The Saga of Andy Burnett

Stewart Edward White

Ranchero

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Stewart Edward White

FICTION

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ARIZONA NIGHTS

Of the Far North: CONJUROR'S HOUSE—THE SILENT
PLACES—SKOOKUM CHUCK—SECRET HARBOUR

Of the Lumber Woods: THE BLAZED TRAIL
THE RIVERMAN—BLAZED TRAIL STORIES
THE RULES OF THE GAME

Of California: THE RULES OF THE GAME—THE GRAY
DAWN—GOLD—THE ROSE DAWN—ON TIPTOE
THE LONG RIFLE
RANCHERO—FOLDED HILLS
STAMPEDE

Of Mystery: THE MYSTERY (With Samuel Hopkins Adams)
THE SIGN AT SIX

Of Africa: THE LEOPARD WOMAN—SIMBA—BACK OF BEYOND

ADVENTURE

THE OUT OF DOORS—EXPLORATION

THE FOREST—CAMP AND TRAIL—THE MOUNTAINS
THE LAND OF FOOTPRINTS—THE CABIN
AFRICAN CAMPFIRES—THE PASS—THE REDISCOVERED

Country—Lions in the Path

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The 'Forty-niners
Daniel Boone: Wilderness Scout
Credo—Why Be a Mud Turtle?
Dog Days

JUVENILE

The Magic Forest
The Adventures of Bobby Orde

STEWART EDWARD WHITE

The Saga Of Andy Burnett

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
JOSEPH HENRY JACKSON

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INTRODUCTION

IN the spring of 1817 an observant Englishman, one Morris Birkbeck, came to visit the young United States. One aspect of the new, raw country struck him so forcibly that it became the theme of the American journal he published as soon as he got back to London. "Old America," he wrote, "seems to be breaking up and moving westward."

Now that they look back upon it from a sufficient distance, Americans themselves are increasingly conscious of this movement which was so significant a phase of their growth; and, as they have begun to see it freshly interpreted, their perspective has changed. More and more, in recent years, the emphasis has shifted subtly from the American Revolution, which was a kind of birth, to the age of Manifest Destiny, which was the youth of the country, its time of conditioning. It is not the fact of birth which determines the nature of a man or of a nation, but the years of growing, of adolescence, of development to maturity. And our novelists and poets, no less than our historians, have seen this truth. It would be possible today to assemble a large library built around the relatively new realization that the Kentucky Trace, the wheel tracks across the plains, the Oregon and Santa Fe Trails, are as great a part of our past as the Boston Tea Party, Valley Forge, or the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown.

In any such library Stewart Edward White's saga of Andy Burnett would occupy an honored place. In the person of Andy, which is to say within the space of one American's lifetime, Mr. White has crystallized the whole westward movement, something he was able to do effectively because the current, once it set to the West, ran so broad and so fast. "One people, one flag, a mighty civilization that shall extend from coast to coast!" Andy was one of thousands whose lives spanned the fulfillment of that beckoning dream.

Thousands of readers already know the story of Andy Burnett in its chief outlines—the story of the boy whose urge to seek out the new country led him into the wilderness, carrying old Dan'l Boone's own long rifle, to make his way with the fur trappers, the tall mountain men, across the plains and the Great Divide, eventually to the far side of the Sierra with Jedediah Smith and down to the western shore itself, there to become a California *ranchero*, a part of the last frontier. These thousands have followed Mr. White's vivid and romantic narrative of Andy's and America's growing up, first in *The Long Rifle*, then in *Ranchero* and *Folded Hills*, when Andy became Don Largo, the well-loved "Mr. Big" and a figure in the colorful period of California's Spanish and Mexican periods, finally in *Stampede*, fourth and final volume of the Burnett annals, in which Andy sees his son come to manhood, a connecting link between the old California and the new.

All such readers, aware of the sweep of our history, will welcome this gathering of the four novels into a single volume, where they become, as they should, a bright, flowing panorama of America's vigorous youth.

But there is more to it than this; the historical approach is not the whole story.

In his four decades as a practicing novelist, Stewart Edward White demonstrated forty times, more or less, that he knew how to tell a tale, especially one that has to do with the outdoors, with the woods, the mountains, the plains, the rivers, all that goes to make the life of action in the places where action is life. When White describes a prairie pool of melting snow water ruffled by the wind, blue from the reflected sky and so clear that it is also colored a little by the first yellow-green shoots of spring grass wavering at the bottom, you know beyond doubt that he has seen such a pool. The fact is that White was always as good a woodsman, a mountaineer, a horseman, a rifle shot, as any of his characters. A man like that can and does write with the kind of conviction that carries over into his books, making them clearly and essentially true.

Here, then, you have a superb storyteller who knew his chosen backgrounds as few novelists take pains to do; who wrote responsibly, under a sense of obligation to reflect in good faith and frankly the scene to which he applies himself; who possessed a unique ability to interpret the general in terms of the particular; to mirror history in the persons of credible, rounded characters of his own invention walking side by side with actual men and women from our yesterday. When you put these things together, infusing them with the plain, transparent honesty of purpose that has always marked White's work, then you have historical novels of a high order. *The Saga of*

Andy Burnett—do not let its apparent simplicity deceive you—is this sort of fiction.

JOSEPH HENRY JACKSON

Berkeley
California

THE SAGA OF ANDY BURNETT

Ranchero

Dedication

To an unknown *Spanish-Californian friend who during the war sent to Captain White anonymously a beautiful patchwork quilt with the wish that it might keep him "both warm and safe." I hope her eyes may fall upon these lines that she may know that I still have the beautiful quilt, and my heart still cherishes the kindly thought. And I hope further that she may consider this study a tribute of admiration to her race.*

Preface

I DO not hold with prefaces as a usual thing. But apparently this volume needs one. Its serial publication brought me many letters of advice and criticism, most of it friendly, a little of it scornful. Some of it was fully justified, and the text has been changed to accord with it.

The fragments of Spanish have particularly annoyed a few. The students of the pure Castilian especially have taken the trouble to point out to me lapses from correct form. Men who have lived long in Mexico or the South American republics also have written themselves as puzzled over what most considered as ignorance. This is not surprising. The Spanish-Californian spoke a dialect. It amused me to try, as best I could, to follow this dialect. The result is, naturally, not pure Castilian; neither is it the brand of Spanish spoken in Mexico or the Argentine. But, in the main, if not entirely accurate, it at least conveys the flavor of difference. In serial publication some minor errors, even in dialect, got by. Such as *haciendado*; which should, of course, be *hacendado*. These have been corrected.

Perhaps it would be amusing to quote a sample or so of the forms to which my correspondents have objected. There is the word *palomino* for the "silver" horse. Of course I know the word means literally "little dove." Of course I know that *palomilla* means white horse in good Spanish. But equally I know that in California to this day *palomino* is the word for the horse. Likewise *valecito casaros* as meaning an impromptu house dance. Undoubtedly *bailecito* is the word intended; but *valecito* was the word used. Another, and curious, example was the greeting which ended "*mar a Dios*." This aroused the especial indignation of one correspondent, who rather heatedly and impolitely pointed out that this line, as written, was "drivel" meaning "sea to God," and that the correct termination should be "*madre de Dios*." To be sure! But in the slurring speech of the Indian and *vaquero* the phrase became distorted and abbreviated and conventionalized to just that. It was one of my best touches; but it missed fire! Listen to the conversation of

any youngsters for parallels of such abbreviated distortions in our own language. Incidentally this same correspondent informs me that my "proper names are just bilge." That is sad; for without exception they were borne by our best Californian families. There occur also a number of coined words not to be found in the dictionary—*rifleros*, for example. The reader will have to take my word for it that they were used. Or others whose derivation is obscure. I have had to spell these phonetically, as they sounded to me. *Morale* is an example. Possibly it would be better to spell it *morál*, with the accent; or even *morral*. But *morral* is in the Spanish dictionary and means a nose-bag or a game bag, while my *morale* was a long lash formed by the joining and extension of the bridle reins.

The list needs no extension. I merely want to make the point that, whatever its deficiencies, the Spanish used in this story is no mere smattering of ignorant phrases in a try at atmosphere. The attempt at dialect may not have been successful; but its general endorsement by my Californian friends might be considered significant.

Some of my correspondents shake a good-natured head over some of the feats of horsemanship, or roping, or the like, described as performed by Ramón and his friends. I sympathize with them. "I have seen some very remarkable feats of horsemanship," one writes, "but I have never seen, and neither have you, a horseman clear any sort of an obstacle balancing a tray full of filled wineglasses without spilling a drop." He is right; I have never seen it done. Nevertheless, the fact is recorded by apparently reliable eyewitnesses. Indeed, such things do not belong in serious fiction unless they are true. It is too easy to invent them. Therefore I have taken especial pains to describe nothing of the sort unless it is on reliable record, or unless I have myself witnessed it.

In conclusion I wish to state what should be a self-evident fact. Naturally, I have read extensively in all available sources, and have borrowed as I needed. In some instances I have followed closely the originals; notably the bear fight on page 236, from Davis, *Seventy-Five Years in California*. I am grateful; but detailed bibliographies seem out of place in a work of fiction.

Contents

CHAPTER I
The Lovely Land

ANDY BURNETT reached California in the autumn of 1832. It is impossible to say exactly where he and his three horses crossed the Sierras. He may have found his way past what is now called Donner Lake and so over the summit and down the American River; or, more probably, he may have picked a route farther north. Andy was an old-time mountain man, of ten years' experience in the Rockies, and a range of mountains more or less presented to him, at this time of year, no extraordinary difficulties. He did not suffer from lack of food, because, before he had left the deer country, he had laid in a sufficient stock of jerked meat. His animals came through in good shape for the reason that, before he took them out of the rich grasses of the hanging meadows at the six-thousand-foot level, he had scouted afoot to find out exactly where next he should land them. He neither lost nor crippled them, for he knew what a horse could do; he had developed an eye for the "lay" of country, and he allowed himself to be led by the logic of geological formations, which Andy had never studied, of which he could have told you nothing, but along which his experience-developed instinct led him as down a broad highway. He made no plunging, heart-bursting, exhausting struggles through the snows. When he came to the snow he sat down quietly and fed himself and his horses, and smoked his pipe, and waited. Then, when the surface had hardened, he led his buckskin-shod animals over the crust. He even took time at the summit to look abroad admiringly on a world made fragile by the moon. Once across the Divide, he stopped at a soggy Alpine pocket amid the granite, where were willows, and short grasses, and flowers, and small rivulets chuckling over some secret they were bringing from under the snow. Andy had already visited the pocket, afoot. Here again he waited and smoked his pipe, until sundry upside-down birdlings in the willows told him it was near to morning.

This was as far as Andy had scouted in advance. The rest was downhill. Every trickle of water showed him direction, but he knew better than to follow the streams. Streams are gay and bounding people who think nothing

of foaming leaps and tumbled boulders. They have a way of luring one down easy ways until he finds himself in a cañon some thousands of feet deep, and then disappearing over edges. Andy wanted a gentle descent, so he kept to the ridge of a "hog's back," where were only minor problems of ledge and cliff. Then he left the willows and entered pines. Some of the riding was over a brown, thick carpet of needles through the spaced columns of a cathedral, some of it was badly complicated by the snow brush and manzanita. Andy took his time. He refused to involve himself, to plunge ahead regardless, in blind confidence that there was another side, near by, accessible. Never for a moment was absent from his mind the last spot where would be available the two necessities, grass—or browse—and water; to which he could, if need arose, back-track for a fresh start.

The cañons dropped swiftly away below him to left and right. Through the thick shafts of the yellow pines he caught glimpses of the blue of depth, and the forested slope across, like ruffled fur. After a time, on the second day since leaving the Alpine meadow, the rounded slope of the hog's back plunged to a steep descent. The pines dwindled and scattered. Small oaks appeared here and there, and pungent sage, and the brittle rustlings of chaparral. The air tasted hot and dry in the nostrils; and lizards darted and stopped, darted and stopped, curtseying up and down and inflating the soft brilliance of their throats.

Here was no water, and Andy had to make a dry camp. He had exhausted his canteen and was thirsty. So were his horses; and hungry as well. In the depths of the cañon below ran clear water, and the bottom widened to a flat with cottonwood and grass. Nothing prevented a steep descent. But Andy was a mountain man and knew better than to yield to the temptation, as did later many an unfortunate who has left us an account of his tribulations. He caught his loose horses and tied them to be led, and sucked a bullet, and did not hurry. And at the last, after a multitude of minor checks which Andy patiently circumvented, the horses braced their feet and half slid, half scrambled down the last powdery steep of the hog's back to meet again—beyond the "breaks"—the cool trickle from the snows, now grown to a river.

Andy was a little hungry, the horses were somewhat gaunted. But he had suffered no great hardships, been in no imminent danger. He had crossed the Sierra as he had crossed a hundred times through unknown passes of the Rockies. It was to him part of the day's work. It never occurred to him that he had done anything extraordinary. That point of view was reserved for the "pathfinders" and the greenhorns who would come later, the "explorers" who were to follow more bunglingly his trails, and the trails of his fellows, without his slow patience or his cunning, to be written of in books.

Nevertheless, even to Andy it was a queer country. Its conditions were strange to him. The sky was clear and deeply blue. The sun was strong. The air was hot. But the strength of the sun had no oppressive weight. It poured down like a golden flood. Every tissue in Andy's body expanded to absorb it. Its very fire was grateful. The air rose in shimmers like the blast from an open furnace. Its heat bit his nostrils. But his skin was dry and his vigor unimpaired. The sagebrush of the bottomlands and the low hills crackled with the brittleness of desiccation as he moved through it. Its odor rose pungent to his nostrils. The earth was baked to an iron hardness. On its surface lingered a few dried sparse patches of the grasses of a former season, thin and fragile, without virtue.

It seemed an inhospitable land. The water was cold and clear. The man and his animals quenched their thirst. But that was all. Andy went hunting. There were no deer, though plenty of tracks petrified in what had been mud many months before. The horses nuzzled the grass, then turned away. But shortly Andy noticed them eagerly licking the apparently bare ground. Examining closely he found it covered with small oily seeds, the fruit of the burr clover. After an incredibly brief time the beasts retired to the shade, stood on three legs, and snoozed. They were satisfyingly fed. On the side hill, among the small vales, he heard a snuffling, and saw the great brown body of a grizzly eating the acorns beneath the trees. Like most sensible mountain men, he had always avoided when possible an encounter with these animals, having found that they were in general harmless when undisturbed, but formidable in combat, especially to a man in command of but a single small bullet. But the jerked meat was exhausted, and there seemed no other game but quail, on which Andy was reluctant to expend his precious ammunition. So without haste he went into war, delivering his shot coolly, springing into the branches of an oak when the beast charged, awaiting there in confidence the effect of his carefully delivered heart shot.

That night he feasted on bear steak. The next morning he caught up his horses, already filling out their gauntness, tied the bear's paws to his saddle, and rode to the west.

All day he moved in and out of diminishing hills. Live oaks were spaced on their slopes and crests as though planted for a park. The sagebrush ended. The dry brown grass thickened, grew tall. Just before sunset he eased himself in his saddle and looked abroad over the plains of the great valley.

The sun was in his eyes, its rim just touching gold-powdered mountains far and low to the west. The heat of the day was lifting. From the snows of

the Sierra breathed an air. The plains were like a great brown sea. Under a breath of breeze all its surface rippled. With a heavier puff of wind it broke into waves which ran away and away until lost in the horizon haze. A herd of elk grazed in the middle distance; a long patterned flight of wild fowl cut the lucent green of the western sky. In the air was a deep humming undertone of bees, a calling of small birds, a liquid, checked half-song of a meadowlark remembering spring. A released fragrance of ripe grasses clung to the last of the day's warmth. From cottonwoods at the stream's edge floated the mourning of doves.

Andy straightened in his saddle with a deep sigh. It seemed to him, for the moment, at least, that he had at last found the peace for which he had journeyed so far. The cloud of frustration, of tragedy, of loss of those he held most dear, of gathering bitterness and strife, had broken against the serenity of those distant peaks turning rose in the sunset. He had escaped—into the Lovely Land.

3

That night he slept among the cottonwoods. Next day he rode through the waist-high grasses. Soon he ran into swarms of game—elk, antelope, deer in herds throughout the bottoms. Andy had never seen so many waterfowl; had never imagined there could be so many, anywhere. They covered the surfaces of the small lakes so thickly that, even from the vantage of his saddle, Andy could discern but a gleam of water here and there. As he rode nearer he found the borders of these ponds eaten, or beaten, bare for a hundred feet or more, to form muddy beaches, and that the beaches too were covered with the ducks and geese, basking or preening in the sun. He rode among them. They waddled away, to right or left, shaking their tails in indignation, gabbling their opinion of discourtesy. But they did not fly. Andy waved his arms and shouted. A few of the more nervous sprang into the air; but immediately dropped down again. But every head was turned accusingly toward the intruder; and into the peaceful air arose a mighty chorus of quackings and honkings. For the first time since the fatal Rendezvous at Pierre's Hole a slow grave smile lightened Andy's face.

"Now, look here!" he expostulated, speaking aloud after the fashion of the man who spends much of his year in solitude, "I've got as much right here as you have! I never in my life been so cussed out!"

A goose stretched her neck at him, hissing, seeming almost decided to nip a horse's legs. Andy turned his smile toward this valiant but somewhat ridiculous champion.

"No, you don't, old girl," said he. "I've got a trick of my own!"

On a sudden impulse he extended the long rifle and fired it into the air.

A blank instant silence followed the sharp crack of the piece, broken a half second later by the crash as of a mighty waterfall as the birds took wing. It seemed as if the dark earth were lifting to expose the hidden silver of the lake. The air was filled with hurtling bodies. The very sky was darkened. And another great roar, and a third, like successive peals of thunder, rolled across the man's astonishment; and then a smooth high silence made up of the thin whistlings of thousands upon thousands of wings. But the startlement was only momentary. Almost at once the birds began to drop back to their resting places, at first by ones and twos, then by tens and twenties, finally by thousands. Each volplaned down at a sharp angle, upended, lowered yellow webbed feet, set the brakes of outspread pinions, furrowed the water in a long silver curve, and came to rest, wagging his tail vigorously, fluffing his plumes, and quack-quacking his resentment at the shock to his nerves. Andy threw back his head and laughed long and joyously. A cloud seemed to have rolled away, a physical weight to have been lifted from his somber spirit. He rode on, whistling under his breath, with a new eye cocked to the low circling marsh hawks and the high sailing vultures and the remote calm blue of the sky.

But when, a time later, he brought his gaze back from this high ecstasy to the practical affairs of life, he drew rein abruptly with a swift curse at his lapse from the mountain-bred wariness which until now he had never relaxed for a single moment of his ten years in the wilderness, a wariness that had brought him this far safely through many dangers, but which now, it appeared, he had abandoned at exactly the wrong time. For he had ridden unseeing over a low undulation of the plains smack into the middle of a wandering band of Indians. They surrounded him on all sides, thirty or forty of them, and were standing silent, looking at him.

Andy was accustomed to the Indians of the plains and the mountains, a fine warlike people, with considerable claim to a civilization of their own. Save for the miserable creatures at the water holes of the Utah desert, whom he had encountered when with Jedediah Smith, he had never seen as wild and primitive a lot as this. He sat his horse quietly and looked them over, trying to size up the situation, to determine a course of action. And while he did so, he cursed himself as a heedless fool.

They were a hard-looking lot, Andy thought, short, squat, heavily muscled, with flat expressionless faces and small beady eyes. Most of them were naked, except for a scrap of skin. One man wore a curious robe made

of ropes of feathers twisted together. A few had plastered themselves with an overcoat of mud. Many were tattooed with blue-black transverse stripes across the face and body. Their hair was as coarse as thread. Most wore it long, to the waist; but some had trimmed it to five or six inches, and its stiffness stood it out like bristles. Andy's eyes ran over them appraisingly, seeking for indications that might guide his course of action. He saw women, which was encouraging in a way—or would have been were these Indians whose habits he knew. The men carried short bows, which was not so good. All were afoot; but Andy could not risk a dash, not with a laden pack horse, anyway. They made no hostile demonstration. In fact, they did not move at all; they merely stared.

Andy spoke to them in sign language. He tried them in several of the trans-mountain dialects, finally in Spanish. They continued to stare. At length he gathered up his reins and, rather gingerly, moved his horse forward. They did not offer to stop him. But they accompanied him. When again he drew rein, after a few yards, they too halted. And continued to stare.

Andy pondered. The situation was decidedly perplexing. Though not at the moment hostile, these people had him at their mercy, unless he could disengage himself. And just how was he to do that?

Finally one who might have been a headman or chief—at least, he wore a headdress of woven grass and feathers—stepped forward. Andy eyed him narrowly for a sign of hostility, testing the looseness of his knife in its sheath. The man touched one of the bear paws hanging at Andy's saddlebow and said something. Andy did not comprehend the words, but he did the look of inquiry. When the Indian understood that Andy had killed the bear he threw back his head and gave utterance to a long wolf-like howl. The unwinking immobility of the bystanders broke. A number ran off through the grass in several directions. The others chattered to one another, moved about. But none ventured to approach, nor was there any evidence of hostile intention. Andy sat his saddle in alert expectation for five minutes; then ventured to move on. They made no offer to hinder him; but followed after, like a pack of dogs. Andy did not like that. He rode in momentary expectation of an arrow in his back. But there was nothing else to do; so he continued, trying at first to watch as well as he could. It was impossible to do so with any efficiency because of the high grass. Finally he gave it up with a shrug.

After a time, from the elevation of his saddle, he began to see the bobbing heads and shoulders of other Indians converging from several

directions, hundreds of them. As they came nearer he noticed that each wore a single white feather in his hair. He stopped; then rode on. If he was to fight, one spot was as good as another, unless he could gain some vantage point. He spied about him for a grove of trees, a thicket, even a slight elevation. There was none.

As the newcomers drew nearer Andy saw that many of them were women, and that they bore armfuls of green branches and tules. These, when they had approached, they proceeded to scatter in handfuls before the hoofs of Andy's saddle horse. He rode forward on an improvised carpet. Gradually he gained confidence. They seemed to be honoring him in a rude fashion of their own. But as he looked about at the impassive, ugly, stupid, cruel faces, he was not so sure. The bead-like eyes stared at him unblinking.

After some hours he saw in the distance a low butte-like hill with a flat top. Unmolested he rode to this, dismounted, tied his horses nose to nose, made the best disposition he could for defense. That was not much; the people crowded about him too closely. He sat in the midst of his possessions, his long rifle across his knees, and waited. He wondered what he should do when night fell. The Indians stared at him. Andy's nerves were good; but this was beginning to get him a little.

More women came in. They brought baskets which they set down before him, dozens of baskets. Soon he was fairly barricaded by them. He examined them. They were filled with acorn meal, with bread in small dingy loaves, with grass seeds, with dried grasshoppers. He tasted some of the bread and found it bitter, but the action seemed to please the savages. The sun set. Andy managed to convey the idea that he wished the top of the hill to himself. To his great surprise the whole multitude withdrew to its base, where they camped below him in a great circle. Andy unsaddled his horses, picketed them, made of his belongings and the baskets a rude fortification. He lighted his pipe and took up his vigil, for he still feared treachery. Evidently someone somehow carried fire, for shortly tiny blazes sprang up in the gathering dusk. After a time a spark advanced up the hill. As it came near Andy saw it was carried by a single unarmed man. The savage laid down the brand and retired. Andy made himself a fire of sorts from the dried brittle brushwood that grew sparsely near where he sat. No other invaded his sanctity of the hill, though he watched all night, but at daylight the whole tribe swarmed up the slope, to squat about and stare.

Andy saddled; mounted; turned down the slope toward the south. The people remained where they were, without following. No one made even a gesture of farewell.

He rode nearly to the foot of the hill; then bethought him, and turned back. From his saddlebow he untied the paws of the grizzly bear and gave them to the chief. He would not need them now as food; there was a plenty of game. For the second time the man's unwinking animal gravity broke, his spirit rose to the surface of his beady eyes. Again he threw back his head to utter his long howl. And the faces of the bystanders became human.

A quarter mile from the foot of the hill Andy turned in his saddle to look back. The Indians were gathered in a compact group on the summit. When they saw him turn they waved their hands in farewell. The whole experience was mystifying.

Within the hour Andy had his second encounter in California. This time the men were five, and mounted, so he saw them in the distance and composed himself advantageously to await their approach. This was headlong, until the party was within a little over a hundred yards. Then the leader uttered a sharp command. The horses threw up their heads, stiffened their forelegs, and came to a plunging stop. The leader trotted forward alone. Andy examined him watchfully and with some curiosity.

This was rather a small man on a very fine horse. He wore a flat glazed hat tied under his chin, and fine botas with silver spurs. The rest of his dress, whatever it might be, was concealed by a loose, sleeveless leathern armor. Andy later learned this to be composed of seven thicknesses of antelope skin, and that it would stop an arrow handily; but at the moment it looked like rather an awkward smock. A saddle covering of the same material afforded a partial protection to the horse. On either side the pommel hung a large pistol in a holster. A sword swung at the rider's side. As he drew near Andy saw him to be dark, young, and rather handsome, especially when, as now, he flashed very white teeth in a smile.

"*Buenas tardes, señor*," he greeted Andy, who watched him composedly but with a finger within the trigger guard. "Lieutenant Jesús María Corbedo de Cortilla of the Army of Mexico upon the affairs of the Republic with troops." He gestured largely toward the four still in the background. "You understand Spanish?" he added as an afterthought. "Ah, that is well. And you? You are a Hudson's Bay man, no? Would you be so polite as to afford me a glimpse of your *permiso*?"

"My *permiso*?" repeated Andy, puzzled.

"Your permission to travel in these the lands of the Republic."

"I am but now across the mountains, señor," explained Andy. "You are the first man—white man," he corrected, "whom I have encountered. So naturally I have no permit such as you mention."

The officer drew his brows together, pursed his small red mouth.

"No permit, hah! From over the mountains, hah! You are not Hudson's Bay man! You are *americano*!" he accused.

A fleeting grave smile sketched Andy's lips at the little man's fussy excitement.

"Why, yes, señor lieutenant," he acknowledged. "My name is Andrew Burnett," he added.

"This is important. This must be seen to. At once. You are under arrest," he stated suddenly.

The grave smile reappeared on Andy's lips and stayed there. The muzzle of the long rifle shifted slightly but significantly.

"That is as may be, señor," said he.

"But let us not be hasty; let us consider." The Mexican's eyes shifted, and he paled slightly. "The situation is most irregular. Dismount, señor, and let us discuss this matter." He signed, almost imperceptibly, with his hand, and the four men gathered their reins and turned their horses.

"Willingly, señor lieutenant; but alone," replied Andy; then, with a snap in his voice and a flash in his gray eyes, "Order your men to stay where they are!" Again the long rifle shifted, until now its muzzle pointed toward the officer's chest. The Mexican shouted a command. The soldiers stopped; drew together in a group, and began indifferently to roll cigarettes.

The officer dismounted. Andy too swung himself from his saddle. The two men squatted on their heels together. Above them stood the horses. The Mexican's animal was a fine beast. From the corner of his eye Andy surveyed its proportions with admiration. It stood like a statue, its head high, its little ears pricked forward, turning over and over on its tongue the metal rollers of its bit.

"The situation is complicated," repeated the lieutenant. The truculence had evaporated from his manner. He was all smiles. His bearing was intimate, as though he took Andy into his confidence, asking him to share his difficulties. "It is my duty to escort you to the Governor, señor. But I am on campaign. I fight the Indians." He swelled his chest beneath the *cuero* and slapped himself vigorously. "I am an Indian fighter, señor. That is my duty in the army. Were you not a stranger, señor, you would know the name of Cortilla." He produced tobacco and corn husks, which he offered politely; then, on Andy's refusal, proceeded to roll a cigarette and to puff the tobacco fiercely through his nostrils. "I have fought many campaigns. It is sufficient that these others learn that Cortilla is afield. They flee, they scatter, their

rancherías are abandoned. Them I burn," he added; then, as an afterthought, "But perhaps you too have fought the Indians, there, across the mountains, señor? If so, you can appreciate the difficulties and the hardships of a soldier's life."

To the mountain man, new come from a long sojourn among the warlike tribes of the plains and ranges, from the winter blizzards and summer "dry scrapes" of the wilderness of the "Great American Desert," riding about in this lovely land in pursuit of such simple savages as he had seen looked more like a picnic than a campaign. But he agreed politely.

"These Indians make war on your people?" he asked.

The Mexican explained. The missions and ranches of the Spanish occupation were all near the coast. The Indians there were Christians, civilized by the efforts of the *padres*.

"A cattle, señor," said the officer contemptuously, "but useful."

Back of this narrow strip lay the broad valleys and the Sierra, a wild country, visited by no man in his senses except at the call of duty. Here dwelt the wild tribes, the "gentiles." They were lower than cattle, mere beasts. No one disturbed them.

"Save when the good *padres* need converts, señor."

But these gentiles would not stay put. Every so often they made raids. Then they must be pursued. And the duty of pursuit fell upon him, Jesús María Corbedo de Cortilla. It was a hard life.

"You have not a large force, señor," observed Andy.

"Stout hearts! Strong arms!"

Nevertheless, thought Andy, these gentiles could not be very formidable. He questioned. It developed that the warfare was not a matter of much bloodshed. The Indians raided with one object in view, to steal horses. This they accomplished at night, without attempting to come in conflict with the *rancheros*, indeed with a very successful determination to keep out of sight. Then the soldiers were sent out in pursuit. Ordinarily they succeeded in recovering most of the stolen animals, for the trail was easy to follow, driven animals moved more slowly than mounted men, and the raiders scattered without resistance when overtaken.

"Like quail, like rabbits, señor," complained the lieutenant, "in the bush, the *barrancas*, in the mountains where horses cannot go."

Nevertheless, he talked largely of doughty deeds, trying to convey the impression of terrible slaughters and reprisals. Andy's shrewdness and

experience read between the lines. He began to be slightly amused. These excursions to him took on more and more the character of picnics. Andy was tough and hard from his ten years in the trapping country. About the only hardship he could discover in the situation was the necessity of wearing the many-plied *cueros* of antelope skin—if it was a necessity. They must be very hot. Sometimes the raiders managed to get clear away with their booty. Then, it seemed, they did not ride the horses, they ate them! This was the culminating grievance.

That was the present case. Don Sylvestre Cordero had been relieved of a whole *manada* of breeding mares. The savages had managed to confuse their trail and had wholly disappeared. It developed that some of the mares belonged to Cortilla himself! So he had pushed on in hope of vengeance, much farther to the north than he had ever been before.

"I circle wide to cut the trail," he cried. "My men are expert at tracking. Soon I shall meet with these *roto cabrones*! And they shall learn that it is not well to affront Jesús María Corbedo de Cortilla—and the Mexican government!" he added. "You encountered no such people?" he asked.

"Oh, I met some Indians," said Andy carelessly, "but they were not the people you are looking for. They were friendly. I don't think, by the way they acted, they had ever seen a white man before. They had no horses."

The young officer brooded darkly for a moment, then turned upon Andy a countenance beaming with friendliness. Andy had listened well, and it was evident that Jesús María had talked himself into a liking for so respectful an audience. And he still had an eye on the long rifle lying in apparent carelessness across the young man's lap.

"As for this present difficulty," said he, "I should, as I said, escort you to the capitol. But I am on other duty, and Jesús María Corbedo de Cortilla never shrinks from duty. I will take your word. You will ride to the Governor. You will report to him. You will say that I have sent you. Thus all will be regular."

"I have never had other intention," said Andy simply.

"*Bueno!*" cried the officer gayly. "Then, señor, we shall meet again. And know this, I, Jesús María Corbedo de Cortilla, am an intimate of the new governor who comes, Figueroa. We are like that," he laid his two forefingers side by side. "A word in his ear, eh? We shall see!"

"Thanks, señor," said Andy. "*Vaya con Dios.*"

He mounted and drew aside to watch the little cavalcade pass. The soldiers, he thought, were rather stupid looking, though they sat their horses

gracefully and well. They glanced at him sullenly as they passed, lowered resentfully at their officer's sharp command. They, too, wore the antelope skin *cuero de gamuza* and the glazed flat hats. They too carried swords, but no pistols. But they were armed further with long lances and short guns slung under the leather skirts of their saddles, and swathed heavily in fox skins, the tails dangling. It crossed Andy's mind that the battle would be about over before they could bring these clumsy smoothbores into action. As additional defense each bore a round rawhide shield. These had been varnished and painted with the arms of Mexico. They presented a very gay but not particularly warlike appearance.

"I think, señor," Andy called after them, "that you will do better to swing to the east. I saw no sign in the north."

The Mexican waved his hand gayly and rode on.

4

Andy too went his way. But not for very long. Within the half mile an uneasiness overtook him. It was a mental—or rather a psychic—condition with which past experience had made him familiar. In externals and in most essentials Andy was a direct, matter of fact, rather slow bit of efficiency, but he possessed spiritual perceptions, antennæ, which worked mysteriously below his knowledges. Sometimes they helped him, as when they enabled him to smell out hidden dangers; sometimes they disconcerted him—as when they forced him too clearly to see the other fellow's point of view. But he had learned never to ignore them. So he reined in his horse and sat relaxed in his saddle, his eyes roaming the surrounding prospect for sign of life, his inner ear cocked for a whisper.

Then, unquestioning, he turned back on his trail. He did not yet know why, but that was the thing to do. When an hour's travel had returned him to the top of the butte-like hill where he had spent the night, the reason was revealed.

From the elevation he could see ahead for a long distance over the plain. About half a mile distant Andy saw Cortilla and his four men gathered in a compact group. The lieutenant was holding out something in his hand and apparently making a speech. In a moment Andy saw why. A dark head appeared above the grass, then another and another, until a dozen were in sight. They were at some little distance from the Mexicans. Cortilla was evidently trying to coax them nearer but was having difficulty in doing so. They seemed shy, and at a sudden movement of one of the horses dove out of sight like scattering quail. But Cortilla persisted. Finally one of the

savages, bolder than the rest, perhaps the chief, plucked up courage enough to take the object that Cortilla was offering. He examined it; others drew near to look. Soon the Mexicans were surrounded by a dark crowd of savages; as Andy had been surrounded the day before. Now, Andy reflected, if Cortilla knows their language, he may get some information. But as yet he did not know why he had come back. It was none of his council.

But suddenly Cortilla arose in his stirrups. The sun caught a flash of his sword as it leaped from his scabbard. The bright pennoned lances of the troopers dipped. The horses plunged, rearing high, striking down viciously. The black mass of the savages held for an instant's astonishment, then broke into flight. The dark figures dove into the grass in all directions. A few stood, apparently paralyzed with fear. Andy saw these pierced through by the soldiers' lances. Then all five men, holding together in a compact group, set their horses at speed through the high grass, ranging like bird dogs, hunting down the fugitives, flushing them from their concealments or overtaking them as they ran.

By this time Andy had reached the spot. He had started his horse at a run down the hill the instant the purport of the scene had penetrated his incredulity. He wasted no time, energy, nor speed in trying to attract attention. The spare horse kicked up his heels and raced joyously alongside and ahead. The pack horse, outraged at this invasion of his privilege of laden sobriety, lumbered along behind.

The Mexicans were mad with the excitement of the pursuit. They yelled at one another exultantly, dashed headlong toward this point and that where the agitation of the grasses revealed another victim. Andy now shouted at them, but in vain. They must have been aware of his approach. Probably they imagined he was joining them to take part in this rare opportunity for a *matanza*, a slaughter, where were no brush, no *barrancas*, no "mountains where horse cannot go." Indeed, as he drew near, Cortilla waved at him his blade and flashed at him a quick smile. At that instant an Indian, about to be overridden in the shallow place of his concealment, arose almost under the horses' feet to oppose his puny bow in a last desperation. The arrow struck Cortilla's *cuero* without effect, and the Indian fell, pierced by the lances. An old woman, wailing, bent low, scuttling away. His rapier pointed, Cortilla spurred forward his horse. At the same instant Andy stood erect in his stirrups; his arm swept forward in a wide arc; his long bladed knife whirled glittering through the air to bury itself deep in the neck of the Mexican's horse. It was a chancy cast in the circumstances; the long rifle would have been more certain for the purpose; but Andy could not afford to empty his

only weapon this early. The stricken animal plunged forward and rolled over. Cortilla hit the baked earth with a crash and lay still.

Andy whirled toward the astounded troopers.

"Rein back!" he commanded sharply. "I'll shoot the man who moves a hand."

They stared at the cold fierce fire in his gray eyes and obeyed. The affair was beyond their slow comprehension, but not the menace of the long rifle.

Andy dismounted.

"Ride back," he repeated, "over there. And sit still."

They trotted away obediently. It was no longer their affair. They were paid to fight Indians, who rarely fought back, not one of these accursed Boston *rifleros*, rumors of whose deadliness had seeped over the mountains, around by Santa Fe and Taos, even into this remote and sleepy land. Especially a mad one. As for Jesús María Corbedo de Cortilla, he had not endeared himself. So they glanced at each other and shrugged and withdrew the required distance, where they rolled cigarettes and rather curiously awaited events. Curiously, and a little uneasily, for who knew what the madman might do when he had finished with *el comandante*?

It certainly looked as though it were all up with *el comandante*. The American had possessed himself of the officer's sword and was standing over him, waiting for him to return to consciousness.

5

Cortilla stirred, groaned, finally sat up. He was dazed, but slowly recollection of events came to him. Andy waited; but his eyes blazed with a cold fury that did not abate.

"Shut up, you miserable little murderer!" he growled in English as Cortilla started to speak.

The naked sword in his hand, he advanced until he stood over the still prostrate man. Cortilla shrank, looked about him wildly.

"To me! To me!" he shouted to his soldiers. "Help! Help! This one murders me!"

The troopers stirred uneasily, but subsided as Andy turned menacingly in their direction. The tall frontiersman thrust the point of the weapon in the ground, stooped, and lifted the smaller man bodily to his feet, putting into the action a half-restrained strength that rattled Cortilla's teeth in his head. For several seconds Andy stood thus holding him by the collar, deep furrows

between his eyes, staring at his squirming and bleating captive, who was now certain his hour was come. Then suddenly he dropped the long rifle, whirled the Mexican about, bent him half double, seized the sword, and with the flat of it proceeded most heartily to spank that worthy, to spank him with the full vigor of the fury that had blazed in his eyes, spanked him until Jesús María Corbedo de Cortilla howled like a schoolboy. It was ridiculous; it was magnificent. Then, as suddenly, he hurled him aside, broke the sword in two pieces, flung the pieces at Cortilla.

"*Vamos!*" he cried harshly: then, as Cortilla, completely exhausted by the terrible beating, half stunned by the force of the fall, failed to rise, he imperiously motioned the troopers to approach. They hesitated uncertainly, but as Andy again held the long rifle in his hands, they finally—and gingerly—obeyed. Their faces were impassively noncommittal; but, if Andy had been cool enough to observe the fact, they were not wholly able to restrain a certain complacency beneath the surface of their eyes. Provided this madman did not further misbehave, provided that after all they themselves escaped from this astounding episode with whole skins, it would be something that they had seen Jesús María Corbedo de Cortilla spanked. The sight had done much to sweeten the memory of past petty disciplines. And already they were, beneath their grave and correct exteriors, relishing in anticipation certain appreciations by others in the *presidio*, others who also had memories of past petty disciplines. Life was worth while, after all.

Possibly some such thought occurred to Cortilla also, and sufficed to overcome his immediate fears. He was livid with rage.

"You shall hear of this!" he shrieked. "You have insulted Mexico, the Mexican Army! You shall——"

"*Vaya!*" Andy cut him short. "It is lucky for you I do not kill. Silence!" he roared, "or I may forget that fact—and there will not be any Mexican Army," he added with grim humor.

The last remark struck home with the troopers.

"Come, señor lieutenant," anxiously pleaded one of them, dismounting. He held the stirrup urgently. Cortilla climbed into the saddle, groaning and wincing.

"*Vamos!*" Andy repeated.

They rode away slowly. When at a considerable distance Cortilla turned in his saddle to shriek imprecations and threats. Andy threw forward the muzzle of his rifle. One of the soldiers leaned forward to grasp the officer's

reins. The horses broke into a shuffling trot. They disappeared through the tall grasses, over the rise.

Andy dropped the butt of his long rifle to the ground, crossed his elbows on it in his typical attitude. For some time he stared into the distance; then roused himself with a sigh. Across the deserts, across the ranges he had made his long and toilsome way, escaping the blood and hatred of the gathering storm. He had not escaped. Here too were hatred and bloodshed. All he wanted was to live in peace, in peace to forget his sorrows, to heal his wounds. There was no peace. He looked about him over the far-flung quietude of the falling day. The sea of grasses bent in long parallel rippling waves beneath the wind. Again the lines of waterfowl cut the sky; But above him swung on slow majestic wing the vultures waiting for him to go. Darkness was gathering over the Lovely Land. The bells of San Gabriel, which had been sounding ever louder in his ears, had suddenly been stricken faint and far away.

“Well,” he addressed himself: with a humorous acquiescent quirk of the lips, “you’ve made a good start, Burnett.”

He mounted, collected his other two animals, and rode on. But now he headed southeast, toward the great valley and the Sierra.

CHAPTER II
Valedor

ANDY BURNETT was bitterly lonesome. This was not so much physical as psychic. Andy was, in his trapper's life, quite accustomed to being by himself. But always, even in the remotest solitudes, the warmth of distant companions, to whose company the mere matter of a journey would bring him, glowed as a reality between himself and the chill. Now they were gone. Kelly alone survived of those nearest to him; and Kelly had quit the mountains. In this new land Andy had remembered Padre Sanchez, at the Mission of San Gabriel, where, many years ago, when on an expedition with Jedediah Smith, he had spent some months. After the tragedies at Pierre's Hole had wiped out the last of his close friends, the young trapper's mind had turned to a hoped-for peace and healing within sound of the mission bells. And at the very threshold of the new land he had fallen foul of its government. More, he had so outraged the touchy pride of its representative that the latter must make it his business to hunt the young man down, if he could. Not only was Andy barred from the coast lands of civilization; but he must, he knew, have become a sort of outlaw.

That did not worry him. He knew he could maintain himself indefinitely in the great interior valley and the foothills and mountain parks of the Sierra, without the slightest danger of detection by the Spanish. There were plenty of beaver, he remembered: undoubtedly he could, in the proper season, make up a few packs. He could take them up into Oregon, to the Hudson's Bay post there. Jed Smith had spoken highly of the factor McLaughlin, known as the White Eagle. The fact that that meant near a thousand miles of unknown rough travel through known hostile tribes did not bother him. But Andy was still a mountain man, with the mountain man's strong prejudices and partisanships. He would as soon work for the Hudson's Bay Company as for Astor and the American Fur Company—just about as soon. Still, sooner or later, he would have to get fresh ammunition and supplies somewhere. An alternative was to return the way he had come. His whole being turned over in revulsion at the thought. That phase of his life was definitely finished,

closed by the searing red hand of massacre. Riding thus, moodily, in a fog of apathy that blotted out the healing beauties thronging on every side to his assuagement, he was, when on the fourth day he encountered three horsemen, almost too indifferent to take the obvious precautions. Almost, but not quite. Long habit nudged him. So he rode directly at them, and brought his horse to a stop at an appropriate distance, and looked them over coolly and appraisingly.

They were unarmed, except that the leader wore a light slim rapier. Obviously not of the military. That, to Andy, was about the only obvious thing about them. Nothing in their appearance or their equipment, as far as he could see, suggested their business—if they had any. His contempt, the contempt of the mountain man for "foofaraw"—unless it might be his own kind of foofaraw—added to his recently acquired misliking of the race. His figure relaxed in his saddle, though his eye did not lose its wariness, nor did his right hand leave the trigger guard of the long rifle that crossed his saddle before him.

No detail escaped the appraisal of his eye, practised in the appraisal of details. And of what he saw he liked nothing. Except the horses. He grudgingly admitted to himself that the horses were fine animals, especially that ridden by the young man with the rapier. It was a spirited-looking beast, a light buckskin in color; but unlike any buckskin Andy had ever seen. The buckskins of the plains had black manes and tails, and a black stripe down the backbone. This one had no such stripe, and its mane and tail, which were long and silky and slightly waved, were of shining silver. Its legs were slender; its hoofs small; its nervously pricking ears fine; its lustrous eyes wide apart; in its distended nostrils the quick blood showed rose. It stepped with a dainty springing touch of the ground, holding its head high, its smooth muscles quivering with a speed eager for release; and yet it moved perfectly in control. Its rider had raised his hand, and it stood, immobile as a statue except for the alert movement forward and back, forward and back, of its ears, and the slow, musical champing of the rollers of its bit.

Nor, though the animals' trappings smacked decidedly of foofaraw, did Andy withhold his admiration from them. Your wilderness horseman, whatever he may be, whether trapper, plainsman, or cowboy, has always lavished on his mount the love of decoration he stoutly denies to himself. The wide side plates of the bit were inlaid with carved silver; the bridle was of braided rawhide starred with silver *conchas*. The rawhide reins were tufted along their length with brightly colored tassels of horsehair, and were joined together at the end in a long whip-like *morale*. Nor was the saddle less gay. Its tree carried a low horn whose top was as broad as a saucer. Over

the tree was an all-enveloping apron-like leather, extending forward and back and down the sides, the *mochila*, the business-foundation of the structure. Over this was another covering, the *coraza*, also of leather, elaborately ornamented with delicate and graceful carvings in conventional patterns of leaves and flowers, elaborately embroidered with colored silks, with silver, and with gold. Across the front of the saddle a folded *poncho*. Behind it a sort of second seat, or pillion, the *arqueta* shaped like a half moon, also of leather, lined with fleece. Silver *conchas* held each juncture. The stirrups were hooded with carved leather that extended below in two long flapping points almost to the ground, the *tapaderos*. Only later, of course, did Andy learn the names for these things; but now he saw them all and admired and approved. A coiled rawhide reata, smooth and oiled and supple, hung at the saddlebow.

That is as far as his approval ran. The rider was much, oh, much too foofaraw. Though tall and muscular, he was altogether too handsome, with his clear olive complexion, his tiny moustache, his long-lashed black eyes, his too-red lips, and the affected streak of whisker that extended from his temples to end at the corners of his lips. The mocking smiling animation of his face was too animated, too changeable, too frivolous for Andy, accustomed to the self-contained Indian stolidity of the mountain men.

But the height of silly foofaraw, as Andy saw it then, was the way the man had rigged himself out. The creature wore a stiff low-crowned hat tied under his chin, with a tasseled band about it of braided gold and silver set with green stones. Under it was tied a bright kerchief to cover his hair, which hung down his back in a short queue, like a woman's or an Indian's. He had a short collarless jacket trimmed with red, so scant its edges did not meet in front, although it sported two crowded rows of gold buttons. The man's shirt was frilled. He had wound about his waist a broad red sash, the ends of which hung down his left side. He had on close-fitting knee breeches the bottoms of which were fringed with gold. He wore bright embroidered garters! His boots were of soft leather and were of two colors, yellow and brown. On his heels two pieces of fringed leather supported his silvered spurs, which were enormous, with rowels two inches or more in diameter, and tiny bells against the rowels, and silver chains hanging under the arch of the foot; that jingled musically with every movement. Andy's nostrils widened with abysmal disdain.

And just to make it complete this—this *popinjay*—carried on his back, held in place by a broad ribbon, a guitar!

The other two were stolid-faced men, slightly older in years. Their equipment was much the same, except that it was less ornamental, less elaborate, more worn than that of their companion. To a bystander, had there been one, the two groups would have presented an interesting contrast: the tall frontiersman in his worn buckskins, his head bound in a simple bandanna handkerchief, his long rifle across his saddle, bestriding one wiry Indian pony, the other two cropping soberly alongside; and the gayly caparisoned Californians.

The younger man was the first to flash a gay greeting, which Andy barely acknowledged. He was decidedly off the Latin races. Then the stranger, unabashed, wheeled his horse alongside.

