.

"She would have been, as Lady Wrexford," said Victor laughingly. "And you can't think all that a title counts for there. I wonder she wasn't tempted. For I had not asked her then."

"But I had promised Uncle Jason."

Isola's music was a greater delight than ever. She had improved very much under her careful training, though her soul's desire was still improvising.

"Oh, how you would be admired in London," Laverne cried enthusiastically. "Such a gift is really wonderful. Why some one ought to write it down."

"Professor Gerhart has tried some things. But you see I never play them twice quite alike, and that bothers. I want to turn this way and that," smiling, yet flushing a little.

"Yes," Victor added, "you could make fame and fortune abroad."

"But she could not play in public," said the mother.

Then they must take new views of the town.

"There is no more Old San Francisco," Victor declared. "One would hardly credit the changes if he were told."

There were streets now running out to Islais Creek, where the marsh was being filled up. And the queer little corner, where the streets ran a block or two in every direction by Channel Creek, still held some adobe houses. Some day the Southern Pacific Railroad would run along here and build its immense freight houses and stations. Market Street was creeping along. Sandhills had been toppled over into depressions. Great buildings had been reared. Kearny Street was running up over Telegraph Hill. The lower end was given over to handsome stores, that displayed goods which could stand comparison with any other city.

323

Telegraph Hill was to be lowered, even after this revolution, that had left the topmost crest fifty or sixty feet above sea level. It had a rather curious aspect now. Some of the quaint old houses had been lowered, and smart new ones formed a striking contrast. A few scrubby oaks, firmly rooted, had defied removal, it would seem, and were left in sandy backyards. The beautiful pine was gone, the old house had not been worth any trouble, and so had shared destruction.

"I can't make it seem real," Laverne said piteously, with tears in her eyes. "There is no more Old San Francisco."

There was no more little girl either.

But farther down the aspect was more natural. Here was the new Presbyterian Church, where she had seen the old one burn down. And here was Saint Mary's, with its fine spire still unfinished. The Mission on Vallejo Street, and St. Patrick's in Happy Valley, and the fine school of Mission de Dolores, they had all improved, though she found some familiar features.

And the little nucleus of China Town had spread out. While the old Californian and the Spaniard relinquished the distinguishing features of the attire, the Chinaman in his blue shirt, full trousers, white stockings, and pointed toes set way above the soles, and the black pigtail wound about his head, looked just as she had seen them in her childhood, and they had not grown appreciably older, or had they always been old?

324

Mr. Dawson had died, and his wife had retired to a handsome private dwelling, and kept her carriage. The Folsom House was much grander, and Dick, a "young blood," whom girls were striving in vain to captivate. Mrs. Folsom wanted to hear about her father's death, and if her stepmother had lived up to her promises.

"I do suppose your father died a rich man. Or, did it all take wings and vanish?"

Laverne answered that the business had not been settled, and that Mrs. Westbury had proved very kind to her.

"I never could quite make up my mind about her. Queer, wasn't it, that she should take such a fancy to you and insist upon having you, for second wives' fancies don't often run that way. I had an idea she would marry you to some lord, with all the money, they expected to have. And here you've married that Mr. Savedra and come back. Does any one hear what has become of that old uncle of yours?"

"Oh yes, he keeps in touch with Victor's father."

"It was too bad he should have lost all by that dreadful fire. Fires have been the bane of the town, but we do not have as many now. Oh, didn't the place look queer when we first came. There were rows of tents still, and such shanties, and now great four-story bricks and stone, and banks and business places. One would hardly believe it if he had not seen it."

325

Mr. Personette was in a large real estate business, and even yet was hardly reconciled that Howard had not gone into the law. But he was very well satisfied with what he called "real business."

Mrs. Personette was stout and rosy, and had been made a grandmother twice. Miss Gaines had taken a husband, though she still kept up a very stylish establishment. Sometimes the three old friends met and talked over their adventures.

Laverne was very happy and added a great charm to the household. Elena would have had her talk continually about her life abroad.

"Why do you not make Victor describe some of the places where *he* has been? Every summer he took a journey away," she said, rather amused.

"He talks about places. You always put in the people, and they are more interesting."

Jason Chadsey was startled by this message. His little girl really here—but, after all, another's. At first it gave him a sharp pang. Yes, he must fly to her. So he picked up his nuggets again. Norcross Gulch was about deserted. Better mining had been found up on a little stream emptying into the Sacramento. Cabins had mostly been carried off, shacks had fallen down. Certainly,

nothing could look more dreary than a deserted mining region. But in a month or two another horde would doubtless invade it.

He came in town and "spruced up," in his old Maine vernacular, was trimmed as to beard and hair, and purchased a suit of new clothes. His little girl! He ought to take some great treasure to her. What if she were changed; but no, they would love each other to the very end of life. He had sent her away in that desperate time, but no, he could not have kept her.

326

Ah, what a meeting it was! A pretty girl with the air of a princess, he thought, sweeter than some of the princesses he had seen, coming back to his arms with all the old love, nay, more than the old love. For now she realized what his affection had been, and how he had soothed her mother in those last sad days. And she confessed to him much that she had not even told Victor; how, by degrees, she had learned the hollowness of the lavish professions that had put on the semblance of love as the present whim had swayed Mrs. Westbury, and, at the last, she had been really relieved to dismiss her, because she could not bend her to her desires. For even Laverne had not suspected her of aiming at the title for herself.