"You come from a long way, señor?" he suggested.

Andy grunted assent; then, as the fact belatedly reached his consciousness, he was startled out of his withdrawal. "Where did you learn to speak English?" he demanded bluntly.

"I espeak it well, eh?" acknowledged the young man. "Why not? I am educate in United States. I think," he added with a laugh, "my family he get tired keeping track of me and send me away to get rid of me. Nevare have I been very popular with my family. Sad, eh?"

Andy grunted. He offered no encouragement to this volatile stranger. Apparently he did not even glance in his direction. Nevertheless, he saw and registered every movement made, not only by his undesired companion, but also by the other two. Andy felt quite competent to take care of himself with double this number of fancy-plumaged jayhawks, but he did not intend to be caught unaware.

The principal jayhawk chattered more like a magpie than a jayhawk, which added to Andy's contempt. The stranger spoke very good English. Indeed, a broad doubling of the initial S and an occasional inversion of phrase were his chief idiosyncrasies of speech. He told a few unessentials about himself; he commented superfluously on the weather and the surrounding country; he questioned Andy adroitly but without response. Andy had no use for this company and took no pains to conceal that fact. Every few moments the young Californian turned in his saddle to address in Spanish the two *vaqueros* who followed twenty yards or so behind. These remarks Andy listened to idly, though his impassive face gave no sign that he understood. But soon his attention was more closely enlisted.

"What do you think, Panchito?" said the leader. "Could there be two like him?"

“He is undoubtedly the man of whom we have heard, Don Ramón.”

The Californian glanced at Andy as though to refresh an impression.

“He has not to me the air of one so desperate. Though,” he added with a curl of the lip, “he is an unmannerly pig, surly as a bear.”

“*Gracias*,” interposed Andy dryly.

Ramón reined in his horse so abruptly that the animal threw its head high. His eyes were dark and flashing with anger, but the suavity of his manner did not alter.

“Ah, you espeak Spanish, señor,” he said in that tongue. “I do not find it courteous that you have concealed that fact! It savors of the spy.”

Andy laughed shortly. His contempt and indifference to the other’s opinion were as obvious as the lash of a whip. The young Californian’s eyes widened slightly, but it was the man Panchito who snarled in anger.

“Shall we take him in, Don Ramón? This is an order to all loyal men—and a reward.”

The long rifle seemed of its own accord to leap from Andy’s saddlebow to point its muzzle not two feet from the Californian’s chest.

“I could kill you,” he said after a moment. “I’d as soon kill you as any of your cowardly kind. But killing is useless.” He slowly dropped the muzzle of his rifle. “I think you’d best ride your way.”

At that instant, swift as the dart of a snake, wham! *slap!* with such tremendous force as almost to shake him from his saddle, a loop of slender heavy rawhide pinioned his arms to his sides, and wham! *slap!* another encircled his neck. Such were the speed and the force of the shock that the long rifle was jarred from his grasp.

So unexpectedly and swiftly did these things happen that for a moment Andy was completely confused, but only for a moment. His mind instantly steadied to complete acceptance of the situation.

“This is the end of Andy Burnett,” he thought. He even found in a corner of his mind space for admiration at the speed and dexterity of the maneuver. The men were a full fifty feet distant; they had snatched the reatas from their saddle horns, had run their loops, had cast them before even the mountain man’s customary quick reactions had responded. He found another small space for mortification that he should have been caught thus unaware, and a counter comforting reflection that it was only his complete ignorance of this new type of deadly weapon that had betrayed him.

He sat quiet, without attempt at struggle. The *vaqueros* had taken each a turn about his pommel, had turned their horses half away, had poised their spurs. Their eyes were fixed inquiringly upon their master.

The latter touched his own mount with the spur to edge it daintily close to Andy's own.

"What say you now, señor?" he inquired, softly in Spanish, "I but raise my hand—and my men are off and away, like the wind. And you? What of you? It is not a pleasant death, señor. One lives to feel the earth clutching at one's body with fingers of iron, tearing the flesh from the bones, until at last it has torn down through the flesh to the life. Eh, señor, what say you to that?"

His face was close, his dancing black eyes searching the depths of Andy's for the effects of his words. Andy stared steadily back at him.

"What do you say, señor?" insisted the other.

"Raise your hand," replied Andy quietly.

"*Caramba!*" cried the Californian. "You at least are no coward!"

He signaled to the *vaqueros*; then, as they hesitated in reluctance, more imperiously. They rode forward grumbling, loosened the loops, released Andy from the nooses, and re-coiled the reatas at their saddlebows. Without dismounting, the young man swooped gracefully down from his saddle, retrieved the long rifle from the ground, returned it to the frontiersman with a half-mocking bow.

"You could have killed me, señor," said he. "You did not. I could have killed you. I did not. We are quits. And now, again, let us ride together for better acquaintance."

He wheeled his horse, slapped Andy's mount lightly to put it in motion.

"You are no coward, señor," he repeated. "You called me one—will you be gracious enough to tell me why?"

Andy was confused and just a little shamed. His pride of a mountain man was still sore at having been so flagrantly caught unaware. He hesitated, then bluntly blurted out the truth. He told of the harmless wild savages he had met in the upper valley, of their mystifying dumb friendliness, of his meeting with Cortilla, the lieutenant, and his four soldiers hunting horse thieves, of Cortilla's unprovoked attack on the savages and the subsequent massacre.

"It was a cowardly outrage, señor," he stated stoutly. "These people were practically unarmed, they were friendly, unsuspicious. They killed children,

old women. These men were cowards. They were your countrymen."

The young man listened attentively, without speaking, up to this point.

"So you concluded I too am a coward," he commented dryly.

"My mind was sore, my heart was on the ground." Andy voiced the quaint phrase of his Indian affiliations in half apology.

Don Ramón reflected.

"*Basta*," said he at last. "Partly I comprehend; though these Indians are animals and must be made to fear. But, señor, those others were not my countrymen: they were Mexicans. They are of *la otra banda*."

"I do not understand." Andy was puzzled. "Are not you——?"

"I, a Mexican!" Ramón drew back proudly. "The saints forbid! I am *californio*! But go on."

Andy told, diffidently now, of his interposition, of how, single handed, he had stopped the massacre, and finally of how he had spanked Cortilla with his own sword.

Ramón listened with interest, with growing amusement. At the farcical dénouement he gave vent to his feelings in a great shout of delight.

"But, listen, Panchito, José," he summoned the *vaqueros* to his side, "the great Cortilla! With his own sword! Did you hear what this señor has related?"

The men's grave faces broke to a sardonic relish. Andy felt the warmth of a complete approval. He did not understand it wholly as yet, but it was grateful to the loneliness of his soul. In spite of himself a liking began to creep into his heart for these strange companions, a liking illogical, against all his sober Anglo-Saxon prejudices, but genuine.

"With his own sword! The great Cortilla!" the Californian repeated. "Oh, *corazón de mi alma*, I could love you for this!"

He swung the guitar to his hands, dropped his reins, struck sweetly its chords, and in a melodious tenor began to sing some obviously improvised doggerel celebrating in mock heroics this extraordinary feat of arms. His horse, unguided, paced stately as a parade. Andy rode soberly alongside. Under the unbelievable blue of the California sky, with the brown plains about him bordered by mountains that somehow looked as fragile as pasteboard, with wide oaks spaced as though planted, with this bizarre, brilliant retinue in its bright trappings, led by the troubadour with the guitar, he seemed to himself to have entered somehow a realm of unreality, to have been lifted body and soul from the stark harshness of his old life. Softly and

mysteriously he experienced the relief of the man who, long submerged, bursts at last above the water's surface to fill his choking lungs with the thin, sweet air of life.

Ramón suddenly ceased his song and swung aside the guitar.

"*Valedor mío!*" he cried.

Valedor. Andy searched in his memory for the word. It came to him at last. Friend: nay, more than merely friend, one especially trusted, one near to the heart.

2

"Don Ramón!" cried one of the *vaqueros* suddenly.

Andy had already seen the object of his attention, a lumbering grizzly bear, prowling out in the open, a hundred yards or so from a dense willow thicket in a *barranca*. He paid it no attention. He had seen plenty of "white bears" in his time and rarely bothered them.

"Now you shall see esport!" cried Ramón. "*Holá!*"

The three Californians struck spurs to their horses and dashed away at a speed more rapid than Andy's smaller and travel-wearied animals could equal. He arrived on the scene to find the bear already bayed-up, its ruff erect, its eyes blazing and badgered, its great head, with its bared, snarling teeth, swinging to and fro following the movements of the dancing horses that circled slowly about it at the distance of twenty yards or less. The horses were wild with fear, or perhaps merely with excitement, but were held to the task in a control of perfect horsemanship. Each man had the coil of his reata in his left hand, with his reins, and from his right dangled the loop.

Andy, riding up, made a motion to dismount for a standing shot. He had no enthusiasm for the affair, but supposed it expected of him, and so prepared to do his best. The bear was a large one and already very angry. Andy had no tree into which to spring while awaiting the effect of a heart shot. The bullet was too likely to glance from the sloping skull. He resolved to try for the difficult, but instantly fatal, eye shot. It did not occur to him for a moment that he was invited only as spectator; that these men intended to capture and to kill this largest and fiercest of America's wild animals with no other weapons than the slender oiled rawhide reatas. If he had understood that, he would have considered it a harebrained reckless bit of bravado; doomed, if carried through, to possibly a fatal, certainly a disastrous ending. And if anyone had told him, as was the truth, that in protection of the cattle

such men as now accompanied him, with no other weapon, made it a regular business to hunt and to kill just such bears as the one now confronting them, he would have dismissed the statement as merely another tall story for greenhorn consumption.

"No! no-no-no!" cried Ramón. "Do not get down. You shall see!"

He apparently was struck with a new idea, so suddenly that under the impulse of it he brought his horse to a full stand. The bear roared and charged at this stationary target.

"Señor!" "Look out!" cried Andy and the others.

Ramón danced his horse aside in a quick falcon swoop. The *vaqueros* shouted, circling in opposite directions. The bear, confused, stopped again, growling in his throat. Ramón was laughing.

"You have said me a coward, señor," he called gayly to Andy.

He stooped to disengage his spurs, which he tossed toward the bear; then in a sudden movement he vaulted clear of his saddle, landing lightly on his feet. He slapped his horse, the beautiful *palomino*, on the flank, and it trotted away. His rapier was bared in his right hand, his broadcloth *poncho* with its frivolous filigree silver embroidery trailed from his left.

"*Madre de Dios, Don Ramón!*" cried Panchito, raising the loop of his reata. José pressed forward. "Don't be a damn fool!" growled Andy, cocking his rifle.

"Stand back, it is a command!" cried Ramón sharply. "—and you, señor, I beseech it."

He advanced with mincing steps toward the bear. The animal, nonplussed at this strange *démarche*, closed its jaws, half rose on its hind legs, pricked forward its ears, peered through its little eyes at this strange unknown creature advancing so confidently. When at ten feet of distance, Ramón stopped, brought his heels together, raised his rapier in the fencer's salute.

The bear was puzzled, even for the moment a little alarmed. The unknown is always alarming, to both beast and human. The animal knew four-legged but not two-legged creatures. It is possible that his next reaction might have been one of retreat, were retreat permitted by the horsemen; but before he could focus his slow mind the man had sprung forward. The rapier blade darted twice, swift as a snake's tongue, pricking each of the bear's fore paws. With almost the same motion Ramón leaped back to resume his graceful fencer's pose of *en garde*.

With a roar the great beast charged. Ramón sprang lightly to one side; brushed the *poncho* across the bear's face; thrusting again with the rapier, this time at the bear's chest. His sense of direction momentarily confused, the bear stopped, shook its head, roared, looked about for its elusive antagonist, charged again. And again Ramón evaded the rush by a twist of the body, a cast of the cloak, and again the rapier flashed in and out.

"Hah! *oso!*" he shouted.

The bear was thoroughly aroused. It was overwhelming, the menace of such fury and such power. Its eyes blazed, its jaws slavered, its great body seemed to expand. A terrible expectation charged the atmosphere as of the gathering of resistless force, like the power of a hurricane. Panchito and José leaned forward against their pommels, their brows knit, muttering to one another, shaking their heads. The horses snorted and trembled, held only by the rigid discipline of their riders' firm and accustomed hands. Andy's mount was not so amenable. It plunged and bored at the bit. He had as much as he could do to control it at all.

The strange combat quickened. The bear's rushes were shorter, more purposeful. It struck savagely with its great paws at the maddening, confusing *poncho*, trying to tear it aside that it might more clearly reach his antagonist. Only by the most astonishing agility did Ramón continue to escape. But escape he did, though sometimes by so close a margin as to elicit from the *vaqueros* a sharp involuntary cry of warning or alarm. And never did the rapier fail to dart in and out like a flash of light. The foam on the bear's jaws was now flecked with blood; and blood trickled over its shaggy hide from a dozen wounds. Nevertheless, it seemed to be as strong and as fast as ever.

With a curse at this fractious animal Andy leaped from his saddle. He was wrought to a high and unusual pitch of excitement. The thing was absurd, senseless, mad. Andy was too experienced a frontiersman to be carried away by the mere excitement of a situation, to be raised above its calculations and appraisals by the exultations of mere glory. The terrain was rough, and a slip or a stumble would disconcert Ramón's close avoidances. The bear, though wounded, was apparently unchecked and was gathering fury and adroitness as the combat proceeded. Thrice had Ramón saved himself by an apparent miracle. Andy watched his chance until for a split second the bear paused motionless, then delivered his shot with all the speed and iron concentration of his long experience, and also, be it confessed, with a fervent outrush of petition from his heart. It was a good shot; a wonderful shot, and also, Andy realized with deep thankfulness, a lucky shot. The

bullet entered the animal's eye, so accurately that afterwards it was found it had not touched the eyelids. The bear rolled over, pierced to the brain.

The *vaqueros* uttered a deep groan of relief. Panchito expelled his breath loudly. Ramón wiped his blade on a tuft of grass and turned reproachfully to the mountain man.

"That I do not take kindly, señor," said he softly.

Andy grunted obstinately, reloading his piece.

Ramón surveyed the huge carcass.

"This, señor, was a personal duel, you comprehend, a personal duel with a grand antagonist. Shortly I would have touched the heart." He shook his head. "Never have I known one to kill a bear with a sword, *como el toro*."

"But I have known the bear to kill the man, *como el aturdido*," said Andy dryly.

"You call me harebrained, señor?" demanded Ramón, rearing his head.

"Well, aren't you?" demanded Andy in his turn, but with an engaging smile.

"*Sí, señor!*" approved Panchito fervently.

Ramón turned to stare at his henchman. But Panchito refused to be subdued.

"*El extranjero* is right, Don Ramón," he insisted, "and to that the holy saints are witness."

"I should have won the fight," insisted the young Californian to Andy.

"May be, señor," returned Andy unmoved, "but your men were doing nothing to help, and I will never stand by and see a brave man so uselessly in such danger."

"Hah! a brave man," Ramón caught him up. "Then I am no longer a coward, eh? You say that? It is all I seek." He touched the bear with the toe of his *bota*. "As for Panchito and José, you must not despise them. They are my men: they obey me to the death."

"So I perceive," returned Andy dryly, "—even to your death," he added.

Ramón threw back his head and laughed long and joyously. He reverted to English. Indeed, it is henceforth to be understood that both young men used now one language, now the other, as seemed to fit the subject or their mood.

"It is good to laugh," he said presently. "I am delight to see *la burla*—what you say, the joke—beneath that face of yours so *serio*." He examined

the bear with a growing wonder, touching the wound made by the bullet, parting the unmarked eyelids. “That was a miracle of shooting, *amigo*.”

“Luck,” replied Andy briefly.

“That I do not believe. Hah! you shall prove that.” He looked about him over the brown side hill. Halfway up to its crest, near a scattered grove of live oaks, the earth had been thrown into a multitude of scattered mounds by a colony of squirrels. Here and there the little animals, driven below ground by the turmoil of the combat, were beginning to emerge. One sat, atop its hillock, erect, its paws across its chest, shrieking indignantly.

“Think you, you can hit me that beast?” inquired Ramón.

Andy estimated the distance.

“Why, I think so, señor,” said he.

The *vaqueros* murmured incredulously; and even Ramón permitted himself a skeptical smile which he instantly and politely erased.

“You doubt, señor,” said Andy, aroused. “See, I will do better. I will clip you the top of his head.”

To the long-practised marksman armed with the long rifle the shot was not very difficult; but the Californians were unaccustomed to firearms and acquainted only with the clumsy smooth-bore *escopeta*, capable at that distance of about a two- or three-foot group. The proposal seemed preposterous. They watched Andy take his deliberate stance with the breathless interest of children; and when he fulfilled his promise they exclaimed with so generous an admiration that, in spite of himself, a new spirit of happy, almost boyish satisfaction welled up in his heart.

“I should not care to have you shoot at me, *amigo*,” said Ramón. “If ever it were my misfortune to fight against you, I would much prefer to entertain you at close quarters.” He touched the hilt of his rapier. “And this.” He laid his hand on the coiled reata at his saddlebow.

In tacit answer Andy produced his other deadly trick. That is to say, he unsheathed his knife and with it made one of the marvelously accurate casts for which, in the mountain country, he had been famous; sinking its point deep in the center of the target of his selection, a lichen mark on one of the live oak trees. And instantly he was ashamed of this braggadocio, this display of foofaraw. It was exactly like a small boy showing off, Andy thought. So when all three of the Californians expressed a genuine wonder and admiration at the feat his manner became in reaction gruff and repellent. Nevertheless, deep down within him was a lifting satisfaction that refused to be abashed, a lightness of irresponsibility that he had never experienced.

You see boyhood had been denied him, and in this warm and friendly atmosphere it was coming naturally into a belated burgeoning.

3

They rode on again. Whether from fatigue or reaction, Don Ramón's ebullient spirits had dropped. For some time he said nothing; nor did it occur to Andy's mountain taciturnity to break silence. Finally Ramón aroused himself with a laugh.

"We ride like friars telling our beads!" said he. He turned to Andy with engaging frankness. "Do you know, Don Largo," he said, conferring on Andy his nickname, "I will tell you truth. I am sulk like a child, because why? Because you have show me what you can do and I cannot do these things. And I have not show you what I can do. Is that not foolish?"

"I think you've shown me considerable," Andy assured him sincerely.

"Ah, that!" Ramón shrugged sadly, "but you say yourself that is harebrain." He laughed at himself, but it was evident that his mood was genuine, for small boys strange to one another must show off. It is a necessity to making acquaintance; and obviously, for the moment at least, these two had somehow slipped back to the magic of that age. Andy had showed off last; now it was Ramón's turn, and there was nothing to show off on.

As yet the two, though they had divined a natural affinity, knew practically nothing of each other's circumstances. Outward details had not yet assumed enough importance to have become the subject of curiosity. That would come when the fundamentals had been properly finished off.

For some time now the plain of the great valley had been gradually dropping away to the left. The broken country encompassed them. They were traveling along a winding dry watercourse from which arose to right and left low hills, soft and round like the flanks of brown beasts. On their slopes, scattered widely, grazed a sprinkling of cattle. They were wild-looking creatures, with long horns and staring eyes, and the nearest of them ran like deer at sight of the horsemen. José and Panchito looked them over with professional attention, commenting to one another low toned. Ramón's eye lighted and he began to hum under his breath.

At this point the hill on one side had drawn too near the watercourse and had, in consequence, been sheared away by flood and wind until it stood over them as a cliff, or rather as a slide of loose deep shale but little off the

perpendicular. On its top stood a lordly bull looking down at them, secure in his scorn of inaccessibility.

"Hah!" said Ramón. "Stop here, and you shall see some esport."

"What are you going to do now?" demanded Andy uneasily. He was beginning to distrust that word. What next? Was Ramón going to tackle also this beast with his sword? But Ramón negatived that idea by unfastening the weapon, which, with the guitar, he thrust into Andy's hands.

"Guard these for me," he cried, struck spurs to the *palomino*, and dashed away out of sight around the curve of the hill's base.

"What will he do now?" Andy turned a troubled face to the *vaqueros*. They smiled at him reassuringly.

"That you shall see, señor. *Paciencia*," returned Panchito.

The bull continued to stare fixedly down on the three horsemen below him. He was curious, and quite serene on his elevation. Once his attention seemed about to wander, but José whistled, both *vaqueros* moved their horses sharply, and it was recalled.

Suddenly the quiet air was rent by a wild yell. Ramón appeared, riding straight as a thunderbolt at the startled animal. The bull, bewildered and frightened out of his wits, leaped straight forward and over the edge, caught his footing, and half fell, half wallowed down the precipitous shale. Without hesitation the *palomino* leaped after him. It seemed that nothing could save him from rolling over and over, his rider with him, to the foot of the precipitous slope. But in midair the *palomino* gathered its four hoofs together, sank back on its haunches. It struck the precipice at exactly the angle of the slope, plunged ten feet with stiffened legs, its head high, its rump fairly seated against the rattling shale. At the same instant Ramón's reata hissed through the air to encircle a hind leg of the staggering bull. Ramón threw up his arm to tighten the loop. The bull fell, rolled over and over, entangling itself, gathering speed and momentum in a fearful tumble down the precipitous incline. And Ramón and the *palomino* followed, the man coolly hauling in and paying out the reata as occasion demanded, the horse, alert in every fiber, even to his small quivering ears, following in a series of short buck plunges, a marvel of grace and equilibrium.

The bull, now bawling with fear and anger, rolled out on the flat ground in a cloud of dust and a rattle of loose stones. Before he could scramble to his feet the reata was wrapped about the wide pommel; the *palomino*, unguided, was backing away, holding the slack. Ramón held up both hands.

Andy, shaken from his customary gravity, stood up in his stirrups and cheered.

After a moment Ramón spoke to his mount. The horse stepped forward. Ramón flipped the slackened loop free. The bull staggered to its feet and dashed away, thoroughly chastened. Ramón trotted back to his companions, gathering in the coils. His handsome face was alight.

"You like?" he asked.

Andy expressed his enthusiasm. Ramón glowed with satisfaction. Everybody was happy. The small boys were quits at showing off. They could now get acquainted.

4

This they proceeded to do. Ramón reminded Andy of the necessity.

"I say, long time ago, that we ride together for better acquaintance," said he. "It is time. Do you know, *amigo*, that it is foolish, but I do not even know your name."

"Andrew Burnett," supplied Andy.

"Andr-rew Burnett." The Californian savored this. "Don Andrés. But still I think you are Don Largo—the tall one. Me, I am Ramón Rivera, to serve you. I have still other names, but they do not matter. And how, Don Largo, you must tell me where you ride."

Andy shook his head.

"I do not know, Don Ramón," he confessed. "I had thought to go to San Gabriel—to the mission." He hesitated, unable in a momentary return of his old controlled taciturnity immediately to bestow entire confidence. Then he met Ramón's eyes fixed on his. "I wanted to rest," he said finally.

"Ah," the Californian's voice was low and understanding, "you have sorrow, *amigo*. Tell me."

And, to his own great surprise, Andy obeyed. He found himself talking, talking freely to this stranger of only a few hours ago, telling him of the old life beyond the mountains, of the Blackfeet, of Kiasax his Indian friend, and of Nit-o-ke-man and the Little Warrior, of Joe Crane and Flying Woman, and finally of Joe's murder and the great battle and massacre that had taken from him the last of his friends. He poured it all out in a torrent of long-pent feeling, and Ramón listened, his head bent, holding the proud-stepping *palomino* to the slower pace of the Indian pony. And abruptly the iron hand of his mountain taciturnity fell across his speech. He stopped.

"Now I understand—Cortilla," Ramón nodded slowly. "And that I did not understand before. *Pobre amigo.*"

At the tone of the young man's voice Andy's eyes filled with tears. Instantly he brushed them away angrily, with an uprush of contempt at himself. Was he a woman or a child?

"I had intended," he said in a hard and matter-of-fact voice, "to live here. But now——"

"Now you would be more like to live in the *cuartel*, at San Blas." Ramón laughed mockingly, quick to understand his companion's reaction of mood. "I do not think Cortilla, and his Mexican friends would welcome you with open arms as a *californio*. And our governors are from Mexico, you understand. Some day we shall change that," he added.

"I know that. So I go to the Sierra. After that, I do not know."

"That we shall see," said Ramón, "but for now there is no haste. One of the *ranchos* of my family lies over the hills but a few leagues from here. It is not much. Nobody but a Rivera would have it at all, for it is far from the *presidios* and the *gente de razón*, and very near the wild country and *los Indios*. I think the Indians steal from it as many horses and more cattle than we keep. Is it not so, Panchito?"

"*Sí, señor*," agreed the *vaquero*.

"It is of little worth. I think my family keeps it for two reasons, both of them excellent, however. The one is that others are afraid to keep it, and the Riveras have always had a foolish idea to do what others fear. That is one reason."

"And the other?" asked Andy, to end the pause.

Ramón threw back his head and laughed.

"The other? Why, I think the other is that they wish a place of a certain remoteness to which to banish their dear son, Ramón Julián Antonio de Quadra y Rivera, when from him, as at present, they withhold entire confidence. And now," he added, "you have heard all my names."

He glanced mischievously at Andy.

"I will tell you my story," he offered. "You are curious; that I see!"

Andy, embarrassed, muttered a disclaimer.

"Oh, it is not painful, I assure you!" cried Ramón. "Except, of course, to my excellent family. Know, then, that I am conspirator, traitor to my people! Yes, it is so, listen. I have fought against them, been in great battles. It was last year. Mexico sent us a new governor. They always send us new

governors. What do Mexicans know of Californians? Always we try to get them to appoint a Californian. They will not do so. Me, I think it does not matter that!" He snapped his fingers. "They live at Monterey; they talk. The *rancheros* know nothing of them. This new governor is name Victoria. He is a soldier, and he gives orders. The California people do not like orders. He gives high offices to Mexicans and small offices to Californians. He puts young silly ones, like Cortilla, in command, and makes old Californians, whose beards have grown gray, to serve under them. He sends some people he does not like to San Blas. Me, I think perhaps most of them better at San Blas. A lot of people do not like him. Hear them talk, you think him an ogre with two tails. José Carillo, Juan Bandini, Pío Pico. They make a war against him down south. They think they put back the old governor, Echeandia."

"Is Echeandia a Californian?" asked Andy.

"No; that is the joke. He is Mexican, too. But he has been here a long while. And he is tall, and thin, and cold all the time, and thinks all the time how he is sick." Ramón laughed joyously. "He live near a fire, and he give very few orders, and everybody do what he like. So they have a battle near Cahuenga, and José Avila kill Ronaldo Pachecho, and Victoria is hurt bad with lances, and when he get well he go back to Mexico, and everybody go home, and now they send us a new governor, Figueroa."

"But you——"

"Oh, yes, me. Well, you see, I go with Victoria in his army, and my family and all the Californians are on the other side, and that makes me not so dear with my family, so they send me here." He chuckled. "I ver' bad boy."

"But I don't understand," persisted Andy, pardonably confused. "Why did you join Victoria? I thought you said he was a Mexican and——"

"Well," said Ramón, "all these others with Echeandia are south, long ways away, and Victoria, he's up north and near by. Too far to go to join these others. So I go with Victoria. He's lots of fun, these war."

Andy's jaw dropped. This was too much for him.

"But," he stammered at last, then gave up the main question, "but how would you feel if you'd killed some of your own people or friends?"

"Oh, I kill nobody," disclaimed Ramón airily, "and nobody want to kill me. For why? What difference who is governor? Juan Bandini and Carillo and some of those men very fierce and angry, surely; and the Mexicans. All right. Let them kill each other if they want. But not we others. No-no-no!"

Andy reined in his horse.

"Well, what, in the name of common sense, did you do? Run away?" he cried, startled into rudeness.

But Ramón was not affronted. He relapsed into Spanish, the better to express himself.

"No, of course not," said he. "That would be to miss all the fun. One rides, and one shouts, and one shoots the *escopeta*, and," he chuckled, "if one can catch the hind leg of a horse with this," he touched the reata, "then there is a great fall and laughter. I think," said he, "that if I had not so upset my very solemn uncle in a so very deep hole of mud I might even yet, Don Largo, be sleeping at the *hacienda*." Ramón chuckled at the recollection; and the iron-faced *vaqueros* chuckled with him.

"Well, I'll be damned!" Andy could not quite gather his wits after these disclosures. Ramón sobered.

"You think that is not war, *amigo*," said he. "That is true; I know that. All the young men know that, too. It is only the few old serious ones, and those who wish to hold power. They are not many, and they are always very angry. It is only people who care much who make war." He fell thoughtful. "I think all people do not know this, as I do, who have been educated outside and who knows the world there. But so it is. One does not kill friends and *parientes* for a small idea. And, at bottom, as long as the cattle eat, and the warm sun shines, and the señoritas have bright eyes, what matter who is governor or what he does?"

"Then," asked Andy sensibly, "why mix up in it at all, and get sent out here, as you say, away from it all?"

"Ah," sighed Ramón, "there you are right. But these war is such fun! And soon they will miss Ramón and his *palomino* at the *rodeo* and the *matanza*, and soon the señoritas at *baile* and *merienda* will say, 'Where is that Ramón and his guitar?' and, *poof!* all will be forgive!" He laughed lightly. "But see, Don Largo, if it had not been thus, we should not have met. So I am glad of it and not sorry!"

"So am I," returned Andy sincerely.

"For tonight you will ride with me to the *rancho*, and we will talk of what is to be done."

The ranch house, which they reached near sunset, proved to be a long adobe structure roofed with tules. It stood bare on a low hill. Not a spear of anything green lived within a hundred yards of it. The roof had been extended the length of one side to form a sort of veranda with an earth floor. From a smaller detached structure smoke was rising. Beyond that stood a circular corral of greasewood bound with rawhide thongs. That was the whole visible equipment of the place. From a distance it seemed to be surrounded by a wide ring of white. As they rode nearer Andy saw that this ring was composed of bones, the bones of cattle slaughtered for the ranch's use. A swarm of dogs bounded forth in greeting. Ramón and Andy dismounted at the veranda. Following the example of his host Andy stripped his saddle and pack and bestowed them on pegs beneath the roof. Panchito and José drove away the horses.

To the veranda opened a number of doorways. There were, however, no doors. The gaps, both of the doorways and the few windows, were hung with *serapes* or hides. Ramón pushed one of these aside.

"*Es tu casa.*" He murmured the familiar form of the conventional welcome.

The room was long and low. It was lighted by a number of crudely made candles of tallow. Its floor was of earth that had been watered and beaten until it was as hard as cement. Except for two chairs made ingeniously from elk horns and rawhide, and a long table, there was no movable furniture. Along one side ran a bench of adobe, a mere thickening of the wall. On this four *vaqueros* were lounging, smoking cigarettes. One fingered a guitar softly. They arose to their feet, saluting Ramón and Andy with the soft ceremonial *buenas tardes*, eyeing Andy with veiled but avid curiosity. They did not remove their hats. After a few moments Panchito and José slipped in and sat down. They joined the other *vaqueros*. A respectfully lowered hum of conversation arose, heads gathered close together. Andy could not hear; but he knew himself to be the subject. He sat apart, smoking his pipe philosophically.

Ramón's high spirits were not in evidence. He had flung himself into one of the elk-horn chairs and was lost in a brown study, his eyes abstracted, his brow frowning. After a while a squat old Indian woman, clad apparently in a single garment and with bare feet, pushed aside the *serape* and deposited on the table a pile of earthen plates and a handful of spoons rudely fashioned of horn and of wood. Two others, equally squat but somewhat younger, followed, bearing a pot of beans, an earthen plate of meat, and a great pile of *tortillas*. They set them also on the table and withdrew.

Ramón apparently did not notice them. The *vaqueros* fell silent, glanced uneasily at him. Finally Panchito ventured to stand before him.

"*Comida, señor*," he said respectfully.

Ramón came to with a start.

Each helped himself on one of the earthen plates, took one of the horn or wooden spoons, unsheathed his knife from the scabbard in his garter. They ate standing, without removing their hats; but Ramón motioned Andy to the other chair, so the two of them sat at table. Still he had no conversation, and as Andy dwelt easily in silence the room was quiet except for an occasional muttered remark of one of the men to another. And as, after the meal was finished and the Indian women had carried out the dishes, Ramón seemed still lost in his thoughts, the men tiptoed out. So for an hour, while Andy smoked placidly.

Then abruptly Ramón stirred.

"Your pardon, *amigo*," said he, "I am not discourteous. I think. And I get nowhere. I search in my mind for this way and that way. But there is no way. It grieves me to the heart. I would take you to the *hacienda*. I would bring you to my father, saying, 'Here, Papá, is your other son,' and he would welcome you for my sake, and soon we would go together to search you out a *rancho*, and the governor would grant you leagues of land, and you would become *californio*, and we would ride together and find you a señorita who shall look softly upon the so-great largeness of Don Largo—I would like that, *alma de mi alma*." He turned his black eyes, aglow with frank affection, toward the tall grave young frontiersman.

"I would like it, too," returned Andy, warmed to unwonted demonstration. "Only I don't know about the señorita," he added.

Ramón laughed.

"Not too soon. We are *bronco*, we two, eh? But some day. Perhaps we find for ourselves sisters—with the gray eyes of Castile, I think, *pequeñas*! That is nice for us, so tall ones; so that the chin just touches the top of the small shining head." His teeth flashed, and he blew a kiss from the tips of his fingers. But instantly his animation died. "But that is espoil," he said sadly. "I think and think, but I cannot see. My father, my family, they are very great; but they are not so great as that; no, not when you have beat with his own sword upon the behind of that so-great *papagayo* the Señor Teniente Don Jesús—María—Corbedo—de Cortilla," he checked the names sneeringly one by one on his fingers. "I love you for that, you understand," he said parenthetically. "It is impossible. But you must not go away. You

will stay here, no? It is rude. It is not the *hacienda*. There are no señoritas, no *gente de razón*, nothing, nothing! It is a barren land, a place of exile. But it is safe. No one will know. My peoples are true. We will ride together. I will make of you *ranchero*. And we shall see. No?"

He leaned forward, searching Andy's face with the urging of a real desire. Andy's heart warmed. His mind passed lightly by the young Californian's depreciations. Hardships meant nothing to him; indeed, this simple house seemed to his wilderness-trained mind abundantly luxurious, adequate to every desire.

He nodded, unable to speak. Even Ramón's quick intuitions were as yet unable to fathom the strength of his emotions so long pent beneath an iron and stoic repression, nor his shamefaced Anglo-Saxon reluctance to allow them to rise to the surface. Ramón had no such inhibitions.

"Hoop-la!" he cried delightedly. He snatched the guitar from its hanging place on one of the room's low beams. His fingers swept its strings.

"*La vida es sueño*——" he sang sweetly, and vehemently struck the chords flat with the palm of his hand.

"*La vida es sueño*—" he repeated the words—"that song is wrong, señor. Life is a dream! Bah! Life is not a dream. Life is esport, a game! And we shall play it together, you and I!"

CHAPTER III
Reata

ANDY BURNETT was destined to receive his first impressions of the California of his adoption at the rough outlying rancho to which his new friend Ramón had been banished by his indignant family. It was not representative of the California life of the period, as Andy was later to find out for himself, but it was a safe refuge. And it offered him a schooling in certain fundamentals which he must learn if he was to live in this new country successfully.

From Andy's point of view the rancho was not so bad. He had been long in the wilderness. The bed to which Ramón led him the night of his arrival was the first in which he had slept for ten years. To be sure, it was only a low frame strung with rawhide, but it was furnished with coarse sheets and a pillow. For hours Andy did not sleep at all. Outside, the swarm of ranch dogs howled and yelled at coyotes who howled and yelled back. But they did not bother him. He simply could not get accustomed to the fact of being in a bed. Then the next instant, it seemed, Panchito, the head *vaquero*, was bending over him.

"*Lucero, señor*," he awakened Andy. *Lucero*—Andy's appreciation, newly warmed by friendship, reflected sleepily that it was rather pretty to be roused by this simple statement: *lucero*—the morning star.

But he never had trouble thenceforth with that bed.

Likewise the ranch itself. To Ramón it seemed the last word in primitive simplicity, lacking all the elegancies of life so graciously to be enjoyed at the great *haciendas*. But Andy knew nothing of such elegancies, so he did not miss them. Here were commodious shelter in a mild climate; plenty of hearty and variegated food; game everywhere; horses to ride; new things to do and learn; congenial company. And to him the countryside of rounded bare brown hills among which wound boulder-strewn dry watercourses was a pleasant land. It had not the wild rugged beauty of the mountain country, nor the wideflung sweep of the prairies; but its very simplicity was grateful

to him just now. Nor, even in this brown ripe time of the year, was it devoid of its beautiful moments, as when after sunset the clear margin of its crests was edged with a thin defining line of gold. Sometimes cattle, singly or in herds, wandered across the face of the slopes; or a band of elk migrating from the tules; and always there were the colonies of ground squirrels, scampering to and fro in crossing lines, or sitting bolt upright, like picket pins, their small hands crossed on their bosoms. A keen eye—and Andy's were very keen—could distinguish other more furtive creatures, coyotes or wildcats, perhaps, sneaking from cover to cover. Swarms of small seed-eating birds—goldfinches, linnets, horned larks, juncos—rose and whirled away like leaves before a wind. Meadowlarks fed busily in flocks; or sat singly on the tips of outcropping rocks and uttered golden songs, unmindful of the fact that this was supposed to be the silent time of year. Rangy solemn jack rabbits materialized from furrows where they had flattened invisible to lope away in long deliberate leaps. At a sharp yell they laid back their ears and scudded off at an astonishing speed. Overhead small hawks hovered over one spot on rapidly beating wings, heads downward, spying for field mice in the grasses. The cloudless sky was of the same deep tint of blue from horizon to horizon. Sunlight filled all the air, liquid, golden, pouring down steadily in an unremitting grateful flood.

The low round hills slept beneath it like gentle beasts. Across their flanks ran the interlaced cattle and game trails. In some of the bottomlands between them grew a few scattered cottonwoods or sycamores, small patches of sage or greasewood or willows. Here lived the blacktailed deer and the crested quail. Here were the rare water pools where the underground streams peered momentarily above the surface. To these pools the trails converged. Some of the larger of them were bordered with tules. On them swam to and fro, in quick jerks, placid and confidential gray mud hens with white bills. Occasionally a duck or so, strayed from the valley, leaped quacking and demoralized by surprise. In the bordering tules were rustlings and the harsh craking of the reed peoples. Blackbirds with scarlet trimmings swung from their swaying tips whistling like flutes.

It was pleasant to ride slowly through this country looking at these things. The horses moved steadily and tirelessly at a fast, shuffling walk that covered the ground almost as rapidly as a slow canter. Their heads were up, their ears pricked back and forth, they revolved ceaselessly with their tongues the wide rollers on the spade of their bits. Between his thighs Andy could feel the eager, restrained quiver of the muscles awaiting the lift of his bridle hand, the touch of his heel.

The days were like that, spacious, simple, alike. They passed swiftly. Andy, to his vague wonder, seemed to himself always to be going to bed, or getting up, and another day gone. Yet they were crowded with happenings, great or small, so that from sunrise to sunset they spread wide as the blue distances of the valley upon which sometimes he looked from the last of the hills. It was a strange double consciousness of time.

Then, almost before he knew it, came rains drifting in graceful long veils rent by the wind; and when they cleared, by magic, overnight, the hills were faintly green. Here and there blazed the deep rich orange of single poppies, like little suns. The green strengthened almost as he looked. For a brief season it was vivid, unbelievable; then darkened and strengthened; and the cattle ceased licking up the burrs of the clover and began eagerly to crop the new feed. The poppies lay in blankets across the slopes. The paler yellow of wild mustard sketched and accented the folds of the hills. Other birds began to believe the meadowlarks' denial of seasons; the air was sweet with perfume, melodious with song.

2

Life, like time, was dual in nature; simple in its broad aspect, yet filled with incident and even adventure. Its sole task, the single reason for its conduct, was to permit the cattle to feed and breed and increase. Yet in the furtherance of that task were comprised many skills and knowledges to which Andy was a complete stranger. In spite of his long wilderness training he discovered himself to be in these things as ignorant as a child. And like a child he plunged eagerly and zestfully into the new experience. It was exactly what he needed. With a new friend and new things to learn, life, so suddenly and so tragically emptied, began again to fill. He was once more happy and satisfied. He missed nothing.

It began promptly that first morning when Panchito had called him from sleep with his simple mention of the morning star. The dawn had not yet broken, but by the time he had eaten a breakfast of *carne asada* with gravy and onions, and beans, and *tortillas*, and a sort of coffee made of dried peas, the sky was lightening in the east. He accompanied Ramón from the candle-lighted interior to the soft velvet gray-black of the out-of-doors. Panchito, mounted, waited at the veranda, holding the reins of two saddled horses. Andy found his Indian pony had been replaced by a fine chestnut, and that his own saddle still hung on its peg. In its stead his animal was equipped with one like Ramón's, with the wide skirts, and the low flat pommel as broad as a saucer. A rawhide reata hung at the bow.

Panchito dismounted to adjust the length of the stirrup leathers. He handed Andy a pair of big roweled spurs. But these would not cling to the young man's moccasined feet.

"*Fuera!*" muttered Ramón.

"I can get on without them," said Andy.

But Ramón shook his head.

"Wait," said he.

He returned from his own quarters with a pair of *botas*, finished with the fringed leather protections at the heels.

"You and I, luckily, are of a size," he remarked.

They were ready to start. Andy took in hand the long rifle and prepared to mount.

"You will not need that, *amigo*," protested Ramón. "No, I tell you. It will be useless. You cannot ride the cattle with that."

He disengaged the piece from Andy's grasp and took it indoors. Andy was reluctant, uneasy. For ten long years he had ridden with the Boone gun beneath his hand. He felt somehow naked, exposed to the world.

Ramón slapped his own mount with his open hand, and as it darted forward at full speed, sprang lightly to his saddle. Andy was nearly unseated by the unexpectedness of his own animal's leap. He was a good enough practical horseman, and could even, at need, cling to the side of his horse, Indian fashion, and shoot from beneath its neck; but he had not the rhythm and certainty of these superb horsemen. Their bodies gracefully and easily erect, the tips of their toes just touching the stirrups directly beneath them, they seemed to be swooping through the air in a long glide unaffected by the motion of the plunging beasts beneath them. At full speed they swept for a few hundred yards, then brought up suddenly with three stiff-legged buck jumps that scattered the loose earth in a fan before them and again all but shook the unsuspecting Andy from his saddle.

He found that they had stopped their headlong career only just in time to avoid collision with a small band of cattle and a smaller band of loose horses. The five other *vaqueros* he made out as dim figures on the other side of the herd. Immediately they began with shouts and urgings to get these cattle under way.

Already the light was strong enough to see. Ramón spurred to the lead, out of the dust, motioning Andy to join him. They proceeded down through the hills toward the great valley, the cattle following herded by the *vaqueros*.

"Where are we going?" asked Andy at last.

"Oh, yes, I forget," Ramón apologized. "You remember, when we ride in yesterday, we see a few cattle?"

"Where you roped the bull?"

"Yes. Well, those are our cattle, but they escape from our *rodeo* and go very wild, like the deer. To seek them is why yesterday we ride—I and Panchito and José—so far from the *rancho* and so have the good fortune to meet you, *amigo*, for which the saints be praise. And today we go to drive in those we have found."

"Where are you driving these others?—to better feed?"

Ramón stood in his stirrups to look back. He laughed.

"But no!" he replied, "these are the *cabestros*."

"*Cabestros?*" Andy repeated the strange word.

"Examine them well, *amigo*."

Andy turned in his saddle to look. He saw at once that a horn of each had been bored to permit the insertion of a short stout crosspiece of hardwood. He learned that this was used as a sort of portable mooring post for other beasts.

"One cannot drive wild cattle," explained Ramón. "No horses can hold many of them together in one band. They break here; they break there. So we use the *cabestro*."

That day's ride taught Andy much. Each of the wild cattle brought in must be run down in fair race, roped and subdued. Its horn was then lashed close to the crosspiece in one of the *cabestros'* horns. Thus he was held from escape; and thus, when each *cabestro* had its traveling companion, the herd was held together and driven to the ranch house. There it was corralled, the animals separated. The newcomers were left overnight to think about it. The faithful *cabestros* were cut out and rewarded with salt. The *cabestros* were very gentle beasts, kept so by much handling and kind treatment. They knew their job and enjoyed it thoroughly, especially when first the wild cattle were bound to their horns. The *cabestros* had done this thing many times. They knew a trick or two. The undisciplined frantic wild ones had no chance at all against their skilled cunning. The *cabestros* held them by a slight angle of the horn, a turn of the neck, a brace of the foot as required, with an occasional vicious twist that inflicted punishment. In an astonishingly brief time the captive was thoroughly subdued to the idea that it had better go along peaceably. Soon it would have been difficult to distinguish which was

which, were it not for the eyes. Those of the wild one were rolling to show the whites: those of the *cabestro* were virtuous with smug satisfaction.

But before that happy solution there must be some pretty wild riding, Andy discovered. At sight of the horsemen the wild cattle curled their tails and departed. Then, save for one man who guarded the *cabestro* band and the spare horses, all clapped spurs and set out at full speed in pursuit. Andy hardly knew which most to admire, the men or the horses. Wherever the cattle went, there must go the pursuers, without hesitation, without check, without thought for the terrain, nor heed for a fall, uphill, downhill, through the low concealing patches of sage, across rock-strewn slopes and boulder-choked stream beds, through treacherous squirrel towns, hell bent, full speed. Where a cow could go, there could go a man and a horse, though at times the feat seemed impossible. The horses were marvelous. Often unable to see clearly more than a few feet ahead, they were quick as cats in their avoidances, sometimes leaping directly sideways as some unexpected boulder or hole intervened, or plunging to a stop in two paces before the trap of an eroded *barranca*, and again racing forward in a new direction at top speed when even a few yards of clear ground offered. Nor were the riders less admirable in their complete abandon to the skill of their mounts, their complete concentration on the fleeing quarry, the ease and grace with which they not merely held their seats but remained throughout in poised control. When one was near enough the rawhide loop shot forward to encircle the widespread horns. No matter what the speed or how awkward the moment's situation, not once did it miss. The trained horse stopped short, and at the exact instant threw its weight at the exact angle against the shock. The cow greatly outweighed the horse. Nevertheless, it was the cow that went down with a thud.

It was permitted to rise to its feet. It plunged and reared, buck jumping and struggling, while the pony, its ears virtuously aslant, backed or yielded, as the situation required. Soon it was able to tow the frantic animal slowly but inexorably to the waiting *cabestros*.

Andy joined with exhilaration in this wild chase. He had run buffalo on the plains and had done his share of rough-riding in the course of his regular business as a mountain man. The first hundred yards inspired him with complete confidence in the animal he bestrode. He held even in the race; he kept his saddle. He was even able on one or two occasions to be of some slight assistance in turning the fleeing cattle.

After a half dozen or more had been thus pursued, roped, dragged in, and tied, the men changed horses. Then they took breathing space, squatting on

their heels, rolling cigarettes of powdered tobacco and corn husks, lighting them with a flint and steel against a long string of cotton tinder wound for protection with a strip of cotton cloth. Ramón clapped Andy on the back.

"But he rides, this one!" he cried. "We shall make of him a *vaquero* surely, eh, Panchito?"

The headman nodded, also well pleased with the unexpected dash of this *americano*. The only specimens of that race he had heretofore encountered were the occasional sailors from the Boston ships.

"*Sí, señor*," he agreed heartily.

Andy was pleased. He discovered in himself an unprecedented desire for good opinion. He wanted next to try his hand with the reata at his saddlebow. He had, of course, learned to throw an incidental and modestly skillful loop in the handling of his mountain horses. But this Ramón would not have, and became very grave and earnest about it.

"No-no," he cried, "not these *broncos*."

He told of the things that could happen, the horse and rider dragged by superior weight and strength, a hand smashed between the rope and the saddle, or a leg cut through by a wrong angle of strain.

"You must not be offend, *amigo*," he assured Andy earnestly. "These things are not learn in one day. See, when I was so small I only just know to walk I begin." He flashed his white teeth, laughing. "I have my reata. I begin to catch first the kitten, then the cat, then the dog and pig. By and by the calf. One time, when I was very small, I catch my papá." He chuckled. "That was not good. I was put *en penitencia*. You know that? No? I kneel on my knees on dry peas in front of a estool, and on the estool a plate and a knife and a espoon. But there was nothing on the plate; nothing. But here I estay while all the others eat. But as soon as Papá go out of the room, my mother and all my sister run to me and give me plenty food and *panoche* and pet me much, so it is not so bad. But you will learn quick; that I can see; for you ride well. But not on the *broncos*. No, no-no!"

"I don't ride like you, Ramón," said Andy, with a faint envy.

"Oh, me!" Ramón shrugged the compliment aside. "That too I begin young. When I'm two or three year old. What you think I ride first?"

"A pony? a burro?" hazarded Andy.

"A pig!" Ramón shouted delightedly. "And when I'm three-four years old I sit in the middle on a horse and my little brother in front of me and my little cousin behind me, and we ride fast everywhere. Sometimes we all fall off together, and the horse he run home, and we walk. Panchito, all

californios, the same." He was struck by a sudden idea. "He shall show you!" he cried.

So at command Panchito mounted, and a horse was cut out from the spare herd, and the *vaquero* gave an exhibition. He threw the reata with whirling loop, flip cast it from a stand, overhand or underhand. He snared, at a gallop, any leg designated. He caught all four together. The serious business of the day seemed quite forgotten.

"There is always tomorrow." Ramón shrugged aside Andy's conscientious observation that the day was passing. He had become very earnest in his exposition of the reata. And successfully so. Andy began to see it not only as an implement of industry but as a serviceably deadly short-range weapon. Ramón explained its fighting uses, and the defenses against it, as when one wards off its threatening loop with lance or sword held horizontal. "As you could have done with that long rifle of yours, had you known," said he.

At length, after an hour, they went on about the business.

3

Andy took seriously Ramón's promise that Panchito should teach him; and Panchito, pleased by the tall American's interest, lavished pains on his education. Though, after his illustrated explanations, the manual part of it was mainly a case of practise, and practise, and practise, as Andy had, in the long ago, practised throwing the knife. Andy's whole training had been in the line of such dexterities, so it did not take him very long to master a workable ability. That is to say, he could rope an individual horse from the *remuda* without many misses; and he could be relied upon to pull his weight in the routine work of the *rancho*. His respect for the reata grew. Not only was it a combination of deadly close-range weapon and indispensable tool for stock handling, but its loop was dropped casually over the most incongruous small jobs that required to be stirred from one place or transported to another. So much of a third hand was the slender supple braided rawhide that when, one evening, Andy dryly suggested to Panchito, who was having difficulty in the threading of a needle, that he do it with his reata, Panchito caught the idea instantly.

"*Sí, señor*," he agreed, "I think perhaps I could do it better with that."

"It is a pity that Panchito must leave the reata behind when he dies," said Ramón. "If he could take it he would undoubtedly be able to haul himself

out of hell, where he is surely going, and into heaven, where he does not belong."

"Like all *californios*," agreed Panchito equably. "It may be that the blessed Saint James will provide me one. I have burned to him enough candles to grease it."

Everyone went to bed at eight o'clock or a little after; but the days were now short. Andy enjoyed the evenings. Panchito was teaching him smaller handicrafts that kept his hands busy. He learned to braid the reata, to fashion the *honda* or ring through which the loop was formed, to render it supple with manipulation and much tallow. He learned also to make ropes and *cinchas* of horsehair, using the white, the black, and the chestnut or bay in pleasing patterns. These were not only gay or ornamental but at times indispensable when a horse was to be tied out at night. For this purpose rawhide was useless for the reason that the coyotes, attracted by the tallow, gnawed it through. Ramón possessed a hair rope of black and seal brown so soft that one could crumple it in one's hands like a silken cord.

"Woman's hair," growled Panchito scornfully. "It has not the strength."

"Strong enough to hold you, Panchito," mocked Ramón. "Ask Vicenta, eh?"

This was over Andy's head; but he thought it well to change the subject.

Sometimes Ramón, or one of the other men, sang to the accompaniment of the guitar, simple little songs with sweet minor cadences and beneath them nearly always a suggestion of the foot-tapping *tiempo de bolero*. Their perfume was of love or a faint memory of nostalgia for a Spain none of them knew. Nothing would do but that Andy should learn the chords on this instrument. He was not too keen.

"When you meet that *doncellita* of your heart you must know how to woo her," Ramón insisted, "to woo her not as a *mozo*, but as a *caballero* should, beneath her window, and a small so-white hand that just flutters, like a dove, and vanishes."

"No *doncellita* for me." Andy grinned at this picture of himself.

"A *doncellita* for every man." Ramón was serious.

"Don Ramón knows," said Panchito unexpectedly. "He keeps a good supply of hair for his rope."

"What mean you by that?" The young man turned on him.

"*Nada, nada*," Panchito shrugged. "I but urged Don Andrés to believe you, señor, he so admired your hair rope."

Behind his impassive face flickered a faint relish. Andy perceived that he felt he had scored in return for Ramón's reference to the mysterious Vicenta.

But he did fool with the guitar at odd times. At first he was very clumsy, and he lacked confidence. Ramón laughed but encouraged him.

"One time, in Monterey," he told Andy, "a man—we will call him El Corbo—went with his guitar to sing under a window. The window was of a woman who was marry. El Corbo thought the husband was gone, but he come back. Me, I do not know why the husband no stick El Corbo with a knife. Perhaps he afraid. But instead he call El Corbo before the *alcalde*, whose name is Señor Casteñares. I tell you his name because I like that judge and what he do. Señor Casteñares is disgust that this husband bring this matter to court. He think. Then he say to El Corbo that he play the guitar and sing like he did for the woman. When he have finish he ask, 'Is that the tune you play and the song you sing?' and El Corbo say, yes, that is it. So Casteñares ask him, 'Is that the best you can play him?' and El Corbo say yes again. Then say this good Alcalde Casteñares, 'Then I fine you six fat cow because you disturb the peace.' "

Andy laughed.

"I'm that bad, eh?"

But he enjoyed his efforts for all that. And shortly in another direction he discovered his audience.

Andy had never before had an audience. Simply he had done things, and let it go at that. But now he found himself in demand as a storyteller. At first he talked of his adventures only in reply to direct questions, and then briefly and almost shamefacedly. But genuine interest stimulated him. He thawed. He told them of the land the other side of the Sierra; of the trapping, and the Indians, and the long hunts. That country and that life were more remote from these men than is now to us any part of the earth's surface. They hung upon his words, uttering deep-toned ejaculations of wonder. Andy did not brag, did not play up the heroic. He tried merely to give them an idea; and the very sincerity of that endeavor built them a picture. They began to sense him as a heroic figure come among them from the mists of another state of being, so remote as to partake almost of the mythical. Perhaps this appreciation was not ungrateful to the boy concealed beneath the frontiersman's grave exterior, a welcome counterbalance to his sense of present unproficiencies. Especially was Ramón fascinated with the sign language. He exclaimed delightedly over the significance of the graceful gestures, and their appositeness. His quick intelligence caught the exact

illustrative quality of each, a quality that not only pictured the idea to be conveyed, but made so easy the remembering of it. He found it immensely amusing to carry on long conversations with his friend through that medium.

"Now we can talk and no one understand!" he cried delightedly.

An expansion was slowly unfolding Andy. The old hard, wary tightness that had relaxed only in his few intimate relations was loosening its grip on his heart. He was becoming a different man. His very manner was losing something of its severe level gravity, borrowing from his new companions a faint trace of liveliness, of irrelevancy. This unfoldment was warmed further by the deep underlying consciousness of something to which for ten years he had been almost a stranger, the sense of security. He had not appreciated how integral a part of himself had become his constant wariness against ever present danger. Now the Boone gun rested on pegs in the wall.

4

The business of the *rancho* required constant attention. The day began with the morning star and ended with sunset. On the other hand, it was carried forward in a spacious leisure that permitted one at any time and anywhere to look upon a pleasant world. It was conducted on horseback. No one walked even fifty yards. Saddled animals stood always ready for the simplest errands. If it was desirable to start before daylight, the first mounts of the day trailed roughly made rawhide ropes all night the easier to capture them in the dark. Spare horses were always at hand, to take the place of those that had been wearied. There were many horses, divided into *caponeras*, or small bands of about two dozen head. They followed slavishly each its own gentle mare, usually a pinto. These *caponeras* were all geldings, for saddle purposes. Nobody ever rode mares, Ramón explained with horror. That was very bad, a humiliation. The mares ran in bands of their own, called *manadas*. They were wild and unhandled, except that occasionally each *manada* was corralled and the manes and tails cut to provide material for the hair ropes and cinches. The integrity of the little bands was well maintained by the stallion in charge. He saw to it that his ladies did not stray. Indeed, at times, he attempted to add to their number by seduction from a rival's harem. One of the ranch jobs was to referee the resultant argument and to rope and drag apart the warriors if the battle seemed likely to go too far. Then one of the *manadas* was driven over the hills and far away, to relieve the fair ladies of undue temptation. The manes and tails of the stallions were never cut.

“Should that be done, the mares would abhor them,” explained Ramón quaintly.

One regularly recurrent task was rounding up the stock and driving it to the rodeo grounds, where it was held for a few hours and then turned loose. This was done twice a month or so, simply to accustom the animals to being handled and to proceeding, when driven, toward a definite spot. Otherwise they would soon run wild, like those brought in by the *cabestros*. This was a matter of easy riding over a great area of beautiful country, singing and shouting, occasionally dashing after some truant, but in general with nothing to do but ride the ridges and watch the long brown lines of cattle hurrying to the rendezvous. The other regularly recurrent task was the breaking of fresh horses to the saddle. The first processes were direct and rough; the finishing was slow and carried on with long patience. At the beginning it took two to do the trick. The selected animal was roped, thrown, blindfolded, permitted to regain its feet. The heavy saddle was tossed to its back, the swinging cinch hooked beneath its belly, by means of a forked stick, to the grasp of the rider. In spite of the *bronco's* kicks the *latigo* was hauled tight. A horsehair hackamore was slipped over the nose. It carried no bit, but was provided with a broad band of leather across the forehead which, by a thrust of the hand, could be shoved down to blind the beast if necessity arose. The rider’s only other unusual protection was a strong bar lashed crosswise on the saddle. This was to prevent the horse from rolling; for once the rider was in the saddle he stayed there, even when, whether through design or accident, the horse threw himself.

But after the *bronco* had learned that his repeated attempts resulted in nothing but punishment, his finer education began. The rider was marvelously patient; as forbearing as before he had seemed inhumane. The perfected mount was reined to turn or stop by the mere lift of a hand, a pressure of the knee. These men never used the bit at all except as an especial or emergency measure; the reins hung loose and swaying. Indeed, Panchito rode customarily with his reins crossed in front of his horse’s chest. Andy’s appraisals were constantly wavering. Nothing could exceed the gentle consideration of these men when engaged, after the first “gentling,” in the handling of the new mounts. And yet, once trained, they were ridden without mercy or apparent thought of suffering. It was not deliberate cruelty; it was merely something that did not enter their consciousness at all. Ramón was no different from the others in that respect. But every man possessed a show or favorite mount which he never subjected to rough work or harsh treatment. Like the *palomino*. This blind spot bothered him, for Andy was a

loyal soul. Those he accepted as friends were to him as himself, and their deficiencies were as his own.

The cattle must be protected as well as handled, he learned. Part of that protection was prosaic in character, as when, after the rains, it was necessary to ride vigilantly the whole range, searching animals bogged to the bellies in the softened adobe. These were dragged out bodily by a loop over the horns. Sometimes one was so deeply mired that it required two ropes and two tugging, straining horses to extricate it. It seemed as though the neck of the bawling creature must be pulled in two. And like as not, as soon as it had reached firm ground, it charged its rescuers. The horses dodged it nimbly; their riders regained their loops by a deft twist of the wrist and rode away laughing at the indignant snorting animal staring about it wildly for what it could destroy. In spite of their vigilance it sometimes happened that the men came upon mired beasts too late, evidently too far gone to survive. These they abandoned. Andy shot them with a flintlock pistol he had unearthed at the ranch house and which he had appropriated for that purpose. Apparently this merciful expedient would never have occurred to his companions.

In spite of Ramón's prediction, they were not, that season, subjected to raids by the horse-stealing Indians. Nevertheless, often they swung wide into the valley, riding fast and far, from sunrise to dark, with no other purpose than to look for signs of marauders.

Toward spring they were called upon to deal with a new menace. From the wilder mountains to the south the bears began to venture out into the open country. They frequented mostly the thick cover of brushy and wooded draws, but occasionally one or more would be encountered trundling about in the open country. These were considered dangerous to the stock and must be killed. It was primarily a matter of business; only secondarily of sport, though all concerned enjoyed the pursuit hugely. But, then, these people made of anything a sport. Andy wanted to take the long rifle from its peg, but Ramón disapproved.

"It is dangerous to fight the bear with the gun," he said in all seriousness.

The preferred weapon, was, again the reata. Certainly the chase as so conducted seemed to Andy not wholly devoid of risk. But after one or two experiences he had reluctantly to admit to himself that something was to be said for Ramón's point of view. Even the boldest of the mountain men, with the single small bullet at his command, hesitated without sound reason to tackle the ferocious "white bear." The encounter was always chancy. But when two of the *vaqueros* set out to kill a bear the result seemed certain. On catching sight of the quarry they immediately pursued him at full speed,

riding a little off the flank to avoid running into him in case he should stop suddenly. When the bear bayed, as he always did after a short dash, one rider engaged his attention while the other roped him from behind. The first reata must snare a hind leg. It was useless to cast at his head or forepaws. In such case he bit off the reata as though it had been string. Usually the bear struggled for a moment, then suddenly sat down. The horse backed away, tugging as hard as he could, but without apparent effect on the bear's great bulk. Sometimes the latter would turn and charge. In that case the horse avoided him nimbly and easily. Sometimes he would start away, dragging his tormentor after him for a considerable distance. After he had struggled thus for some time and had more or less exhausted himself, the second rider, who had been keenly awaiting the proper moment, went into action. Like a flash of light his reata encircled the bear's neck and was drawn tight; and instantly the two horses were turned in opposite directions and spurred to the limit of their power. This maneuver must be executed very quickly. A moment's slack, permitting the bear to get his forepaws over the second rope, would be disastrous. But it was always so executed. In a few moments the bear ceased to struggle. He had been choked to death. If a third rider happened to be present he also cast his loop to bind together the victim's forepaws. That made it simpler but was not necessary. The whole affair was very businesslike. The men went about it as part of the day's work, so to speak. Nevertheless, Andy found it tremendously exciting. He was present merely as spectator, for he was not yet up to this sort of thing. In this manner four bears were killed within a week. Reluctantly he had to admit again to himself, in secret, that Ramón was right, that in the hands of these men the reata was a surer and safer weapon than the Boone gun. And he entertained a sincere respect for their courage and skill, even though they appeared to take the whole performance as a matter of course. Andy's cool courage had been many times proved, but repetition never abated his thrill at these close encounters with a raging, bawling half ton of fury.

Only once that winter did Andy take the Boone gun afield. Then he slipped away by himself with the idea of shooting one of the fat bucks that had organized a bachelor's club in the bottomland. This he succeeded in doing; but unfortunately, just after he had delivered his shot, he was attacked by one of the range cattle. Submissive enough to the man on horseback, these animals are more dangerous than a grizzly to a man on foot; much more dangerous, for they invariably attack at sight, whereas the grizzly is peaceable enough unless disturbed. Could Andy have reached his horse he would have been perfectly safe. But unfortunately he had tied that beast when he had set out to stalk the deer. As the country was open, without tree

or projecting rock, he was in imminent danger of his life. But Ramón, attracted by the shot, appeared in the nick of time. He was mounted on the *palomino*. At full speed he dashed at the steer from behind, leaned from his saddle, seized the beast's tail. He shouted; the *palomino* leaped mightily ahead; the steer was turned end for end, rolled over and over. It scrambled to its feet, still full of fight. Ramón repeated the maneuver. After the third repetition the chastened beast slunk away.

Andy took his escape coolly. A miss to him was as good as the width of the continent, and to a danger passed he never awarded the briefest thought. Except to make a mental note not to be caught so again.

But Ramón was excited and therefore a little exasperated. He pointed out in no uncertain terms the folly of showing one's self afoot to range cattle; of separating one's self from one's horse; of the idiocy of bothering with deer when good beef was so plentiful.

Andy took his scolding philosophically. He agreed with all Ramón had to say, now that he had learned about it.

"The deer is not worth eating, anyhow," concluded Ramón.

Andy did not agree to this, but it was not worth while to dispute.

"He is worth wearing," he returned equably, "and I must make me some buckskins soon if I am not to go naked."

Ramón struck his forehead in his dramatic way.

"*Ay de mi!*" he cried. "I am a great fool! I never think that you must have more clothes! But not the skin of the deer! No, see! Soon we shall make the *rodeo*, the slaughter of the year, the *matanza*, and from the *hacienda* will come the *peones* for the hides and the tallow. They shall bring you clothes. I shall send a message. That is agree?"

Andy nodded. He had no desire to go through the laborious process of making buckskin if he could get anything else.

"I must learn that trick," said he.

"What trick is that?"

"Up-ending them by the tail that way. That was neat."

"The *colear*!" cried Ramón, enlightened. "Yes, that is good treek. We use him much at the *rodeo* when the bull or the cow want run away from the herd. After he get the *colear* two-three times, then he be good."

"I should think he might," agreed Andy.

"He's good esport at fiesta," went on Ramón. "Some of these cow know the *colear* pretty good. You laugh to see them. When man on horseback

come near, he tuck his tail tight between his leg. He's a good treek, but you watch out when you try him or you take a bad tumble. You begin on the so-small young cow." He rode thoughtfully for a few moments. "I tell you," he offered at last, "I teach you the *colear* if you put that gun of yours on the wall and leave him there. I tell you he's dangerous. He's all right for your country, but here, every time, he get you in trouble!"

Andy laughed and promised. He learned to do the *colear*, and the long rifle went definitely into retirement.

5

One morning toward the latter end of March Andy snatched his horse to a stand. At the moment he and Panchito were just topping the crest of a hill. From the valley below, their ears were assailed by a medley of shrill wailing shrieks, piercing, diabolical, like nothing Andy had ever before heard from throat of man or beast.

"What the devil!" he cried. "Something is being attacked!"

Panchito laughed.

"*Las carretas, señor.* They have come for the hides and tallow. Now we will have *rodeo*. Come see."

They rode straight down the slope at the headlong pace Andy had found to be the normal gait of the country when one wanted to get anywhere. In the bottomland they soon discovered the cause of all the hullabaloo. Three ox-carts strung out a quarter mile or so apart. They met the first. It was made of heavy timbers lashed together with rawhide. Its wheels were merely cross sections of huge trees, in the centers of which holes had been bored for the wooden axles. These probably had fitted fairly well when new; but wear had enlarged them to a diameter of as much as a foot. Thence had arisen, and was still arising, the weird shrieking that had so puzzled Andy.

The *carreta* was drawn by oxen yoked by the horns. This was the first detail Andy noticed. It seemed to him awkward and senseless, and very painful to the poor beasts. He said so to Panchito as they rode forward. Panchito merely shrugged.

"But," insisted Andy, "they could pull so much more load with their shoulders and would be a lot more comfortable."

"That may not be, señor," returned Panchito politely but firmly. "Thus in Spain always, always have cattle been so yoked. It is well known that the wisest people in the world live in Spain, and if there were a better way of yoking cattle, undoubtedly they would have known it."

By now the first *carreta* was so near that further conversation was impossible until it should stop. It was driven by an Indian and carried several others as passengers. These men resembled their wild brethren in feature but were dressed in a simple sort of uniform of loose blue trousers and coarse cotton shirt, with a broad band confining the hair. Their expressions, moreover, were informed with a certain placid intelligence. Evidently they were some steps on the way to civilization. As the horsemen approached, the driver brought the oxen to a halt, and a blessed stillness fell, though in the distance the other two *carretas*, slowly drawing near, continued to shriek blasphemy against the outraged peace of the spring morning.

"*Ave María purísima*," the driver of the first *carreta* greeted the horsemen. His eyes, alight with covert curiosity, devoured the strange figure of the buckskin-clad mountain man.

"*Sin pecado original concebida*," Panchito returned.

"*Mar a Dios*," said the Indian.

"*Madre de Dios*," said Panchito.

Whereupon the Indian set his beasts in motion again and proceeded on his leisurely and ear-splitting way. The flat bed of the *carreta* carried, besides its passengers, a few boxes and bags.

The second was empty, and after the same formal greeting, also continued its journey. But at sight of the third Panchito uttered a loud ejaculation of surprise and perhaps of dismay.

It had been made into a crude sort of precursor of the covered wagon by means of a cotton sun shelter stretched across perpendicular stakes. On various boxes and bundles sat upright, as though enthroned, a woman.

She was rather a fat woman, but with pleasing, comfortable, humorous good looks of her own, and with intelligent snapping black eyes that were really beautiful. These surveyed the obviously crestfallen Panchito in mocking amusement that became tempered with a veiled surreptitious curiosity as they stole toward Panchito's companion.

"Vicenta!" cried the *vaquero*, as the cart groaned to a stop. "What brings you here?"

"You are glad to see me, eh?" Her voice was soft and musical.

"Always, *alma de mi alma*," Panchito hastened to reply. "But—but—but—is it wise?"

"I know—*los Indios*," she heaved a theatrical sigh, "but what is danger when the heart calls? When I think of you here suffering such hardship, such peril, all alone—ah——" She rolled her eyes and sighed. Then, after a moment, briskly, and in businesslike tones, "But be not alarmed for me, *querido*. I return with the *carretas*. My business is not to braid your queue." She turned a slow friendly smile toward Andy.

"My husband is so overcome with joy, *señor caballero*, that he forgets to make us known."

"I am a friend of Don Ramón, señora, Andrew—Andrés—Burnett."

"And-r-r-ew," she repeated. "That is not so easy for my tongue. I think I like better Don Andrés. You are a friend of Don Ramón. Yes: that I think most likely." She laughed, but without malice. "It seems to me I have heard of you, señor. I think most people have heard of you. And you are here. But that is droll."

"That is not your business, woman!" cried Panchito roughly.

"My business is not with you, *amigo*!" she said. "It is with your betters. *Vaya!*" she commanded the ox driver. The shriek of the *carreta* drowned any reply Panchito might have made.

"*Diablo!*" muttered the *vaquero* uncomfortably, "what does the woman here? I do not like it." He shook his head. "She loves her ease. Señor, I do not like it."

6

They arrived at the ranch house near dark to find Ramón not yet returned and the *carretas* unloaded and Vicenta established in the outside kitchen from which she had ousted the Indian woman.

"At least we shall eat," said Panchito, his gloom lightening somewhat. "The woman can cook. But I must stop her tongue."

After a few moments of indecision he obviously took his courage in his hands and departed for a conference with the lady. Those of the *vaqueros* who had finished their day and returned seemed highly amused at the situation.

Ramón himself, when he arrived, shared this amusement, but appeared to be more surprised. He too visited the kitchen. He returned enlightened but thoughtful and immediately drew Andy aside.

"It is explained," he told his friend. "She comes with a message. It is for me, from my mamá. I am no longer the bad boy. I must return to the

hacienda to eat of the young calf, like the man in the Bible. All is forgive. Poor Vicenta, she has the heart of gold. So long a journey, and the sun so hot, and the dust so choke, and the *carreta* so shake the bone. If ever you ride the *carreta*—which the saints forbid, señor—you shall see. And la Vicenta so fat." Ramón chuckled, then instantly became grave. "But that is a true devotion," he said.

Andy agreed it was true devotion, but could not quite see its necessity. Why not a simple message by one of the ox drivers? Ramón tried to explain.

"But my papá, he could not tell me to come back!" he said.

"Why not?" Andy wanted to know.

"Ah, *amigo*, you are *americano*; you do not understand the Espanish people," he cried. "My papá have been angry; he send me away. He cannot tell me to come back. No, no-no! He is proud. That is for Mamá to say: that if I come back my papá will be no longer angry. You see? That is woman business. That is not man business at all! You see?"

But Andy's simple and direct mind did not see entirely. It still seemed rather roundabout. Why did not Ramón's mother send her message through one of the Indian drivers, then?

"No, no-no!" repeated Ramón in horror. "Did I not tell you this is not man's business? And these Indians—they are servants. This is family matter not to be done by servant."

"Well, Vicenta—isn't she a servant?" asked Andy reasonably.

"But she is a woman," Ramón pointed out with a slight impatience.

"She could send a letter just as well, couldn't she?" demanded Andy, roused to persistence by Ramón's tone.

"*Mi madre* do not want to tell the *padre* these thing to write," explained Ramón. "These are family matter," he repeated conclusively.

"Why the *padre*?" Andy felt himself more and more entangled.

"My mamá do not know how to do the write," said Ramón without the least embarrassment at such a confession of ignorance; then, catching a hint of Andy's astonishment, "For why should the *señora* know how to do the write?" he asked reasonably. "Always there is the *padre* to do it."

At this point Andy gave it up. He agreed that it was very devoted of the so-fat Vicenta to undertake the journey.

"You must be very glad, Ramón," said he.

"Yes, I am glad. But, too, I am sorry. What of you, *valedor*? How can I leave you, soul of my heart? I have ask of Vicenta, and it is as I thought.

Here you are safe. Vicenta will not tell of you; a word to the men, they will not speak. But you are hunted. All men are told to watch for you. Here must you estay. It is to me very sad."

It was very sad to Andy also. They talked it over, but there was no way out of the situation. Ramón must obey what amounted to a command, even though so indirectly conveyed. Andy must remain.

He did not know whether he wanted to remain. Suddenly the sun vanished. He had made a discovery: it was not the life of the *rancho*, it was the friend. Andy was clear-eyed; he never fooled himself. The destiny of his brilliant companion could never be long connected with this rude outpost, nor could there be much ultimate satisfaction in such rare and brief visits as he might manage. After Ramón had retired, Andy lingered in the *sala*. He took the Boone gun from its pegs on the wall and laid it across his knees. His eyes were blank to his surroundings, peering blindly down an unknown trail.

At last he arose with a sigh and returned the piece to its resting place. He had in the brief space reëntered that gray land of fatalistic acceptance to which the hard, quick life of the mountains had accustomed his spirit, but from which he had thought to have escaped. Still, sufficient unto the day; let the morrow bring what it would. And the morrow of change was still at some space distant. The immediate future at least was secure. The *rodeo*, the *matanza*, hearty, eager weeks of companionship shared. He would enjoy them to the full. And thereafter? His mind slipped back to the phraseology of his Blackfoot days. Thereafter was the affair of the Above People.

CHAPTER IV
Matanza

SUFFICIENT unto the day. Though it seemed inevitable that after the spring *rodeo* Andy Burnett and his new California friend must part, there remained several weeks, and tacitly they agreed to enjoy them to the full. Probably that is why Andy made none of the objections normal to his type and temperament when Ramón developed a project that had been for some time near his heart. The ox-drawn *carretas* that had come for the purpose of carrying out the hides and tallow had brought in various simple supplies. Among them were several personal boxes for Ramón. It appeared that he had, after all, without consulting Andy further, sent for a full equipment of clothes for the American, in California style, such as Ramón himself wore. In spite of Andy's casual agreement as to the replacement of his worn-out buckskin garments, Ramón knew his friend well enough to anticipate some difficulty in inducing the sober-minded mountain man to rig himself out in the glories of the *californio*. But, to his surprise, Andy made no objection. He wished to oblige the friend from whom he must soon separate. As for his former austere aversion for foofaraw, that had greatly weakened. There is something about the vitality of the Californian scene that, even today, permits visiting Boston to wear reds and yellows.

Ramón was delighted. He furnished out Andy completely, from top to toe, even to such unessential details as a rosette on the chin band that confined his hat. As the final touch he called in Vicenta from the kitchen to braid a proper queue, augmented a bit by horsehair, for Andy's own was not quite long enough. Even to this he submitted with a certain relish, for his secret spirit liked dress-up games; and also with a faint nostalgic sadness, for it brought back to him the memory of the time when Kiasax and Nit-o-ke-man had rigged him out in the full regalia of the Blackfoot warrior and had taken him forth to visit the chiefs.

Ramón and Vicenta were delighted with the results of their efforts; and the six hard-bitten *vaqueros* also admired unreservedly Andy's appearance.

Their pleasure was genuine and childlike; so Andy was unembarrassed and also enjoyed himself and was equally childlike. An exclamatory and pleasant time was had by all. Indeed, with his black hair, and his black thick eyebrows almost meeting across his forehead, and the bronze brown of his complexion, Andy now looked more like a Californian than an American.

"Except the eyes," Ramón eyed him critically, his head on one side, "and the little whisker. And the knife. You should wear the knife in the garter, *amigo*; not at the side."

"Not me; not if I'm going to use it," Andy grinned. "I'll wear another in the garter, for looks, if you insist. But I want my own where I can get at it."

"*Bueno*," agreed Ramón. "And the whisker, you shall start him tonight."

Andy agreed cheerfully to start the whisker, without the faintest pause of wonder at how astonishing, in him, this agreement was, nor how impossible it would have been a few short months ago. But he confessed the matter of the eyes was beyond him.

"But the Arrobas have eyes of gray," Vicenta pointed out to Ramón, "as also many of the Noriegas. Me, I think Don Andrés is now a *caballero perfecto*."

So that made it reasonably complete. Ramón snatched the guitar from its beam.

"A dance!" he cried.

In spite of Andy's protests he was pushed to the middle of the floor opposite Vicenta. The *vaqueros* paired off. Andy, it seems, was to extend his education. They took the matter seriously. He was not an inept pupil, for his lithe powerful body was in the balanced command that makes for grace, and Vicenta, in spite of her too-fatness, was as light as a thistledown. Andy's first embarrassed restraint gave way to a complete abandonment. He was having fun, genuine fun, without reservation, without thought of past or future. For the first time in his life he was living whole-heartedly, light-heartedly in the present. His spirit as well as his body arranged itself in foofaraw as a garment of pure joy.

2

But for the serious business of the *rodeo* and the *matanza*, which began next day, some of the foofaraw must be laid aside. He found that Ramón had provided also a second set of garments, not different from the others, but plainer and more serviceable, including a sort of divided apron of soft

deerskin, called an *armita*, which was to be worn as protection in the rough riding through brush.

The work was hard and continuous, for this outlying *rancho* was undermanned. Counting Andy there were, indeed, only eight horsemen. They rode far and fast, urging the cattle in toward the rodeo grounds to which they had been accustomed. As fast as one horse was ridden tired, another was saddled. Once gathered, the beasts were segregated according to class—the unmarked calves with their mothers in one herd to be branded; the steers to be killed, in another; those not wanted for either purpose driven so far into the hills that they would not return to embarrass the further operations. Here again the *cabestros*, the tamed and gentle beasts kept habitually near the ranch house, came into use. They were held in small groups as the nuclei to which could be driven the selected animals cut out from the main herd. The cattle were wild, obstinate to dash back to their companions, inclined even to fight at times. The horsemen wormed their way here and there in the bawling, pressing mob, quietly following the selected beast that doubled and turned, seeking to escape the persistent pursuit. The long-horned creatures rolled their eyes wildly and jammed close, but offered no harm to the mounted men, whom they would have killed instantly afoot. Little by little the animal was edged to the clear. The horses were very intelligent at this. A motion or two of the rider's bridle hand was sufficient. Once they had identified the object of pursuit they needed no further guidance. Then at the proper moment they dashed into the full speed of pursuit. The hunted animal turned and twisted, dodging back and forth, striving desperately to regain the shelter of the herd. But once it had caught sight of the little band of placid *cabestros* it galloped across the intervening space to join them.

The cows were the most difficult to handle. They were worried about their calves which, nevertheless, followed them closely. When one was especially obstinate it was treated repeatedly to the *colear*—the twisting upheave by the tail at full speed by which it was upset and rolled over—until it was dispirited enough to behave. Two men held the main herd; one was sufficient for each of the *cabestro* bands. The others busied themselves with the cutting.

Andy, to his pleasure, found himself of real use. At first he contented himself with a job as a herdsman; but after a time he insisted on trying the cutting-out. It was a fascinating alternation of slow patient judgment and fast hard riding. He had to keep his mind on it or he would have been unseated. At times his horse turned so suddenly that his stirrup brushed the ground.

At nightfall four of the men rode to the *rancho* for food and rest: the other four held the integrity of the segregated bands. The cows and calves, however, were driven into the corral and left to their own devices. And all day and all night long arose the not unmelodious unremitting deep-toned bawling of the cattle to fill the bowl of the heavens.

Andy took his turn at anything and enjoyed it to the full. Especially was it pleasant to him in the hours after midnight when the stars hung remote in a mantle of quiet, withdrawn and aloof above the man-induced restlessness stirring in the crouching velvet black of earth. The air was cool on his cheek, and the clean odor of the cattle sweet in his nostrils. At this time the beasts became somewhat quieter. Many of them lay down. He rode slowly around and around the dim guessed mass of their forms, singing, swinging his loop slowly back and forth from his right hand. At first he sang because Ramón had told him that the cattle were soothed by the sound of the human voice; then because something demanding floated from his heart to his lips, something that must arise, like a mist of the night, to the quietness of the stars. He hardly knew what he sang; that did not matter—snatches of half-remembered plaintive old-fashioned melodies from his boyhood, and before his inner eye rose and dissolved unformed pictures, an old woman in a rocking chair by an open window, brown earth turned beneath a plow, and red-winged blackbirds fluting; minor savage half-voiced cadences, and a fleeting vision of painted Blackfoot lodges against a sunset; the quicker beat of trapper's ballad, and a strange confusion of the red light of camp fires and sprawling figures at ease and the feel of crisp air from mountain peaks. And in these was no bitterness, no regret; he knew no pain of past nor foreboding of future. He poised gratefully in the all-sufficiency of the present moment. It filled him. He rode at peace, with upheld cup.

After the cattle had been separated and the unmarked animals branded, there remained only the business of the *matanza*: the gathering of the annual crop. It was customary, Ramón explained, for a well conducted *rancho* to slaughter about four fifths of its increase each year. They were driven from the rodeo to the *matanza* ground near the stream. Here each *vaquero*, riding at full speed after his victim, struck it skillfully with his knife in the back of the neck. Rarely did he miss his first stroke, and rode immediately on after another. The *vaqueros* were closely followed by three of the Indians on foot, the *peladores*, who quickly stripped the hides from the carcasses. Though afoot, they were protected by the herdsmen who held together the main band. After them came, in turn, the remaining Indians, the *tasajeros*, who cut up such of the animal as it was desirable to save. A very limited amount of the choicest of the meat was taken from each creature, perhaps fifty or a

hundred pounds, to be dried for emergency rations; but the tallow was worth something. That nearest the hide, the *manteca*, was especially prized and was dissected carefully away from the coarser interior fat, the *sebo*. The *manteca* was of fine quality; it could be used as cooking fat and made superior candles. Any surplus was readily disposable to the Russians, there to the north, who appreciated its superiorities. The *sebo* went to the Boston ships, in trade. One could get as high as a dollar and a half for each *arroba*[1] of it.

Behind the *tasajeros*, again, came the Indian women with leather baskets to gather up the tallow and to load it on the waiting *carreta*. On returning to the *rancho* theirs the task of trying it out in great iron pots, procured from the whalers, and running it into hide bags each of which would weigh, when filled, some hundreds of pounds. The *sebo* tried out easily; but the *manteca* was more delicate, required closer attention to prevent its burning. Vicenta herself kept a distant eye on the *manteca* kettle, and woe to its custodian if she relaxed her vigilance for a moment's gossip!

As many cattle as could be thus cared for were killed each day. The remainder were corralled for the night. They had drunk at the stream, but had been given no opportunity to graze.

"It does not matter," Ramón answered Andy's expostulation. "They are soon to die anyway." It was that puzzling blind spot again.

The *matanza* lasted for three days. Then the hides were stretched for drying, the tallow tried out and run into the skin bags, the meat cut along the grain into strips to be hung out for jerky. The crop for the year was gathered. The *rancho* itself would need many of the hides—strips for reatas, for building corrals, for binding wagons, for a dozen purposes; it would use the best of the tallow for candles, for soap, for cooking fat; it would save a little of the jerked meat in case of expeditions beyond the cattle country. All the rest was to be transported in the *carretas* to the *hacienda*, there to be stored until the arrival of a Boston ship for trade. And there, in miniature, Andy had seen practically all the gainful business of the country. There were, to be sure, a few productive avocations, but for strictly home benefit. The missions and some of the more progressive *hacendados* raised fruits, grain, a sufficiency for themselves and everybody else, including the Russians to the north, when they wanted to come and get it. But the majority did not bother. Why should they? There was already plenty, to be had for the mere sending. The Californians were, on the whole, rather fond of agriculture; but what to do with more? There was no market. And Mexico, through its governors, tried by every means to discourage foreign trade. They clapped

prohibition duties on all imports; they imposed the most harassing regulations as to harbors and inspections. If Mexico had its way, apparently, the Californians were to be deprived of every luxury, every necessity, even, that could not be produced at home, on the spot—or supplied at scandalous prices and in inadequate quantity and quality from Mexico. That was the nub of the situation. That was the underlying basis of the hostility, the resentment of the Californian against the Mexican. Were it not for a few informal local modifications, conditions would be impossible.

Andy learned these things from Ramón as they rode together. Ramón's foreign education had given him the advantage of a perspective, an outside point of view. He was able, when he chose, to discuss such matters intelligently. But he refused to take them seriously as, he explained, did some of his countrymen.

"They get very mad," said he. "They say he's an outrage, that Mexico keep the California by the throat and choke out of her the life." He shrugged his shoulders and laughed. "That is true—when you talk about it. But the señorita, she have her silk and her lace and her *camisa* and her stocking and her comb and her jewel and all those things; and the señor he have all the thing he like; and in the *casa* is mirror and table and bed and wine of France and Spain and all the thing people want just the same. Me, I think he's a joke to talk that way. He's fix all right and comfortable for everybody."

He went on to explain. Andy discovered, as other Americans have been discovering ever since, that laws mean little if they run counter to a people's feeling of justice. It was a fact that under these laws the luxuries of living were impossible. Nevertheless, there they were. Their presence was strictly illegal, of course, but it was brought about very simply. A certain amount of plain smuggling accomplished something: so smuggling had become an esteemed occupation. But that was risky, and resorted to only by the more adventurous, rather through love of excitement than from necessity. Certain tacitly accepted customs were simpler. The shipmasters carried only a portion of their cargoes readily accessible for inspection, the rest being concealed in "secret" places in the vessels. Or a portion of the cargo was transferred, at one of the outlying islands, to ships that had already made their entries and received their papers. Fictitious invoices were a matter of course, and as no oath was demanded, even the most puritanical Boston skipper did not hesitate to offer them.

Naturally these expedients were in reality very flimsy. They would never have stood against real determination. The "secret" hiding places on the vessels were actually merely a removal of the goods from plain sight. Every

Californian, even on the remoter *ranchos* of the interior, was correctly informed when a smuggler was to land on the beach at Refugio and was on hand with his hides and tallow to purchase his fancy. As for the checking of invoices, that was a farce, conducted at a cabin table over a glass of wine.

Sometimes, a great many times, this complaisance was venial, arranged on a percentage basis. More rarely it was a result of common sense, when the Mexican official in charge realized perfectly the impossibility of enforcing orders delivered ignorantly from a perspective of thousands of miles. They made an impressive show, as when one governor commanded that in no seaport must any building be erected nearer to the beach than two hundred *varas*, but no real effort toward enforcement. The regulation named was supposed to discourage the illegitimate landing of goods. Of course, it did nothing of the sort; but it looked well in official reports to Mexico City.

But occasionally some simple-minded unimaginative martinet—like Victoria—came along, who took things literally. Then there was trouble. Otherwise Ramón could not see why there was the slightest occasion for trouble. Things went along all right. Naturally the government had to have some money to meet its expenses. Naturally the officials wanted to make something for themselves out of their offices. There were no taxes whatever, and nothing from Mexico. The missions were there to contribute, surely; but even the fattest cow gives only so much milk.

Andy was no great stickler for legality; but he had breathed in with his boyhood the Anglo-Saxon passion for regulated form. He was a little doubtful and even a trifle shocked at all this.

"You should talk to my cousin, Guadalupe," said Ramón carelessly. "He reads books, and he get very excite over what he call the rights of man. Why make the fuss?"

Andy did not really know. He was not even coherent enough to be able to tell Ramón the real reason for their difference; that he was of the race that makes a fuss about intangibles, and Ramón was not.

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[1] About 25 lbs.

3

All that, however, had nothing to do with the *matanza*, nor what must happen next. The labor was drawing to a close. On the following day the

laden *carretas* would begin their shrieking journey back to the *hacienda*, and Ramón soon must follow.

The last day Ramón, Andy, and all the *vaqueros* rode together over the hills to the south, ostensibly for a look around. Each was keenly conscious that this was their last ride; each still avoided speaking of what must soon be discussed.

They returned to the ranch house to find it occupied by the Mexican lieutenant, Cortilla, with a detachment of soldiers; and the circumstances were such that they were not aware of this fact until too late for retreat or concealment. Andy was able merely to rein back into the group of *vaqueros* whence he could watch for a chance to slip away before he was observed. He did not dare make a dash for it on his wearied horse: besides which he had no intention of leaving the Boone gun on the wall. The *vaqueros*, understanding the situation, closed about him. If it came to a showdown, there were as many Californians as Mexicans, and Andy had confidence his new friends would prove stanch. He was confirmed in his decision by Ramón, who was talking sign language for his benefit.

So he rode quietly to the ranch house with the others, unsaddled his horse, hung the equipment on its pegs. He kept himself as much in the background as possible, held his head low. It seemed that he need not have bothered. Cortilla was much too important in his own eyes to do more than glance briefly at the *vaqueros*. His attention was all for Ramón.

Andy could hear nothing of what they said to one another. He got merely an impression of elaborate ceremony, in which he seemed to detect a veiled hostility on the part of the soldier and a flavor of irony on the part of the Californian. Then they disappeared into the *sala*.

Since the *patrón* entertained a distinguished guest, the *vaqueros* did not intrude. They ate their meal on the veranda; Andy and the Mexican soldiers among them. The American held himself silent and in the background. Nobody paid him any attention. He learned from the conversation that it was supposed that this was a patrol to inspect the state of the border. No one really knew, except Cortilla, and he had not taken his men into his confidence. Certainly it was not a campaign against the Indians, for always they had slept at mission or *rancho*. Unless, of course, they were now to proceed on across the valley. This was the outermost *rancho*.

“Which saints forbid, and which I do not think,” hoped the most talkative. “I am a shrewd one: I have my idea.”

“What is that, *amigo*?” inquired Panchito courteously. The head *vaquero* leaned over to fill the Mexican’s cup with *aguardiente*. From some

mysterious store a bottle of that fiery liquor had appeared. Contrary to general belief, the Californian of that day was abstemious, both as to food and drink; and this was the first strong liquor Andy had seen since he had entered the country.

"He seeks news," said the Mexican.

"Truly?" said Panchito. "And news of what?"

The Mexican did not answer at once. He arose, walked, humming under his breath, to the veranda's edge, peered upward at the stars, picked his way across the half recumbent forms to reseat himself deliberately at Andy's side.

"Why," he remarked pleasantly at last, "of a tall devil of an *americano* whom the governor would have arrested for travel without *permiso* and whom the señor lieutenant would like well to see for reasons of his own." He turned suddenly to Andy. "You have seen none such, señor?"

Andy's muscles tightened.

"No, señor," he replied.

At this moment Vicenta thrust aside the hanging *serape* and stood in the lighted doorway, peering out.

"Largo," she called, "Don Ramón summons Largo."

Andy hesitated, then arose to his feet and made his way through the *vaqueros* and soldiers. He could see nothing of them but the glow of their cigarette ends, but he seemed to himself to sense a sudden electric tension. He stooped beneath the *serape* and entered the *sala*.

Ramón and Cortilla sat at the table. Between them were bottles, both of *aguardiente* and wine. Ramón leaned back, cool, compact, and alert. Cortilla sprawled, half unbuttoned, obviously a trifle drunk. Andy, blinking in the light, noticed these things; and one other—that the long rifle had disappeared from its pegs on the wall.

His mind was working rapidly and smoothly in the grooves of his old wariness, coolly appraising the situation and its possibilities. Except for his knife he was unarmed. Nevertheless, he had no immediate fear of arrest. The people of the *rancho* could easily see that did not happen; and it is significant that not for one moment did Andy's faith in his friend's loyalty waver. But that would involve them openly, perhaps render them, too, outlaw. This must be prevented: but how? What was he supposed to do? Through the other door of the *sala*, toward the kitchen, he could step into freedom for the moment. But what then? Was that what Ramón wanted him to do? Was that why he had been summoned? He moved catlike to a position

in the shadows behind the Mexican and fixed his eyes on the young Californian, alert to catch a hint. But Ramón summoned him, motioning him carelessly to stand before him in the full light of observation. Andy hesitated. Surely this was sheer recklessness. He glanced toward the bottles.

"Stand here, Largo," insisted Ramón impatiently.

To hesitate longer would be worse than obedience. Andy faced the two men.

"My head *vaquero*," said Ramón.

The Mexican glanced at him idly and with complete indifference.

"Largo," said Ramón, "our guests depart in the morning. You will see that they have fresh horses, of the best. Understand?"

"*Sí, señor.*"

"That is all." Ramón dismissed him.

Andy turned to the door toward the kitchens, his eyes fixed keenly on his friend. The latter nodded approval.

"Wait there," he signed swiftly in hand talk.

Andy went out. Leaning against the wall, he smoked, staring out into the velvet night. He did not trouble himself with idle speculation. What would come must come. He merely held himself in readiness.

After an hour Ramón joined him. The Californian was laughing softly. He hooked an arm through Andy's elbow and drew him away to some distance.

"Now there is a dumb-head, if you will," said he. "He looked straight at you and did not know you. That I wished to see."

"Was that why you had me in?" asked Andy.

"But surely. It is better to know. Then we cut our cloth."

"What if he had known me?"

"That is arrange. You come out that door. La Vicenta take you by the hand. You find your horse, your gun, all your thing. You ride away to the hill. Me, I am astonish. I saddle my horse, and all of us—*el señor comandante*, his soldier, Panchito, and the *vaqueros*, we ride like hell in the valley. We have fine *pasear*; you have nice pick-a-nick. By and by you come back. But he don't know you at all. Now soon they go away. You remain."

"I think perhaps I'd better go away," said Andy. "It is simpler."

"It is more simple, but he is not so much esport," said Ramón. "See, in the morning you shall bring to *el señor* lieutenant Jesús María Corbedo de

Cortilla his horse, and you shall hold him his estirrup for him, and it shall be one great laugh for us."

But Andy was not educated to that point as yet. He refused firmly to lend himself to this exquisite jest. Furthermore, he insisted on going at once to the corral and seeing for himself that the arrangements described by Ramón were in order. He felt much better when again the Boone gun was in his grasp. Ramón was frankly disappointed.

"But, *amigo*," he pleaded, "think how we shall tell the estory of how this so-great Cortilla ride to seek you, and you do hold his estirrup for him to mount; and I think maybe he give you a *peso*." He moaned over the loss of so magnificent a conceit.

But Andy was obstinate.

"Besides," he added, "I think one of his men recognized me."

"How was that?" asked Ramón, instantly serious.

He listened attentively to Andy's account of what had happened.

"I do not think so," said he, "but in the morning we shall know."