"And she takes everything!" he said indignantly. "He was concerned with a company that will make some tremendous fortunes in quicksilver—an English company. And it is said that he managed by underhand ways to get possession of the tract while he was here. They have just sent out a new agent, and that you, his only child, should have no part nor lot in this!"

"Oh, don't mind," she cried, "I would rather belong to you in poverty than to live with them in luxury. It was dreadful to have him die that way; he was so fond of life, and business, and plans. It makes me feel quite free not to be under any obligation to them. And I do not care about the money. I would a hundred times rather have stayed with you and helped you, and comforted you, if I could have been any comfort."

They would fain have kept Jason Chadsey for a longer stay, but he was a little restless and would go back. He had not secured all the Golden Fleece, he declared, and he must live up to his name. But he would see them often now. To himself he said, he must get used to sharing his little girl's heart with another, and, since it must be, he would rather have it Victor than a stranger.

327

They were all very happy at the Savedras. The house was large, and they gave them room and the heartiest of welcomes. And there was room in the rapidly growing town, and need for young men of culture and integrity and all the earnest purposes of life that mould men into fine citizens. For there was much work to do in this glorious land, even if nature had dealt bountifully by it.

And then came the terrific struggle that swept through the country, with its four years of hopes and fears, sacrifices and sorrows, and the loss of human lives. California took her share bravely. Gold mines missed the rapid influx, the city had to call a halt in improvements. But a great interest in agriculture was awakened, and now they understood that this might be the most bountiful garden spot of the world.

Through this time of anguish to many, Laverne Savedra felt that she had been singled out for good fortune and some of the choicest blessings of life. Her little son was born, and to none did it give greater joy than to Jason Chadsey. He kept at his lode with varying fortunes, and at length struck his aim in a splendid nugget that for a while was the town's marvel. Now the place swarmed again, and he was offered a fabulous price for his claim. He listened at length to his earnest advisers, and retired from the field. For, though he was not an old man, he had borne much of the heat and burden of life, and won a resting time.

328

And, after years of trading about and buying a boat of his own, Captain Hudson sailed in to San Francisco one fine day with his wife and three babies, bright rosy children, and she with content written in every line of her face. He had a cargo of valuables consigned to several San Francisco firms, and they were overjoyed to meet old friends. When her first baby was born, Carmen had written a long, tender letter to her mother, and was glad to have a reply, even if it did upbraid her dreadful disobedience. After that matters softened. The old Papa Estenega died, and, though there were still some distant cousins, he left the estate to those who had cared for him in his last days. Juana had married well, and Anesta had a nice lover. She was to go to Monterey to see them all as soon as Captain Hudson could be spared.

And then, the last spike in the line that united California with the East, was driven by Leland Stanford in May, 1869. Railroads were being built elsewhere, but this was the dream and desire of the Old San Francisco that had almost passed away.

But nothing could take away the beautiful Bay and the Golden Gate, the entrance to the golden land that had been the dream of centuries.

Afterward they did go round the world. Some of the old ports had changed greatly. Some just as Jason Chadsey had seen them thirty or more years ago. And there was wonderful Japan, which was some day to startle the world with its marvellous capacities. Strange India, with its old gods and old beliefs; Arabia, the Holy Land, with its many vicissitudes; great, barbarous Russia, Germany, the conqueror, and the beautiful Eugénie a sorrowful widow.

329

In Europe, Isola Savedra joined them, and did make a name as a remarkable improvisatrice. She did not court publicity, but the higher circles of music were really enchanted with her marvellous gift, and invitations came from crowned heads to play at palaces.

Lady Wrexford had achieved most of her ambitions, and was a social success. If she could only

have kept off old age!

They came back well content. And, lo! again San Francisco had changed, stretched out up and down, with the hill-encircled bay on one side and the ocean-fretted rocks on the other. Is this old Market Street, and this Montgomery, with its splendid buildings? Whole blocks taken up by spacious hotels. California Street, with its palaces; Kearny Street, with its glittering stores and throngs of handsome shoppers or promenaders—everywhere a marvellous city.

But the old "Forty-niners" are gone, the Mexican in his serape and sombrero, the picturesque Californian on horseback, and nearly all the wandering Indians. Tents and shacks and two-roomed adobe houses have disappeared before the march of improvement.

The Savedras are prosperous and happy, and have a lovely home out of the turmoil and confusion, where beautiful nature reigns supreme. And an old, white-haired man, rather bent in the shoulders, tells a group of pretty, joyous children about the Old San Francisco of half a century before, and the long search of Jason after the Golden Fleece and the little girl that he loved so well. They go up Telegraph Hill and say, "Was it here she and Pablo made the little lake for Balder, was it here she climbed up the crooked paths and tamed birds and squirrels, and here that Bruno killed the cruel fox?" It is more wonderful than any fairy story to them.

330

Transcriber's Note:

Obvious typographical errors have been corrected. Inconsistent spelling and hyphenation in the original document have been preserved.

The island currently called Alcatraz is variously spelled Alcatras, Alcantraz, and Alcatraz.

Belvidere on [page 20](#) should possibly be Belvedere.

Matteo on [page 44](#) should possibly be Mateo.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD SAN FRANCISCO ***

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE
THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG LICENSE
PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase "Project Gutenberg"), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg™ License available with this file or online at www.gutenberg.org/license.

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg™ electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any

part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”
- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.
- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.
- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written

explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you 'AS-IS', WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™'s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations (\$1 to \$5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.