Reluctantly he agreed that perhaps it might be well for Andy to pass the night apart in the clear. But in the morning the American must be at hand when the party rode off. Ramón was insistent on this point.

"No, this time it is not for a joke," he became resolved; "it is for an idea I have. You may sit upon your horse: you shall have the *palomino* which is so swift no one shall catch him. This you must do for me. I ask you, *como amigo*."

Andy at last had to yield, though he was disgruntled, and took no pains to conceal the fact. The performance seemed to him inane, idiotic, of a piece with Ramón's ordinarily engaging harebrained recklessness. And to subserve no earthly good purpose. It speaks much for the quality of affection with which the Californian had filled his lonely heart that he finally agreed. Not that he lacked confidence in his own escape, if escape proved necessary, as he had no doubt it would. But Andy had an ordered mind: he disliked useless hazards. He tried in vain to dig out of Ramón his "idea," but Ramón chose to be aggravatingly mysterious.

"That you shall see!" he cried. He was in higher feather over Andy's reluctant consent, clapped his friend on the back, departed chuckling.

Andy disgustedly but methodically made a few simple preparations. He deposited the Boone gun and its ammunition and some small necessities in a live oak fork whence he could snatch it at speed. Then he lay down to sleep

beneath another tree at some distance from the *rancho*. In the morning he saddled the *palomino* and mounted. For an hour he waited, sitting like a statue on the well trained patient horse. From the ranch house at last emerged the officer and Ramón. After a time all was ready. The little command moved by. Ramón, in his capacity of host, rode at Cortilla's left. He would, according to custom, see them over the next hill crest. They jogged by Andy at the shuffling Spanish trot. Cortilla did not even glance in his direction. Obviously he had no further information as to Andy, and the latter had about concluded the episode finished when one of the troopers turned his horse aside. He rode directly to the man on the *palomino* and reined it to a stop. Andy's muscles stiffened.

"You do not know me, señor?" murmured the soldier silkily.

"No, señor," returned Andy.

"But we have made acquaintance." The Mexican eyed him. Andy stared back stoutly. "Yet I knew nothing, nothing," continued the trooper after a moment's pause. "I have said nothing. Why? Because you have made in me a friend. Why? Because you have so well chastised that one, and I have been there to see and rejoice. Why have I rejoiced? Because that one is a pig."

"Blessed be pigs," said Andy in English.

"What is that you say, señor?"

"I say, *gracias*, señor."

"These things I desire that you know."

"Pedro!" bellowed Cortilla, turning in his saddle. "Cow of the world! What do you with that man? Join your rank!"

"Coming, señor lieutenant!" The trooper turned his horse. "And so, go with God, señor."

"*Vaya con Dios*," Andy called after him.

4

Ramón hurried back from his ride of courtesy as soon as he possibly could. He was full of his "idea," and was very much dashed at Andy's cold reception of the same. The "idea" was dazzlingly simple. Since Andy had passed unrecognized in his "disguise" as a Californian, further concealment was unnecessary, and he could now journey at will whither his fancy called; which would be, of course, the *hacienda* and the company of Ramón.

It was like slapping an eager child in the face to point out that the thing would not work. Nor was Ramón easily persuaded. Andy had to be almost

brutal about it.

"I wish it could be," he said seriously, "but it is not sense. Just because Cortilla did not look squarely at me is no reason I'd escape recognition long," he pointed out. "Consider a moment how many people would see me, would hear me talk. They would be pretty dumb not to suspect. One of the soldiers knew me. Yes, I told you he did. He told me so, but that he had said nothing because he hated Cortilla. But he is sure to tell someone, his best friend, or someone he drinks with, that I am going about dressed in California fashion. And even at your home, a chance visitor, a traveler, one of your Indians, anybody who is not a blind fool could see that I am not what I seem, and once the news is afoot . . ."

Ramón had to yield at last to plain common sense. He did so reluctantly, petulantly, with the resentment of a thwarted child.

"*Diablo!*" He threw up both hands at last. "All right! all right! Have it your own way. Stop the talk!—stop the talk! Such a buzz of words! But this you admit: that so long as you ride on the horse and do not pass near people or talk to them they will take you for *californio*. That you admit?"

"Why, I expect so," Andy laughed, "but I can't go forever riding at full speed up and down California, like the Flying Dutchman."

"*Bueno!*" Ramón cried. "Then we go. Panchito!" he called to the head *vaquero*, "a *remuda, pronto*! We go! Come," he urged Andy. "Prepare! We go!"

"Where?" Andy wanted, reasonably enough, to know.

"We go to see Viador."

"Viador?"

"He is the *padre* at the mission of Santa Clara. We shall go to see him. It is easy. It is not too far. If we go quickly we shall arrive before vesper. You shall speak to nobody. We shall sleep there. Then we shall return. It is very easy."

"But what good will it do to see him or anybody else?" Andy's common sense persisted. "What could he do about it?"

"*Madre de Dios!*" cried Ramón, out of patience. "How can I tell you that? If I knew that, why should I go to ask him? He is *el sabio*, the wise one. You shall see."

Panchito rode up, driving a dozen loose horses before him.

"Come!" said Ramón. "We go!"

However, Andy was not to be rushed completely off his feet. He would go. What could it matter? At least it would postpone the inevitable for a day or two. Andy's vision of himself was very clear. After this beautiful interlude, back to his old life he must go, the only life he knew and to which he was fitted. Therefore, in spite of Ramón's impatience, he rode to the live oak tree and reclaimed the long rifle and the bundle of his necessities from their hiding place. Ramón was in despair.

"But you cannot take with you that thing!" he expostulated. "You who have the so-great—and so-cold—common sense. When the peoples see that they must know you for what you are. No *californio* carries such a thing. As well Panchito ride ahead crying in a big voice that *el americano* is coming."

For once the common sense was with Ramón. Nevertheless, Andy was obstinate, deaf to argument. He would not be separated from the Boone gun. If he could not take it with him, he would refuse the journey. Secretly he had no faith in it, nor that he would ever return to the *rancho*. Ramón had to give in; but he did so with ill grace.

"Always you get in trouble with that thing," he grumbled, "always, always!"

He washed his hands of the affair. He refused to make suggestions. He sulked. Panchito came to the rescue.

"I shall carry it, Don Ramón," said he, "wrapped in a *serape*, and nobody will see."

"And everybody will wonder what a *vaquero* does with such a bundle and what is in it," growled Ramón, unappeased.

"Nobody will care what a *vaquero* carries," replied Panchito.

"Have it as you will!" cried the young man. "*María Santísima!* Let us go! But it will make you trouble!" he predicted gloomily; "that you shall see!"

For the first time Andy saw him genuinely out of temper. That fitted in well enough with the somber bitterness of his own mood.

5

But even the worst of humors could not have withstood the exhilaration of such a journey. Ramón shortly recovered his gay spirits. Andy thrust the gray curtain of the inevitable enough back to be able to enjoy the present while it lasted. They rode at a fast gallop, never drawing rein except for the occasional change to fresh horses from the *remuda*. This, Andy was to learn,

was the invariable method of travel in California, and by its means enormous distances could be covered in a day. The season was well advanced. The hills were awave with green grasses; bright with the blue of lupin, the orange of poppies, the yellow of wild mustard. The sky was blue; the air like wine. Birds, little and big, sprang startled before the flying hoofs; jack rabbits scuttled away. Cattle and horses threw up their heads to stare; but the wild cavalcade had swept by before they could gather their scattered wits to flight. Up the slopes, down the hills, plunging into and out of the shallow streams without a check, the horsemen fled. The swirl of their going was like a sudden wind through the leaves, stirring life into momentary whirling fragments that settled again to placidity when they had passed. Some of the fragments caught at them, half attended, a snatch of bird song cut short, a glimpse of a deer poised for flight, but gone astern before it had moved from its tracks, a stream of consciousness rushing by, its components stricken to immobility by speed. Steadily the countryside unrolled before them. The grassy hills reared higher, were covered with brush, then with a darker scattered forest. They closed to a cañon; they opened to a narrow plain sloping to wide waters; and far across them more hills, blue with distance.

Cattle became more numerous. Their trails cut the earth deeply in many directions. Here and there, in the distance, Andy saw groups of houses on the hills, and smoke rising. They passed a number of *vaqueros* riding in pairs, who shouted at them a greeting, and were answered. But they did not draw rein. Beyond the foot of the bay they turned across flat lands, forded a creek, perforce slackened pace among the tules where the wild fowl arose in swarms, emerged to hard ground. In the distance showed the green of a long double row of willow trees, and beyond them the red of tiles and the white of numerous buildings and walls. Ramón slowed his horse.

"Santa Clara," said he.

The sun still lacked an hour to setting.

They jogged forward at a more sober pace. Shortly they came to cultivated lands. Indian men were at labor in the fields. They were dressed in a uniform like that of the ox drivers who had conducted Ramón's *carretas* —blue cotton trousers, cotton shirts, a head band. A few wore rough shoes of rawhide; but most were barefoot. They stared stupidly at the horsemen, but one man, no different in appearance from the rest, saluted them in sonorous Spanish. This was the *capataz*, the overseer, Ramón carelessly explained.

They entered the long avenue of willows that led to the walls of the mission. A sudden loud clamor behind them caused them to draw hastily aside. Andy stared astonished. Past him at full speed swept a most singular equipage, a light-wheeled vehicle to which was attached a large black mule. The mule was ridden by a small Indian boy, presumably for its guidance, though at the moment he was clinging desperately to retain his seat. The guidance was furnished by a *vaquero* who rode in the lead, towing the mule by means of a reata about the beast's neck. As the noose of the reata had tightened partially to choke and therefore to bewilder the mule, the said guidance was more by main strength than persuasion; nor did the devoted animal, hanging back against its tormentors, furnish much motive power to the vehicle. That was taken care of by two other *vaqueros*, riding on either side, who had attached their reatas to the front axle tree. What the black mule and the small Indian boy were supposed to contribute, unless it might be honor and glory, was obscure to Andy. The carriage slewed and swooped wildly from one side to another in short lunges, threatening collision with the trees until brought up short by the bulk and weight of the mule. Perhaps that is what it was for. At brief intervals it was rammed by the carriage from the rear. Whereupon the lead *vaquero* spurred ahead to frustrate the exasperated beast's obvious desire to kick the whole thing into kindling wood. In spite of these subsidiary and interval reactions the whole unit swept forward at an astonishing speed.

Andy caught no more than a glimpse of the carriage's occupant, a fat white-haired man in priest's robe, with a benign and undisturbed countenance. Obviously he had no spiritual connection whatever with all this row and crash and headlong imminent disaster. He might have been riding in a shallop drawn by swans. At sight of Ramón and his companions he raised the two fingers of benediction and was gone in a swirl and cloud of dust. Andy turned round eyes of astonishment toward his friend.

"That is Father Viador," said Ramón.

"The man we have come to see?"

"Exactly."

"Humph!" Andy grunted. Then a reluctant grin overspread his face.

"Obviously a very holy man," said he.

"That is true. But why say you that?"

"Well," said Andy dryly, in Spanish, "if he were not very holy indeed, I do not think the saints would indulge him with the miracle of riding in that thing safely."

Panchito grinned in appreciation, and Ramón shouted.

"Always it does the heart good to hear from you, the so-serious one, the *burla*," he cried delightedly. "That is in all California the only *calesa*. The good father is very proud of it. You must compliment him on it."

"That I shall do," returned Andy, "for I think the *calesa* another miracle that it has not flown to pieces long ago."

Ramón, with a thrust of his fist, cocked his hat jauntily askew and, still chuckling, led the way through the mission gates.

6

Andy had scant opportunity to look about him, for the little party was immediately surrounded by Indians of apparently the better class. One held Andy's horse by the bit; another deftly removed the large spurs from his heels; a third steadied his stirrup while he dismounted, disengaged his *cantinas* from the saddle. The moment his foot touched the earth, all the horses and equipment were whisked away through the gate. A grave-faced majordomo, probably a half-breed, Andy thought, stood before them waiting.

"You are welcome, *señores viageros*. *Pax vobiscum.*"

"And with you, peace," responded Ramón in Spanish.

The man, with a courteous gesture, turned to lead the way. The courtyard, as wide as a field, afforded room for many activities. The mission church, flanked by a long arched colonnade, to which opened doors and barred windows, occupied all of one side. Two others were bordered by buildings of various sizes, some of which seemed to be workshops, and others were large enough to be used as dormitories or assembly rooms. The fourth side was merely a strong adobe wall crowned with the same red tiles that roofed all the buildings. A flowing fountain cut from stone stood before the church. Indian men and women were hurrying back and forth across the square. A number of *vaqueros*, in whom Spanish blood predominated, squatted on their heels against the pillars of the colonnade.

The majordomo led them down this colonnade to the end of the wing, where he showed them the doors of two rooms. The Indians who had been pattering along behind silently deposited the light *cantinas* and departed.

"Here be the Travelers' Rooms. Rest with God, señores," said he, and turned to go, motioning Panchito to follow. But Andy darted forward to reclaim the long rifle, wrapped in the *serape*; nor would he listen to expostulation.

"Always that brings trouble," grumbled Ramón.

They entered one of the rooms together. It was clean, bare, tiled, furnished most simply with bed, chair, and table. On the wall hung a crucifix and a framed colored print of Santa Clara. The only openings, the door and a window barred with iron, were toward the court. An Indian woman brought a ewer of baked red clay filled with water, and a basin of metal. Another set upon the table a plate with two oranges and a flask of wine. To Andy this was almost oriental magnificence; for the only oranges he had seen in all his life were during his expedition with Jedediah Smith. Ramón was pleased at his surprise; boasted a little the more to impress his friend. He informed Andy that he could, if he wished—and if there were no Cortilla, he interpolated—ride from one end of California to the other and be received at the close of each day's easy travel at one of the missions where he would receive similar entertainment, without cost or price, for himself and his horses. Indeed, at some of the more generous or more opulent establishments, if his animals were overweary, fresh ones would be supplied at his departure. Or he could stay as long as he wished. Not only were Travelers' Rooms, like these, kept for the purpose, but the fruit came from the Travelers' Orchard, planted especially for wayfarers. From it, a little later, Ramón said, they would have had a great variety—figs, grapes, pomegranates, peaches, pears—but this was not the season.

A bell began to ring.

"Come," said Ramón, "it is the vesper. We must attend."

The courtyard was a-crawl with groups of men and women sauntering slowly toward the dark opening of the church door, into which they disappeared. Soon the square was empty, except for a half-dozen *vaqueros* hastily trying to finish some sort of gambling game about which they were grouped. Ramón and Andy, ascending the broad stone steps before the church door, stood aside as the bulky figure of the hero of the *calesa* suddenly emerged. His eye swept the spaces of the courtyard, fell upon the intent *vaqueros* over by the wall. His nostrils widened to emit a low trumpeting sound. Ramón laid his hand on Andy's arm.

"Wait," he whispered. "Here you shall see esport."

As though the snort emitted by the good *padre* had been a signal, suddenly and mysteriously appeared the black mule, led by the diminutive Indian child. Evidently the beast had been held concealed behind one of the wide buttresses to the bell tower. It had been divested of its harness and now was gayly caparisoned in saddle and silvered headdress. The *padre* shortened the skirts of his robe through his girdle and with astonishing

agility for one of his bulk swung into the saddle. From the hands of the Indian child he took the handle of a long-lashed whip. Then he guided the black mule stealthily across the courtyard toward the unconscious gamblers. When within a few yards he visibly gathered himself for action and suddenly charged down upon them with a roar.

"Ha, *pesados!*" he shouted. "Ha, *impíos!*"

He laid at them with the lash of the whip, continuing to bellow most unecclesiastical imprecations. They scattered like quail, scuttling toward the sanctuary of the church door. The *padre* followed after as fast as he could urge the black mule, herding them as one herds wild cattle, striving to reach them with the braided lash. The mule bored at the bit, was obviously out of all patience with so many changes of direction, turned too late if at all, overran, generally carried the good father where he had no desire to go, after the fashion of independent-minded mules everywhere. The men ducked and dodged, laughing consumedly, slipping under the threat of the whip, at last darting through the door like rabbits into a warren. The *padre*, with some difficulty, brought the mule to a halt, dismounted, trumpeted again through his nostrils, pulled his robe down to cover his stout hairy legs. He was puffing heavily from his exertions. Andy was amused at the performance but also faintly contemptuous. It was this buffoon who was to solve his difficulties!

Then, as the priest neared the doorway, his great body straightened to a solemn dignity; he threw back his head. A spirit seemed to descend upon him. Andy, shocked to a faint surprise, instinctively bowed his head.

The small Indian boy slipped the reins of the mule's bridle through a ring in the wall and followed close at the priest's heels. His face was expressionless with the true Indian stolidity, but as he passed Andy the young man recognized something familiar lurking in the depths of the child's eyes. Shortly he remembered it. It was the fatuous and supervirtuous complacency of the *cabestros*, the tamed cattle used to subdue the wild ones.

7

The interior of the church was narrow, high, and dark. Most of the illumination came from the altar candles, though from a few high windows a little of paler daylight filtered down through the gloom. There were no chairs or benches. Men knelt on one side, women on the other, with a narrow aisle between, up and down which prowled ceaselessly the majordomo, watching behavior. When Andy's eyes became accustomed, he

made out crude paintings on the walls, of saints and sinners in hell and in heaven.

Father Viador conducted the services with a transforming dignity, even with a certain majesty. In the pure faith of his office he stood transformed. Andy—or indeed any other of those present—made nothing of the Latin; but no one, even the dumbest savage of a new-caught gentile, but was perceptive of, and to a certain extent uplifted by, the sheer piety and sincerity of the man. Of the burly, bullying, reckless, swashbuckling master of the black mule remained no trace.

Nor was this effect in the slightest marred by his vigilant supervision of the church music. This was supplied by several violins and guitars and two flutes. They were played by Indians, very painstakingly and in the main correctly. Andy, of course, could have no conception of what a triumph in training the raw savage this represented.

The *padre* listened closely to the performance. Twice, without ceremony, he stopped it abruptly to scold a performer for missing the rhythm or for striking a false note. Once he even darted forward, with the agility so astonishing in one of his bulk, to rap a culprit sharply on the head with the knuckle of his middle finger. When the thing went well, he listened, obviously pleased, his head on one side, his forefinger unconsciously beating the rhythm. Nevertheless, these schoolmaster interruptions in no manner disturbed the high serenity, the lofty flow of the spirit in which he moved. And the kneeling worshipers crossed themselves and bowed their heads; nor smiled nor raised their eyes.

Andy's first amusement was sobered. To his own inner surprise he found himself sinking—or rising—to the level of these simple people about him. A faith crept into his heart, not of these rites strange to him, not of any mystic meaning of what he was seeing and hearing; but quite simply of the man. In spite of the utter futility and the very real risk, he was glad now he had made the journey. This was irrational, but it was so. Andy was not accustomed to irrationalities. His life had taught him to face practical difficulties in a practical manner, to depend for his salvation on his own quick brain and his own keen eyes and his own strong right arm; to trust no man's judgment above his own. A few leaders he had followed had proved themselves to him as such by the deeds of their days. Until that proof he had moved warily and alone. And even to those leaders his independence bowed only in the expedience of the moment: he still held himself proudly as the equal to any. That independence was the very fiber of his being. But here was a man, a fat man, in the despised robes of a priest, with whom he had exchanged no

word as yet, whose only observed activities up to now had been to conduct a black mule rather badly, whom Andy found himself unquestioningly ready to acknowledge.

Andy shook himself angrily; turned his head to stare at the depiction above him of the sinners bathed to the waist in the flames of hell. The crudity of the daub stirred his sense of humor. The spell was broken.

The bells overhead began to ring. Ramón touched his elbow. They arose stiffly from the tiles of the floor. The Indians waited respectfully for the *caballeros* to pass.

On the flat stone platform before the door the two young men paused. The walled square was darkening, and the figures of the people pouring across it from the church became wraithlike, as though they were of one substance with the dusk. Over the wall were the tops of willow trees against the sky, and through a single gap in their planting he saw the tops of eastern mountains, soft rose color under the last caress of the sun. They were very beautiful; but at sight of them Andy fell somber again. They brought back to him too vividly his old solitary life—the traps in their sacks, the buckskin on his back, the long rifle across his saddlebow. Adventurous loneliness—he suddenly hated it, with a strength of bitterness that surprised him.

Ramón turned aside to speak to an old Indian. And, unheralded, out of the acuteness of his loneliness stole the shadow of something familiar. . . . It had happened to him before. . . . The clear crest of the Rockies under the moon. . . . He must hold very quiet, very still. . . .

Gentle power, that was it, the feel of it . . . like his grandmother. . . .

He had obeyed it unquestioningly before. He had lived out his life of the mountain man, had shared great deeds and from them escaped unscathed. And in the end the vision of destiny had blurred and broken like a spent wave in what seemed tragic futility. So he had wandered on, uninspired, led only by an instinct for escape and rest, emptied, the tide at ebb.

And here was that power again, lifting him mysteriously to a perception of greater destiny to which his own was linked. There was no vision, no clairvoyance of detail or circumstance. Gently he was lifted on a mighty wave. New power, new anticipation, new eager courage flooded his soul. And absolute certainty. Here he belonged; and here he was to stay, to the fulfillment of further destiny prepared. Gently the wave set him down again. Once more he stood on the flat stone platform before the little church. The whole experience had passed between two strokes of the sonorous bell over his head.

CHAPTER V
El Sabio

ANDY understood from Ramón that, so far from having any influence, the missions were at outs with the civil powers. The latter were busily passing new laws and exhuming old ones designed to appropriate the mission lands, cattle, fields, and crops. They did not call it that; they called it secularization; and they rationalized so well that a great many disinterested people thought it the proper thing to do. Ramón, whose foreign education had made him clear sighted beyond the provincialism of his countrymen, talked a little of it to Andy as the two sat on the coping of the fountain, after vespers, awaiting the call to the evening meal.

"It is said," he explained in his own tongue, "that the good friars should be relieved of the burden of temporal managements so that they may give all their time and energy to the spiritual duties. That is the argument for those who are of great piety. It is also said that the Fathers have held the land only in trust for the Indians until they should become civilized enough to manage them for themselves; and that now they are civilized enough and should be given charge of the riches they have made—under direction of the *padres*. That is for them who make a great point of law. It is said further that these Indians are the noble savage with the soul equal before the sight of God, and they are enslaved against their will, and I do not know what other argument, all of which comes from France and a man there who writes books, named Rousseau. Very few have read the books, but they talk just the same of what they call the Rights of Man. That is for the young idle men of generous spirit who sit about the wine table and argue much. Then it is said that the *padres* are cruel to the Indians, and beat them much, and torture them, and make them die in great numbers. That is whispered. And it is made much of that the *padres* are nearly all Spanish men, and that they work for Spain against the Republic. That is for the patriot and also for the man who is afraid. They make many kinds of talk for many kinds of people."

"What do you think, Ramón?" asked Andy.

The young Californian laughed.

"Me? I think that the missions have many cattle and many leagues of land, and that they are rich from trading and from the making of things, and that in those riches is a magic that can make an elephant of a flea."

He would express no further opinion; but he made it sufficiently clear that from the Church, in the present state of affairs, nothing could be hoped in the way of political influence. Rather the contrary. It was, Andy reflected, rather late in the day to tell him these things.

An Indian stood before them, bowing.

"*Comida, señores*," said he respectfully.

They followed him to the long narrow room of the refectory, where they took their places at table with Father Viador and three other friars. Except for a grace said in Latin, the meal was eaten in silence. The visitors attracted no especial attention. As long as Andy was not called upon to speak, he passed well enough for what he seemed. At the close of the repast, the *padre* Viador signaled them to follow him. They accompanied him down the dusky colonnade to a room at the far end, into which the burly priest ushered them with a bow of ceremonial politeness. It was a large apartment, plainly furnished, relieved from austerity only by a number of comfortable chairs and a shelf of books, and by the fact that on the table awaited a flask of wine and three glasses.

"Welcome, my son," said the friar to Ramón, "welcome as always."

He uttered a formal benediction in Latin, to which Ramón listened with bowed head, stooped to kiss the young man lightly on both cheeks.

"And you, *señor extranjero*," he turned to Andy, "you also are welcome, and may the good Lord bring you peace."

His manner was stately, exquisite with a high ceremonial of courtesy. Then abruptly he dropped into one of the chairs, loosened the cord about his waist, reached for the wine flask from which he filled the three glasses. The formality fell from him. He turned upon the two young men a quizzically humorous countenance.

"But sit!" he cried, "and tell me how it happens you are here, *hijo mío*. Is all forgiven? Has the Señor Rivera laid aside his dark spectacles? Are you free again to get yourself into more troubles? Ah, you shall come to no good end, my Ramón! I must read to you what is said of obedience." He sipped at his wine and chuckled. "And now what mischief is afoot, and what penitence must I place upon you next? Confess, now, and be absolved."

"There is no mischief, Father," replied Ramón seriously.

"No mischief? That I cannot believe. When otherwise did Ramón ever turn to the Church?"

"This is serious, *padre*," said Ramón. "I come on behalf of my friend."

Father Viador turned and examined Andy. All at once Andy recognized that up to now the priest had carefully refrained from looking in his direction, and realized that this pointed avoidance was actually a subtle courtesy until Ramón should choose to explain his presence.

"Ah, your friend," repeated the friar, "*el americano*."

Ramón uttered a short ejaculation of disappointment. Father Viador's eyes twinkled.

"You do too little justice to my wits, my son," said he. "The appearance is well enough; it will pass—for those who have not thought that two and two make four. And who have not so often heard the confession of Ramón Rivera."

He threw back his head in a great roar of jolly laughter at the young man's puzzled expression. He held up one hand and touched its forefinger with the forefinger of the other.

"Where mischief is afoot there is Ramón—that is two." He touched the second finger. "The only mischief I hear of just now is the so-great scandal that the señor lieutenant Cortilla has been insulted by an *americano*. That is two more." He closed the fingers together into his palm. "Therefore Ramón is with the *americano*. That is four." He laughed again.

"Then you were only guessing?"

"Was it not a good guess?" countered Father Viador shrewdly. "But be comforted. I think there are not too many who can add two and two." For the first time he addressed Andy directly.

"I will hear your confession, my son, and you may go in peace."

"My confession, *padre*?" repeated Andy.

Father Viador examined him keenly.

"Are you not of the Faith?" he demanded.

Both men looked toward him expectant. Andy was confused at this swift deflection. He felt stupid.

"The Faith?" he again repeated the priest's words. Then he understood. "I am afraid I am not a Catholic," he confessed, "if that is what you mean."

The great form of Father Viador straightened in his chair. His whole being underwent one of those swift and astonishing changes that seemed to

make of him a different being.

"A heretic!" he cried.

For a moment he sat silent, almost visibly gathering his forces. Then abruptly he launched into a torrent of ecclesiastical argument and exhortation that left Andy gasping and bewildered. This was no longer the rollicking, magnificently vital master of the black mule; nor the serene high priest of the temple, nor yet the genial, faintly mocking host sipping his wine and poking sly fun at amusing and harmless escapades. It was the missionary of the Cross, the zealot who forty years before had with Serra braved the howling wilderness to save a heathen land. Fire blazed from his eyes. Words poured from him in a flood. Andy was overwhelmed. He knew not what to say, how to stand his ground. But something racial, bred in his very bones, held him fast. It was no tenacity of childhood faith. Andy had little or no formal religion of his own; nor had he any antagonism to this creed more than another. Merely his integrity of being could not permit him to be rushed off his feet. He could not get his breath. He could merely squirm and look helpless. Indeed, so abject at last became his appearance that Ramón burst out laughing. Instantly the *padre* turned his thunders upon the young Californian.

"You laugh!" he cried, "and your friend standing at this moment in the danger of hell's fires!"

But the imp of perversity was dancing in Ramón's eyes.

"I think it not amiss that *los americanos* go to hell," said he.

Father Viador checked, eyed him uneasily.

"Not amiss?" he repeated uncertainly. "What talk is that?"

"I think it very likely I shall go to hell myself," said Ramón with mock gravity. "You have told me so often enough, *padre mío*, and I should believe you. I have lived with Americanos, as you know. They are wonderful. If enough of them go to hell, they'll manage somehow to change the climate for me."

Father Viador's face flushed. He choked, tried to check himself, then abruptly he uttered his great shout of jolly laughter.

"You are the incorrigible one!" he cried. He shook his great head at Ramón. "For this you shall come to me tomorrow and I shall impose on you the penitence. See you do not forget."

"No, *padre*," said Ramón submissively, but he glanced sideways at Andy.

“And you, my son,” the priest sobered again, “we shall talk of these things further.”

“Willingly, Father,” said Andy.

“And now,” Father Viador repossessed himself of the half-emptied wineglass, “we shall drink—to the salvation of your soul.”

“And incidentally of his body,” supplemented Ramón.

“There shall be more penitence if you persist in impertinence, my son!” warned Father Viador.

By another of the about-face changes that so abruptly transformed the man, he was again the genial, somewhat worldly host. No trace remained of the religious zealot. Even his face seemed to have altered, its lines to have rearranged themselves in some subtle manner. He listened in silence to Ramón’s exposition of Andy’s dilemma.

“Why do you come to me?” he asked, when the story was done. “You are no fool, Ramón; you know that, so far from being in a position to ask favors, the missions are put to it to defend their own. Indeed, I think you well know that it is sufficient for the mission to make a request to cause the opposite to be done.”

“Would not your prayers help, holy *padre*?” asked Ramón demurely.

“Doubtless, if the Lord willed. But some things He has deemed wise to place beyond the reach of the holiest of prayers, possibly to prevent some busybody praying himself out of merited punishment. One of these things is a Mexican official. Take care that you are not added to the number, my son.”

“To speak truly, we are at our wit’s end,” confessed Ramón, “and we have come for your advice as to what we can do.”

Father Viador made no immediate reply, frowning intently under his heavy brows. When he spoke, it was abruptly, with authority.

“You,” he addressed Ramón, “shall proceed tomorrow on your journey to the *hacienda* to make your peace. You shall return here when I send you word. You,” he turned to Andy, “shall remain here. You will be safe, undiscovered. I shall cause it to be known that you are *en penitencia*, a *caballero* from the south, and that you are under a vow of silence to expiate a fault.”

“For how long and for what purpose, *padre*?” asked Ramón, after a short silence.

“That I shall tell in due time.”

Yet another personality seemed to inform the priest's bulky body. The two young men faced their schoolmaster. He fronted them uncompromisingly. They had come for advice: there it was. Take it or leave it. Nor would he explain; and thus he remained until, reluctantly, a little doubtfully, they decided to do as he said. Then he became again the genial host, refilled the wineglasses, sprawled comfortably in his chair. For an hour he conversed brilliantly with Ramón, while Andy sat by, fascinated. He had never before come in contact with an exchange of pure ideas for their own sake. This facet of Father Viador's mind opened broadly to a wide angle of comprehension and of tolerance. He considered the world and all its works from a shrewd and temporal point of view shot with a cynical humor that had nothing in common with the narrow high blaze of fanaticism of his former mood. It was abundantly evident that the many aspects of Father Viador's bewilderingly varied nature were in watertight compartments, so to speak; that his mind obeyed literally the Scriptural injunction, that its right hand knew not its left. Andy knew little of the high politics or the fine-spun theories of thought or of conduct with which the conversation dealt. He felt himself profoundly ignorant; humble minded. This was a new and unsuspected Ramón. But it stimulated him.

In the seclusion of their chamber, however, Ramón proved devoid of enthusiasm as to the outlook. He shook his head.

"It may be as you say," he acknowledged, "but I do not entirely rely on that one."

Andy was astonished at this change of front.

"Surely you do not suspect——"

"No, no-no!" disclaimed Ramón. "It is as he says; he will keep you safe enough. Inside its walls the mission still has its power. But do you know, *amigo*, what I suspect? It is this: that purely and simply the good *padre* keeps you here to save your soul, and here you shall remain until he has persuaded you to the true Faith. He is of the old time, one of the companions of Junipero Serra, of blessed memory. Look you. He is the kindest of men. He is like you, *amigo*, or like the blessed San Francisco who was the friend of all things. Yet it is known that in early days he caused the wild Indians, the gentiles, to be driven in like cattle and dragged to the church with reatas, and has had them beat on their bellies with ropes, even until some have died. For that he is cruel? No, no-no! For that he save their soul. The body, he say, and what happen to it, is nothing; the soul is all. He must be cruel to be kind, like the surgeon is. He enslave the gentiles in this life to save them in the next. And in the beginning, when the gentile is a wild beast, there is no other

way. As one breaks the horse for the saddle. You have seen the wild Indian, *amigo*." Ramón shook his head. "Perhaps he is right. Me, I like the body pretty well. He's lots of fun." He pondered for a moment, then chuckled. "I tell you one funny thing. You know what these *padre* say when they have one of these Indians whip? They do not say to the *capataz*, 'Whip me this man.' No. They say to him, 'Give this one spiritual relief.' " He chuckled again. "Me, I think I like my spiritual relief other ways."

He finished his preparations and rolled between the rough blankets on the bed.

"Agh!" he grunted. "These mission blanket no good. At the *hacienda* ——" He raised himself on his elbow. "No, my friend," he concluded earnestly, "I make one mistake in coming here. But you see I did not know you are heretic. That was estupid of me. This *padre* will not think one think about what we shall do. He forget all that because now he got one nice new soul to save that he do not have to drag in with the reata. A nice new white-man soul. And that is all he think of. And until he save you, he will do nothing. So for love of me, *amigo*, hasten to be save."

2

Ramón reiterated his plea when, the following morning, he and Panchito resumed their journey.

"Me, if I was you, I'd be save today," said he.

But the fiber of Andy's sturdy being could not so readily twist itself to expedience. He was troubled. In sheer unconscious reaction he braced himself against immediate and frontal assault. But nothing happened. He found himself in the position of a welcome guest, without restraint of any kind. Men and women saluted him respectfully, perhaps eyed him with hidden curiosity; but none offered to address him. Evidently Father Viador had well fulfilled his promise, had firmly established the supposed status as a *penitente*. At first Andy ventured rather gingerly, uncertain whether or not he was committing an intrusion; but soon he found that he was welcome to go where he wished, to observe what he would. No one directed or instructed him; but soon he learned to fall in with the routine customs of the place. He arose at daybreak with the rest; he ate, in the customary silence, at the refectory tables; he attended the frequent religious exercises, not because of any urging—apparently he was free to absent himself, if he so chose—but through an instinctive feeling of courtesy and deference to those who entertained him.

As for Father Viador, the friar appeared neither to seek nor avoid him. Certainly Ramón must be wrong: he did not again touch upon the question of religion. The nearest he came to it was in the loan to Andy of some of the books from his shelves. These were religious in character, but Father Viador did not emphasize that point. Indeed, it might be imagined that he half apologized for it by remarking that the reading of them might pass the time and would be excellent to improve Andy's Spanish, "even though they do not interest you much." But, on the other hand, it did not appear that he was giving any practical thought to the temporal problem either.

However, for the moment Andy was satisfied enough. The life of the mission interested him; he was thankful for this opportunity of ease, comfort, and above all security, a breathing space before stepping again to the trail of his destiny. After so many years of the wild life, complete inaction for a period was not ungrateful. He walked here and there, his hands idle, but his mind busy in the acceptances and appraisals of what he saw; and, unknown to himself, the priest watched him.

For Andy's spiritual chemistry was astir in flux. This California, from his very first day within its borders, had been remoulding him. He was already a different person from I-tam-a-pi, the Blackfoot Man. Certain elements of the land's genius had seeped into the taut fibers of his being; and, working from within, as components of his life's stream, were beginning to transform him to new manifestations. It was something a little more than a mere expansion or unfoldment from the compactness of the perilous and the solitary. The essence of his spirit was changing, taking on the color of his environment.

At first his judgments were puzzled. He saw contradictory things which changed his mind for him a dozen times a week. He saw the fields cultivated, rudely, it is true, and with implements absurdly primitive, but to lavish fertility. He saw orchards and vineyards bringing forth their fruits in season; and cattle by the thousands on the hills. He wandered into workshops where were carpenters, blacksmiths, weavers, saddlers, hatters, the tanners of hides, the makers of soap, all busily productive. Outside the walls were pits where men dug the heavy adobe, and poured water upon it, and mixed chopped straw in the mud, and pressed it into wooden molds where the hot sun hardened it into bricks. But also there were kilns where the red tiles were baked. All these labors were done by the Indians, the men and the women, under the vigilant supervision of the *capataces*, most of whom were white men, or who passed as such. Each workshop had one of the friars in charge as overseer and instructor. By this means a great deal of actual wealth was produced. New buildings were constantly under

construction. Warehouses were filled with grain and produce; and also with various imported goods bought through trade with the Boston ships and resold on occasion to the *rancheros*, the *hacendados*, or more rarely the Mexican officials themselves.

In contrast to the brutish savagery of the native tribes Andy had encountered in the interior, the Indians attached to the mission seemed to have been made a different race of beings. The wild peoples were little better than beasts with, apparently, only a groping intelligence flickering in a dumb haze of brutishness. These were stupid enough, dumb enough, but in them stirred something, it might have been bewilderment, but it was life. They did things, efficiently and with purpose. They led an ordered and productive existence. They wore clothes and ate regularly. They were in no fear of enemies. Some few of them, such as the musicians of the church, and the finer artisans of the shops, had even made the long step into a civilization of a sort. Andy, watching, could not enough admire the patience and understanding of those who undertook to teach the few. It was indeed admirable when it is considered that not one of the musicians had ever heard music until they were called upon to play together; that musical instruments were strange to them; that they must be taught to read music to whom written or printed pages were wholly unfamiliar. Still, Andy noticed, though those selected ones seemed apt enough in learning both the arts and handicrafts, they did so only under the lash of constant urging. Left to themselves they did nothing.

This was all to the good, but Andy was an observer. His keen eyes noticed other things. For instance, no effort whatever was made to teach anything to the rank and file, only to the few that were required for the mission's own necessities. In spite of the variety and abundance of production, the Indians shared little of it. They received, he learned, a blanket each year, a pair of the blue trousers, one shirt; women the material for a dress and a petticoat. For provision they were given corn, wheat, and meat. At night they were herded into separate buildings; locked in until morning, and the keys brought to the *padre*; the young men in one, the young women in another called the *mujerío*. These buildings were dark, dank, almost like dungeons. They were wholly unventilated. In the morning their inmates, as soon as the doors were unlocked, rushed forth gasping frantically for fresh air. There was no sanitation. In consequence there was much sickness, to which those in authority appeared almost indifferent, except that the greatest precautions were taken lest death intervene before the pronouncing of extreme unction. Indeed, several boys were kept on

constant duty, day and night, as messengers of death whose duty it was to rush to the *padre* in summons lest any die without sacrament.

Every detail of life was ordered, not only the risings and retirings, the labor of the day, the goings and comings, but the larger affairs as well. No man could quit the premises without leave. At daybreak each must leave his couch, must eat his breakfast of *atole*, a sort of gruel, must attend mass, must go to his labor. Three times in the day the bells rang and all heads were bowed in prayer. At eleven o'clock a cart with a *refresco* of water, vinegar, and sugar went afield. This, in some obscure fashion, was supposed to prevent sickness. It was the single attention vouchsafed to the subject of health. At evening mass again, and supper, and a muster when the *capataces* reported progress to the overseer; and he in turn to the *padre*. The latter then decreed punishment as it seemed necessary. Then roll call as each entered the dungeon for the night.

Those were the days, monotonous, almost without change. But at irregular intervals, Andy discovered, as time went on, such of the Indians as wished to do so were permitted to hold a native dance of their former tribal state, but not within the mission walls. For that purpose had been erected a long shed of poles with a tule roof. The dances were very simple and also very pagan. At first Andy did not understand why they were permitted; but after a little he perceived again the profound practical wisdom of El Sabio. Always, in spite of the rigid discipline, the priest remained sensitive to pressures, and yielded a safety valve before the point of explosion was quite reached. Nevertheless, it was a reversion for the moment. A fire was built in the center of the shed. The men doffed their sober garments to appear in loincloth and feathered headdress. They painted their bodies and faces with lines of black and red and blue. In single file, long peeled staves in hand, they circled the fire, stamping the earth, throwing their bodies into contortions, grimacing horribly and shouting and yelling at the top of their lungs. A drum, trumpets made of horns, and small sticks clattered together furnished an accompaniment; or, rather, added to the din, for there was little attempt even at rhythm. Motion and noise; that seemed to be the whole of it. The only break in the proceedings was the arrival from the outside of an individual decked out from head to toe with huge plumes. He bounded suddenly in from the darkness. At once the dance ceased, and the howling died; but the drum, trumpets, and castanet-sticks continued to thump, blare, and rattle. The newcomer whirled, pirouetted, and squatted for some minutes, then rushed into the darkness whence he had come. Immediately he had retired, the dance resumed. Andy, withdrawing a little from the whirl and ear-splitting din and general stink of the occasion, discovered that the

plumed gentleman had squatted behind a bush a hundred yards away and was engaged in uttering without intermission creditable imitations of the cries of various animals. Because of the hullabaloo in the shed no one could hear him but himself. Furthermore, the night air was cold, and he, save for his feathers, naked. Nevertheless, he stuck conscientiously on the job. Whether this was for some obscure personal satisfaction, or whether the man was a martyr to a crude symbolism, Andy could not guess. If the latter, it was the only touch of significance in the whole performance. There was not even a culmination toward the excitement of frenzy. They simply hopped and howled. Nevertheless, the participants seemed to find in this some sort of outlet. At dawn they filed back to the mission compound sleek and sleepy, like sated beasts.

Andy returned with them. He had stayed up all night; why, he could not precisely have expressed. There was no variety in the performance; and, after the first ten minutes, no interest. He was held by his own puzzled subconscious gropings for appraisal, for understanding. He had known only the free, wild, clean-cut, proud savages of the plains and mountains, and from his life among them he had built a certain concept of the Indians, as such, into which, unconsciously, he had been fitting his impressions. But these people did not belong in that concept; and so his impressions must be shifted. He looked curiously on the docile stolid workers plodding to the fields; and for the first time he was able, though dimly, to see them, not with the eyes of the Blackfoot Man, but with the eyes of the priest. For all that day he could not rid himself of the strange illusion that these were not men and women but half-tamed wild animals, like the cattle on the hills. The point of view did not long persist in its full purity, but its influence endured.

The apparent severity of some of the punishments no longer so completely perturbed him. Now he was able to perceive that they were imposed with a certain discrimination and in accordance with some sort of policy. Father Viador's judgments were sometimes severe; sometimes extraordinarily lenient. Heretofore this inequality had seemed based on caprice. Without help or explanation from his mentor Andy made his own discovery of the difference between venial and deadly sin, though of course he did not express it in those terms. He did not understand the standards by which the difference was judged; but he did understand that there was a difference. Often Father Viador met the most annoying stupidities or even malices of daily living with no impatience, indeed, with a certain large and sardonic humor. As when the overseers, of a frosty morning, were unable to turn the men out to labor in the fields. The situation was really almost serious enough to constitute a mutiny and might with full justice have been

handled as such. But, instead of whipping the sulking Indians to their tasks, Father Viador caused all fires to be extinguished. The shivering, thinly clad Indians found the only way to get warm was to go to work. On another occasion three young men, with the intention of a night out or perhaps even of escape into the hills, dodged evening roll call and the usual lock-up by concealing themselves in a shallow trench and covering themselves over with dry grass. Unfortunately for themselves they had not done a very good job of it, and their hiding place was discovered. This too, in the eyes of the *capataces* and the majordomo, was a scandal, a bad example, a direct affront to authority, and they eagerly besought the good father's permission to put a stop once and for all to such tendencies with a proper punishment, the wooden collar, the *corona*, and a sufficiency of lashes well laid on. But the *padre* would have none of it. He seized a brand from the fire and, tiptoeing with a catlike stealth extraordinary in his huge bulk, he sneaked upon the unconscious truants' hiding place. The dry grass burst instantly into flames, and the three surprised Indians, with a howl of fright and dismay, leaped to their feet and scuttled to their places. Father Viador roared with laughter, slapping his great thighs. And forgave them!

On the other hand, Andy saw what seemed to him inconceivably cruel punishments inflicted; men held in the stocks for long periods under the blazing sun and the chilly dews of night, without food or water; men dragging heavy weights by chains about the ankles, and the flesh raw and bleeding; men whipped across the abdomen, fifty lashes well laid on, without mercy. One woman who had lost her baby and whose grief was pitiable was compelled to carry always in her arms a block of wood and must continue to carry it for as long as she would have nursed the child. To this Andy ventured a protest.

"My son," said Father Viador, "this must be, for through neglect she permitted her child to die without the Holy Sacrament."

It was difficult to understand, even though Andy at last perceived that the alternations of leniency and severity were not the play of pure caprice. And he saw Father Viador, El Sabio, moving among his people, by turns boisterous, pious, kind, harsh, benign, severe—but beloved. Of that there was no doubt. Some of the people were dull, sullen, rebellious; some were restless and defiant; a few even tried to make escape to the wild tribes of the hills and were hunted down by the *vaqueros* and brought back bound with rawhide. Beneath the stolid brutish submission stirred the wild strain. But when the day's small troubled doings were over and the waters stilled, when all the people were gathered kneeling in the candle-lighted dimness of the church, and Father Viador stood over against them, his countenance

transfigured, then Andy, looking about him, saw in the faces uplifted a devotion, unreasoning, uncomprehending, profound. And dimly he sensed something greater than he could understand, greater than any inconsistencies of idea or conduct, something so inclusive that all peoples—himself, the *padre*, Ramón, Cortilla, the brutish Indians, the men red and white of the mountains and the plains and of the cities beyond them and over the seas—were embraced within it; and all the deeds of men, however dark or noble, had their due and proportioned places. It was an experience which comes to men at a certain ripe stage of their development, in degree according to capacity, but the same in essence. It has been variously termed—illumination, cosmic consciousness, finding God—but it is the same experience under whatever name. Possibly perception of unity comes nearest it. It was in that aspect that it presented itself to Andy, as was natural in one who had known only individualism. After its brief exaltation had passed remained still a feeling of belonging to something, of no longer walking alone. It was purely an instinctive feeling, however, a comforting inner warmth; for when Andy tried to examine it he could not for the life of him summon a clear thought.

3

So far El Sabio left the young man strictly to his own devices: he did not repeat the mistake of his first overzealousness. But his experienced hand had gauged the young man's spiritual pulse. He judged the moment.

It was in the Travelers' Orchard, to which Andy often repaired when he wished to be alone. Of late this had been often. Why, he did not know. He did not think of anything in particular. His consciousness hung in a moody brown study, apparently over nothing, as when one is in a state of comfortable digestion; as indeed was Andy's case, though not of the mission's good fare. He paced slowly to and fro, back and forth between two trees of the orchard. At the end of each ten paces of his short journey he plucked from the tree trunk, where it was embedded, the heavy frontiersman's knife and, turning, hurled it toward the other tree. The long blade flashed in an invariable and lovely arc of accuracy to thud quivering almost exactly into the scar of the previous casts. It was a pretty sight, the lithe strong body poised in balance, the wide graceful swing of the arm, the flight of glittering steel. Nevertheless, the act was purely mechanical. Andy was scarcely aware of what he was doing. The priest's voice startled him to consciousness of his surroundings as though from a trance.

“That is beautifully done, my son,” said Father Viador, “and I do not doubt my olives will bear the better for a little bleeding.”

Andy was dismayed, conscience stricken.

“Oh, I am sorry!” he cried. “I did not realize what I was doing. It was habit—I hope there is no damage!” He examined the broken bark solicitously.

“There is no harm done,” the *padre* assured him, “though perhaps it would be as well to vary the target before you cut through to the heart. But never have I seen such skill with such a weapon. And it is a very curious skill.” He plucked the knife from the tree and balanced it in his hand. Then, as though on impulse, he drew back his arm in imitation of the mountain man’s action and hurled the blade. The knife turned end for end erratically, missed the tree, slapped another with the side of the hilt, and bounced off into the grass. The priest gave vent to his great jolly laugh.

“Now why was that?” he cried in apparent chagrin.

“Why, Father, you held it wrongly in your hand, and then too, you must cast not with your arm only, but with the whole body, as though—as though ——” Andy cast about for an example. “Look you, Father, have you seen the children sometimes, in play, cast a green apple from the end of a willow switch?”

“Seen them? I have even done it myself, and no later than yesterday, though this you must not whisper, for the dignity of the Church.”

“Well, it is like that, and your body is the switch that bends back and forth from the very heels to give the power and the smoothness to the cast.”

“I see!” cried the *padre*. “Bring me the knife.”

Andy retrieved the weapon, arranged it properly in the old man’s hand. But the second attempt was little better than the first.

“It is also a matter of the balance of the blade,” Andy told him, “and the *feel* of it, and that can only be gained by trial. This is a twelve-foot knife, and that you could not know.”

“A twelve-foot knife?” repeated Father Viador. “Now, what mean you by that?”

“Why, merely that it will turn once over in twelve feet when thrown with a full cast. So that if you would have it enter point first at six feet you must make a half cast, and if it is farther or nearer you must judge the distance and the power to put forth. That you must learn by practise.”

“But I perceive I shall not master this art this afternoon,” said Father Viador, “besides which I fear I am much too fat to assume the rôle of a willow switch.”

He disposed himself, grunting somewhat, on the sun-warmed sweet grasses with his broad back against the olive tree.

“Sit, my son. It is very pleasant,” he invited. “Let us talk. This pretty trick must have lost you many hours. Is it of use to you?”

Andy nodded assent to the first observation.

“It has served me,” he said briefly to the second.

“How is that, my son?” asked the priest. “Come, you must humor the old man. The sun is warm, the air is soft. You shall tell me.”

Andy hesitated, checked by the self-contained taciturnity of his nature, a taciturnity which his wilderness life had emphasized. But he looked up into the placid benignity of the *padre's* face. Haltingly at first, he began to tell of the time when, as prisoners of the Blackfeet, he and his companions, Kelly and Joe Crane, on the point of escape had turned back to do battle on the side of their captors against the raiding Assiniboines. To explain this he had also to tell of his Blackfoot friend, Kiasax, and his woman and of the Little Warrior. Returning to the conflict, he described the moment when, closely beset by his enemies, he had by a happy inspiration cast the knife over and beyond them to pierce the neck of the Assiniboine chief, standing apart, and so had turned the tide of battle.

“So that time, you see, *padre*,” he concluded, “the trick did me a service and was worth its pains.”

“And again?” Father Viador pressed for more. “No, never mind that: now you must tell me of these you call your friends,” he amended. “Tell me of them. What do you call them? The Blackfeet? What kind of people are they? Are they like our Indians?”

“No, no, Father, not at all like.” Andy was aroused. “They are much better. Why, they are real—like you and me!” His tongue was loosened by his eagerness that his adopted people should receive the justice of appreciation. Guided by the priest’s shrewd questions he talked for an hour.

“But that is wonderful!” sighed the priest at last. “That is like Homer! You know Homer? No? I read him in my youth.” Then he added hastily, “He was a pagan and is not for a good Christian to read. But he told of such things.” He crossed himself in some confusion; dismissing the heathen singer of tales. “That is a wild hard life you have led, my son. Why,” he asked curiously, “did you leave it to come to this quiet land?”

“My friends were murdered. I killed a man,” said Andy.

“That is bad,” said the priest gravely, “but——”

“I have killed men, of course,” broke in Andy. “How else could I live? I never thought of it one way or another. But this one—it was not in battle: I gave him no chance. I did not want to give him a chance. And when I had killed him I scalped him, like any savage. I had never done that before.”

“Why did you do that, my son?” asked the priest. His voice was gentle.

“He had murdered Joe Crane, my friend. He had done it treacherously. He was Joe’s enemy, and he picked a fight with him. A man I knew saw him empty the priming pan of Joe’s rifle. Joe did not know it, but he was helpless. This man shot him down in cold blood, safely. I followed him and caught him unaware and empty handed, and shot him as he stood, and scalped him. And when I had ridden back I found that my people—and Kiasax my friend—had been massacred by the trappers; and they had come in peaceably to trade. And I found Nit-o-ke-man, the wife of my Blackfoot brother, standing by his dead body; and before I could prevent it a Crow Indian dashed her brains out. Why should such things be?” he demanded fiercely.

Father Viador was silent.

“You asked me why I came to this land,” concluded Andy, more gently, after a moment.

“Did you kill also this other man, this Crow Indian?” asked the priest.

“No,” said Andy.

“Why not?”

“I do not know,” said the mountain man wearily. “Of what use more killing? It was done.”

“Ah!” said Father Viador. He pondered.

“Do you repent killing this other man, this one who murdered your friend?”

Andy threw back his head.

“No!” he cried.

They sat for some moments in the humming silence of the sun-warmed bees.

“ ‘Vengeance is mine;’ saith the Lord. That is what the Scriptures tell us, my son. Vengeance is not ours but His. But His ways are wonderful and past

the finding out of our poor groping. Who knows but for His vengeance he used you as His own right arm."

Andy looked up quickly.

"You mean?"

The priest arose to his feet, straightened his great body, raised the two fingers of his right hand. After an instant's hesitation Andy bowed his head.

"*Absolvo te!*" said Father Viador.

4

By a common impulse they began slowly to pace back and forth.

"Have you found what you sought in our land?" asked Father Viador.

"Partly—a friend—Ramón. And the life on the *rancho*. But it slipped—there is in me an uneasiness. It lies always below other things—I cannot explain it. It sounds foolish."

"I understand, my son."

"I feel outside, somehow—" Andy's necessity for expression forced him stumbling on—"as if I was looking on. No matter what I did." He hesitated; but it was the atmosphere of confidences, and, a little shamefacedly, Andy continued, "It is curious, *padre*, but a few times I have lost that, and it has always been in the church when you were saying the mass."

Father Viador's breath checked for a moment, but he controlled the eagerness from his voice.

"How was that, my son?"

"Why, I do not know how to tell you. But it was a feeling of belonging—like belonging to a family, I should think. I never had a family, only my grandmother, and she is long since dead. Of course, there were Joe and Jim, and there was Kiasax. They were the same as brothers, I suppose, and any one of us would have died for the other, but it was not quite the same. I told you I could not tell you!" cried Andy, baffled.

The priest's eyes shone.

"You *have* told me, my son; and I have understood, as why not?—for it was indeed a Family whose communion you entered, whose mother is the Church. Do you not see, my son, that thus she is calling you to herself?"

The priest paused; but resumed instantly he perceived that Andy was on the point of reply. His every nerve was sensitive to the occasion he had so skillfully evoked. Undoubtedly he perceived that, however impelling was

his purpose, and however necessary was the young man's emotional urge, it must take its place now as the underlying, hidden, deciding factor; and that the Anglo-Saxon, the mountain man, must be permitted his cooler surface rationalizations beneath which to conceal his actual response. His whole being was quivering with eagerness, but with an eagerness in leash. He forced himself to speak as of one reasoning of simple and comfortable things.

"If you are to live in California and here find happiness, my son," said he, "you must become as the Californians. There is no other way. As a stranger you will be apart and alone. Not otherwise will my people trust you and take you to their hearts. Already you have put on our garments. And deep within you have changed a little from your old self. Is not that so, my son? Answer truly!"

Andy thought of Ramón. He nodded.

"And you will change more. That I know: for deep within yourself, beneath the iron, you are *simpático*, and though always your eyes are dry and hard and your face bold, your heart can weep. But, my son, never can you be one with those for whose love you secretly hunger while you sit apart."

Even the priest's keen acumen could not guess the unexpected direction this appeal now took. Perhaps it was an instinct that led him to touch upon what had been, in the homely community of Andy's boyhood, a commonplace of custom, and so partly transferred the situation from the uneasy ground of pure religious emotion to a familiar parallel. For in the tiny Pennsylvania community a new-come family, as a matter of course, had always first of all joined the local church. And Andy's wild life had washed from his being all the small distinctions, leaving in his soul's background only the great simplicities of a reverence in which he abided but which he never examined—God, the Sun, the Above People, ordered mystery beneath which he moved in trust but to which he did not raise his eyes. He had long since lost any sense of creed loyalty. Though the practical side could not, in his fundamental sincerity, be the deciding factor, it was a bit of solid earth beneath his feet.

"But I am not a Roman Catholic, *padre*," said he.

Father Viador closed his eyes, and from his heart rose a brief formless prayer for forgiveness of what he was going to do. Then boldly he plunged.

"You are a true Catholic, my son," he stated, "in those things that truly make the Faith. You have acknowledged our Lord, and have in spirit entered into the holy mystic communion. And this very day you have knelt before

me and have confessed yourself and from me have received absolution. At the very threshold of the door you stand. Come with me."

He seized Andy's arm and led him out through the wicket gate of the Travelers' Orchard, across the busy courtyard, into the cool dimness of the church, deserted now, where burned only the feeble flicker of the altar candles.

"Kneel, son!" he commanded.

He was panting heavily, as though he had run a race. He dipped his fingers in the holy font, and toward the faintly smiling painted figure of the Virgin cast imploring eyes.

"In Thy name," he muttered: then threw back his head and proceeded with the ceremony of baptism.

"Rise, my son," he said gently, "and in the bosom of the Family may you find that for which you seek. And now leave me, for I must make my peace."

5

Alone in the church Father Viador fell upon his knees. He raised his eyes toward the faintly smiling Virgin.

"Mother of God, intercede!" he murmured. A groan burst from his great body. He bent in the consciousness of guilt that thus, not through the broad prescribed portals of instruction and preparation, but through the small doubtful wicket of expediency he had led this soul before the Throne. And yet the agony in which he knelt sprang not from concern for himself, but lest because of these bold irregularities the soul be denied and his effort have been in vain.

Long he knelt, and the pale daylight faded, and the altar candles flared high in the breathless air, and the smiling madonna looked down on him, making no sign. Then slowly his heart swelled within him, and from mystic sources came certitude and with it a sweet enveloping warmth. The painted image still smiled down at him its fixed smile, but to Father Viador's streaming eyes it seemed that the wooden face had softened and the light from the candles had invested it with a swimming golden haze. He bowed his head.

"For this, Thy grace, be praised," he whispered. He arose to his feet and addressed himself solemnly. His deep-toned voice rang strangely through the empty church.

"*Peccavi*," he intoned, "and forasmuch as Francisco Viador hath gravely sinned against the prescriptions of the Holy Church, I, the *Padre Ministro* of the Mission of Santa Clara, do impose upon him the penitence that for three nights through shall he kneel at the Altar of Our Lady, and that for thirty days shall he each day upon his bare back scourge himself twenty lashes well laid on, and so may his soul find peace. *Ora pro nobis, María Santísima.*"

He crossed himself and strode masterfully down the echoing church to the open door. Outside it the bell ringers awaited his command for vespers.

"Ring, my children!" cried the priest. "Ring strongly this evening, for in heaven the blessed saints rejoice."

The bell ringers looked curiously at one another.

"His face shines—El Sabio," said they.

CHAPTER VI
Hacienda

ANDY had every reason to expect, now that Father Viador had baptized him into the Faith, that the priest would at last turn his wits to practical matters. That, after all, was why he was here: to get a little advice on how to placate the unfriendly government officials. Ramón had highly recommended the *padre* as El Sabio, the wise one, who would be sure to find a way out of the difficulty. But to his profound surprise he learned, two days later, that the friar seemed to consider the job finished.

"You are welcome to stay if you wish it, my son," said Father Viador, "but your place is not within mission walls but in the world of men and action. There you must take your place and make your way."

He was blandly unimpressed by Andy's dismayed expostulation that really nothing had been done to alter the hostile situation outside the said walls. Father Viador thought differently. He had done his full part in leading Andy to the shelter of the Church and the protection of the saints. Now it was their turn. To do him justice, Father Viador firmly believed they would take over.

"Put your trust in the Lord and go forth boldly, my son," said he. "Have faith, and a way will surely be opened to you."

So Andy packed his few belongings again in the *cantinas*, wrapped the Boone rifle in its disguising *serape*, and bent his head to Father Viador's parting benediction. It had been decided that the first thing he should do must be to journey to the family *hacienda* of the Riveras where he could consult further with Ramón. To this end Father Viador had furnished him with a half dozen of the mission's fleetest horses together with a *vaquero* to herd them and bring them back, as well as to act as guide.

The party had proceeded, at the headlong speed of the country, barely a league from the mission's walls when it encountered a similar *caballada* racing in the opposite direction. Recognition was simultaneous. Ramón did not appear to share Andy's surprise.

“But he sent for me, El Sabio,” said he, “saying that now all was arranged. What is arranged, Andrés *mío*? What is the good father’s plan?”

“I am to trust in the Lord and the blessed saints,” said Andy dryly.

“And besides?”

“Nothing besides.”

Ramón looked blank.

“But surely——”

“Exactly that,” said Andy. “He seemed to think that once he had joined me to the Church he had done the job.”

Ramón turned to him a shining face, crossing himself devoutly.

“Ah, blessed Mary be praised!” he cried with a sudden and genuine depth of feeling that surprised Andy and made him just a little ashamed of his momentary protective cynicism. “Then all is well!”

“Nevertheless,” Andy persisted, “I’d like to know what is to be done.”

“He is wise, that one,” said Ramón with entire conviction. “If he says that now matters are arranged, then so it will be, for he does not speak idly. What we shall do I do not know, but we shall know all in good time. We shall first of all return to the *hacienda*. My papá, he also is a wise one. Perhaps he shall tell us. *Holá!*” He struck spurs to his horse and dashed away. Andy raced alongside. The two *vaqueros*, driving the little herd of remounts, followed headlong, fifty paces to the rear.

2

All that day thus they rode, almost without check, save for a change of horses every three or four leagues. Toward midafternoon they surmounted the crest of a low range of grassy mountains to look abroad over a wide flat valley. Across the way were other and loftier mountains, dark blue with forest and with distance. Far to the right hand, half discovered, half guessed, hazed by bright mists, sparkled the sea. To the left hand the valley ran like a broad river gradually rising, until, unguessed miles away, it had blended smoothly into the encircling hills softened to vagueness by the shimmer of rising heat.

The floor of the valley itself was stilled by the maplike immobility of the elevation on which they stood; variegated in soft changing colors of ripening grass. A slender thread of meandering darker green of trees and bushes marked the course of a river. Tiny dots that moved might have been cattle or game animals. Across the way, beyond the river, on a low elevation close

under the wall of mountains glimmered a wide group of low white buildings, the red of whose roofs caught the sun in a splash of color.

Ramón swept the flat of his hand to include, apparently, the whole of the visible landscape.

"The *hacienda* of the Riveras," he said, with a touch of pride, "and yonder *la casa*—where you shall have your home, I hope."

They sat for several minutes, eased in their saddles, elbow on pommel, while the horses were breathed after their sharp climb. The air was soft and sun-warmed, but from the west came a little breeze that carried a faint far coolness of the sea.

Though obviously they followed a traveled highway, the descent was accomplished within the hour. The trail was precipitous. When the Californian set out to go anywhere, he went; with a minimum regard for grades. The horses slid and buck jumped. The riders leaned far back, yielding gracefully to each plunge. Regaining the flat lands, they left the trail and again scampered on at top speed over the open plain.

Only at the river the journey suffered a slight check. In the bed of the stream the water ran swift, shallow, wide and muddy over a sandy flat. Ramón and the *vaqueros* consulted.

"There is a hard ford, but it is a league above," Ramón explained to Andy. "But we shall see."

The *vaqueros*, shouting, herded the loose horses, with the exception of the two carrying the packs, to the crossing. The animals were reluctant to enter the shallow water. Only repeated urging and the flailing of the rawhide reatas forced them on. The moment they had set hoof in the stream their instinct proved sound, for they sank in the quicksand. They floundered violently, some fell and with difficulty struggled to their feet. The *vaqueros* were at their heels, yelling at the top of their lungs, lashing them on, vigilant to keep them moving, for an instant's hesitation must mean disaster. It was apparently a foolhardy excursion; but somehow it was carried through, and men and horses gained the other bank, splashed, wet, disheveled, the beasts' flanks heaving. And at once the *vaqueros* dashed around the little herd and forced it back the way it had come. It was a wild sight, the plunging, snorting horses, the flying water, the frantic *vaqueros*. Thrice was the maneuver repeated; and the third time Ramón's *vaquero* shouted:

"*Preparada, señor!*"

"Come on!" cried Ramón, "and hold his head up by the bit, and use your spur! If he stops, you shall be very wet!"

The final crossing proved to be much easier than Andy had anticipated, thanks to the trampling hard of the ford. Still, his beautiful Californian costume was splashed and muddy. But Ramón laughed.

"There are clothes at the *casa*!" he cried, "and we have gained a league!"

Nevertheless, night had fallen before they arrived at the ranch house. The white buildings shimmered silvery under the moon, and the flames from torches and the light from numerous windows blazed brilliant orange. Andy could not see much of the surroundings. The *casa*, on this side, presented merely a long wall, in the center of which was a door, and on either side small windows high up. A number of people pressed about the horsemen, Californians all, but most of them with an evident admixture of Indian blood. They flashed white teeth of welcome to Andy and removed his spurs from his heels, and at the last disappeared with all his belongings, including the long rifle still wrapped in its *serape* for concealment. Ramón laughed at the mountain man's reluctance to part with the weapon.

"But you shall see it again," he mocked, "and my papá and my mamá call it very bad you come arm—how you call it?—to the teeth when you pay your respect."

Andy glanced down at his splashed garments; but Ramón assured him he was supposed to present himself instantly, just as he was.

They entered the door into a hall that extended through the building. Other doors opened to right and left. Ramón thrust open one of these.

Andy found himself in a long low room that occupied the whole width of the building. Its floor was bare and polished like a brown pool; its beams overhead were also brown and darkly rich. The walls were white. Against them stood several carved brown chests, a number of straight chairs whose seats and backs were of patterned leather, painted and gilded. At regular spaces silver candelabra, each with three candles, twinkled in their own light. The candles were smooth and white and burned with a clear steady flame. They were molded neither of the *sebo* nor of the *manteca*, but were of genuine sperm, and so an evidence of great honor and great wealth, had Andy known it, which he did not. Between them, and at the wide blank end of the room, hung portraits done in oil, of stern men and fair women, dim and stately and aloof behind the dark mellowness of age. The whole center of the room was clear; nor were there bibelots or tables, what-nots or other furniture to detract from the simple, brown, dark, quiet richness. And at the far end, side by side, stood a man and a woman. So still were they that they might well have stepped from one of the frames above them. The man wore simple dark clothes and knee breeches, but with silken hose and jeweled

buckles to his shoes, and a high flared collar about which had been wound the folds of a black stock. The woman, also in contrast to Andy's previous observations of the country's costumes, was clad with equal simplicity in a gown of heavy gray silk with flaring skirt, and a close-fitting jacket buttoning to the neck, before which crossed the light folds of the *rebozo*.

The two young men walked down the length of the room. Ramón stepped lightly forward, bowed his head before the man, raised the woman's hand to his lips.

"*Señor padre, permíteme presentarte un buen amigo, Andrés Burnett. Doña Engracia*," said he, "*aquí yo introdusco el valedor mío, el señor Don Andrés Burnett*."

Andy bent his body from the hips and straightened to find himself the object of a veiled but keen scrutiny. Although an appreciable time elapsed before Don Sylvestre acknowledged the introduction, the pause conveyed no faintest tinge of discourtesy or embarrassment; rather it seemed the deliberation natural to a high and rhythmic ceremonial. For several seconds Don Sylvestre's haughty eyes surveyed the bold and resolute countenance of the young frontiersman waiting respectfully before him. Then they softened in approval.

"*Sylvestre Carlos Jaime Rivera y Martinez*," he named himself, "*servidor de usted*."

He presented his wife as Ramón had presented himself. She curtseyed.

"*Engracia de Rivera*," she murmured, "*a sus órdenes en esta su casa de usted*."

She extended her hand with a faint but pleasant smile.

"You kiss the hand, you do not shake him," warned Ramón rapidly in English, at Andy's movement. Andy managed, somewhat awkwardly, it is true, but in time, to alter his first intention. He murmured a few words of appreciation and escaped without disgrace, following Ramón the terrible length of the room, and imitating his friend's bow as they at last reached the door. But he could not repress a sigh of relief when once more they had gained to the hallway.

Ramón laughed merrily.

"You are escare!" he accused. "But there is no need. It is only Papá and Mamá. Tomorrow you shall see. I think they like you ver' much."

He led the way out the farther door and down one side of the patio into which it opened, to a wing of the house where, in another room, only a little smaller than the first, was a long table set out for a meal with silver and

china and glass. Here too were the simplicity of dark and polished wood, and more portraits, and white candles of sperm. They encountered no one; but somehow Andy felt himself the object of scrutiny by hidden eyes, and once he thought he caught the echo of whispering and of faint smothered laughter, though the windows were dark and there was no sound but the tinkling of a fountain. He felt awkward, constrained, ill at ease, for he was not accustomed to this sort of thing. Suddenly Ramón seemed withdrawn from him. A gap had opened between them.

But the Californian appeared to be unaware of it. He was in high spirits, bursting with a scarcely restrained pride. Tomorrow, tomorrow was the content of his cry. "Tomorrow you shall see! My brothers, them I have told of you, and they wait eagerly to make your acquaintance! And the *hacienda*; you will forget the little rough rude *rancho* of the border when you shall see! I have a horse for you that steps like a fairy of the winds! And——" Ramón was struck by a sudden thought. He clapped his hands. The young girl who had been serving them appeared. She was a demure, pretty young creature whose shy friendly smile toward the *extranjero* had been that young man's one comfort in a growing uneasiness.

"Call Panchito," said Ramón to her.

The *vaquero's* familiar face and the obvious pleasure of his greeting were grateful to Andy, but Ramón's commands dismayed him.

"Look you, Panchito," said he. "We shall make *fiesta* for our guest. Send men to all who can be reached in a day's ride and summon our friends for, let me see, five days hence. And see to it that all is prepared. We shall have a dance, and a *merienda*, and riding and games, and we shall have pleasure for all the people. You shall see!" he cried enthusiastically to Andy. "There are many young men who will come whom you shall love; and *doncellitas*, ah, *doncellitas*!" he kissed the tips of his fingers, "beautiful like the year-old cow, who shall love you, my fighter of the Indian. Yes, and you shall have your accursed rifle in your hand, that make you the trouble; and you shall cut them, piff! the top off the head of the *ardilla*, the esq-ee-rell like you do it for me, and you shall show them how brave a friend have I! And we shall dance, dance all the night, and the *doncellita* shall make the big eye at the so-handsome *americano*. Eh?"

Andy was dismayed. The prospect threw him into a panic, especially the *doncellitas*. He tried to stammer some sort of protest; but Ramón would not listen.

"You hear, Panchito?" he cried. "You understand?"

"*Sí, señor*," the *vaquero* agreed with relish. "Rest easy. All shall be done."

"But, Ramón," expostulated Andy, when the *vaquero* had withdrawn. "You have not asked your father, your mother. Perhaps they——"

"My mamá? My papá?" cried Ramón, astonished. "But they like the *fiesta*!"

"Doggone it!" cried Andy. "I won't know how to act!"

"Act? Act?" repeated the Californian. "What you mean, act?"

"I'm scared," blurted Andy.

"Escare?" repeated Ramón again. "Why escare? They nice peoples." He pondered. "Oh, you mean Cortilla! My papá fix him some way. Tomorrow we ask him. You shall see!"

Andy gave it up. But his panic was genuine. For a fleeting instant he even contemplated flight.

Ramón stretched lazily and arose.

"Come, we will sleep," said he; "we have made the long ride."

He led the way to still another room in the other wing. At first glance that was in its way as formidable as the rest. Andy had never known luxury. Especially was he appalled by the bed. In the California of that day the one object of pride and luxury was the bed. Even the pioneer house, meagerly or even poorly furnished otherwise, boasted of its bed. So, naturally, in this noble *hacienda* this was a noble bed, high and wide and canopied. Its mattress was thick and soft, it supported two great white pillows. It was covered by a marvelous spread of satin heavily embroidered and ornamented with rosettes of ribbons. To Andy's simple mind it seemed a profanation to disturb the thing. He eyed it with distrust.

Ramón puttered about here and there examining the arrangements. Andy stood rigid in the middle of the floor casting his eyes warily about him. There were plenty of things whose use he could not guess, and plenty of others, he told himself, he would not try to meddle with. But on the table near the head of the bed was one object that must have been misplaced and forgotten; a half-open leathern bag full of gold coins.

"Oh, that," said Ramón carelessly. "No, I do not think you need him. This is the traveler's room, you see. These is for the traveler if he need him."

"Well, I'll be damned," muttered Andy under his breath.

When Ramón had at last departed, he removed his garments and gingerly inserted himself beneath the gorgeous coverlet. He did not know

enough to fold it and lay it aside. He was mildly uncomfortable beneath its weight. His mind was uneasy. Nevertheless, at last the low tinkling murmur of the waters in the patio lulled him.

3

For the first time since running away from the Pennsylvania farm, Andy the next morning overslept. For the first time since crossing the Missouri River he must have relaxed all, even subconscious vigilance, for he found that someone had entered the room undetected. His splashed and muddy garments had been taken away, and in their place his elaborate holiday suit had been laid out. As he unclosed his eyes a servant was entering the room bearing a tray of chocolate and biscuits. Andy, much ashamed of himself, dressed hurriedly.

He threw open the door looking into the patio and brought up short on the threshold. Then he hastily withdrew out of sight.

The open part of the patio itself was a jumble of loveliness. Around the lily-padded fountain in the center were giant ferns, roses, carnations, sweet peas, great orange lilies brought from Mexico; and climbing jasmine on the supporting pillars, and the decorative awkwardness of cactus against the white walls. Yucca and Spanish bayonet bristled vigilant as sentinels. Birds hopped busily; butterflies fluttered; intent bees droned from bloom to bloom. Through the resonant dappled brilliance of sunlight and foliage and flower was a toddle of kittens and puppies and small children. Under the veranda-like extension of the roof were many women. Some of them were weaving at small portable looms; some were bent over sewing and embroidery; some were tending or nursing babies; some, great bowls between their outspread knees, were preparing foods of various sorts for the fire. A hum of soft voices and gentle laughter blended with the drone of the bees, the twittering of the birds, and the golden flood of the sun in a comfortable mixture of sound and warmth.

Andy did not know what to do. There was no way out of his room except through the patio.

The women were all dressed alike, simply, in loose white waists and colored skirts. Their sleek heads were bare, the hair cut square across the forehead, gathered in nets, but with a lock hanging on either side down the cheek. Some of the younger were very pretty. All, old and young, were pleasant with the content of entire good-humor. Some of the elders were fat; and some of the oldest were incredibly seamed with a crisscross of wrinkles; but even the most ancient had preserved still the attraction of beautiful

veiled eyes, of glossy abundant hair, and of flashing white teeth. They bent over their tasks, or walked here and there about their affairs; and the movements of their hands and arms, the poise of their sleek heads, the carriage of their bodies had the suspended fluttering grace and a little of the apparent inconsequence of the butterflies in the garden.

After a moment this general impression steadied in Andy's mind to a recognition. Near the great door leading into the *sala* a smaller group of four sat apart. One of them Andy identified as Doña Engracia, though she too now wore the simple house dress of informality. At that instant one of the four arose and made her way down the colonnade toward Andy's room. As she drew nearer Andy saw that she was but ten or twelve years of age, with the child's flat boylike figure, and the child's rounded face; but that no otherwise, neither in dress nor in grace and dignity in carriage, did she differ from the others, a grown-up in miniature. She stood in the doorway and bent her knees in a deep curtsey, holding her skirts spread with the tips of her fingers.

"*Buenos días, señor*," said she demurely, "and my mother begs you will be so gracious as to sit with her."

Her small face was gravely ceremonial, and from beneath her lashes she surveyed the tall stranger with solemn curiosity. So evident and so avid was this emotion that Andy's risibilities were tickled.

"*Buenos días, señorita*," he returned gravely, and bending from his great height he raised her small fingers to his lips.

The child's eyes widened.

"So you are Ramón's little sister," said Andy.

"*Sí, señor.*"

"And what is your name?"

"Faquita, señor."

"Why, that is a pretty name. Mine is Andrés."

"*Sí, señor.*"

She continued to stare at him wide eyed.

"Why do you look at me so?" asked Andy.

Her sedateness broke by ever so little. She hesitated.

"But you are not like they told me, señor," she said.

Andy grinned.

“And what did they tell you I would be like?” he asked. “Come, we’re going to be friends, aren’t we?”

She looked up at him sideways for a long searching moment, scanning his face. Then her own broke in a slow sweet smile.

“*Sí, señor*,” she whispered shyly.

“Then if we are friends you must tell me what I ask,” said Andy with mock severity, “or I shall be very angry. You would not have me angry, would you? I eat little girls when I am angry.”

Suddenly she giggled and became wholly the child.

“They said all Americanos are *como el oso*!”

“Like a bear, eh?” Andy laughed. “And I am not like a bear?”

“No, señor,” Faquita assured him earnestly. “You are like a *californio*.”

She laughed with him joyously.

“It was Carmel who told me that,” she added.

“Who is Carmel?”

“She is my sister. She is *la favorita* with all the *caballeros*. She is very beautiful. See,” she took his great hand in hers and drew him to the door, “that is she, who sits next to Mamá. Is she not beautiful?”

“Very,” agreed Andy.

“She said that all *americanos* are *como el oso*, and Ramón, my brother, did not like it and was very angry with her.” She giggled again; looked up into Andy’s gray eyes. “Then, señor, she said,” the child hesitated, then continued with a rush, “She said, señor, that she had always wished for a tame bear so she could make him do the dance like those at the *fiesta*. But she would be very angry if she knew I told you this.”

“Then why do you tell me, Faquita?”

She stared at him in slow perplexity.

“Did you not say we are to be friends?” she asked gravely.

“Of course!” Andy was touched. He reflected a moment, his mouth setting in grim and obstinate lines. “Come,” he said, “we must not longer keep your mother waiting.”

He took the child by the hand and marched down the colonnade of the patio. The soft chatter, the busy movements of industry were suspended. Andy was not even aware of this attentiveness that, but a moment ago, would have thrown him into an agony of embarrassment. In his gala costume his tall form made a very fine figure of a man. The *muchachas* by

whom he brushed unceremoniously looked up at him with a flutter of admiration. He had no eyes for them. The Doña Carmel, seated among her spread skirts at her mother's left hand, her shining head bent low over her embroidery frame, apparently was unconscious of his approach. As a matter of fact, she was acutely aware of the moment he left the doorway of his room; and her veiled eyes, not without a certain surprise, had taken in every detail of his appearance. Certainly its lithe, smooth grace of movement, the correctness of its apparel revealed none of the uncouth barbarity she had expected. She stole a glance at his browned and resolute face, with its bold outline and the strange square growth of the eyebrows. She could not see his eyes. As soon as might be, she must see his eyes.

He was bending over Doña Engracia's hand and speaking to her. His voice was not bad, nor his Spanish harsh with the twang of the ships' supercargoes, who had visited the *hacienda* on business. Doña Carmel bent lower over her embroidery frame, apparently absorbed in the delicacy of her task.

Doña Engracia waved aside Andy's apologies, drew in her skirt, inviting him to sit at her side.

"But when one is tired one sleeps until one is rested again," said she. "Soon Don Sylvestre and my sons will return. They have gone to make the ride, as always. Now you must talk to me while waiting."

"That is pleasing to me, señora," replied Andy.

He seated himself next her and looked about him boldly. The child sidled to him and inserted her little hand in his fingers. The third member of the group he recognized now as Vicenta, the "too-fat one," the wife of Panchito the *vaquero*. She smiled broadly at him but did not speak.

Doña Engracia offered no introductions, but continued to speak in her slow placid manner.

"My son has said much of you, Señor Andrés," said she, "and has told us of your life there over the mountains and among the wild people and the wild beasts. To me it all sounds terrible; and you must know that you are welcome here and that you are *de la casa*, and that you must find this a place where you can be happy."

"*Gracias, señora*," returned Andy. "How could I be otherwise?"

"You like the California?"

"Very much."

"That is well. But we are a quiet people. To one like yourself who has traveled in so strange places, our life may seem dull."

"I know little of the life, señora, except what Ramón has told me, for, as you know, I have as yet seen nothing but the *rancho*—and a little while the mission—but it seems to me far from dull."

"Ah, Ramón!" Doña Engracia laughed softly, but with a touch of fond pride. "That one!" She sobered and laid her hand on Andy's arm. "But he tells me, Don Andrés, that you have saved his life. And for that my heart thanks you, señor."

"I?—saved his life?" Andy was genuinely puzzled. "No, señora."

"You are overmodest," Doña Engracia insisted.

"I have not the slightest idea what you mean!" cried Andy. "You have been misinformed, señora."

Doña Engracia shook her head, smiling.

"Ramón has told me. The bear that was about to overcome him, and he with only his rapier."

Andy's jaw dropped.

"Is that what he told you?" he cried. "Why, señora, it is true that Ramón was fighting a bear with only his sword and his cloak, and that I did shoot the bear, because I thought it a very foolish and dangerous thing, but Ramón was angry with me for doing so, saying that I spoiled his sport and that if I had not interfered he would have killed the bear himself, as indeed I think he might." He was blankly astonished at hearing this version of the affair. Then he laughed aloud, so whole-heartedly that the whole patio looked up.

"Do you know, señora," he cried boyishly, "I think that Ramón told you that because he wished you to think well of me."

"What I think, me," said Doña Engracia placidly, "is that you and my son are very good friends. And, señor," she added, again laying her hand on his arm, "for that I am content."

Andy was touched. His bold eyes softened, and turned—to encounter those of the girl glancing sidewise under her lashes. They hardened. Her lashes fell.

"Do you know, señora," he pronounced with slow deliberation, "what of all things has most impressed me in your California?"

"No, Don Andrés, what is that?"

"Why, it is just this matter of your men's courage in the case of these bears. To us men of the mountains these animals have always been beasts to avoid if possible, but the *vaqueros* kill them with the reata, as I have seen many times. I have heard," his voice drawled the words one by one, "that

they even tame them to dance at the *fiestas*, which seems to me quite extraordinary and not to be believed."

Doña Engracia did not at once reply. She glanced at him speculatively. He was looking not at her, but at the girl bent over the embroidery frame. She smiled secretly to herself.

"Nevertheless, I have seen just this thing," she answered at last, "and perhaps you too shall see it."

"Perhaps," said Andy, "but, señora, these must be the small *oso negro*. The great white bears of the mountains must be a different matter. What think you, señorita?" he demanded suddenly.

Carmel raised her eyes. Her lips sketched a faint mocking smile.

"Why do you ask me, señor?" she asked demurely. "I know little of bears—or of men."

Her eyes fell, but not before they had flashed a glance at Faquita. Andy felt the child's fingers stiffen within his own. He was dismayed. He had not intended thus to betray her confidence. All at once the blaze of his reaction to challenge died. He discovered himself, without defence, alone in a patio full of women.

Fortunately at this instant Ramón's gay voice sounded in the hallway, and a moment later the young man entered the courtyard.

"*Holá!*" he cried, "the lazy one! And where do I find him? As I might have known, like a sultan of the Turks with the women all about him! What said I of the *doncellitas*? Are you already caught?"

He glanced mischievously at his older sister. Carmel made a face at her brother, covertly, which, nevertheless, Andy saw. On a sudden inspiration he drew the child before his knees.

"Why, yes," said he, his confidence returning with a rush. "Here she is. She is my *doncellita*, and I am her *caballero*, ready to defend her to the death!"

"*Holá!*" shouted Ramón, "but this is good, the so-serious one! *Madre mía*, you cannot conceive of how so-serious this one is. And when he makes the *burla* all the little smaller angels clap their wings like the cock until the good San Pedro must make them quiet like the schoolmaster."

He surveyed his friend, his head on one side.

"You shall see him, *madre mía*, as I first saw him, with his clothes all so black and somber like the Judas in the *fiesta* of the Holy Week, and his horse like the sheep that hang his head, and his face like the saint of wood, so I

think to myself his name should be Don Doloroso, and his eye solemn like the dark water, and no smile at all."

He laughed again contagiously. Doña Engracia smiled her slow, indulgent smile. Andy's stern face lightened with amusement at this description of himself.

"You shall see!" cried Ramón. "Soon we shall dress his inside like his outside, and then he will be all *californio*. But come, now you must see the horse I have for you to ride."

Succeeding the young man's departure a dead silence of several minutes was broken at last by Vicenta's fat chuckle.

"What are you cackling about?" demanded Carmel sharply.

"A dog that starts many hares catches none," quoted Vicenta cryptically.

4

Ramón showed Andy the horse. Andy met, and liked, Ramón's brothers, tall, grave, handsome, courteous—Ygnacio, Cristóbal, and the young Felipe. He followed his host on an inspection of the nearer activities of the community, and everywhere was introduced with a high formality to all sorts of people, great and small; and was by them greeted with a respectful but familiar friendliness that seemed genuine and that warmed him within. There were many industries forward, in a spacious and leisurely sort of fashion, mostly in the hands of Californians of lighter or darker hue. Only when the excursion had extended its scope to inspect the *milpas*, the outlying cultivated gardens, did Andy see any Indians. These were a dozen in number and were performing their labors under the eye of a plump moon-faced but nevertheless handsome man, in expression good-humored and in manner of exquisite courtesy. He was discovered sitting comfortably enthroned beneath an elevated shade of tules, watching the activities of the Indians.

"Good-morning, Benito," Ramón greeted him. "I have brought my friend to see your *milpas* and to make your acquaintance." The young man spoke carelessly, without formality, as to an equal.

"You are welcome, señor," said Benito to Andy with grave courtesy. "You find us at a busy time." Using the willow switch which he held in his hand as a pointer, he began to tell of the little domain over which he ruled. It was indeed a small domain, of but a few acres, but evidently to Benito it was wide enough to contain all life. He spoke slowly, in sweet modulated accents, always with a grave and deferential courtesy that invested the

commonplace with plumes and ruffles. He told simple things. And yet by some magic of personality he made of the tiny *milpas* a wide seigneury, and of the homely affairs over which he presided grave matters of high estate moving majestically. Andy was at once fascinated and drawn into the illusion. With Benito he arose to a high rarefied air of lofty converse, himself almost visibly growing plumed hats and ruffles.

Andy was told that the yellow slugs had overrun the cabbage patch, and he learned that fact with the concern appropriate to a great lord who hears of barbaric invasions. In due and proper sequence he heard also of what Benito had done about it, and he knew the relief of a threatened populace saved by the wisdom of its ruler. Having finished with the slug matter, Benito leisurely took up bugs, squirrels, birds, rabbits, deer; and how at times it was necessary to guard against the latter with the rattling of sticks, and loud shrieks, and torches by night, until the peaceful appearing *milpas* became to Andy's imagination, directed by Benito, a field of drama. He was for the moment intensely a partisan. He listened breathless to Benito's account of the swarms of linnets swirling like clouds to the feast when the berries or the smaller fruits ripened. He wanted to do something about it: something should be done. His mind cast about for expedients. Why, he asked Benito, could he not use nets—or perhaps poisoned grain—or——

But Benito spoke from the high comfortable plane of calm tolerance.

"No, señor," said he, "that I cannot do. They get theirs: I get mine. I just plant for two."

Finally Ramón indicated that the visit was at an end, but Benito insisted that they must first visit his house.

"It is the hour of *comida*, señores," said he, "and my house will be honored."

Ramón hesitated and turned to Andy.

"Will they not miss us at the *casa*?" asked Andy.

"No," Ramón told him, "not for the noon meal."

So Benito led the way to a small adobe structure in one corner of the *milpas*. It was a crude affair, with coarse *serapes* for doors. A half-dozen dogs and twice as many small children tumbled about together. The oldest of the latter was not over twelve years of age. The smaller wore nothing at all; the larger, apparently, only a single smocklike garment. They ceased their play and stared and drew close about until waved aside by Benito's lordly gesture.

He called, and instantly appeared a woman, also handsome, also comfortably fat, with the sleek hair, the romantic eyes, and the white teeth of her race. She was barefoot and wore only a coarse linen waist and a short skirt of dark serge. But she greeted Ramón by name and smiled at the stranger with no constraint or embarrassment, and brought wine and little cakes until the meal should be prepared, and stood by so graciously at ease that the primitive crudity, for which neither she nor Benito offered apology, sank to complete unimportance. After a moment she bowed her sleek head and disappeared.

The children stared with great solemn eyes. Benito surveyed them complacently. In answer to Andy's question he affirmed them as his.

"That is to say, five of them are born of us two," he amended. "The others also the good saints have sent to us from God."

As Andy did not understand this phrase, Benito went on in his leisurely fashion to explain that these were orphans, adopted into his family. He shrugged aside Andy's rather appalled amazement.

"The hen that has twenty chickens scratches no more than for one," said he carelessly.

They finished their wine and cakes. Shortly they were summoned inside, where the men ate of simple fare. The woman did not eat. The place was bare, with hardened earthen floor. There was no table. They sat in crude chairs of rawhide and wood and were served in clay dishes, *cajetes*. When they had finished Ramón arose and handed his *cajete* to the hostess.

"*Muchas gracias, señora*," said he politely.

"*Buen provecho, señor*," she returned graciously.

The two, she and Benito, stood side by side watching the departure of their guests. Andy looked back. Instantly they smiled.

"I like them," said Andy to his friend.

Ramón nodded.

"They are of our blood," said he. "He is a Rivera. One of our bastards," he added carelessly.

From the *milpas* they proceeded by easy stages down the slope of the hill toward the line of cottonwoods and willows that marked the course of the stream. But their progress was slow. There were many things to see. Especially was Andy fascinated by threshing operations that were forward in a small flat field fenced in by palings of greasewood. Here the earth had been hardened and beaten flat, and on it the grain had been piled to a depth

of two or three feet. At the moment of the young man's approach several *manadas* of mares, over a hundred in all, were being urged through the opening by mounted *vaqueros*. The gate was closed; and at once the horsemen, shouting and swinging their reatas, urged the mares to a run. Around and around the circle they swept at full speed. The dust arose in clouds, in which disappeared and reappeared again the flying half-guessed figures. The men yelled, the mares nickered and squealed and were answered frantically by their stallions outside. Faster and faster they whirled. And then suddenly the men cut square across the arc.

"*Yeguas! Yeguas!*" they screamed.

The startled mares, headed in full flight, tossed, plunged, jostled together, slid stiff-legged, turned in the other direction, overturning the piled-up straw to the very bottom. Thus the grain was separated. Later it would be thrown from wooden shovels against the afternoon breeze to winnow away the chaff. It was a wild sight. Andy would have liked to linger, but Ramón led him on.

On the way to the stream they met the water carriers, the *aguadores*, each perched on the rump of his donkey, and the casks slung before him on either side. They had bedecked their burros with flowers and were tearing up the slope as fast as they could urge their obstinate animals, laughing and shouting. When they saw Ramón, however, they pulled down, with some difficulty, to a more sober pace, and tried to look virtuous. Ramón responded to their greetings with a severity which obviously did not much impress them, though they tried to look meek and penitent.

"To race is forbidden," Ramón told his friend, as they went on, "for thus they break the water kegs. If it had been Don Sylvestre, now; or Ygnacio, who is serious—but well the rascals know that I—but here, you see, we make the brick for the house. But you have seen that at the mission."

A group of men were feeding great lumps of adobe clay into a wooden mill; others barefooted were treading the resultant powder with water into the proper consistency; still others pressed the mixture, bound with straw, into the moulds. But here the process diverged from the mission practise. Into the soft bricks the artisan pressed bright-colored pebbles and shells to form pleasing patterns; and in one lot—gorgeous conception—had been embedded cattle skulls with the horns out.

"Yes," said Ramón, "the *padres* are the serious ones. We are more gay."

Indeed more gay, Andy thought; for the workmen themselves smiled at the young man as though sharing some secret joke or pleasure, in marked contrast to the stolid brutishness of the Indians.

Their excursion ended at the stream side, where many women knelt in a row, beating garments and linen against stones. Some were very old and wrinkled; some young and very pretty; but all possessed of a shrill gayety and a busy tongue. They were not at all abashed by the holiday magnificence of the two young men, but shrieked rapid impertinences which Ramón parried in kind, but which would utterly have routed the bewildered Andy had he been alone. He was glad to withdraw in fair order under cover of his friend. Ramón laughed at his confusion.

"They are only *mozas*," said he. "There is nothing to be escare of them. And I think—you like—some day we go to the *fandango*, and you find they like you much. Some of them very nice, and if they like you very much they not so cruel as the *doncellitas*." He glanced slyly at Andy. "How you like one little Benito to take care of your *milpas* when he grow big?"

5

Only at close of day did all the family assemble in the great *sala*, Don Sylvestre and the Doña Engracia, the four tall sons, the young woman and the little girl. No constraint rested on the occasion; but, to Andy at least, its complete ease was a bit stiffened by ceremonial. Don Sylvestre occupied a large chair at the end of the room where he consumed a succession of cigarettes. None of the other men smoked: that would have been considered a mark of great disrespect. Doña Engracia and Carmel bent over their embroidery frames. The young men exercised a wandering commission; chatting with one another, teasing their sisters. After a little a guitar was produced, and in turn and in unison they sang, very sweetly, the haunting, minor-cadenced songs of Spain. Ramón tried in vain to persuade Andy to sing one of the trappers' songs.

"But you should hear them as I have heard him sing them to the cattle, at night," he appealed to the others. "They are wild, like the mountains."

The others murmured their applause. But Andy was confused, embarrassed at the mere idea. He muttered a refusal, self-conscious, ill at ease.

For the first time Carmel raised her head from the embroidery frame.

"That I also should like to hear, *señor caballero*," she said. "I beg of you."

Her expression was innocent. Her eyes looked full into Andy's with a widened guilelessness. Nevertheless, he sensed a hidden mockery, and his confusion fell from him. He returned her glance coolly.

“I must stand excused, señorita,” said he, with a level iron finality. At the same time he inclined toward her in easy politeness. She continued for a moment to stare at him, and a faint line sketched itself between her brows. She was puzzled; as why not? for all her preconceptions of the rough frontiersman, *el oso*, were overset. Andy, it is true, had no schooling in formal manners, but his nature was based on simplicity and directness, and he had lived for years among the most ceremonial and dignified people in the world, the Blackfeet Indians. A slow flush of mingled surprise and vexation mounted her cheeks. The vexation was not diminished by Ramón’s fleeting but appreciative smile.

It was a small drama, swiftly played, but it was duly relished by all the spectators. The surface gravity of the young men became more profound; Doña Engracia permitted herself a veiled glance of placid amusement; the child, Faquita, sidled over to clasp Andy’s hand. She looked up at him with an air of mature coquettishness comical in so small a creature.

“But you will sing the song of the mountain to me, will you not, *señor caballero*?” she asked assuredly. “Remember, I am your *doncellita*!”

“You must not tease our guest,” chided Doña Engracia.

But Andy smiled down at her gravely from his great height.

“Since you are my *doncellita*, I must sing for you alone,” said he.

6

For some reason Andy was again comfortable, at ease with these pleasant people. Their manner, their grave ceremony, their luxury of living no longer embarrassed him. His spirit was able to move among them freely and confidently. His powers of analysis were not sufficient to tell him why this was: nor could he have explained to himself the glow of his expansion toward them. Possibly he had a dim perception of approval; that their secret appraisal of him had warmed. Don Sylvestre summoned him and talked to him for some time, asking many questions. The conversation, in external aspects, was so formal as almost to be stilted; yet the hidden residue of its effect was familiar. The company rose at a very early hour, soon after eight o’clock. Ramón accompanied his friend along the colonnade of the patio to his room.

“You like the *hacienda*?” he inquired.

“Very much,” replied Andy.

“That is fine! And tomorrow we shall ride with Papá, and you shall see the land and the cattle. My papá, he like you very much. Yes, that is true. I

know my papá. He is very great *hidalgo*, and he say not much, but he look always, and he like you; that I know. He will fix things. That you shall see. He do not escare you any more?" asked Ramón shrewdly. "No? That is good. And my mamá, she like you very much; and my brothers, all, they tell it to me that you are *como hijo de la casa*. Is not that fine? Are you not glad? Me, I am very glad. Do you not like them? But yes, I see that you like them. How you like Carmel?" he asked suddenly. "Is not she beautiful?"

"Very beautiful," agreed Andy shortly.

"And she like you very much also," persisted Ramón.

Andy snorted, shocked into frankness.

Ramón lifted the candle and held it close to his friend's face.

"*Amigo*," said he, "you are to me a very wonderful man. You have live the life of danger and of fight, and you know the men of the wild countries, and how to catch the beaver and kill the beast, and you can do many things, and when you will talk and I can listen I sit with my mouth open wide for the fly to come inside. But one thing I think you do not know at all, not one little esmall bit, and that is about women; and when I tell you somethings about the woman, you will sit quiet and put on the little-boy face, and you will say to me, 'Yes, Ramón,' and 'No, Ramón.' You understand me?"

"But——" protested Andy.

" 'But!' " mocked Ramón. "Is that to say 'Yes, Ramón,' and 'No, Ramón'? I tell you, Carmel also like you very much."

Andy shrugged.

"All right," he agreed dryly. "She does! But if so, why should she act the way she does?"

"Did I not say you know nothing of the woman?" cried Ramón. "Why does she act that way she does! Why, because that is the way the *doncellita* act."

Andy was sardonically skeptical, but he said nothing more. He ascribed Ramón's statement to that young man's liking for himself. He stretched himself between the cool sheets, when Ramón had gone, with a sigh of sheer comfort, not as much of body as of spirit. It is nice to be liked; it is even nicer to be told so. He himself had sensed the young men's somewhat admiring secret approval; nor could he mistake the placid and motherly kindliness of Doña Engracia. He suspected the former to be a sort of hero worship engendered by Ramón's adventure narratives; and the latter to embrace all things dear to a favorite son. Andy was clear-eyed and hard headed when the question was of practical estimations. Faquita was whole-

heartedly his: he smiled slowly in the darkness at the thought of that youngster. Don Sylvestre was as yet an enigma. He was meticulously polite; he engaged Andy in rather stilted conversations apart; conversations that consisted of questions by Don Sylvestre and answers by Andy, whom questioning made uncomfortable. But Andy was content to accept Ramón's certainty that he was well disposed. Though, Andy grinned to himself, he did not show it! And he made no mention whatever of the business that was, after all, the real reason for Andy's visit to the *hacienda*.

There remained, of the family, only Carmel. Andy all at once realized that he had wilfully put off thinking about Carmel, dawdling through all the other members of the family, holding her out as long as he could. And now that, in due order, he had disposed of the others, he must come to her. What about her?

Why, he disliked her, of course. Did he? Why? She had described him as a bear from the mountains and boasted that she would tame him to dance for her. No man of spirit would stand for that. Now, Andy was probably one of the least vain young men alive; but in some respects the life he had led had left him younger than his years, as in others it had made him far older. And a small imp whispered that the remark had been made before she had seen him; and that his California foofaraw became him pretty well; and that he had borne himself not so badly, and that there was a faint chance that Ramón knew what he was talking about. Scandalized, he banished the small imp, but he had heard the whisper. Ramón was right about one thing, anyway: she *was* very beautiful. As for the rest——

As usual, when Andy had involved himself about so far in introspection, he gave it up. His mind emptied itself for sleep.

CHAPTER VII
Fiesta

THE five days succeeding Andy's arrival at the *hacienda* of the Riveras had been busy with preparation. *Caponeras* of the best horses had been driven in for the use of the visitors, and were now being held by the *vaqueros* in the bottomlands. Rude shelters of tules had been erected, and conveniences for camping had been arranged beneath the spreading live oaks. A wide space in front of the great house had been roofed with branches laid across poles. Three sides of this were enclosed in cotton cloth which the women had been very busy decorating with ribbons and with artificial flowers. The fourth side was barred off by a strong rail. Andy, as always inquisitive for reasons for the things that interested him, wanted to know.

"For the dance," Ramón told him; and as for the rail, that was to keep the horses out. Andy wanted to know what horses had to do with it; but Ramón was too busy for conversation. Everybody was busy, cheerfully busy. The women swarmed in and out of the various rooms in the *casa*; in and out of the kitchens; the patio. Messengers darted to the *milpas* and back, bearing fruits or vegetables. Men killed two steers, and skinned them and cleaned them, and cut one of them up for the kitchen, and hung the other whole from one of the live oak trees where it swung, free for anybody who at any time cared to cut from it a steak. There seemed to be a thousand things to attend to. Andy wanted to help but could not even get instructions. So he wandered about alone until the child Faquita joined him. And Faquita was much too excited to talk of anything but the fact that for the first time she was to be permitted to attend the festivities as a grown-up.

"Remember, you are my *caballero*!" she warned Andy over and over.

The hurry and disorder rose like a storm until it seemed that utter confusion must forever prevail. And then suddenly it fell to a flat calm. Andy found himself, dressed in his best, standing before the great door with all the Riveras, while the *hacienda* waited in a peace of smiling welcome.

The first of the guests arrived a little after noon, and the last just before sunset. They came in astonishing numbers. A great many, the majority, were on horseback. The women and girls rode men's saddles, but there hung across the saddle in the place of stirrups a brilliant piece of silk of red or blue or green, at least a yard in width, joined at the ends, puffed out like a bunch of flowers at the fastening. They wore wide straw hats beneath which, for coolness, flapped sun cloths embroidered at the four corners with gold and silver beads. The ever present *rebozo* was flung to the left side. Their faces had been whitened with powdered eggshells. Nevertheless, what with their red lips and sparkling eyes and their gay apparel and, above all, their assured and expert use of all their advantages, they were very alluring. A few of the horses carried double. The girl sat the saddle; the man bestrode the *arqueta* behind her, holding her with one arm and guiding the horse with the other. In such case she wore the man's hat, her own slung at her side; while he rode bareheaded except for his handkerchief of silk; and the spirited animal, neck arched, ears slanted in virtue, stepped daintily as though proud of his burden.

Arrived in the open space before the *casa* they drew rein. At once the servants of the *hacienda* surrounded them. Some held the horses by the bits. Others removed the spurs from the heels of the *caballeros*, who flipped them silver coins. One dignified, erect old gentleman with the lofty bearing of a true grandee tossed the *mozo* gold. Then they dismounted and advanced with the greatest dignity to their waiting hosts. The men bowed from the waist; the women curtseyed. A few, men or women, embraced Don Sylvestre and Doña Engracia, arms around, cheek to cheek, looking smiling to left and right; but these were friends of very long standing. They did not kiss. Andy bowed and bowed and bowed again, looking into faces, looking into eyes sedate with ceremony; but friendly, all friendly, and some with a flash of curiosity or coquetry or of covert admiration. He heard the murmur of names—Arrellanes, Carillo, Jimino, Yorba, Lugo, de la Cuesta, Alvarado, Estudillo, Vallejo, Ramirez, de la Torre—some of which later he was to remember well. Now they caressed his ear liquid as the ripple of waters. Their owners passed on and immediately disappeared; some under conduct by the servants; others finding their own way with the assurance of familiarity.

These were the *caballeros* and the *doñas* and *doncellitas*. There seemed no end to them. But still other parties, obviously of a humbler class, rode in, even more numerously; men and women both. These dismounted without help from the *mozos*, and bowed from a distance, and were bid welcome by Don Sylvestre, and led their horses away.

Nor was this all. From time to time unearthly squeals and groans warned of the approach of an ox-drawn *carreta*. From each *rancho* and *hacienda* came one of these crude vehicles heaped with baggage. But occasionally one carried guests: older women, or bevies of girls who preferred this conveyance to the saddle. Such *carretas* were canopied, and heaped with cushions or sheepskins; and they, and the oxen, were decorated with ribbons and flowers. Nevertheless, they jolted along shrieking and springless; they moved in a cloud of dust; and Andy could but admire the unquenched high spirits of their passengers.

They came, and still they came. The house swarmed with people. Beneath every great oak was a group. Multitudes seemed to Andy's confused senses to fill even the open spaces. He found himself wondering where they were all to sleep; how they were all to be fed. But nobody seemed to be worrying about that.

At length he recognized the tall figure of Panchito, who approached and said something to Don Sylvestre. The latter nodded. Ramón touched his friend on the arm.

"They have all come," said he. "Let us go."

The receiving line dispersed; the women to the *casa*, Don Sylvestre in search of some friend of his own age and station. The brothers and Andy strolled away to join one of the groups under the live oaks.

2

Andy saw no more of the women until after dark. They disappeared in the *casa*, together with the baggage brought in by the *carretas*. Nor did any of the men venture to invade that retreat. They arranged themselves in either one or another of the temporary tule huts, or in the open under the spreading oaks. Some were squatted about talking, exchanging news or arguing on some point of politics. Others gathered about the possessor of a guitar. A larger concourse had rallied about a cockfight. A few connoisseurs had mounted horse and ridden to the bottomlands, where they examined the *caponera* and commented on the animals it contained. But already the choicest had been saddled with guests' accoutrement and now stood near the *casa* just in case, as was improbable at this late hour, anyone should fancy to ride.

Ramón, followed by Andy, moved here and there from group to group, everywhere hailed with enthusiasm. He paused for a moment with each, exchanged a flash or so of repartee, and moved on. Andy had anticipated for

himself a certain embarrassment among strangers; but there was none. The young men neither ignored him nor too pointedly included him. Rather they accepted him carelessly, so that when, after a little, Ramón disappeared, the American found he could join any group, not as its guest or its spectator, but as one of it; and that nobody noticed particularly whether he talked or not; and that they turned to him for opinion as easily and naturally as to each other. In short, he was made at ease; and he liked these people; and he began to think he might even like this dreaded *fiesta*. For the moment he had forgotten the women, and was having a heartening masculine time of it, so that when Ramón suddenly reappeared with the guitar and commanded him to sing one of his trappers' songs, he complied without hesitation. It was evident they liked it. One young man, one of the Lugos, it seemed, took the instrument from Andy's hands when he had finished, touched the chords tentatively, his head on one side, humming the tune of the song. His musical memory was astonishing considering the fact that he had heard the air but the once, and that the type of music was so totally dissimilar to that of the Spanish. From time to time he appealed to Andy.

"How goes it here, señor?"

And Andy would hum with him in unison. Shortly the young Californian had it. He was immensely taken with the strange lilt.

"But that is fresh: that is original!" cried Lugo. "But the words: those I could never say. What mean they?"

He listened to Andy's rough translation and shook his head.

"Those things are strange to me," he said. "I shall make words. What words?" He pondered for a moment. "That is not a song of love, nor is it a song of war, nor yet a song of the swallow or the dove or such things. Ha! I know! It is a song of you! I shall make it! You shall see; and it will be the Song of Don Largo, as Ramón has named you, tall like the mountains from which he comes, with the eye of gray like the rocks, and the strength of the wild wind in the peaks, and——"

"Stop, stop!" cried Andy, laughing.

"But no! I have it! Wait! Listen!" Young Lugo struck the flat of his hand on the strings of the guitar and began, at first hesitatingly, then with swifter assurance, to sing his improvisation to the tune of the trappers' melody. It was not bad impromptu verse; but unquestionably it was high flown, not to say hifalutin, and its content should have embarrassed the modest Andy to tears. If any of his old companions among the mountain men had been present! but there were none; and somehow all this foofaraw went naturally with all the other foofaraw, so Andy lay back on his elbow and grinned

happily and quite impersonally. The bystanders listened, patting softly or nodding their heads in time to the lively lilt. A few, then more, struck into the air with one ear cocked for the words. At the final chord a shout of applause.

"Bravo! bravo! *Holá!*" they cried. "Again! again!"

This time all joined in the air, catching at snatches of the words as they remembered them, filling the gaps with humming. The group was augmented by those within hearing. Over and over they tried it, until the whole chorus was shouting out the Song of Don Largo with enormous gusto. Nobody, for the moment, paid any attention to Andy.

Dusk had fallen. Under the trees the servants had lighted fires. Shortly came women bearing kettles of various food and flasks of wine and cups and plates and spoons, which they set down. Each helped himself. From the suspended beef they cut steaks which they roasted over the fires, squatting on their heels. Young Lugo had wandered away. Andy found himself surrounded by strangers; but he did not feel strange. They addressed him easily and naturally as one of themselves; or let him alone as the case might be. He was at ease. Still the women did not appear.

3

But now Ramón was at his elbow holding the reins of two saddled horses.

"Come," said he.

"Where?" asked Andy.

"The dance begins," said Ramón.

Andy did not see why one should not walk the short hundred yards to the pavilion, but he mounted obediently. Before the stout rail they drew rein, and around them and behind them crowded all the other young men, also mounted. From the elevation of the saddle Andy could see the whole interior of the pavilion.

It was brilliantly lighted with hundreds of candles. At one end an orchestra of guitars, violins, and flutes was softly tuning. The older men, Don Sylvestre among them, flanked them on either side. Against the other two walls of the room the girls and older women were seated in chairs.

At first Andy was dazzled, and a little frightened by the thought that he must shortly venture before this formidable array. His impression was of

color and light and slow movement. Then, as Ramón showed no present intention of dismounting, he recovered himself.

Doña Engracia was seated directly opposite to him, with older women to her right and to her left. Farther down the room were the younger women and the girls. They were dressed very much alike in dresses whose colors blended and harmonized. Indeed, had Andy known it, this harmony was the result of a close consultation as to what each was to wear, for the baggage carried many costumes of many colors so that an appropriate choice might be made. Feminine standardization is not so modern, after all. All of these damsels of an earlier day wore their hair cut square across the forehead; a lock curled along each cheek. Nets of color or of gold confined the mass of it in the back. A few, the more advanced in fashion, wore the high comb, later universal, but as yet the very newest thing from Mexico. All draped the silken *rebozo* about the head or shoulder; all were clad in jackets of silk buttoned high in the neck, but fitted to set off well the allurements of a beautiful figure; all spread ample white skirts with wide embroidered hems from beneath which peeped trim ankles red-stockinged in silk, and low shoes with silver buckles. Around their waists were broad scarlet ribbons whose golden ends nearly touched the floor. Necklaces of pearls from Baja California and long eardrops completed the costume. Except for the broad fan, which each waved slowly before her breast, and which was the cause of Andy's first impression of movement.

A personable young man stepped to the middle of the floor. His appearance seemed to be a signal, for the musicians at once struck up. At the same time the other young men outside began to rein their horses to and fro in a slow weaving movement. However, Ramón, as eldest son, and Andy as his guest, did not take part in this maneuver, but sat immobile, facing the barrier.

The young man raised his hands and danced gracefully in time to the music across the floor toward Carmel. He clapped his palms together twice. She arose, placed her hand in his. He held it high, and, still in time to the music, led her to the center of the pavilion. There he stood aside. Carmel, holding her skirts outspread, executed a dozen slow and languorous dance steps. Her lithe body swayed, her little red-clad feet glided to the slow tempo. The young man, aside, swayed also, and his feet moved, but rather as though echoing the dance than as sharing it. His eyes languished down at her in a disgusting manner. At least, that was Andy's reaction. And her eyes, as she danced, peeped up at him from beneath her lashes in a fashion which—to Andy—was altogether too bold for modesty. Suddenly he knew he did not like this young man. He looked effeminate; and his manner was too assured.

Andy felt himself already a member of this household and privileged to resentment on its behalf. Certainly, if any sister of his——

He looked toward Ramón, but that young man appeared to be quite undisturbed. He caught Andy's glance and smiled.

"That is *el tecolero*—what you call?—the master of the dance," he explained.

The exhibition, if such it was, lasted but a few seconds. Already Carmel had resumed her seat, like a butterfly settling, and the *tecolero* was clapping his hands before the girl on her right. The latter, Andy now saw with considerable astonishment, was his little friend, the child Faquita. He had not recognized her, in her ceremonial costume, for in all respects she was a miniature of those about her, even to the string of pearls and the long pendants in her ears. With entire self-possession she duplicated her sister's performance even to the languishment of the upturned eyes. Only a certain exaggerated gravity of conscientiousness in what she was doing betrayed the child in her. And it must be admitted that *el tecolero* was just as devoted in demeanor as he had been to her beautiful sister.

Thus one by one he led the bright butterflies forth to flutter their instant in the center of the stage. The man was tireless. Never for a moment did he cease following with the rhythm of his feet and body the beat and throb of the music. The orchestra seemed equally tireless. The music rose and fell, now whispering, now swelling, like the wind in trees. Occasionally one or another of the guitarists caught up a bar or two of the melody with his voice. The fans waved slowly; the flames of the candles bent and recovered; in the half darkness beyond the barrier the horses weaved to and fro, in and out.

After each of the younger women had thus been given her turn before the eyes of all, *el tecolero* danced his way to Doña Engracia. But she merely arose, touched his uplifted hand, revolved slowly twice, and reseated herself. And so with the other older women, the *dueñas*. As the last of these resumed her chair the orchestra leader cried loudly, "*Bomba!*" and the music ceased. At once arose a chatter of voices.

"Now we shall dance," said Ramón, bending low to remove his spurs. He leaped from his saddle, threw the reins over his horse's head, and, hat in hand, entered the pavilion.

4

Many of the young men followed his example; but as others still kept the saddle, Andy felt that he could do so also. He had no desire to venture on the

floor. He knew nothing of these matters; it was better to watch.

The dances succeeded one another in bewildering and interesting variety. Some of them were general affairs in which many took part; others were solo exhibitions. The *tecolero* directed. The young Felipe sidled his horse alongside Andy's. He was not yet twenty, it appeared, and so was not permitted to take part in a *sone* such as this; though, with his father's permission, he might attend the less formal *baile*, and of course the intimate small *valecito casaros*, the impromptu parties. Andy was glad of his explanations, for without them the meaning of what was going on was sometimes obscure.

For example, the dancers paired, the couples "balanced," formed circles, the men passing in one direction, the women in the other, until again the partners were opposite. It was a very simple dance, but its performance required a certain majestic grace of movement which raised it from banality to beauty. Felipe called it *la jota*.

Indeed, there was in many of these dances a certain childlike quality of simplicity, stark in structure, but lovely in the clothing of grace and gayety. Thus equal numbers of men and women formed a ring about a lone man in the center, around whom they circled in time to the music. The orchestra leader sang the verses of an apparently interminable song. At intervals all the men, including him who was alone in the center, embraced the nearest woman. Naturally, as the numbers were unequal, one must get left; and he took the place in the center to a chorus of joyous cries, *burro! el burro!* Felipe told Andy that the signal for these changes was a certain catch word in the verses which each, naturally, was vigilant to hear. A variation compelled the man thus caught instantly to recite an original quatrain, supposedly impromptu, celebrating the charms of the lady to whom the chance of the moment had brought him opposite. A vote by acclamation decided whether the effort was worthy, or whether the perpetrator should be dismissed from the dance. It was a pretty test of wit; and Andy was very sure he could never take part in it. Nor indeed, he thought, in any of the others, as his eye followed with growing pleasure the stately and enchanting grace of their movement.

In these general dances for the whole company the men chose their partners. But the reverse was the case for the solos. Then the girl snatched a man's hat and, perching it rakishly atop her head, darted away pursued by its owner. It was the challenge to dance. Some of these solos were remarkable, but, Andy learned from Felipe, they were all known and standardized and

named, and their performance critically estimated. One of the most astonishing, to him, was executed by Carmel.

In spite of himself, Andy had found his eyes constantly returning to Carmel, and the fact irritated him, though, if he had paused to think of it, he would not have understood why. He did not approve of Carmel. To his sober mind she was much too conspicuous. She made eyes over her fan at everything in breeches that came in range. In the dances she turned and twisted her lithe body after a fashion that Andy thought immodest. She had daubed her face with too much powdered eggshells. She was altogether too —well, too vivid. She was having much too good a time: and Andy illogically resented it. She danced promiscuously with everybody who came along—and they swarmed about her. She danced continuously with that *tecolero* popinjay. Andy entertained equally these two ideas without a thought of their inconsistency. Now she had clapped the popinjay's hat on her head and had scampered about the place like a tomboy, and had been grabbed and mauled about and yanked out in the center of the pavilion, and Doña Engracia sitting there as placid as you please! Somebody might have asked Andy what business it was of his, and he could have had no reply; but nobody did, not even himself.

She signaled the orchestra.

"*La bamba!*" cried Felipe at the first strains of the music.

A burst of applause; then dead silence. Arms outspread, Carmel swayed gently to the rhythm. Someone handed the *tecolero* a glass filled with water which he balanced carefully atop her head. Then he knotted the ends of a handkerchief and laid it on the floor at her feet. Carmel's movements quickened, her body swaying ever the more widely, her outspread hands fluttering, her little feet executing a complicated pattern of steps around and within the circumference of a small circle in the center of which lay the knotted handkerchief.

"*Holá!*" she cried sharply.

There was a quick flip of a foot, a swirl of wide skirts: the handkerchief had vanished.

"*Holá!*" she cried again, and there on the tip of her outpointed toe it hung.

The *tecolero* removed the unspilled glass from her head. A burst of applause burst forth, in which Andy, almost unwillingly, joined. The younger people shouted, clamored in a wild informality of enthusiasm; but

the older women holding their hands high over their heads clapped their palms together in the beat of a measured rhythm.

When the noise had died down Don Sylvestre arose to his feet.

"*Un rosario!*" he announced loudly.

Felipe told Andy that this meant a quarter hour's intermission. In the old days it was called about once in so often, so that the pious merrymakers might tell their beads; but now it signified merely a recess. The musicians laid aside their instruments and betook themselves to the refreshment table outside. The women, for the most part, disappeared within doors. Ramón returned to reclaim his horse. He was scandalized to find Andy exactly where he had left him.

"But these *fiesta* is for you!" he complained, "and all the *doncellitas* await to see you. They have ask me many time, where is this, the one you speak so much of? Is he *jorobado* that he does not show himself?"

"I reckon they'd find my dancing hump-backed even if I ain't," said Andy.

"But you make the dance very well with Vicenta at the *rancho*. And you have not pay your respec' to my mamá and the *dueñas*. That is escandal!"

"All right, I suppose I must do that," conceded Andy reluctantly. "Your sister did that *bamba* dance wonderfully," he said, to change the subject.

"Carmelita? Oh, yes, she do good enough," agreed Ramón with fraternal indifference.

The ladies were drifting back into the pavilion. Andy saw his friend's face light up and followed the direction of his eyes to a girl. She looked to Andy very much like all the other girls of her age, for he was unskilled in smaller feminine distinctions, and found it as puzzling then as he would now to distinguish individuals in the standardized product.

"Who is that señorita just now coming in?" he asked, but merely because of his friend's obvious interest.

The enthusiasm with which Ramón rose to his question brought to his lips an involuntary smile, which he instantly erased. But Ramón caught it.

"Ah, *amigo*, you laugh!" he chided. "You are so near my heart you read it clear. But is she not beautiful? See, her hair eshine as she move; and her eye, so deep that in it the soul dive down, down, like in the sea! And she is *pequeña*, like I joke to you at the *rancho*, so that on the top of the so-small head my chin he just touch!"

"How do you know? Have you tried it?" Andy laughed.

"She is *doncellita*," he said haughtily. "You must not say such thing!"

"I am sorry." Andy was distressed at Ramón's heat. "I did not mean ____"

But the young Californian was already himself contrite.

"No! no-no!" he cried. "It is I who am sorry! I forget too many things. I forget you are *americano*. I, who know, forget your customs. I forget you do not know the custom of the Espanish peoples. Forgive me, *amigo*."

"I was only joking," murmured Andy.

"Yes! Yes! But when one loves," Ramón was unembarrassed by the confession, "one does not touch, one does not espeak unless in the presence of Mamá or *la dueña*. No! no-no! That is very bad!"

"Well," said Andy, "I admit I'm a greenhorn, but it seems to me that makes it a little difficult—and just a little unsatisfactory."

"Unsateesfactory?" Ramón repeated the word. "Ah, *lo qué no convence!* But no! I look; I breathe from the heart; and she look back to me. And by and by, when the dance is finish, I take my *guitarra* and I creep so soft to her window and I sing the song of love!" He hummed softly a few bars of sweet minor cadences. Abruptly his tone changed. "But I do not know behind which window she esleep," he said savagely. "That I do not know; and I ask and I ask and I do not find out. My mamá she just make the esmile; and the *doncellitas* they laugh when I ask."

"Won't the young lady herself tell you?"

"Conchita?" Ramón was scandalized. "She tell? But that I would not ask of her! That would be eshameless!"

"Sorry again!" but Andy could not suppress a chuckle over the fantastic hopelessness of the situation.

Ramón smiled ruefully; then laid his hand on Andy's arm.

"But you shall do this for me, *amigo!*" he cried, struck with a sudden inspiration.

"I? Do what?"

"Find out for me where she esleep."

"Oh, I thought you wanted me to sing to her," Andy grinned.

But Ramón was now much too serious for joking. He brushed this aside.

"It will be like this," he proposed rapidly. "You shall make the dance with *la muchachita*, with my little sister Faquita. She will tell you if you do that, for she think you ver' fine and call you her *caballero*, and she will be

so flatter that she will tell you all that you ask. She is only little girl, that I know, but you will do this for me, eh?"

Andy nodded. It was not a bad idea. If he must dance, he would rather make a fool of himself with the child than with any of the terrifying *doncellitas*.

"You haven't told me the lady's name yet—if I may ask that," he reminded.

"Ah, no?" Ramón was surprised. "It is Conchita: Conchita de la Cuesta." The name rippled caressingly from his tongue with the murmur of flowing waters.

"But that is a beautiful name!" cried Andy. "Ramón, yours is a beautiful language!"

"Yes?" said Ramón. "But not so beautiful as the English."

"But English is not beautiful."

"But yes!" insisted Ramón, "I think the most beautiful two words I know are English."

"What are they?"

"Cellar door," said Ramón; and as he pronounced it—celadór—the syllables were indeed lovely.

His eyes, as he talked, never ceased following the fair Conchita.

"See how she move, *amigo!*" he burst forth again—"like the deer. And see her so-lovely eshape, and how when she move this way and that way her so-small breast show itself like the apple, and the silk so thin that if you look close you may see the *pezón* which is undoubtedly like the bud of the rose."

Andy perceived that this was indeed true. Indeed, he had not been able to avoid seeing it, though, as a gentleman, he had conscientiously tried. Now he was astounded to learn that he should not try. It was too much for him. One must not touch or speak, it seemed, but one may, quite unembarrassed, comment on a lady's nipples. Ramón had spoken with entire absence of self-consciousness.

He was spared further ecstasies by the appearance of a servant with a tray of wineglasses, from which each horseman helped himself. At the same time the music swung into a rhythmic lilt.

"Hah!" cried Ramón. "*La cachucha!*"

El tecolero led the girl Conchita to the center and stood aside. She struck an attitude, body bent back and sideways at the waist, one toe pointed forward, her arms gracefully above her head. For an instant she held it, then

with a sharp snap of her fingers started to dance. Ramón was staring with all his eyes.

"Hah!" he cried again, and struck spurs to his horse.

Over the barrier the *palomino* sailed like a bird plump into the middle of the dancing floor, where instantly its rider brought it to a stand. The *tecolero* leaped hastily to one side. Ramón was leaning forward in the saddle, the filled wineglass, from which not a drop had been spilled, outheld. Several of the women uttered startled cries; the orchestra faltered a moment but immediately resumed. Conchita flashed upward a smile. It was a pretty sight. The girl swayed, whirled, advanced, retreated in the coquettish symbolism of the dance; and Ramón, his reins held high, maneuvered the horse in perfect complement to its intricacies, while from the glass in his hand he sprinkled the wine before her as she danced. His eyes blazed; and from time to time little cries escaped him of inspiration and encouragement.

"*Holá!*" he cried. "*Va! Echela todos, mi alma!*"

Which last, had Andy lived in modern times, he might very accurately have translated as "shoot the works."

The crash of the music in finale stopped Conchita short in a back-flung pose. Ramón stooped from his saddle, lifted the girl by the waist, struck spurs again to his horse, and over the barrier they flew into the outer darkness pursued by a clamor of *vivas*. He deposited her gently on the earth; at once, laughing, she scurried back to her place in the pavilion.

"Thought you should not touch," observed Andy dryly.

"But thees was of the dance." Ramón was very earnest about it. "And she return immediately: she do not estay here with me."

Which seemed to Andy only another of the fine distinctions.

"What you think? Is she not beautiful? Do she not do the dance like the birds?"

Andy assented: but secretly he thought Conchita's performance far below that of Carmel.

He entered the pavilion with Ramón to pay his respects to his hostess and to the *dueñas*. He had to cross its floor exposed to a battery of bright, curious, and somewhat critical eyes. The anticipation of this had dismayed him; but now that the time had come he moved with a composure whose surface, at least, afforded no chinks of vulnerability. Andy's training in danger had developed in him one precious faculty, that of rising to emergency by sheer iron imposition of will. Furthermore, he was possessed of a certain natural dignity, and a fierce pride that refused to let him down.

The effort he was making set his face into lines of sternness which suited well his aquiline Indian-like cast of countenance. Andy kissed Doña Engracia's hand, elaborating the gesture deliberately into a foofaraw that was his defiance, but which, originating in self-forgetfulness, resulted in grace. The *doncellitas* fluttered and rustled behind their fans, whispering breathlessly.

"You come belatedly, Don Andrés," his hostess chided him.

"I am strange to your customs, so I watched. And I do not know how to dance your dances."

"But that is foolish when so many would make you welcome. And since all know that you are strange to our customs, no one must blame mistakes. We wish to give you pleasure, señor. And as for the dancing, you must not disappoint the young ladies who will be joyful to teach you. It is all for pleasure, señor. If you would please me, you will dance."

"Why, then I will do my best, señora," said Andy, touched by her earnestness. "But I fear these ladies will find me clumsy as a bear."

Doña Engracia looked up at him quickly. His grave face did not alter by the flicker of an eyelash.

"Nonsense," said she, "you move more like the puma. So go now and take your partner. But this is one of our customs, which I shall tell you, that first of all you should dance with a daughter of the *hacienda*."

"That I find a pleasant custom, señora." He bowed and turned away. Carmel looked down demurely in certain anticipation. But he passed her by and stood before the child, Faquita.

Carmel flushed angrily and bit her lip. For an instant the fans ceased their movement. Beneath an exaggerated decorum of demeanor rippled a concealed surprise and a relished amusement.

"Will you dance with me, señorita?" said Andy with grave formality.

Faquita glanced timidly toward her mother. That she was present at all had been a tremendous concession. She was not supposed to dance, for she was only a child. But Doña Engracia nodded. Faquita arose with a delight she tried in vain to repress. Her cup of bliss was full. The dance, probably by kindly instruction, proved to be a figure dance, somewhat after the order of a quadrille, so that Andy was able, by observation and by Faquita's eager help, to walk through it without discredit. He blundered once or twice, turned the wrong way, but there proved to be no embarrassment in his mistakes. They set him right so gayly and with such kindly good-humor that

Andy laughed, and then they laughed too. Of a sudden he was at ease and ready to do anything.

As soon as he had returned Faquita to her seat he was pounced upon by Ramón.

"It is the third room in the west wing," Andy told him.

"Soul of my soul!" cried Ramón rapturously, though it is uncertain to whom he referred.

Andy was bending forward to his friend's ear, his hands behind his back. He felt his hat snatched violently from them, and turned startled to see Carmel scuttling away down the length of the enclosure, the hat perched rakishly on the side of her head. Andy stared after her in dismay and back to Ramón in perplexity.

The latter was delighted.

"Go now, you must catch her. Go on, quick!" Ramón pushed him with the flat of his hand.

Carmel had turned at the end of the room, her eyes cool and insolent in challenge. Andy hesitated, then his jaws set.

"Oh, very well," he muttered, "if that's your game!"

Ordinarily these affairs were merely a pretty pretense of capture, but Carmel avoided Andy with what was evidently a determination to embarrass him. She was quick and lithe, and for two moves evaded her pursuer. A good many people were laughing, with entire good feeling, it is true, but laughing just the same. Andy's eyes narrowed. He half turned away, as though to abandon the chase, then suddenly whirled and pounced. It was an extraordinary leap, from a stand, quick, graceful, sudden, like the spring of a panther.

Holding his captive firmly by one arm, he turned to face the room.

"Now what?" he demanded of Ramón.

"Now we dance," Carmel told him, "if you can!" She moved to disengage her arm, but Andy tightened his grip. For ten seconds he stood thus in thought. Ramón was watching him with delighted interest. The *dueñas* and the *doncellitas* and the older men at the end of the room were watching him too. The musicians waited, poised for a signal. Doña Engracia leaned forward to say something, but Ramón stopped her with a gesture of the flat of his hand. Outside, in the darkness, the horses had ceased their weaving to and fro.

Suddenly he came to a decision; and at once discovered he was master of himself. He faced the attentive room with cold assurance.

"*Señoras* and *señores*," said he, "I do not yet know your dances. I am not yet entirely a *californio*; I am a mountain man still. But dance I must, it seems, as this *doncellita* makes plain to me. *Bueno.*"

And suddenly he threw back his head and uttered the wild high cry of the Indian warwhoop; leaped into the air; cracked his heels together. Several of the women shrieked. The girl Carmel stared at him round eyed, with parted lips.

"You shall dance with me a dance of mountain men, *señorita*," Andy told her in level cold tones. He seized her, almost roughly, by the waist. The orchestra, without order or instruction, struck up a lively air. Its leader was one of the house's bastards, as Ramón said, and was possessed of quick intuitions.

Andy danced with the girl Carmel. He stamped his feet, he leaped in the air, he flung his body, he whirled his partner violently from one arm to the other, around and about. It was not a graceful performance, for the refinements of grace could not have held within their narrow containment the wild, barbarous upflinging outrush of sheer animal exuberance after loneliness which was the expression of this dance. But it had a contagion. Andy began it in the coolness of defiance; but as the music quickened and his blood mounted his present surroundings slipped away. Across the gap of the vanished years the spark leaped. Taos: Estrellita with her loose white *camisita* and her short swirling skirt, and her smooth bare legs, and the flash of her dark and alluring eyes; and the feel of her, soft against him; and the gleam of her sharp little teeth; the murk and heat and odor of the low dim room; the throb and beat of the guitars; the confusion of tall buckskin-clad figures leaping about—Howgh—owgh! Howgh—owgh! Andy too was uttering the war cry, swept back in spirit to vanished days. Faster! Faster! A dam had broken within him. He was riding high on waters released. Howgh—owgh! Howgh—owgh!

Carmel could not catch her breath; could not have escaped if she would. Things happened to her so rapidly she could not seize hold on herself. She was squeezed close, flung to arm's length, whirled about, at times swung clear off the floor. The man's muscles were iron; his strength prodigious. And suddenly *crash!* she was set down violently on her two feet; and *crash* the inspired music ended; and the pavilion seemed to steady as from the subsiding turbulence of waters. The man was holding her fingers firmly in his own and bowing composedly to the assembly.

For ten seconds a doubtful and somewhat dismayed silence. Some of the older women frowned; some of the younger men muttered. No one knew quite what to think or do, whether to resent or applaud. Certainly no *doncellita* had ever, in all the history of California, taken quite so public a mauling. Was it a scandal, an insult—or wasn't it? Carmel herself tipped the scales of decision. She was shaken, her garments disarranged, her hair had partly escaped from its golden net. A hint of resentment on her part would have been sufficient. She disengaged her fingers from Andy's clasp, spread wide her skirt, dipped low in a sweeping curtsey, first to the audience, then to Andy, then again to the audience, as one does who seeks commendation for a concluded performance. Ramón applauded vigorously. At first uncertainly, then with growing enthusiasm, the others followed his lead.

Under its cover Andy turned to lead her to her seat. Abruptly, as the music stopped, he came to himself.

"*Gracias, señorita*," he said to her with all sincerity, as they crossed the floor; and both knew that he was not thanking her merely for her partnership.

She glanced up at him sidewise.

"But you are strong, señor!" she murmured breathlessly. "I feel as though I had been in a whirlwind."

"I am sorry, señorita. I had not meant to be so rough. I was carried away."

She gave him fully her eyes.

"No, señor, you must not say that," she said seriously, "for it is I who must be sorry and who must say to you *gracias*."

For a second her eyes held his, then into their depths flickered a faint mischief.

"I think that must be called *la danza del oso*, the dance of the bear, is it not, señor?"

She fled the last few steps to her chair.

Andy grinned to himself. So the tame bear had danced for her after all. But, he felt, honors were even.

And now Carlos Lugo had the inspiration which was to turn this doubtful situation to a full triumph for Andy. Seizing a guitar from one of the musicians he struck its chords and in full voice swung into the barbaric lilt of the mountain man's song, the Song of Don Largo. One by one others of the young men who had been of the group under the live oak tree leaped

the barrier to gather close about the singer. The lusty full-blooded chorus swelled to a shout. People laughed and applauded and beat time. Ramón was clapping Andy on the shoulder. Everybody was looking at him; everybody was smiling.

And Andy stood there, a little embarrassed, a little deprecatory, but very much glad. Ramón was the best of friends; Carlos Lugo was a fine fellow; these people, for all their foofaraw of person and manner, were warm hearted and generous. He looked toward Doña Engracia: she smiled at him. He looked toward Don Sylvestre: the austere dignity of his face was relaxed. He looked toward Carmel: her lashes were cast down, so there his eyes lingered. Ramón was right: she was very beautiful. He had not really noticed how beautiful she was. Her arms, raised to the rearrangement of her hair, were soft and round. The attitude drew smooth the silk of her high buttoned waist. Andy could not avoid recollection of Ramón's naïve comment as to another girl. His dark face flushed, and he forced his eyes away. They met those of the child, Faquita, gazing at him solemnly.

5

But now Don Sylvestre arose to restore order to the confused occasion. He announced the *canastita de flores*, the dance that would terminate the occasion, and all joined hands in a great circle, singing very sweetly, and at the last word of the song each embraced the person next him. Then the men escorted the women to the doors of the *casa* with the music of guitars, after which they mounted and rode about for some time singing in the darkness until their spirits were stilled and they sought rest at last.

The air was tepid and sweet at this season. The younger men slept in the open beneath the great live oak trees, leaving the small temporary huts of tules to the elders. The *casa* had been turned over entire to the ladies. One by one the lights were extinguished. The world was stilled, except for the shrill night insects, and the cry of the little owls, and the faint tinkle of a guitar, and with it the voice of Ramón beneath the third window in the left wing.

"*Tú tienes diamantes y perlas,*
Tú tienes los ojos divinos,
Tú tiernos divinos los ojos.
Qué más, oh qué más quieres tú?"

It was very sweet. A light flickered for a moment behind the window's bars, flickered and was extinguished. Shortly after, the shadowy form of

Ramón stole through the darkness. The young man was ecstatic. That single candle gleam had recompensed him; it was shining in his heart. Beneath the covering of his broadcloth poncho Andy stretched his long muscles luxuriously. He had had a good time. Yes: undoubtedly he had made a star-spangled fool of himself, but he had had a good time. A bird in the branches overhead twittered sleepily. He was surprised. Was dawn so near? Well, he was glad of it, for it meant another day and what it would bring forth. What it was he did not know; but he was eager for it. The air of Ramón's song echoed faintly in his memory like a little breeze. *Qué más quieres tú?* What more did he want? He did not know; but something avid was tingling within him. Life was quivering, a-tiptoe.

"*Amigo*," Ramón was whispering, "you sleep?"

"No," said Andy.

"Is she not beautiful?" whispered Ramón.

"Very beautiful," agreed Andy again; but it was not Conchita he was seeing.

And so ended this day which, because of these two young men, was to be remembered. Long would those who had been present tell of Ramón's *palomino* and the *cachucha*, but especially of the dance of the mountain man, so that this *fiesta* was to be famous as the *Fiesta de Don Largo*.

CHAPTER VIII
Merienda

A CALIFORNIA *fiesta* of the old days in externals little resembled the trappers' rendezvous; but in many fundamentals its spirit was the same. Therefore Andy was more familiarly at ease than he would have believed possible. Thus, nobody appeared to sleep much; and when awake, save for recurrent general assemblies, like the dance of the evening before, each did exactly as he pleased. Nobody had lain down for sleep much before dawn. Nevertheless, soon after daybreak a few of the more exuberant were afoot, and then a-horseback; after which the rest might as well turn out.

Andy straggled down to the stream with the others, and plunged his head in the cold water, and was as good as new. But he found himself incapable of the explosive high spirits of these California young men. At this hour they seemed egregious, even to the hardened mountain man, to whom the loss of a night's sleep meant nothing. They talked and argued and joked and laughed and sang snatches of song and shouted for horses. The place rapidly turned into a three-ringed circus. Mounted men scurried in all directions, skylarking, or competing in impromptu races and games.

For a while Andy stood apart, watching gravely, but with great interest, and an even greater admiration of the superb horsemanship. After a time Ramón espied him and dashed up on the *palomino*.

"But come!" he cried. "You must not estand thus! This is esport! *Holá!*" he shouted. "Juan! saddle *el señor* his horse!"

"Not I!" said Andy. "I'll just watch."

Ramón laughed mischievously.

"But it will be hours before the *doncellitas* they come," said he. "Now they sleep!"

His eyes followed Ramón and the *palomino* as they swooped toward a group of horsemen who had been conferring. The confused dashing about was steadying to some sort of game, a good deal like ring-around-a-rosy, but

on horseback. The horses' noses were turned to a common center. Around the outside of the circle thus formed one man rode slowly. He carried a peeled rod. Suddenly he thrust the rod beneath the arm of one of the horsemen, who reined back and at once pursued him. The first man ducked and dodged, striving to dart into the vacated place. The other tried to head him off, and at the same time to get near enough to beat him with the rod before he could gain that sanctuary. It was a simple game, but it involved considerable dash and skilled horsemanship and jostling and plunging. They played this for a few moments, and then someone appeared dragging a hide at the end of a reata, and the party shouted acclaim of the new idea, and the game broke up. The hide was spread flat on the ground. From a distance of about a hundred yards one by one each dashed toward it full speed. Just before he reached it he brought his horse to a plunging halt. The idea seemed to be that this halt should be so accurately timed that the horse's forehoofs should come to rest on the hide. Apparently it was miss and out, for he who failed to do so, or who began to check his horse too soon, or who did not cover the hundred yards at a speed sufficiently headlong, fell out of the contest. Perhaps exhibition might be the better word, for before the field was narrowed down to a winner this game too was abandoned in favor of another. A *peon* appeared afoot, dodging through the horsemen, carrying a chicken under his arm. While the horses danced impatiently about him, he proceeded methodically and without haste to bury the unfortunate fowl in the loose earth, until only its head and neck, shining with grease, were left exposed. Again one by one the horsemen rode by at full run, swooping from the saddle at just the right instant to snatch at the chicken. It was obviously no easy feat. A swerve by the horse of even a few inches; a mistake in timing of a fraction of a second; even a slight uncertainty of grasp on the greased feathers were sufficient to cause a miss. The rider swung gracefully to his seat, his clutching fingers empty, and circled his mount back to a stand amid the good-natured laughter of the bystanders. But an astonishing percentage of the contestants succeeded. The demoralized fowl, snatched from the earth, was tossed high and squawking through the air to the outstretched waiting hands of the group of *peones* who had gathered to watch the sport—and to acquire thus the makings of something unusual and especial in the way of a feast. And immediately a fresh chicken was produced for the next rider.

At this juncture appeared Don Sylvestre and some of the older men, also on horseback, saluting the youngsters gravely and sonorously, and by them greeted respectfully in a briefly imposed decorum. The *hidalgo* and his friends sat their horses sedately, looking on. But Don Sylvestre's appearance

gave a new turn to the proceedings. The chicken idea was abandoned in favor of the silver coins which Don Sylvestre tossed to earth one by one. The riders found even more difficulty in picking up the coins; but when one was retrieved it spun and flashed through the air to the eager *peones*. Needless to say the *peones* liked this game. They shouted their encouragement lustily. The hullabaloo, subdued for a moment by the arrival of the older men, rose again to a clamor. Ramón was everywhere, a gay and vivid figure on his "silver horse," the *palomino*. Everybody was good-humored; in the highest spirits. Once only the occasion clouded. One of the young men by a mischance not only missed his grasp at the silver coin, but missed his seat as well and rolled over in the dust. Andy perceived, with satisfaction, that this was none other than last evening's master of the dance, *el tecolero*. The satisfaction was unworthy of him. He could not have explained it, nor why he disliked this young man, who was a harmless if somewhat effeminate-looking individual. Possibly he was too foofaraw. He laughed, and the *tecolero* saw him and scowled, though the others too were laughing. However, he turned his exasperation over the mishap toward Ramón.

"Your pardon, señor? I did not hear," said Ramón, with sudden grave formality.

"I say I have not your luck, señor," reiterated the *tecolero*, brushing the dust from his garments and remounting his horse, which a *peon* had captured.

"My luck?" repeated Ramón. "What mean you by that?"

"I suppose you did not have luck last night, with the wine, then?"

The reference was clear, for at the dance of the evening before, Ramón, filled wineglass in hand, had leaped his horse over the barrier to the center of the floor, and no drop spilled, to finish the dance mounted, opposite the girl Conchita. Incidentally the maneuver had jostled aside rather rudely her partner, none other than this young man, who now, for the first time, gave vent to his ruffled feelings.

Ramón stared at him a moment. Then he raised his voice.

"Antero!" he called.

One of the *peones* left the group to stand at his stirrup.

"You will go to Vicenta," Ramón instructed him, "and she will give you twelve glasses of wine on a tray, and you will bring them to me."

The man disappeared. They awaited his return in silence; the young men with the eagerness of a restrained curiosity; the older men in the profound

noncommittal gravity of their years; the *tecolero* sullen and uncertain. Only the horses moved slightly, throwing their heads, stamping their feet.

Antero shortly reappeared with the glasses of wine. Ramón balanced the tray on the tips of his fingers held high, turned the *palomino*, and slowly paced it across the open space before the *casa* to where the hill dropped away. He wheeled to face them, poised motionless as a statue of stone. Then with a shout Ramón struck home the spurs. The palomino snorted and leaped. At full speed it raced, until within ten feet or so of the uneasy young man.

"*Holá!*" cried Ramón.

Stiff-legged the *palomino* slid to a halt. Ramón lowered the upheld tray; held it at arm's length toward the *tecolero*; bowed.

"Don Gastón," he said in tones of silky politeness, "a glass of wine with me to the luck of the Riveras!"

The young man hesitated, but Ramón held him with his eye. He took one of the glasses. Ramón bowed again and slowly backed the silver horse, step by step, across the open space to the *casa*. There he stopped for a moment, then trotted forward again to distribute the remaining glasses of wine to the nearest of the bystanders.

2

He raised his own glass.

"To the luck of the Riveras!" he repeated, "—and to the friend that luck has brought me, Don Andrés Bur-r-nett—Don Largo." This was well received, for Andy was already popular. "And now, my friends, you shall see something wonderful, which you have never seen before, and of which I have not told you, because without the seeing you would not believe."

He signed with his hand, and again the *peon* Antero stepped forward. Evidently he had been already instructed, for he carried Andy's long rifle, the Boone gun, together with the belt on which were slung the knife, the powder horn, and the shot pouch of the regular equipment. Andy took them, smiling good-naturedly. He was perfectly willing to oblige Ramón. There was no spirit of vanity in his willingness. Simply he possessed something curious and strange to these people, who were being friendly to him, and he was to show it to them as he would a strange and curious coin. He loaded the Boone gun methodically. His eyes casting about for an appropriate mark caught a momentary flutter behind one of the high barred windows of the *casa* where, officially, the *doncellitas* lay sound asleep. For an instant the

hickory ramrod hesitated in the long sweep of its motion, then drove the patched ball home. A great illumination came to Andy. Now he understood a number of things that had been obscure—the why of all this early morning high spirits, and this dashing about on horseback, and all these brave feats of skill, and why they had been performed so inconsiderately near to the slumbering *casa*. He grinned secretly. Conchita had slept in the west wing, which was on the other side of the house; but Andy had every confidence that Ramón's feat of horsemanship had not been missed by the one for whom it was intended. And he himself quite deliberately modified his own first intention. He had thought to shoot at a prosaic mark on a live oak tree. Now he had a better idea. Having completed the charging of the Boone gun, he placed one of the empty wineglasses at a distance of fifty or sixty yards and proceeded to blow it into fine bits. This, for Andy, was an easy shot; but to the Californians it was remarkable; and therefore it was completely satisfactory as an exhibition. That was what Andy was giving, an exhibition, so like a good showman he intended attempting nothing of which he was the least uncertain. Indeed, so shamelessly gone in foofaraw by now was he that he condescended to what any rifleman would have recognized as trick work. He thrust a bit of paper over the muzzle of the piece apparently to obscure the object of his aim, and in spite of it broke a second wineglass. It looked like blind work. Actually it was nothing of the sort. Andy kept both eyes open. The left eye saw the object of his aim around the edge of the piece of paper; the right eye aligned the sights; the laws of optics superimposed these two separate images, as any reader of these lines may prove by trying it himself. But to the spectators it was a marvel, almost a miracle. Some of the *peones* crossed themselves, a trifle fearfully. With a third shot Andy split a block of wood which he had Antero toss straight up into the air. Probably he would have been capable of this as a feat of plain marksmanship; but he took no chances. He stood so that the sun shone over his left shoulder. Then all he had to do was to point the rifle in the direct perpendicular line of the billet, holding his head high, his eyes fixed, not on the sights but on the brown glossy surface of the barrel. At the exact instant when the shadow, or rather the reflection, of the falling object darkened that surface, he pulled trigger, and again the obliging laws of optics sped the bullet to its mark. He dropped the butt of the long rifle to earth, and grinned his engaging grin at the acclamations, and stole a glance out of the corner of his eye toward the high barred windows of the *casa*, for Carmel Rivera did not sleep in the west wing. It was foofaraw, of course, but foofaraw was the order of the day, wasn't it? And Andy, the straightforward, direct mountain man, was not in the least ashamed of himself, and no thought came to him of what Jack Kelly would say to such a performance.

“The knife, *amigo*,” Ramón pleaded. “For love of me, the knife! Now you shall see something!” he promised them proudly.

He was urgent, but he did not need to be. Andy was quite willing. He did things with the knife; even more marvelous things than he had done with the rifle. Antero, who was a resourceful *peon*, brought as a mark a fat ripe squash, which was just the thing, for the blade cut into it in a most satisfying fashion. Andy pierced it again and again, lengthening the range between each cast, until the bright weapon, turning over and over in its graceful arc, was hurtling through the air a full fifty feet. Then, shortening the distance, he did the same thing with his left hand. He cast sidewise across his chest; finally he turned his body and threw over his shoulder. He was inspired; he could not miss. Foofaraw, of course, but grand foofaraw, glorious foofaraw. Ramón was as tickled as a dog with two tails. Andy for the last time retrieved the knife from the mutilated squash, and wiped the blade, boyishly pleased, and belatedly just a little diffident.

But now the men were laughing, shouting at him, calling his attention toward the *casa*. From the barred window fluttered a small white hand.

“Go, *amigo*!” cried Ramón. “You must take!”

Suddenly Andy was filled with embarrassment. He would have liked well to efface himself. But even Don Sylvestre was smiling at him, motioning him on. He crossed the open space, stood beneath the window. From the white hand something fluttered to the ground. He stooped to pick it up; then stood staring at it, his dark face flushing. He felt very flat, very foolish, very much alone exposed to the ridicule of many eyes. For what he held was no pretty guerdon of rose or jasmine, but a sprig of common sage, dry and powdery with the season, a sorry mockery. He did not know what to do.

But Ramón, perceiving his hesitation, was at his side.

“No! no!” he negatived Andy’s gesture, “you put him in the hat. You wear him in the hat. What I tell you? Some of these *doncellitas* she send you this as message.”

“Message?” repeated Andy.

“But yes. All the flower, they say thing. Do not you know that? And this one say this: ‘I await for you.’ ”

Andy glanced up at the window. It was blank. The men, his friends, were smiling at him, and their smiles were kindly. Evidently they did not consider this a joke, or at least not one maliciously intended. He thought of the child, Faquita. But that was no child’s hand. His eyes crossed those of Don Gastón,

the *tecolero*, and stopped with a shock. They glared at him with a blaze of hatred. Andy thoughtfully removed his *sombrero* and thrust the bit of sage beneath its band.

3

A number of *vaqueros*, each leading three or four saddled horses, rode to the door of the *casa* and stopped. Two decorated *carretas* followed. The men abandoned their sports to join the group. After a short wait the door opened and the women emerged.

Slowly and with much chatter and laughter the cavalcade took form. Most of the young women, and some of the elder, rode their own horses, sitting their saddles with accustomed grace, their small high-arched Spanish feet resting daintily in the looped broad ribbons that served in lieu of stirrups. Beneath the wide straw hats the sun cloths stirred in the breeze, alternately obscuring and revealing round cheeks, red lips, soft or sparkling eyes; an effective substitute for the fan. A few of the *doncellitas*, wearing their *caballero's* hats and carrying their own over the left arm, rode a man's horse, which its owner managed from his place behind the saddle; but this privilege, Andy learned, was reserved for the suitor accepted, or at least markedly favored. Several offered, and were refused, and fell back with an air of resignation; though, Andy thought, some of the refusals looked rather strategic than final. Ramón, holding Conchita thus on the *palomino*, glanced triumphantly at his friend. Andy saw his arm tighten, and the girl yield her soft body ever so slightly to the pressure; and he could not help wondering how that would feel, and his eye involuntarily wandered, seeking Carmel, and he fetched himself up short, slightly scandalized; but at once deliberately and recklessly turned back to entertain the thought.

Remembering in time Ramón's explanation of its value as a favor, he did not quite dare to invite Carmel to his saddle; but he did spur forward to her side. And as he was the guest of the house, as also the ostensible reason for all this merrymaking, the half dozen or more young men about her fell back, leaving him a clear field.

But just before the party set forth Ramón called him aside for a moment.

"Here," said he hastily in Spanish, out of courtesy to Conchita. "You must make reply. Yes, it must be: it is courteous. Place it also in the hat."

He thrust upon Andy a sprig of jasmine. Andy took it but looked doubtfully at his friend.

"What does it say?" he wanted to know.

"Ask the *doncellita*," Ramón laughed.

Andy turned in appeal to Conchita, but she shook her pretty head, then nodded encouragingly.

"I must not tell you that, señor," she smiled. Her eyes met his. Andy searched them; found in them reassurance. He thrust the jasmine in his hatband.

For a fleeting instant Carmel's eye rested on the decoration; but her face was inscrutable. Don Sylvestre gave the signal by turning his horse. The procession started. Down the slope; across the flat where the meadowlarks sang and the wild cattle stared; toward the spreading white oaks and the sycamores of the bottomland moved the cavalcade at decorous pace, colorful as a figured tapestry. The horses arched their necks and stepped daintily in a proud rectitude of restraint. The *carretas*, blooming like flower baskets with the brilliant colors of the women's garments, creaked soberly in the rear. A number of unattached young men surrounded it solicitously. Still others rode slowly off the flanks, playing guitars. Several of them, from time to time, edged alongside Andy and Carmel. They did not look toward the couple, and, after a few seconds, reined back or spurred ahead. The guest of the *fiesta* must of courtesy have his clear field with *la favorita*, even against the desires of the many.

It must be admitted that Andy's use of this consideration fell short of the masterly. He did not know what to do with it. Carmel rode composedly aloof, her eyes fixed on distant invisible things. The situation was like a prickly pear. Andy had no small talk. His few proffers of politeness sounded to him flat instantly they had been voiced. He did not know that this was because the girl made them so by deliberately permitting them to fall to the ground. After a try or two Andy desisted. They rode in silence. But the effect on the mountain man was not completely what Carmel may have intended. For a little while only he writhed appropriately wormish; for a little while more he flushed with a desirable anger. Then he laughed aloud.

There had suddenly come to him a simple recollection, that Carmel would not have understood, but a recollection so vivid that it had for the moment almost the quality of a vision. It carried him back a dozen years, to a leafy Pennsylvania woodland, and opposite him the quaint bizarre figure of Joe Crane seated on a log and holding forth to the open-mouthed youngster which was himself. He could hear the words, as though spoken in his ears. "I might well, thinks you, git me the foofaraw of proper dress; but, thinks I, 'Joe Crane, never in all your life have you acted like anybody but yourself. Do not make yourself out a fool by trying to ape other folks now.

Joe Crane you have always been, and Joe Crane you still remain. Go ahead, Joe Crane!' " Andy chuckled again. "Andy Burnett you still remain. Go ahead, Andy Burnett!" said he to himself. He looked up into space. "Thanks, Joe," said he aloud.

"You laugh? Why do you laugh, señor?" The girl stared at him.

"Why," said Andy, "I laugh at you and me." He drawled the words in a fashion that would have warned her, had she known the breed.

"You find us amusing, señor?" she demanded so haughtily that Andy leaned forward in the saddle to look at her. In spite of herself she stared for a breath-taking moment into steady gray eyes that were far from dumb but rather filled with a direct primitive force that swept her from all her practised moorings of defense. For ten seconds they held her. Then a film of surface lights obscured their depths. Carmel was shaken. She tried to laugh naturally. Andy had made no reply to her question, which both had forgotten. He seemed to come to a decision. From his hatband he snatched the bit of sage and the sprig of jasmine and tossed them aside.

"Foofaraw," said he.

"Señor?" gasped Carmel.

"Foofaraw," repeated Andy. "That is your game. Now we will play mine."

"I do not understand," said Carmel faintly.

"You will," said Andy.

4

They arrived at the stream bottom and dismounted. Here, it was disclosed, were a number of *peones* and servants of the *casa*, who had been on the spot since early morning, and who had dug a pit, and in it roasted an ox, and had otherwise disposed preparations for an elaborate feast beneath the trees. Andy immediately sought out Ramón.

"Look here, Ramón," he demanded without preliminary, "what did that flower you gave me mean?"

Ramón glanced curiously at his friend's face, then answered directly and without hesitation:

"She mean, 'I do not wish you to become a nun.' "

"That's all right: I wouldn't wish anybody to become a nun. Now tell me: it was your sister who threw me that piece of sage, wasn't it?"

“That is for you to find out, is it not so?”

“Well, I am finding out. It was, wasn’t it?”

“Yes,” acknowledged Ramón, after a moment.

“Are these things meant seriously by your women, or are they supposed to be a joke? I want to know.”

“Who knows what the *doncellita* mean?”

“Well, she’d better mean it, with me,” returned Andy brusquely.

“Why are you thus angry, *amigo*? Has Carmel——”

“I am not angry,” Andy interrupted. “I just want to know.”

“Yes?” Ramón was thoughtful. “But what ails you, *valedor*?”

“I’m going to marry your sister,” said Andy bluntly. “You do not approve?” he demanded at Ramón’s astonished face.

“Approve? Approve? But, heart of my heart, I am delight!” Ramón hastened, “There could be nothing I more desire. But you take from me my breath! There are so many thing—Carmel, does she love you?”

“If she does not, she’d better let me alone.” Then for a moment Andy’s white blaze wavered. “Oh, Ramón!” he cried, “don’t you think——”

“But, yes,” Ramón hastened. “I think. Didn’t I tell you, at the first, and you do not believe, that she like you much? Yes, yes, I think. But there are so many, *amigo*; you do not know! Carmel, she is *la favorita*. All these young fellow, they——” He broke off with a chuckle. The expression of Andy’s face had wiped out all young California. “There is Cortilla—those Mexican——”

“I’ll attend to them,” said Andy.

“And there is Papá and Mamá. First of all you must ask Papá and Mamá. I think they like you much. But perhaps Papá he say, ‘Where are your land, your cattle, how make you *la casa* for my daughter?’ ”

Andy was checked for a moment, but only for a moment. He spread his great hands, contemplating them.

“I can keep my woman,” said he briefly. His eye was somber. Then suddenly he reared his head, visibly shaking off the swarm of practical considerations and difficulties his friend’s words had evoked. Foofaraw, all of them. He was through with foofaraw.

“I’m going to marry your sister,” he repeated decisively, and turned on his heel.

Ramón looked after him for a moment. Then he chuckled delightedly and sought out his sister.

"Carmelita," said he, "it just came to me a saying of our Vicenta."

"What is that, *hermano*?"

" 'He who runs with wolves must learn to howl,' " said Ramón.

5

Lacking the key of understanding that fitted Andy Burnett's type, Carmel must have been baffled and puzzled by the total lack of developments after so exciting a beginning. To be sure, the young man, throughout the progress of the *merienda*, sought her company, so that he was recognized as her *caballero* for the day. But that was all. He did not seem to understand that something was expected of him; he did not seem to appreciate the rare opportunity offered by the *fiesta*, and that once the *fiesta* was over all communication must return to the presence of the *dueña*. That, in the mind of Carmel, and of all others of her age, was what *fiestas* were for. An enterprising lover never failed to seize these fleeting moments; for they were too few and much too fleeting. Andy appeared ignorant of this fact; and, what was worse, he was either oblivious to or ignored Carmel's leads. He could not, or would not, play the game. Carmel could not make up her mind; and so, possibly, Andy's cause with her was as much helped as though his tactics had been deliberate. Ramón, a connoisseur of wooing, thought them deliberate. He approved of keeping them guessing, and admired Andy's resolution the more in that he himself had in the case of Conchita signally failed to live up to his own ideas, and had in consequence been led a lively dance.

But they were not deliberate: they were a by-product of the mountain man's temperament and training. One puzzled out a trail bit by bit; one met each day separately face to face and did not live tomorrow until it came; when one tackled a job one disentangled all its elements and arranged them in due order, and took the first one first, and stayed with it until it was done, and then—and not until then—went on to the second. That was the way he had managed to survive.

So now. He loved Carmel: he must have her. This was a fact, that had confronted him quietly, as one comes around a corner of the rim rock upon something that has been there all the time. It was as though he moved into a new country, where he belonged; and in it waited strange exciting things that at odd moments stabbed through him, disturbing his accustomed calm

possession of mind. It had been so when he crossed the Sierra into the Lovely Land. And in this land too was the same feeling of inevitability, of certainty. He recognized the feeling. In a few other occasions of life he had experienced it, but never with such conviction.

But here he swung into the habit of his training. He bent his head to the trail, turning his mind inward to the practical steps of the way. He must act at once. The necessities arranged themselves in an ordered and logical program of necessity, one dependent on the other. He must arrange matters so he would be permitted to stay in California: he must arrange matters so he could take care of Carmel with honor and comfort: he must obtain, if possible, Don Sylvestre's approval. Then he must win the girl. That was the trail.

It must not be understood that all this presented itself to Andy as above set down. He was not analytical; and certainly not as cold-blooded as all that. The iron of his logic was instinctive, subconscious. That was the way his nature worked, not his mind.

The party disposed itself on the grassy bank of the stream, and the men sought the ox pits and the hampers, to fill plates with the *carne asada* and the other food that had been prepared. While they were thus occupied the women culled flowers and made quaint tight miniature nosegays. Each young man offered himself—and the food—before the lady of his choice, who signified her acceptance of his company by presenting to him the nosegay, which he thrust into his hatband, where it must remain until it had withered and fallen to pieces. Andy, returning belatedly from his foraging, found a half dozen standing before Carmel, awaiting her pleasure. She sat, her skirts spread wide, toying with the little bouquet, parrying vivaciously the gallant and rather elaborate speeches of the young *caballeros*. She delayed her decision, enjoying her little triumph as *la favorita* of many suitors, perhaps a corner of her eye wandering in search of the tall figure of the young frontiersman. Whether or not she intended favoring or snubbing him perhaps she herself did not as yet know: but she was given no choice. Before she realized what he was about Andy had in the most matter-of-fact manner disengaged the nosegay from her fingers, had inserted it beneath the band of his *sombrero*, and had stretched his long body at her side, grinning up at her confidently.

Completely surprised, she stared at him unbelieving. The young men looked toward one another, scandalized at this breach of convention, uncertain whether they should resent it. But they made no comment. This was the guest of the house, an *extranjero*, probably ignorant of the etiquette

of occasions. After all, it was Carmel who must decide. And she, still staring at Andy's resolute face, hesitated, for she was confronted by a situation so strange to her she could not gauge its consequences. She could not guess that this strong young savage intended no discourtesy, had acted from no spirit of aggression, but had merely cut across the foofaraw; was only vaguely aware of the young men waiting.

The latter withdrew, gracefully enough, all but one. This was Don Gastón, *el tecolero*. Andy looked up to meet his hostile eyes. His hackles rose, and he leaned forward, his muscles stiffening. The Californian seemed to him about to leap at his throat. But the young man retained control of himself.

"Doña Carmel has perhaps need of my help?" he asked softly.

Carmel shook her head faintly; and after a moment of glowering hesitation Gastón turned away. But he did not, like the others, seek out a lady of second choice. Down through the bottom he stalked to where stood the horses waiting in charge of one of the *vaqueros*. He spoke to the man who, after a moment, led forward one of the animals. The *tecolero* leaped to the saddle, struck home his spurs, and dashed away.

Carmel had come to her decision through no favor to Andy. Had one of the Californians committed this—yes, this outrage, she would have known well enough what to do. But the unknown frightened her. She had not yet learned to howl with the wolves. She was angry, of course; she was disturbed; but secretly she was thrilled. She turned to the young man at her side.

But the thrill died away. Andy was monosyllabic. She could make nothing of him. As a matter of fact, he was waiting at quite a distant point of time for the present to catch up to him.

6

Conchita, probably lest Ramón become too elated, elected to return to the *casa* in one of the ox-carts. The young Californian rode home with his friend. He had, of course, heard of the lunch-time episode and was astounded to find that Andy had totally missed its significance. To them came Panchito with news. Ramón listened to him apart and shook his head.

"I like not that!" He turned to Andy. "Panchito tell me this Gastón have been seen riding fast on the road to Monterey."

"Well," said Andy, "let him go. I don't like him."

"No, and he no like you. That is it," returned Ramón. "You know what I think? No, I do not think; it is esure. He go to tell this Cortilla you are here." Ramón struck his forehead dramatically. "See!" he lamented. "Here on this *hacienda*, now, is many peoples—peoples who belong to the *hacienda*, Riveras and *mozos* and *vaqueros* and many, even *los Indios*: and besides them other peoples from all about, and not one of them would tell that you are here. Not one! Except this Gastón. He is pig of the world! He do not like you; he do not like me; always he do not like me! That I know, but I do not think that ever, even he, would be traitor. I am ashame'!"

"Perhaps he has just gone home mad," suggested Andy.

"Then why he ride toward Monterey? He come from San Juan."

"What do we do about it?" asked Andy.

"That we must ask my papá."

"Well," said Andy reasonably, "that is what we were going to do, isn't it? You said yourself that I could not stay here long without discovery."

"But *mañana, mañana*!" cried Ramón, "not so quick; *mañana*! Now we do something *pronto*, right away, quick! It espoil *la fiesta*." He peered into his friend's face. "You are not sorry? You do not care? Perhaps you must go away. You like leave Carmel?"

"Of course I am sorry," said Andy stoutly; but deep in his heart he was not sorry. If the thing must be faced, he welcomed the coming to grips. Once more he was feeling beneath his feet the solid ground of action.

But on arrival at the *casa* the opportunity for consulting Don Sylvestre must be, for the moment, postponed. Here awaited them an arrival of the day whose business attracted the eager and instant attention of all. This was a short pale man dressed in sober dark garments and accompanied by a lazy, insolent-looking fellow in Californian costume. The latter announced himself present as interpreter. Don Sylvestre looked him over and waved him aside.

"My son Ramón will say what is needed." He stared the man down haughtily until the latter withdrew. "Papá sure do not like the Mexican," Ramón chuckled to Andy as he moved forward. "What would you have me to say, señor?" he asked the little man.

It developed that the stranger had been sent by the captain of a ship recently from Boston. What ship? The *Petrel*. Ah, yes, Don Sylvestre nodded, the good Capitan Barclay. The stranger introduced himself, Ethan Phelps, supercargo, at your service. Don Sylvestre was honored, but what of the Señor Todd who was supercargo, and also well known to the Don? Todd

was out—too slack, Phelps added gratuitously. The owners had put him in because he was up to snuff and wouldn't have any monkey business. The phrases puzzled Ramón, who turned to Andy for explanation.

"You speak English, too?" asked Phelps.

"A little," said Andy.

"That I regret," said Don Sylvestre with dignity. "Señor Todd is a man who possesses my esteem. Ask this one to state his errand."

Captain Barclay, newly entered, had, it seemed, heard of the *fiesta*. It had occurred to him as a good idea to take advantage of the gathering of so many scattered families. The supercargo had brought with him a *carreta* of goods for sale. This was a distinct departure from custom, for ordinarily all trading was done aboard ship, and people traveled many miles to market. Don Sylvestre was pleased at the good captain's thoughtfulness, which he appreciated as a mark of the friendship that had long existed between them. As a matter of fact, the idea was not Barclay's but Phelps'; and was put into execution only to anticipate a rival ship, with which the *Petrel* had raced all the way to the Horn and which must soon arrive.

The short interview had taken place before the *casa* in the presence of the picnickers, who had not yet dispersed. And when the feminine portion understood what was forward, and that Don Sylvestre was purposing a postponement of the market until tomorrow, they protested. Tomorrow was too long to wait for Santa Claus. The day was yet young. So finally the *carreta* was unloaded and the bundles carried into the patio and there unpacked. Captain Barclay, or perhaps his supercargo, had chosen from the great variety in the *Petrel's* hold the lighter and more compact articles of luxury that could be the most readily transported and that would most appeal to the holiday spirit of the *fiesta*. There were silks, laces, stockings, red shoes, fine linens, ornamental combs, bracelets and bangles, satins, velvets, earrings, necklaces, hand mirrors with carved frames, small watches, a wealth of feminine foofaraw. These constituted the bulk of the consignment. For the men there was little; and of the more solid and bulky articles of general use none at all. These more serious purchases would be obtained in the regular way of commerce; or, Phelps explained, by order, if the purchaser knew exactly what he wanted.

Don Sylvestre nodded abstractedly to this. He was considering an idea of his own. Immediately the bundles had been opened and their contents spread out, the women had pounced upon them, and already the smaller objects were passing from hand to hand. No one waited to be served. They helped themselves. The supercargo was distracted. He darted from one group to

another, trying in vain to impose some order, to regain possession of his valuables, at the very least to ascertain the names and the responsibility of those who made off with them. This was the more difficult in that he knew nothing of the language, his interpreter had disappeared, and nobody paid more than momentary attention to his incomprehensible excitement.

But now Don Sylvestre put his idea into execution.

"Señoras! Señoritas!" he called again and again, until the chattering died to silence.

Don Sylvestre had bought the entire consignment, it seemed. Would each lady accept her choice of it as souvenir of the *fiesta*? And if anyone fancied that which was already chosen, he added negligently, let her make the fact known, and duplicates would be procured as fast as courier could make the journey to the ship. Which arrangement not only was received enthusiastically by the guests of the *hacienda*, but undoubtedly saved the sanity of Phelps, the supercargo from Boston.

However, that young man's bewilderments were not yet finished. The small matter of payment? Ah, yes, Don Sylvestre nodded when Ramón translated this: what would be the amount? Phelps, scandalized to the depths of his soul at this casual indifference, named a sum.

"Very well," Don Sylvestre assented, "tell him we shall have *matanza* by and by, and when next his ship comes to Monterey I shall send to him the hides."

Phelps was astonished at this instant and careless acceptance of the first price. He repressed a smile of satisfaction, for, in expectation of bargaining, he had named a sum in excess of what he was prepared to accept.

"Ask him when he wishes to sign the papers," he told Ramón.

"What papers are those?" Don Sylvestre wanted to know.

The papers recording the transaction.

"But I shall not forget," protested the *hacendado*.

It was only with the greatest difficulty that he was made to understand what Phelps was driving at: that it was not merely a memorandum against forgetfulness, but a guarantee of payment.

"I cannot return to my master without a guarantee!" protested Phelps in despair.

At last Don Sylvestre comprehended. He drew himself to his full height, and from his beard plucked a single hair, which he handed to the bewildered supercargo.

“Take this to your master,” said he grandly. “Tell him it is a hair from the beard of Don Sylvestre Rivera. It will be to him a sufficient guarantee.”

He and Ramón turned on their heels and stalked away.

Andy took pity on the little man’s honest confusion.

“It’s all right,” he assured him.

“But my owners—Captain Barclay——” gasped Phelps.

“I reckon the Captain will understand, if he’s traded on this coast before. This your first trip, eh?”

“But it wasn’t businesslike!”

“Maybe not. I don’t know business. But it’s California, I reckon. You’ll get paid.”

“I hope so.” Phelps was only partly reassured. “But you aren’t Spanish, are you?” he asked suddenly.

“No: I’m American like yourself.”

“Haven’t I heard of you? Aren’t you the one——”

“I reckon so,” Andy laughed.

“Look here,” the little supercargo was very serious, “what you doing here? Don’t you know——”

“Yes, I know,” said Andy.

“Well, what you going to do about it?”

“That I don’t know.”

“Well, if I was you I’d pull out, and pull out quick.”

Andy shook his head.

“Why not?”

“Reasons of my own.”

“Well, you know your business. But look here, if the time ever comes—there’s the *Petrel*. If you can get aboard her. Of course, I’m only supercargo; but Captain Barclay no more than me wouldn’t want to see an American —— Remember!”

“I’ll remember, and thank you,” said Andy. This wasn’t a bad sort of little man, after all. Simply he did not yet understand foofaraw. Well, Andy had not understood foofaraw at first either. He must tell him something about foofaraw.

Ramón was at his elbow.

"I have told my papá we must talk to him, now," he said in Spanish. "He awaits us in the small room."

7

But Don Sylvestre failed for the moment to justify Ramón's confidence in Papá as a fixer. Indeed, he proved to consider the situation even more seriously than had the younger man. To be sure, a Mexican could be bribed to accept almost any insult, Don Sylvestre agreed contemptuously, but hardly a public spanking. And when the Mexican has the official power—— Don Sylvestre shrugged. Nor was his own protection sufficient for more than temporary asylum. Even inimical officialdom would hesitate to molest anyone while actually a guest of the Riveras. But formal demands would be made which could not be avoided.

All this the young man already knew, too well. Nor did Don Sylvestre contribute anything new in the way of plan. Andy could return to the mountains and his old life: the way was still open. If he remained in the country it must be under the shadow of a risk that would sooner or later close in on him.

So far Don Sylvestre had spoken impersonally, with grave politeness. Now, having stated the case, he permitted himself a warmth of manner as he laid his hand on Andy's shoulder.

"It desolates my heart that thus matters stand, *hijo mío*," he said familiarly, "for I have watched your bearing, which is of the true *hidalgo*, so that I would happier circumstances permitted Ramón such a brother as yourself. And the *casa*," he added with the bow of formal politeness, but nevertheless with entire sincerity, "would be honored to welcome such a son."

Obviously both he—and, reluctantly, Ramón—considered that the subject had been covered. But Andy was not quite satisfied. This new governor, Figueroa, sent from Mexico, had he arrived? What was he like? Was it certain he would back Cortilla in face of a strong appeal?

Yes, he had reached Monterey in January. Don Sylvestre did not know much about him, except that he was in bad health, due it was said to the hardships of military campaigns. It had not been worth while to learn anything about him: nobody on a *hacienda* cared what governors did. Nobody knew anything this one had done; except that he had declared a general amnesty to those who had taken part in the late revolutions. Undoubtedly he would back Cortilla. These Mexicans stuck together.

“Could I get a hearing from him if I should go to Monterey?” Andy wished to know.

That seemed to Don Sylvestre doubtful. More likely he would be arrested out of hand and railroaded to San Blas through subordinates. Besides, what could Andy proffer at a hearing? He could not deny that he had spanked the excellent Cortilla.

No, he could not deny it, but it had been done with cause, Andy insisted. The officer had been massacring innocent people, for which act he should in justice be officially reprimanded as well as unofficially spanked.

The victims were nothing but Indians, wild ones, gentiles. And Cortilla was on campaign.

Andy hesitated, baffled. Obviously the innocence of his victims registered nothing with his hearers; and if this consideration carried no weight with friends, how much less with enemies? He tried a new tack.

“But if your governor is a military man, as you say, then he must see that this lieutenant has acted very badly, for he has needlessly aroused a new hostility among savages who would have been friendly except for his act. I know they were friendly, for I stayed among them.” Andy told of his experience in detail; and as he went on managed to build up a specious and flimsy plausibility. Ramón brightened; but Don Sylvestre listened doubtfully.

“That is well argued, *hijo mío*,” said he when Andy had concluded, “but its effect must depend entirely on one thing.”

“What is that?”

“The disposition of Figueroa. If by some chance this Cortilla should not be favored by him, then what you say he might accept as an excuse. But if, as is more than probable, Cortilla is in his favor, then he will not listen at all.”

“But there is a chance?”

“Of the very slightest.”

But Ramón was not so sure the chance was of the slightest. This Cortilla was the pig of the world. He was overweening, puffed up in his own conceit. Any sane governor ought to be delighted at an excuse to get rid of such a fellow. And, he reminded his father with growing eagerness, had he forgotten one other thing that Figueroa had already done?—the appointment of Guadalupe Vallejo, a Californian, to command of the military forces? Was not that a sufficient indication? Ramón’s enthusiasm kindled. It became a certainty. On to Monterey!

Don Sylvestre brushed Ramón's enthusiasm aside. "I cannot deceive you, señor, much as I would like to share my son's confidence. He sees things always as he would like them. If you go to Monterey, my opinion is that you will be placed in prison until a ship sails for San Blas; and then you will be heard of no more."

"But there is a chance?" Andy protested.

"Of the slightest," Don Sylvestre repeated, "but yes; a chance."

"Then I shall go to Monterey," said Andy.

Don Sylvestre looked at Andy thoughtfully. He did not again present the obvious alternative, nor attempt to combat the decision.

"You are a very brave man," he said finally. "That I like. You are also, I think, somewhat foolish. But that," he added unexpectedly, "I like also. This much I can do: I shall journey with you to Monterey. You shall speak yourself to the governor. Until that is accomplished no one shall molest you. So much Sylvestre Rivera can promise. But beyond that nothing."

"I will risk it," said Andy. "When shall we go?"

8

He left father and son together in discussion of details. He closed the door behind him. Carmel stood before him.

"I listened," she whispered hastily. "I could not but listen. I must know. I am frightened for you. Why do you do this thing?"

Andy placed his two hands on her shoulders.

"For you," he said simply.

He stood for a moment devouring her with his eyes.

"For you," he repeated. "And, by God, there aren't Mexicans enough in Mexico to stop me!"

He crushed her to his breast. She clung to him desperately for a moment; then at Ramón's approaching step she tore herself free and vanished. Andy's program was obviously getting to be hind-end-to.

CHAPTER IX
Monterey

SOMEHOW ANDY did not associate the idea of prompt action with his California friends. But now that it had been definitely decided to visit Monterey, there was no suggestion of *mañana*. Ramón and his father had settled it between them.

"You and Papá will go at once," Ramón told his friend. "I must stay here until our guests of the *fiesta* shall wish to go home. It is not courteous that both Papá and myself, who am the eldest son, shall go away now. But I shall follow so soon as I can."

"You mean right now?—tonight?"

"But yes: we have talk it, Papá and I. It is but six leagues to Monterey, and the moon he rise pretty quick. You get in there by midnight, maybe, and you go to the home of Alvarado, who is good man and *pariente* to us; and no one shall know you have come until it is fix for you to see this governor. And here is 'nother thing: these Gastón ride for to tell Cortilla you are here. He get to Monterey these afternoon. Now Cortilla come here quick as he can to get you. Maybe he come tonight. But in the morning sure thing. If he find you here, that's bad. But if you can get first to Figueroa and he is not come back yet, that is good. So you ride *pronto*, so soon as you eat a little."

Andy saw the close-reasoned common sense of this, but he was still a little overcome at the thought of Don Sylvestre, an elderly man, a grandee, called upon to do six leagues, horseback on top of a long day which had been preceded by a very short night after the dance of the evening before.

"My papá!" Ramón scoffed. "I bet you he ride you off your—what you call him?—off your tail right now!"

The three ate a light, hastily served meal in Don Sylvestre's small office, which was the only room in the *casa* not given over to the women. It was agreed their departure was to be kept as secret as possible. They slipped quietly across the patio. Panchito and two other *vaqueros* awaited them with

saddled horses and a spare apiece. There was no baggage: that could follow if needed. Ramón was unwontedly grave. At the last moment he expressed his thought.

"I do not think so; but it just might be that I see you no more, *valedor*," said he.

Andy laid both hands on his friend's shoulders.

"I shall see you again," said he. "I was never surer of anything in my life. You shall see."

"You have the plan?" Ramón brightened.

But Andy had no plan. And he could not in two words have made Ramón understand the truth; that somewhere within him existed, had always existed, an area of certainty which occasionally opened for his comfort at times of his greatest stress. And when once he had set foot within that area he was serenely sure, no matter how untoward circumstance might be. The experience was rare, it was capricious. It might be described as a state of psychic attunement with reality; or it might be called a hunch. But it was authentic.

He was in the saddle. Panchito was handing to him the Boone gun, the long rifle, and its equipment.

"I think perhaps you like this, señor," murmured the *vaquero*.

"Good man, Panchito," said Andy who, indeed, was on the point of demanding the weapon, though he was perfectly aware that arms could help him little in this affair. For once Ramón had no objections to offer. He touched Andy's knee. Andy bent to him.

"*Adiós, valedor*," murmured Ramón. "Be of cheer. And I shall say to her for you what you would have me say for farewell."

"Thanks," said Andy gruffly. He crushed Ramón's hand in his strong fingers.

They struck spurs to their horses and dashed away after the headlong manner of California travel. As they topped the gentle rise Andy looked back. The pavilion was alight, and outside it dimly he could make out the lighted figures of the young men weaving to and fro. The dance had begun.

At full speed they swept on through the soft night. The moon was just rising, and the shadows were velvet dark. Don Sylvestre rode ahead, an erect fine figure; the *vaqueros* and the loose horses thundered along behind. No word was spoken. Andy's spirit was serene. His mind did not even consider the complications and the very real dangers of what lay before him. Those

things would present themselves in due time. He savored the present; and it was sweet. In spite of the rapid movement, he seemed to himself suspended in serenity. Somehow the Boone gun beneath his hand had reëstablished his contact with a feeling he had left behind him beyond the mountains, a feeling of larger destinies with which it linked him. They swelled within him. Again he was moving forward with their current. He did not know what they were or whither they tended; he did not strive to know. Merely he felt them, and in some mystic fashion sensed his oneness with them, so that as long as they endured he must endure. A palpable power seemed to flow from the old Boone gun, through his arm, to uplift his heart.

Thrice the journey checked. The first time was merely for a change of horses. The second halt was called by Panchito, who spurred forward to say something to Don Sylvestre. The two, with Andy, left the *remuda* and trotted at a hand pace several hundred yards to the left, to draw rein on the rounded summit of a low hill. From the crest they overlooked a narrow winding valley, dotted with live oaks, black and silver under the moon, and the thread of a well traveled road.

"*El camino real*—the road to Monterey," said Don Sylvestre in a low voice. For the first time Andy realized that their journey had taken them over byways. And above the small sounds of jingling and stamping of their own animals, he became aware of the measured beat of other horses below.

"You have good ears, Panchito," Don Sylvestre complimented the *vaquero*.

After a few moments a compact cavalcade came into view and passed beneath them, small with distance.

"Cortilla, señor," Panchito grinned.

Followed by the other *vaqueros* they descended the slope and resumed their journey boldly on the King's Highway. After a time they broke from the hills and saw before them the curve of a shore, and dark wooded ridges beyond, and a low headland where surf gleamed white, and a straggle of white buildings and a ship anchored in the silver tranquillity of a bay.

They rode into the slumbering town, remarked only by the clamor of innumerable dogs. Past scattered smaller buildings built here, there, and everywhere, without order, they made their way to a central plaza composed of several long two-storied buildings and a number of the larger type of dwelling houses. A fort with mounted cannon stood beyond them on a low cliff. There were no streets. The place was profoundly asleep. There was no movement of any kind, no light showed; except that from the tall mast of the ship gleamed a single lantern, and up the sands of the beach at long spaced

intervals a gentle wash crept lazily and receded with a sigh, a somnolent breathing of the sea.

Before one of the houses facing the plaza they stopped. Don Sylvestre dismounted, knocked. To one who finally answered he conversed for some time in low tones. Then Andy was summoned. The *vaqueros* disappeared with the horses. He entered the house. The door was closed behind him.

Andy was bowing to his host. The latter was a slender man, young, taller than most, with a remarkably white skin, of a simple but commanding presence. At the moment he wore a heavy silk robe, evidently donned hastily at the summons. He was dignified and reserved in manner, but greeted the mountain man cordially enough. Andy was at once struck by the fact that this was the first Californian he had seen wearing his hair cut short. Don Sylvestre introduced him as Don Juan Bautista Alvarado, a name that then conveyed nothing to Andy, and was indeed as yet little distinguished, but which later was to become well known in the fulfillment of destiny.

There was no conversation. Alvarado showed no curiosity as to his guest, apparently satisfied for the moment with what Don Sylvestre had been able to tell him in their brief interchange at the door; nor did he permit his glance to betray inquisitiveness or other motive than that of a polite and exquisite hospitality.

Candle in hand, he led the way to sleeping rooms and there left his visitors. Andy composed himself, tired after two days and nearly two nights of incessant activity. He viewed another specimen of the elaborate California beds with complacency; nor, after he had stretched himself between its sheets, did he long lie awake. The night was very still. Even the dogs had ceased baying the moon. On the beach the wash whispered softly against the sands. Beneath the silence beat the diapason of distant surf. From the ship in the harbor a bell struck briskly twice.

2

The following morning his hosts seemed to be in no haste. They sat with Andy in the patio and smoked cigarettes and talked. It would have been very pleasant had it not been that Andy felt time was being wasted. The sun was soft and warm, the small birds twittered, sounds of the town were muffled by the walls. But shortly Alvarado noted his uneasiness and reassured him. Cortilla was out of the way for some days, at least: for he would conclude that Andy must be in hiding near the *hacienda*, or a fugitive, and the Mexican would not return without a search. The hour was too early for an interview with Figueroa. So why not enjoy the time of waiting?

Alvarado proved to be a fluent and intelligent talker, a shrewd and practical judge of conditions. He spoke slowly, with a reserved and formal courtesy, but beneath his manner Andy sensed the movement of a restless and ambitious spirit. His outlook was surprisingly wide as compared with the natural provincialism of his countrymen; and he seemed avid for new information and new points of view. Possibly for this reason Andy found himself more and more involved in the talk, until the conversation became a dialogue, with Don Sylvestre apart listening.

Alvarado asked many questions. They were not the type of question to which Andy had been accustomed. Most people wanted to hear of adventure: this Californian was more interested in movements. He inquired closely of Andy's own journeys, and was much struck by the fact that the mountain man had been of Jedediah Smith's party. He wanted details. He traced back through Andy's individual experiences until his questions had evoked in Andy's own mind a picture of a gradual opening of a country. For the first time the young man saw the thing whole, for the first time realized what had happened in the short dozen years of his Western life. At their beginning the frontier stopped little beyond the Mississippi. He himself had been one of the first to cross by the Cimarron to Taos and Santa Fe, where now, Alvarado told him, flowed the steadily increasing commerce of the prairies. He had been but a few days behind those who had discovered the easy way of South Pass through the great Continental Divide. In his time had been opened the unknown of Green River, the Virgin, the Central Basin. He had with his own eyes seen the supposed impassability of the Rockies leveled by the stubborn enterprise of his fellows, so that inaccessible solitudes had become neither inaccessible nor solitary.

"You have twice crossed our Sierra, señor," said Alvarado. "Tell me: do you think that you could do so again?"

"Why, yes," said Andy. "The passage is indeed of some difficulty, but a good mountain man could always accomplish it at proper season."

"And on occasion you could lead others by the way you have come?"

"That also I could do, señor, I think, if these others were strong men and well found. Do you desire me to undertake such an errand, señor?"

But this, it seemed, was not Alvarado's thought. He shook his head, and changed the subject unexpectedly to speak of George Washington. He knew much of George Washington, whom he greatly admired. His knowledge was detailed.

Abruptly he veered to local politics. He took them much more to heart than did any of the *rancheros* with whom Andy had come in contact.

"That is our trouble: the indifference of men like yourself, *tío*," he said respectfully to Don Sylvestre. "It is absurd that we permit Mexico to send us their broken-down military men to govern us. It is absurd that we submit to the laws they make for us from these hundreds of leagues' distance." He turned to Andy. "They believe any renegade who gets their ear, and they send us men to rule us who have no sympathy with our problems. Not one *penique* of Mexican money has ever been brought to this country, señor; not one!"

"Nor do we send money to Mexico," Don Sylvestre reminded him lazily.

"Except in the private pockets of some of these Mexican officials," amended Alvarado. "That is the point I make, that we do not contribute to or depend upon Mexico, so why should we not rule ourselves? And we shall see this much, within a few years, that Mexico will be forced to recognize a governor chosen from our own people."

"Yourself, Juan," said Don Sylvestre indulgently.

"Perhaps," agreed Alvarado composedly, "or Guadalupe Vallejo, or José Castro, or José Noriega or many another. That much will surely come about; and then we shall have different laws of the trade, and for the mission, and above all for the land."

"We get on very well," said the *hacendado*. "Matters are perhaps not the wisest, but they suit us well enough."

"But how will they suit the others?"

"What others, Juan?"

Alvarado gestured toward the mountain man, who was listening with lively interest.

"Those who follow him, will they be suited? They are the people whom the great Washington led in revolt against just these things. Have you not heard the things our friend here has told us? Have you not seen the picture he has drawn? They but pause yonder, the other side the Sierra. Soon they will find the way, as this one has found it. What then? Send to Mexico for instructions?"

"Are there not instructions already?" Don Sylvestre pointed out.

"Surely. And they change: and they are ridiculous. See what this new man, this Figueroa brings. He is told," Alvarado checked the items on his fingers: "To examine conditions—which means to do as he pleases; to favor explorations—which means nothing: to encourage the distribution of lands *both to citizens and to foreigners*. Also, he must keep out Russians and English, who are not foreigners, I suppose; and he must enforce strictly all

the old regulations which say, among other things, that one visiting the country must obtain permission and must stay but a year, and all the rest of the *absurdos* of Mexican origin. Which means simply that Figueroa will do as he likes; and the one who succeeds him will do as he likes, and we Californians will continue to say 'what does it matter?' "

"Well, *sobrino mío*," returned Don Sylvestre with comfortable irony, "all that you will arrange when you become governor."

Alvarado ignored the irony.

"Could I—could any of us?" he seemed now to be speaking more to himself than to his companions. "Not single handed, nor with the few who see. We can try; we shall try. But first we must take our own business into our own hands: we must shake off Mexico."

Don Sylvestre smiled at Andy.

"It is not comfortable to be *político*," he observed. "You must not take my nephew too seriously. He is a good *californio* just the same."

"You think that California will be an independent state?" Andy was really interested.

"That cannot be: I am not so foolish. Consider: in all this land there are but a few thousands of *gente de razón*. California cannot stand alone. With Mexico; yes, she might. But is that possible? I do not know. We shall see." His eyes became distant, and he uttered a prophecy[2] remarkable at that time. "Don Andrés," said he, "it is only a question of time when our country will belong to your government. I regret this, but it is undoubtedly a ruling of providence."

Something clicked in Andy's brain. For a fleeting instant the years rolled back. A green untried boy he stood, hat in hand, in a dim, richly furnished library. Before him paced a tall hawk-faced man with blazing eyes, Benton of Missouri. He heard again the fragments of words that man had uttered, a clear echo from the past of long ago, "One people; one flag; a mighty civilization that shall extend, that must extend, from sea to sea." "We are born to a noble destiny," and again, "You are highly privileged, beyond most." The words had lifted him high; but in the long years the wave had fallen with forgetfulness. Now beneath his spirit he felt once more its mighty surge.

It was but a confused moment that passed. He came to himself slightly bewildered. Alvarado was still talking. Andy did not clearly hear what he was saying. Don Sylvestre's indulgent tones penetrated his consciousness.

"Some young men turn to gambling," he was addressing Andy, "and some to wine and some to women. This one turns to *política*, which is less amusing. These things may be as you say, *sobrino mío*, but it occurs to me they are a matter of years, and I shall not be here to observe. But now, at this moment, it is, it seems, an affair of Figueroa."

"True, true!" Alvarado threw aside his preoccupation. "Do you, *tío mío*, walk about a little with our friend. I will pay my respects to my beloved governor and see what can be arranged."

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[2] Attested.

3

Don Sylvestre and Andy went out together. The *hacendado* seemed diverted over what he called the vaporings of Alvarado. He seemed to look upon them as manifestations of youth which would be outgrown, but which now were evidences of an independent spirit.

"Juan was always that way," said he. "When he was a young boy he always wished to read, and he did not confine himself to the books allowed by the *padres*. He read many contraband books, displaying great ingenuity in eluding the vigilance of the friars. You noted that he wears his hair cropped. He was the first in California to do so. He cut his hair at the age of fifteen, 'to show his independence,' he said. Now Guerra and Vallejo follow his example. He may end by setting a fashion. Who knows?"

Andy had not before seen the *hidalgo* in so familiar and discursive a mood. He encouraged the old gentleman in his gossip.

Certainly it was a good hour for gossip. The little sprawling town was in its time of animation. The plaza and the space beyond the custom house were very busy. A squad or two of soldiers drilled near the fort: gayly dressed *caballeros* trotted about at a hand pace or dashed racing over the hard sands of the beach; a motley crew milled about afoot or lazed against whitewashed adobe walls. They looked like what they were—pearl fishers, masterless soldiers of fortune new come from Mexico, bandits, pirates, smugglers, and a few Yankee sailors rolling about from the ship. Indians were all about. They seemed to Andy even more primitive, if possible, than those he had encountered in the valley; wearing only a breech clout, and their coarse hair hanging down their backs to their waists. Some of them, when they came in, carried bundles of skins of deer or beaver. These they took promptly to a low adobe whence emerged a very fat pock-marked man

who bullied and bawled at them and finally gave them bottles and a little money and took the skins. For this reason most of the Indians were more or less drunk. Those sober enough squatted in circles playing some sort of gambling game with sticks. The others simply howled, like wild dogs, without intermission, until a *caballero*, obviously maddened beyond endurance, emerged from one of the houses, leaped on his horse, roped one of the savages, and dragged him about in the soft dust of the plaza. Nobody but the victim seemed to pay this performance much attention, but the howling ceased for a little while.

A man rode into the plaza, and across it to the beach, dragging behind him at the end of his reata a bundle of rawhides. This Don Sylvestre explained was one of the smaller *rancheros* from the immediate vicinity come in to do a little shopping, and the bundle of cowhides was his purse. Nobody but Andy seemed to find this quaint. The horseman rode ahead methodically, the dust rising like smoke from the pack plowing along behind. People gave way to him. At the beach, but just above high tide, he loosened his reata and rode back to the adobe presided over by the pock-marked fat man, into which he disappeared.

That adobe was the center of much activity. It was a public *taberna*, said Don Sylvestre, of the lower order; and the fat man was a foreigner—a Portuguese, he thought, or maybe English, he added. But violent and shrewd, whatever he was. His place was frequented by the soldiers and *vaqueros* and *peones* and sailors, when they came ashore. In the evening there were *fandangos*. Don Sylvestre shrugged his shoulders disdainfully. It was a rough place, not to be noticed by a *caballero*. As though to emphasize the roughness, at that moment two angry men of the *vaquero* type burst from the door into the open. Their emergence was not entirely voluntary, for its motive power was the flat of the fat man's hand on the back of each. Immediately the two flew at each other, swinging their heavy spurs held by the end of the straps. These were weapons not to be despised. But the fight was not permitted to reach the interesting point. A girl, probably the cause of the trouble, darted from the door, interposed between the combatants, shrieked a volley of Spanish so rapid that Andy was unable to follow it. After a moment all three reëntered the tavern. A few of those within hearing looked up languidly, but without especial interest. A woman, obviously of the upper class, passed within ten feet of the rumpus, without, apparently, even becoming aware of it. She was very beautiful, dressed soberly in black, stepping in slow-paced dignity, her head high. Two paces behind her followed an Indian girl carrying a folded rug over her left arm. Her air was of one entirely alone: the teeming life of the plaza seemed not to exist for

her. Nevertheless, she saw Don Sylvestre and inclined her head to his sweeping salutation. Andy thought he had never seen a face so sad.

"She is of the De la Vegas," said Don Sylvestre, "and she goes to mass. There is mass said each hour, beginning at dawn, so that those who require the consolation of religion may find always opportunity to attend. I am told that one of the De la Vegas is present at each mass."

"They must be a very pious family," observed Andy, in order to say something.

"They expiate a mortal sin. I will tell you of it, if you wish. Let us stop here for a time in the cool of the shade."

They sat on one of the adobe benches attached to the front of the custom house fronting the water. Immediately below them began the arc of the beach that curved away to the right, and so, across the way, to the left again to encompass the sheltered part of the little bay. Across its width Andy saw the gray-clad dunes, and beyond them the rise of wooded hills through which he had ridden the night before. A dark and rocky headland to his left cut the view of the open sea, and beyond it he could hear the muffled beat of the surges that swept past to break white on the distant shore line across the way. But here within its protection the swell had fallen to a gentle wash that crept up the strand and receded with a sigh. Bands of tiny sandpipers followed its recession to its extremest ebb, snatching hastily at invisible quarry during its brief hesitation, only to twinkle away in retreat before the lazy surge of its flood. Two pelicans soared on slow wing, their tremendous beaks pointed downward in vigilance for their prey. They looked absurdly like gigantic mosquitoes. Occasionally one or the other of them let go all holds and fell like a plummet to hit the water with a tremendous splash. Ribald gulls wheeled about them screaming, snatching both at their prey and at the great dignity that informed their grotesqueness. Of these pirates they seemed completely unaware, but floated atop the water in serene buoyancy, like little ships. And beyond them was the ship itself at anchor lifting and falling gently, its spars and yards lined clearly against the blue background of the sky. Small figures moved on her deck. A boat bobbed and tugged alongside like an impatient child.

Don Sylvestre lighted a cigarette.

"There was," he began abruptly, "in earlier days, when I was young, a *doncellita* named Ysabel Herrera. I remember her well. She was very beautiful; and all the young men of that time sang beneath her window. Some of them did so because they loved her. Others—and I was one of them —" Don Sylvestre paused to laugh softly—"because it was the fashion. For

she was *la favorita*, you see. But one who loved her to madness was a young man named Vicente de la Vega. Many wished to marry Doña Ysabel, but she was a coquette, and she would not choose. So at the last she said that she would marry the one who would bring to her the finest string of pearls. When she had said this, Vicente de la Vega disappeared and was no more seen for a very long time, but when he returned he brought with him a string of pearls such as had never been seen by any of us, a magnificent necklace, each pearl perfect, worth a king's ransom. So Vicente and the Doña Ysabel were betrothed, and a grand ball was given to celebrate the betrothal. And just at the height of the festivities the door opened, and in it stood a priest, a stranger to us all. I can see him now, tall, gaunt, stern, his garments stained with travel. His face was such that the music stopped short, and we all turned to stone.

" 'Sacrilege!' he cried.

"And so, *amigo*, we learned that this thing had happened through the madness of Vicente de la Vega. You must know that for many, many years, whenever one of the fishers of pearls in Baja California had brought up a pearl of unusual perfection, he journeyed with it to the shrine of Our Lady of Loreto, and there before her altar he piously dedicated it to her. So that, one by one, through these many years, Our Lady's necklace had grown to be the wonder of the world. And this necklace it was that Vicente de la Vega had brought to the Doña Ysabel, *la favorita*; and in the rape of it he had stabbed to death the guardian priest. Sacrilege indeed!

"You can imagine, *amigo*, the horror of us all. But this Vicente was a bold spirit; and Ysabel Herrera must have been touched by his same madness. Women are strange creatures. Before we had recovered from our horror, they had fled together. In the harbor was an English ship. This undoubtedly they hoped to reach where, under protection of heretics who know not the blessed saints, they might yet be saved in this life though undoubtedly damned forever in life to come. But the soldiers, and many of the others, pursued them close. They failed to reach the beach, and turned along the cliff yonder. There, as they ran, Vicente was shot dead. But as he fell Ysabel seized his body and leaped with it into the sea. They were never found, señor; and so were lost forever the pearls of Our Lady of Loreto; and so it is that, though this was many years ago, one of the De la Vega women attends mass each hour every day."

After a little bugles began to blow. They strolled together to the *presidio* to watch the drill. Andy was not very much impressed with either the numbers, the equipment, or the discipline of the soldiers. Nor did the set

defenses look formidable. The cannon at their corners pointed every which way; Andy wondered whether they were dismantled. The walls of the fort were flimsy, vulnerable to the lightest cannon shot, or even the simplest battering ram, in determined hands. By the gateway Andy saw hanging a curious object which on examination proved to be a number of dried human ears strung together on a cord. These, Don Sylvestre explained, had been brought back to the *comandante* by soldiers sent on campaigns against the Indians, as proof of efficiency. Andy remembered the slaughter of the innocents which had inaugurated his Californian experiences, but said nothing. Don Sylvestre remarked that the cannon mounted on the rise at the edge of the beach had some four hundred pounds of silver in its metal and was said to discharge with a ringing musical note. "Though I have never heard it," he added. "It consumes too much powder to be fired idly." He was little interested in the military establishment, but warmed up to tell Andy of old days when the Spanish governors ruled.

"It seems to me," he told Andy, "that undoubtedly God intends Monterey to be one of the great cities of the world. It has a history of mystery. Vizcaino anchored in this bay in 1602 and raised a cross beneath an oak, and the friars sang the mass, and he sailed away to tell of the wonderful harbor he had claimed for the King and for our Saviour. And then for a hundred and sixty-eight years it was lost. No one could find it again. It became a legend. And when Juan Perez rediscovered it, in all Mexico was great public rejoicing. The oak of Vizcaino still stands."

The shrill shrieking of a *carreta* warned them to stand aside. It moved in a cloud of dust, but was surrounded also by a penumbra of yelling small boys and not a few grown-ups of both sexes, but of the lower class. On the *carreta*, spread-eagled to the frame of the cart, lay a living bear. The beast was bound fast by rawhides, drawn so tight as almost to cut through the heavy fur and the tough hide. It had given over useless struggle, for it had been prevented the slightest movement; but its eyes glared red, and the slaver dripped from its jaws. The boys, and occasionally one of the girls, poked the helpless creature with sticks, or darted in to pat it on the head. The *peon* drove stolidly; but drew up when he observed the *hidalgo's* attention. Don Sylvestre examined the bear with appraising eye. A man stepped forward, taking off his hat.

"The bear is yours, then, Bartolo? You have good bulls?"

"Wild from the mountains, señor. You shall see a good fight. After the hour of *siesta*, señor, if you will honor us."

Don Sylvestre nodded and turned away. He seemed, not indifferent, but genuinely unaware of the poor beast's suffering. When Andy ventured to remark on it, the Californian misunderstood his meaning, assuring Andy that the bear would be permitted opportunity to limber up before facing its antagonist. Andy gave it up. It was again that blind spot that had so troubled him.

They returned to the house of Alvarado and sat at lunch. Alvarado had made a little progress. Figueroa had finally consented to an interview—tomorrow. He was not favorably inclined. Indeed, at first he refused to have anything to do with the matter until Cortilla's return, and only yielded to Alvarado's importunities out of respect for Don Sylvestre's name. Alvarado had not considered it wise to go farther. He had not attempted to urge Andy's case in any way. So matters stood as before. The subject was dropped. It was an affair of *mañana*.

Andy was silent, or nearly so, throughout the meal, but he listened with interest and pleasure. He was as yet unaccustomed to conversation for its own sake. Alvarado was a graceful and charming host. He was of an active forward-looking spirit, with a theory for every topic. To the restlessness of his mind Don Sylvestre's comfortable conversation offered a pleasant foil. His dry comments brought Alvarado's hobby horses to so dead a stand that the younger man had perforce to laugh at himself. Thus when for five minutes Alvarado had declaimed on the subject of education. He was educated himself; he believed in education; he lamented the lack of schools; he was scandalized at the present illiteracy; above all did he consider it a disgrace that the women, especially of the better classes, should lack elementary schooling. Andy remembered his own feeling of shock when he had learned that Ramón's mother, that gentle and high-born aristocrat, was dependent on the *padre* to write her letters.

"You yourself must appreciate the value of education," Alvarado insisted. "Otherwise why did you send Ramón to New York?"

"If a woman learns well four things she knows all she needs to know," said Don Sylvestre placidly. "And in these four even you, my *político*, must admit them well taught."

"And what are those?"

"Dancing, music, religion, and amiability," stated Don Sylvestre.

Alvarado checked, hesitated; then laughed.

"Your cook could not have prepared a more exquisite dish than this," said Don Sylvestre, helping himself again, "if he could patter Latin like a

priest."

"My cook, ah, yes." Alvarado lightly accepted the change of subject. "Now, there is one! He is an Indian, and he is excellent, as you see. But he is good only if I have him severely whipped regularly once each month. And the diverting part of it is that he himself knows this so well that he will come to me of his own accord and beg me to have it done. That is true, I assure you. You shall see."

The Indian, an elderly and wrinkled man, with extreme gravity of countenance, came when summoned and stood in the doorway. He solemnly corroborated his master's statement.

"*Sí, señor*," he agreed; "that is indeed so. It is undoubtedly a dispensation of the blessed saints."

After the meal his hosts retired for the *siesta*. Andy had not yet come to this habit. Alvarado, questioned, thought it quite all right for him to wander about as it pleased him. Except that he negatived Don Sylvestre's suggestion that perhaps Andy might accompany him, after the *siesta*, to visit the *Petrel* in the harbor and make the acquaintance of the excellent Captain Barclay, his countryman. If this were to be reported to Figueroa the governor might conceivably consider it smacked obscurely of a conspiracy of evasion.

So Andy took the Boone gun and tramped through the now somnolent and deserted town to the wooded ridge that rose behind it, and sat on a fallen tree, and breathed the soft air perfumed with heated pine needles, and listened to the bawling of jays and the brisk calling of quail, and thought of all the things he had seen and heard.

4

After a time he descended the hill to the town. On the outskirts he was drawn aside by a concourse of people gathered close about the adobe walls of a corral. Some sat atop; others stood on rough platforms permitting them to see over. A number were on horseback. Andy climbed up and looked within.[3]

To a post in the middle of the corral the bear was tied. He had considerable freedom of movement; nevertheless, he was firmly shackled. Several strands of stout rawhide, possibly a yard or more long, connected his two hind feet. To this a number of doubled reatas were attached, the loops of which had been thrown over the post. Thus the bear could move about the post within the circle whose radius was determined by the reatas. A horseman armed with a long pole maneuvered just out of reach. He kept

poking at the bear with the pole. His first object was to prevent the animal from gnawing through his bonds, which otherwise he would very promptly have done. As a by-product he had succeeded in arousing the beast to frantic anger. After a few moments someone yelled. The horseman instantly spurred out through the open gate, which was promptly slammed shut behind him. At the same time another gate was opened, and through it dashed a young bull.

This was no domesticated bull, even in the limited sense in which that term might be applied to the range cattle; but a true wild beast, a renegade that had long run the chaparral of the rough districts of El Sur; long horned, slender barreled, as quick and agile as a deer. He had been captured only after a long wait as he crossed a tiny flat at daylight on his way to water. His kind and the bear people were old acquaintances. By the very fact of survival he had proved himself. He was instantly aware of the bear attached to the post; and he was as swiftly cognizant of the fact that he here encountered his hereditary enemy in an enclosed place. In the open he would warily have fled at the mere scent of a bear. Here he charged at once, and with what looked like irresistible speed and power.

The bear had, at first sight of the bull, ceased its raging to survey the newcomer through little eyes that seemed to twinkle with calculation. Now, he rose to his hind legs and waited calmly until the long rapier horns seemed almost to touch his chest. His body looked to be utterly relaxed, almost somnolently indifferent. Then, at the last split second things happened with lightning speed. The bear's forepaws shot forward, clamped on either side the bull's head. Andy saw the spread of the wide horns jerk to the vertical, and then on over almost to the horizontal again. The two beasts went down in a cloud of dust. Instantly the bear was afoot again; but the bull was dead, his neck broken.

Horsemen entered, cast their reatas about the dead beast's horns, and dragged it out. The bear raged at them, straining against his rawhide bonds.

The moment they had disappeared, a second bull was admitted. This also was a wild captive from the chaparral. It was fully as active and powerful as the first, but more formidably armed, in that by a freak of growth its long horns, instead of spreading wide, pointed forward almost like a pair of lances in rest. Obviously the same tactics that had conquered the first bull must result in the bear's impaling himself through the chest. The spectators saw this at once and shouted in anticipation.

"*Viva toro! viva toro!*" they cried.

But they had not reckoned with the keen intelligence behind those small red and blazing eyes. The bear had sized up the situation as quickly as and more competently than had his audience. He did not rise to his hind feet to meet the charge, but leaped quickly sideways in avoidance; and as the bull passed he reared and brought down his great paw so powerfully across its neck that the bull was dashed to earth with such violence as to break off one of his horns. Instantly the bear rushed at him, to pounce upon him before he could rise; but was snubbed up short by his tether. The bull was no less prompt in recovery. As he leaped to his feet he brought his remaining horn sideways in a wide swipe that caught his enemy, who had not recovered his balance, across the shoulder, inflicting a long deep gash. The bear grabbed for the horn with both paws, but again the hampering tether brought him up short. For the third time the bull wheeled and charged, his single horn pointed like a rapier. But this time the bear delivered the boxer's blow from his paw, not at the bull's neck, but toward its knees; and the bull, flinching from the threat, turned his head just sufficiently to afford the bear opportunity for his head hold. Again the horn tossed up and around; again the bull rolled over, dead, its neck broken.

Once more the bear arose to his feet; but slowly. Blood streamed from his shoulder, and he swung his head wearily.

Ensued now a long pause; and a wrangle the purport of which Andy could not fathom. But after a little he began to understand. The man Bartolo considered that the bear had provided his money's worth, to which the crowd was entering a vigorous dissent. Its blood was up; it wanted more. The argument was not with the spectators, however, but with three other men, who crowded gesticulating about the owner of the bear. Andy's neighbor, between excited shouts of *otra! otra!* volunteered snatches of partial explanation. The three men were, it seemed, the proprietors of other bulls they had brought in for a try at the bear. They objected to being deprived of their chance. Andy could not quite see how Bartolo—or the owners of the bulls, for that matter—were making anything out of what seemed to be a free show. Betting, the man said briefly; and went on yelling. Andy could not see on what basis; but he gave that up. Finally Bartolo seemed to abandon his objections. At last he shrugged his shoulders and turned away. A moment later Andy saw him on horseback riding about, his hat outheld, receiving contributions which those in the audience tossed him. He did not solicit Andy. Andy did not know why. As a matter of fact, he was taken for a *caballero* who was exempt, unless he happened to feel generous.

The third bull was a larger animal than either of the other two, thinner, rangier, and obviously in a frenziedly combative spirit. His head swung from

side to side; his eyes flashed green fire. Andy did not know it, but before its admittance to the corral the animal had been prodded to a fury. It wasted no time in preliminaries, but charged at once. The bear met it as before; but a little more slowly, a little less certainly, almost clumsily. It may have been due to this: or possibly an unexpected twist of the head at the last moment upset the nicety of the bear's calculation. At any rate, the long straight horn passed through the bear's neck at the exact instant the latter's paws closed about his antagonist's head from above. There was a sharp snap, and the two hurtled violently against the stout snubbing post. The bull was dead.

The crowd was shouting crazily. Andy's neighbor turned to him, his eyes blazing.

"A fine bear, señor!" But neither he nor any of the others seemed to have compassion for the beast. All were shouting impatiently for the next bull, which was his informant told him, the last.

A slow anger was swelling in Andy's breast. This was not fair. The bear was panting heavily; the blood was streaming from his two wounds. Surely he had earned at least a respite. But already the corral gates had swung back, and a great shout greeted the final bull as it bounded vigorously into the arena. This time the bear, though the blaze of his eyes advertised his undaunted spirit, was obviously to be on the losing end. He was slow in standing up; and as he made his customary snatch his hind foot slipped, so that he missed his hold. The bull had charged with his head held sideways to present one horn. It penetrated near the base of the neck, and both rolled over together. Everybody cheered wildly for the bull. No one—except Andy—seemed to have a thought for the gallant stand of the wearied but undaunted old champion.

Both were afoot again, but the bear was now bleeding badly, while the bull bounded high in exuberance, his tail lashing. It was perfectly evident that the next charge must be the finish; that the affair must be quickly, and at last mercifully, over. If Andy had been in his sober mind he must have realized that fact. But he was not in his sober mind. His anger wholly possessed him. He snatched the long rifle to his cheek and shot the bull.

It is useless to speculate what might have happened had not Alvarado and Don Sylvestre opportunely appeared. Possibly Andy might have been lynched by the outraged populace and the licentious soldiery. Undoubtedly, failing this, he must have landed in the calaboose. Andy's act appeared to these people as gratuitous, without reason or sense. They resented it.

Nor did his hosts, when finally a settlement had been made, find it easy to get the idea.

“But that bear must die, señor, from his wounds,” observed Alvarado reasonably enough, “and that would happen quickly. Besides which, the bull was a very fine bull.”

This was entirely logical; indeed, Andy was forced by his common sense to agree to it. Nevertheless, the illogical part of him was stubborn; he was still glad he had shot the bull. Something of this skepticism must have showed in his face, for he caught Alvarado looking at him curiously. After a moment the Californian laughed.

“You are still puzzled, *tío*,” he said to Don Sylvestre, “but I think I understand. Don Andrés killed this bull for exactly the same reason that he spanked our friend Cortilla!”

“Well, the bear had made a good fight,” muttered Andy, “and the whole world was against him.”

Alvarado turned again to the *hacendado*, whose austere face was relaxing to comprehension.

“Undoubtedly our friend is crazy,” said he, but there was in his words no sting. “I think always you will find him fighting on the weak side; and for that reason I think that always you will find him in trouble. And,” he added with half-affectionate amusement, “for that same reason I think that always he will have friends to get him out of that trouble.”

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[3] The bear fight is taken almost literally from contemporary accounts of one such spectacle. See Davis, *Seventy-five Years in California*.

5

Nevertheless, the incident did not help. Public sentiment was resentful, and this resentment must undoubtedly filter through to Figueroa. Andy found the governor to be a thick-set swarthy man below medium height with much black hair and a scanty beard. A protruding lip and large prominent teeth were partly redeemed by eyes of a peculiarly piercing quality. Contrary to Andy’s expectation, his manner was affable, even fascinating. He insisted on making the occasion a social visit, although he had been clearly enough informed of its purport. His greeting was courteous; he was but recently come to the country; he was overjoyed at the opportunity to become acquainted with a *hacendado* of Don Sylvestre’s wealth and reputation. Alvarado he already knew and esteemed. As for Andy, Figueroa addressed him briefly but with no less cordiality, affecting to believe that the whole

matter was a delayed application for the *permiso*, the *carta de seguridad* without which no foreigner was supposed to remain in the country. A small affair. It should be attended to by the clerks with as little delay as possible.

"My lieutenant of troops should return within the day or two, if it pleases your excellencies to amuse yourselves so long." Figueroa's teeth flashed in a significant smile.

"Cannot El Comandante Vallejo sign for the military?" ventured Alvarado.

"Unfortunately El Comandante Don Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo is absent on a mission toward Sonoma, beyond the bay." Figueroa enunciated the words with meticulous nicety.

That was as near as the interview approached the vital subject. After ten minutes of elaborate politeness the visitors withdrew.

6

"What think you, my *político*?" demanded Don Sylvestre as they sauntered across the plaza.

"That I shall tell you in two words," said Alvarado. "The governor will do nothing until Cortilla returns. That I suspected. But this you note: he made no offer of arrest. Our friend, here, is still as free as the air. That is significant."

"Of what?" asked Andy.

"Of one of two things. Either he hopes you will take advantage of that freedom to flee and save him this trouble; or he hesitates because Don Sylvestre appears to be your friend."

"He seems to me," offered Andy shrewdly, "to be a man of decision, in spite of his manner."

Alvarado nodded vigorous acquiescence.

"He is part Aztec, that one. And, were he not a Mexican, I should say that he means well by our country. But now I will tell to you politics, my uncle, since you have called me *político*, and you must listen. This governor is not having so easy a time as you may think. He is not now popular in the south. For why?" Alvarado shrugged. "You know the south, *tío*. You remember how pleased they were when Echeandia, because of his health, went to reside at San Diego, and so for a while the actual capital was there, though officially it remained still at Monterey, of course. They had hoped

this arrangement might be permanent. Now they resent the fact that Figueroa has returned it to Monterey. That is one thing.

"Now for another. With Figueroa from Mexico came ten friars from the school of Zacateca, which is in Mexico. These were to displace some of our old *padres* of the missions, who are, as you know, of Spanish blood and therefore viewed with suspicion by Mexico. Also, it seems, he had definite instructions as to mission lands. It is too long a story to tell you, though I know much of it, for I myself, with José Castro, were of a commission to deal with the subject. But the point is that Figueroa here too has displeased the south, both in the things he has done, and above all in the things he has not done. Myself, I think he has done the best he can. Obviously he cannot disobey orders, which are to distribute the mission lands to the Indians; but as obviously the Indians are not as yet fit to own the lands, nor would they own them long.

"And for a third thing, and then I am finished with politics. It is known that José María Padres had gathered in Mexico a large number of people who come to California in the guise of colonists, and it is strongly rumored that he may even have secret orders to supplant Figueroa if the governor does not fall in with the policy of despoiling the missions." Alvarado smiled. "Figueroa lets it be known that he is in bad health and suffers from vertigo and the dampness of the fogs. This is what I think: that if affairs go badly this dampness may force him to take residence, like Echeandia, in the south. If they go worse, the vertigo may cause him, reluctantly, to resign. But if he finds the support he seeks, then you will see his health improve."[4]

"All of which is interesting, *sobrino mío*," submitted Don Sylvestre, "but complicated to a *ranchero* who is not skilled in politics."

"Why," said Alvarado, with a hint of impatience in his tones, "it is simple. Figueroa must have the good-will of the north, since he lacks that of the south. Even in small matters he must step cautiously. I think he most heartily dislikes this whole affair. Our friend here has most plainly put himself in the way of imprisonment and exile: one does not interfere with an officer of troops, and most certainly one does not chastise that officer with his own sword. On the plain facts Don Andrés should by now be confined in the *calabozo* and by tomorrow be on the way to San Blas; or even shot against a wall. But several things stand in the way: your friendship, Don Sylvestre, for you represent a sentiment unknown to Figueroa; the fact that he is my guest, and," Alvarado added with a gesture of deprecation, "I too am not without influence. It is also a fact that Cortilla is turbulent, and I can

guess that Figueroa would like well enough an excuse to get rid of him. You know what I think?"

"What?" asked Andy and Don Sylvestre together.

"That Figueroa awaits Cortilla's return so that it may be Cortilla who shall be held responsible. But here comes Señor Larkin. He has lived in Monterey only a short time, but already, I think, he is very wise."

Thomas Larkin, destined to play an important—and a sympathetic—rôle in the stirring later history of the times, proved to be a dark, thin man who walked with a slight stoop. He was dressed in European clothes, except for a *serape* across his shoulder, and a *sombrero* with a silver cord and tassels. He greeted Andy without surprise or emotion, his keen face devoid of curiosity. Only his eyes flashed into his countryman's with an instant's sympathy and understanding. He listened without comment to Alvarado's recital, holding one hand behind his ear as if he were a little deaf; a gesture habitual with him, though he seemed to hear well enough on occasion. He nodded to Alvarado's conclusions.

"I agree, Don Juan," he said, when the Californian had finished. "And I will add this: that I think Figueroa would be immensely grateful if you would do as he obviously hopes."

"What is that?" Andy asked.

"Why, simply, to mount your horse and ride east. I think I could safely predict that you will not be too closely pursued. That is my opinion."

"And mine," said Alvarado.

"Much as I regret it, it is also my own," said Don Sylvestre.

"I will add what these gentlemen would never tell you," said Larkin in English, "for they are your friends, and when a Californian is your friend he will stick to you through anything. But have you thought of the embarrassment you will cause them if you force them to do so?" He laid his hand on the mountain man's shoulder and gave it a quick shake. "I know how you feel," he said, and in his voice was a world of kindliness. "But think!"

"I will," muttered Andy.

He turned on his heel and strode away.

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[4] As a matter of historical interest, Alvarado was here in error. Figueroa actually died of his infirmities after a brief administration whose

wisdom seems to indicate he might have been the best of the Mexican governors, had he lived.

7

He sat again on the fallen log; and he did think; and his logic and common sense brought him inexorably to the conclusion voiced by Larkin. The only difficulty was, he did not believe it. That, his reason told him, was because he did not want to believe it. But reason had nothing to do with the matter. Again Andy was oriented by one of his blind "hunches," which he had always followed, and which he must follow now. It might be sheer obstinacy or selfishness; it might unwarrantedly involve people he had every reason not to involve; it might, very probably, land him in a Mexican prison; but he must stick it out. He came to this conclusion in no forlorn-hope spirit of desperation. Quite to the contrary, he swung down its current with a feeling of security that, in anybody else, he would have designated as chuckle-headed. He knew that feeling of old; and it had never failed him yet. Somehow he always associated it with the old long rifle, the Boone gun. It was his talisman through which on rare occasions somehow flowed to him protections and leadings he sensed but neither examined nor understood.

CHAPTER X
El Político

THE end of November approached, and the days were getting short. So engrossed was Andy with his inner affairs, he did not notice that the sun's rays had leveled through the pines, nor that he had rounded the arc of the bay. He was brought to himself by the sounds of hoofs and voices.

As may be imagined, a mountain man of a dozen years' experience was rarely to be surprised by anything; certainly not sufficiently to complete bereavement of his power of motion. Yet just so was the case of Andy when, a moment later, the disturbers of his solitude came into view.

The horses were three in number, each with its rider. The latter were typical mountain men, long hair, shiny black buckskin garments, moccasins, long rifles, and all. They were about as congruous, in this gentle Californian coast forest, accustomed to its pageant-like brilliantly dressed cavalcades, as a saxophone in a convent. They rode close together, at a shuffling trot, and their eyes wandered restlessly, never still for a moment. They caught sight of Andy instantly, and stopped.

"Thar's one of them now," one of the riders said to the other. "Mebbe so he'll tell us the way and how fur it is."

"How you goin' to ask him?" inquired the second sarcastically.

"Don't need to ask. Just say 'Monterey' and hunch up yore eyebrows."

"That shines," admitted the second, "but wouldn't you think effn they didn't l'arn white-man's language they'd at least l'arn hand talk!"

The third man did not speak. After a moment's attentive scrutiny they set their horses again in motion.

By this time Andy had recovered from his astonishment.

"Hullo, Joe Walker," he said quietly. "Hullo, George."

The horses were again snatched to a halt.

"Who are you that knows my name?" said the third man sharply.

"Take a look," advised Andy.

But the man he had called George uttered a wild shrill yell.

"Andy Burnett, by the 'tarnal!" he shouted. He cast himself from his saddle, abandoning his horse recklessly, to seize the young man's hand. "You horny toad you! What you doin' yerebouts? And whar you from? And by the 'tarnal, boys, look at the foofaraw on the critter! But I'd know that long barrl'd piece of your'n among a thousand! But what's your game, Andy? You settin' up for a Mex? Jist *look* at the foofaraw!" All the time he was pounding Andy exuberantly on the back.

"You might also take a look at that horse of yours," advised Walker dryly.

"Doggone, I am always plumb fergittin' these yere California hosses ain't broke to trapper ways," muttered George, setting off in pursuit of the beast.

"Glad to see you again, Burnett," said Walker. "You know John Price?" He waved his hand at the other member of the party. "What you doing in this neck of the woods?" His eyes traveled over Andy's get-up, and he grinned slowly. "That your war paint?" he asked.

"Purty good, eh?" Andy fell gratefully into the familiar vernacular. "But where floats your stick, Joe? I'm sure surprised to see you 'way over this side the ranges."

"Same to you," Walker pointed out. He swung leisurely from his horse and squatted, frontiersman's fashion, on his heels. His companion followed his example, and George, returning with his recaptured horse, joined the group. Walker produced a short stone-bowled pipe from his belt, filled it, pressed into the tobacco a light from his tinder, and passed it to Andy. The latter puffed strongly on it thrice and passed it to George. Until the circuit was complete no one spoke further. Andy took part in the little ceremony with an uprush of nostalgic pleasure that surprised him. For the moment he was swept spiritually into a past he thought he had closed away from him forever.

"You know where is this Monterey place?" Walker asked abruptly when the pipe had been returned to him.

"Sure," said Andy.

"Is she far?"

"Just over the hill. I walked out from there."

"We're headed that-away. Want to get permission to winter."

“Hope you get it,” said Andy. “They ain’t very friendly to mountain men just now.”

“So?” said Walker. “Friendly enough over where we left the boys—San Juan, they call it. Know the place?”

Andy nodded.

“How about you?” asked Walker. “How do you get to stay here?”

Andy grinned ruefully.

“That’s just it; I don’t,” said he.

He explained his position. They listened without interruption. Only when he detailed his encounter with the lieutenant, Cortilla, and how in reprisal for the latter’s unprovoked massacre of the harmless and confiding Indians he had spanked that official with his own sword, did their attentive gravity break.

“That shines!” said John Price.

“So you see,” concluded Andy, “looks like I might have to get out. But doggone if I can make my mind up to it. And looks like you boys might have trouble too.”

In the interest of the narrative no one noticed that the dusk had fallen. Mechanically, as though unconscious of what he was doing, George Parker had scooped together a handful of pine needles and dried twigs and had lighted a tiny fire. Walker for some time made no comment, but considered, his brows knit. His companions did not offer to break into his meditation. They waited, chewing placidly. The orange glow of the little fire strengthened in the dusk; began to reflect downward from the somber pine fronds overhead. Behind the group the horses stood patiently, their heads hanging, a hind foot tucked up, eyes half closed, dozing in grateful rest after the journey.

“You speak this lingo?” asked Walker abruptly.

Andy nodded.

“That’s good; none of us do. You can talk for us. We’ll go see this governor. He can’t any more than refuse. All we want to do is to winter here. If he does refuse, we can always go over toward the big mountains until the snow goes in the spring. I reckon we’ll know how to take care of ourselves. There’s nigh onto sixty of us,” he told Andy.

Andy whistled.

“Sixty!” he was astounded. “Anybody else I know?” he asked eagerly.

“We’re workin’ for Captain Bonneville,” interpolated John Price swiftly. “Sent us to take a look west of the Big Lake, and we got a little furtherer than we meant to and had to keep a comin’.”

Walker brushed aside further explanation for the moment.

“We’ll go see this governor,” he repeated, “you can talk for us.”

“There are several who can do that,” said Andy: “an American named Larkin; and there’s an American ship in the harbor.”

“Yes, we saw her in the big bay up north—Captain’s named Baggshaw,[5] isn’t he?”

“No, Barclay,” amended Andy.

“Same man probably. Doesn’t matter. But you better talk for us. You’re a mountain man yourself. You needn’t be scared they’ll hold you. I reckon we can take care of that. And if they do get funny, the rest of the boys will be over in a couple or three days to see about it.”

“I ain’t scared,” said Andy, “but don’t get the idea you can fight California, even with sixty long rifles. I used to think these people no good that way, but I changed my mind.”

“I reckon we can fight this part of California long enough to get ourselves away, if we want to,” said Walker grimly.

“All right,” agreed Andy. He was in the current of events. He no longer, even in his thoughts, attempted to guide them. “I was going back anyway.”

He got to his feet to lead the way, but Walker did not immediately arise.

“We got a piece of venison,” he decided at last. “Reckon we’d better stay here till morning. Bad medicine to go in now. Mout make trouble. Better by daylight. What think?”

They built up the fire; picketed the horses in an adjacent patch of grass; made their simple dispositions for bivouac. It was, to Andy, like old times. He took part with a zest that astonished him. After a meal of the venison roasted on the ends of green branches, once again they lighted the pipes, stretched themselves comfortably at full length about the fire. The night was mild. Sweet odors of pine needles evoked by the day’s sun hung suspended in the tepid air.

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[5] He meant Bradshaw, captain of the *Lagoda*.

It was Andy's turn to ask questions. A thousand dormant curiosities had awakened within him. A closed door had opened, and through it blew sweet bitter cold from the mountains. George did most of the talking, though John Price cut in from time to time.

What had happened in the fur country? Why, many things. It was mostly a mess.

"Heard about Vanderburg and what happened to him a'ter you done lit out from Rendezvous a'ter the fight?" George wanted to know.

"I told you, I've heard nothing, nothing at all," said Andy.

It seemed that the representative of the American Fur Company had made up his mind to cut in on the territory of the mountain men. To that end Vanderburg and Drips followed Jim Bridger and Fitzpatrick after the close of business at the summer's rendezvous, and came up with them on the Jefferson Fork.

"They meant to hog things," struck in Price. "Jim and Bad Hand acted decent; they offered to divide up the kentry with them. But they wouldn't do it. So Jim and Bad Hand left that kentry to them and moved up to another place they knowed of. They figgered there was enough for everybody. And danged if them other two didn't show up thar a'ter a little!"

"That made Bad Hand and Jim so mad they couldn't spit," George took up the recital. "So they sez to one another, if he wants to foller something, we'll gin him something to foller. And they starts out. And they sure led them a chase! Landed them finally into the Blackfeet kentry. The Blackfeet swarmed out and killed off Vanderburg, and that finished that! Fitz and Jim managed to git out of it; but they was attacked too on their way out, and Jim tuk him an arrow in the back, and he ain't been able to dig out the head yit: she's stuck in the gristle."

"How about the Blackfeet?" Andy brought himself to inquire at last.

"Those red imps of hell!" exploded Parker, but checked and spat embarrassedly. "I done forgit you're a Blackfoot man, Andy," he grinned shamefacedly. "If a man kain't cuss his friends, who can he cuss?" he submitted. "The Blackfeet? Wall, they're hostile yit to trappin' in their kentry. Bill Sublette made a round with nigh onto two hundred men. They was too many, so the Injuns didn't attackted them. They say the American Fur people is gitting to trade some with them up on the Marais. I dunno."

"Two hundred men!" cried Andy. "Two hundred!—trapping in one party!"

"Sure; that's the way they're doing things now. The days of us old lone wolves is about done. We hunt in packs now. Lookahere, Andy, while I tell you who was at Rendezvous this year. First of all they was us, of course—I mean the old mountain men, Bill Sublette's company. Then they was the A. F. C. And then there was Wyeth."

"I remember him," said Andy, "and his New Englanders. They were about as green and helpless a lot as I ever saw."

"Wall, he l'arned. He's only *purty* good in the mountains; but when it comes to trade he's an old he-coon and no mistake! Then thar's Captain Bonneville and his outfit."

"Who's he?" asked Andy.

"Ain't you run across him? Why, he's that army man that goes projecting around the mountains a leetle of everywhar. He does a leetle trapping and considerable trading and a hell of a lot of just plain ramming around, but whether he's on gov'ment business or his own, I dunno. Maybe Joe here knows. He's a sort of *burgeway* for the Cap'n, him and Mike Cerré."

"I am in his employ," said Walker briefly, but volunteered nothing.

"Well, so'm I," Parker laughed loudly, "so's Jack: and many another mountain man that you wouldn't think would be workin' for nobody but hisself. That's the way things is shaping."

"The Rendezvous," Andy reminded him.

"Oh, yes. Well, besides these they was another outfit yet, from St. Louee, got up by Bob Campbell, that had just come out to make a start. That was all the big outfits, but that was enough to one time. Then they was a couple dozen or so free trappers, us mountain men, that hadn't got hired yit. And one other outfit you wouldn't guess at, not effn I let you guess from now to Christmas."

"Then I won't try to guess," said Andy.

"They was a feller that called hisself a cap'n too; but he was a Britisher. He knew something of the mountains," acknowledged George, "though I don't know whar he l'arned. But he had with him a party—say, yo're some on foofaraw yourself, Andy; but yore foofaraw's got some style to her. But this foofaraw these fellers had, why, it was just plumb funny! It'd make an Injun laugh. Funny pants; funny coats with more pockets than a leg has hairs; funny caps, some on 'em, with a front and a back roof to 'em—wall, you jist ought to have seed them. When they come ridin' in, with this yere Britisher leadin' the way with a two-shootin' rifle, you could have collected you a bushel of eyes by jist goin' round and knockin' 'em off us with a stick.

And what you suppose they come for? For *nothin'*! They jist come to shoot game! No trappin', no tradin'—nothing with nothing in it for them. They was making nothing from it. Contrariwise they was payin' this Britisher to bring 'em! Now can you figger on that?"

Andy's mind harked back to boyhood days, and breathless moments with the old Boone gun—larger than himself—steadied across a fence rail. He thought he could; but he did not say so.

"Those were what they call sportsmen, George," Walker cut in dryly.

"They were what I call crazy," said George, "and I bet the Injuns git 'em, or a mule rabbit bites 'em. I talked with one of 'em. He was proud as a bull ellick because he'd done clumb right to the top of some mountain or other, right above timber line, whar thar warn't even a whistler, let alone ary game. 'Why,' he tells me, 'I was the only man ever done it!' All them sportsmen seemed to think a lot of that. I was tellin' somethin' about that Hole I trapped in up beyant the Rocky Fork. 'Why,' sez one of them, 'Mr. Parker, you was the only man in that kentry, wasn't you?' " George's voice became a mincing falsetto. " 'Hell,' sez I, 'that was no great shakes. I didn't even have a nigger to boss. I come within one man of bein' nobody.'

"That," he resumed after a moment, "is why John yere and I, and a passel of others, tuk up with Joe when he hired out to Cap'n Bonneville."

"On account of the sportsmen?" asked Andy, amused.

"On account of the way things is goin'. Why, Bad Hand went over to the Crow villages jist to ask 'em could he make his fall hunt in their kentry, like he always done—the Crows, mind you, that never bothered nobody yit, to amount to anything. And right off they tuk everything he had and turned him loose; robbed him clean. And a'terwards he found out they done it because the A. F. C. people hired 'em to do it. That's the way things are gittin' to be. If a man hires out to one company and then changes over next year to another company, chances is he is killed for doin' it. Ain't that right, Joe?"

"It's a good deal so," admitted Walker. "The Indians are getting more and more demoralized by this attitude of the whites toward one another. And they are using a lot of liquor."

"Makes me plumb sick," said Parker. "Gittin' so they ain't room for a man to take exercise."

For a time they smoked in silence, contemplating sadly the passing of the good old days. This was in the year 1833. The "explorers" were not to appear until another decade had passed.

Andy roused himself finally to inquiry of a more personal nature. Now Walker took up the story. Andy listened to a first-hand account of an expedition that has since become famous: the journey west from Salt Lake across the barren starving country—Andy nodded understandingly, for with Jedediah Smith he had made this trek; the headwaters of the Humboldt, down whose course they had followed hopefully, only to encounter disappointment when, instead of flowing on into the Pacific, as they had hoped, it ended in the "sink." Some trouble with the miserable Indians of the country. They were so ignorant they did not know the power of firearms. Had to be taught.

"Some of the men got out of control," Walker confessed. "More were killed than I wanted."

Usual starving times. They had killed their last buffalo on the fourth of August; they had eaten the last of the dried meat by the time they had reached the east side of the Sierra, two months later. Until they had crossed the great range they encountered no game bigger than a rabbit. They got along on the flesh of the emaciated and exhausted horses, which they shot. When the matter of subsistence was at its lowest, one of the party came upon an Indian carrying a basket. The Indian dropped the basket and fled. It contained acorns. Joe Walker talked at some length concerning the acorns. They were larger than those back East, he claimed, some of them as much as three inches long; and they tasted a lot better than any chestnuts you ever ate. For several moments he held forth; then checked himself with a laugh.

"Reckon a diet of lean hoss meat didn't leave me much of a judge," said he.

It took them nearly two weeks to struggle through the Sierra. Walker described in detail their difficulties. Andy did not realize until later years that he listened to the first description of Yosemite. But it was a hard country to get through; to get out of. At one place, failing any other way, they had to lower the horses over rock cliffs by ropes.

"It was easier where I came over," submitted Andy—"but that was a little earlier in the season," he added.

The party had also come upon trees of incredible size.

"I mean *big*," said Walker earnestly. "Bigger than you ever saw before in your life."

"I saw some pretty big ones where I crossed," said Andy. "Bigger than anything in the Rockies."

“How big?” demanded Walker.

“Must be at least eight foot through.”

“Some of these we saw was over twenty,” stated Walker.

Andy politely made no comment. But later in life he understood that he must have heard a first account of the Big Trees, probably the Merced or the Tuolumne groups. Two claims always aroused his indignation in after years: those of other “discoverers” of Yosemite, and the pretensions of the “explorers” and “pathfinders” who not only followed the routes of the mountain men, but were actually guided over them by the latter. At this moment, recalling the imposing proportions of the sugar and yellow pines through which he himself had passed, he allowed himself a silent reservation as to anything larger.

After that, Walker said, there was little more trouble. They had found plenty of game. After a while they had reached salt water, the Bay of San Francisco. Here this Captain “Baggshaw” had been anchored. Acting on his advice they had turned south to Monterey——

John Price raised his hand in emphatic warning. Walker bit off his sentence. Distinctly, but distantly, the sound of drumming hoofs became audible, a body of horse, coming in their direction and at full speed.

With catlike agility the mountain men leaped to their moccasined feet, rifles in hand. All but Andy, who kept his place.

“Just a bunch of these Californians going somewhere,” he told his companions. “They always travel that gait, day or night.”

They looked at him doubtfully.

“Yo’re gittin’ keerless, Andy,” chided George Parker. “Fust thing you know you’ll lose yore ha’r.”

Down through the trees, below the slope, shortly could be made out the glimpsed streaming mass of a considerable body of riders. Obviously their course would carry them far below the bivouac. The mountain men relaxed.

“They shore are hard on hosses!” muttered Parker.

But now it became evident that the horsemen had pulled down to a halt and that one was riding toward the camp. The three mountain men watched his dark figure warily; but Andy recognized the *palomino*, the “silver horse,” which was the favorite mount of his friend.

“Ramón!” he shouted.

The *palomino* leaped forward, plunged short. Ramón flung himself from the saddle.

"*Valedor!*" he cried. "But it is you! I see the so-esmall fire." His fine eyes swept Andy's companions and widened with surprise. The mountain men were leaning on their rifles in typical attitude, waiting, their eyes blank and noncommittal. "These are friend of you?" asked Ramón. "How they come?"

"Over the mountains, as I did," said Andy. He turned to the Americans. "This is the man I was telling you about, my friend, Ramón Rivera. These are mountain men, Ramón: Joe Walker and George Parker and John Price."

"*Señores!*" Ramón swept a bow.

"You the one that fit the white b'ar with a sword?" asked George.

Ramón glanced toward Andy with comical vexation.

"Always he tell that foolishness!"

"Yes, it was plumb foolish," agreed Parker candidly. "Leastwise, I wouldn't want to tackle it. But doggone if it didn't take nerve! Shake!"

Ramón shook. Walker and Price stepped forward and with great solemnity grasped his hand.

"What's up? Who's that with you?" asked Andy.

Ramón did not immediately reply. He whistled shrilly. The horsemen, who had been waiting in the dimness below the hill, set their mounts in motion of approach.

"You know them," he replied to Andy's question, "they are our guests of the *fiesta*."

The mountain men viewed their approach uneasily. There were a great many of them. Left to themselves, they would never, in a strange country, have permitted this. But Andy understood their misgivings and reassured them with a muttered word. He himself was recognized with obvious surprise, but with as obvious pleasure. They shouted greetings to him and eyed with avid curiosity the strange and picturesque appearance of his three companions.

"See," said Ramón, "we are all here!" He waved a comprehensive hand. "All!" He eyed Andy's blank face with amusement. "The *fiesta* is finish," said he, "so we make the esport."

"Sport?" repeated Andy, groping.

"But yes. The *fiesta* she is finish; all the young men is together. So we think we ride to Monterey. There is always esport in Monterey. You have seen the governor? Eh? What he say?"

“Nothing much yet,” said Andy. “He is waiting for Cortilla to come back.”

Ramón nodded.

“Yes, that is as I thought. The so-excellent lieutenant is—what-you-call?—chasing the wild goose up the Salinas. He come back some day. And these señores, your friend, they are here with *permiso*?”

“That is what they have come to get, for themselves and their party.”

“There are more?”

“At San Juan,” said Andy, “fifty or sixty of them.”

“So many! And what says Figueroa to that?”

“They have not seen him yet. We shall go in tomorrow. These do not speak Spanish. I am to talk for them.”

“All these so many!” Ramón chuckled. “But that is something for Figueroa to think about!” He thought for a moment; then chuckled again. “*Holá!*” he shouted, and with one leap was in the saddle. “*Mañana!* In Monterey!” He struck spurs to the *palomino* and was off down the slope through the trees, followed headlong by all his company, leaving behind them a scatter of pine needles and dust that eddied in the swirl and settled slowly.

The Americans looked at one another.

“Is that fellow crazy?” George broke the silence at last. “He sure acts it.”

But Andy shook his head.

“Crazy like an owl,” said he loyally.

Nevertheless, he was troubled. What mad prank was this? The situation was delicate enough as it was.

4

Figueroa received them promptly, and with his customary politeness, though his eyebrows went up for a moment at sight of Andy. He listened to the request for permission to winter.

“Why have they come to California?” he asked.

Walker explained that, being instructed to explore the country to west of the Big Lake, the party had gone so far into the deserts that it could not return but was forced to push on over the mountains. This statement was not entirely ingenuous. From Jedediah Smith and others it was already sufficiently known that the areas west of Salt Lake were not beaver country.

Indeed, several of the men, Joe Meek among them, had joined this expedition solely because it was headed toward the Pacific. Having crossed the Sierra, Walker added, it was obviously impossible to retrace their steps, now that the winter had set in. Therefore they begged permission to spend the season in California.

Figueroa sat for some time drumming a forefinger on the polished table.

"There are threescore of these men, you say?" he asked Andy finally.

"About that, señor."

"Do they fight?"

"I do not think they wish to fight; but, naturally, señor, they would fight if they thought they had to do so."

"You do not understand me," said Figueroa. "What I mean to ask is whether these threescore are all armed fighting men, like these before me."

"All men from across the mountains are fighting men, señor," said Andy. He was beginning to think that the size and the character of the party were having their effect. After all, even sixty American rifles were not to be taken lightly. But the governor's next words would seem to indicate that this thought was not uppermost in his mind.

"My orders from Mexico are exact, señor. It is my duty to compel these men to leave the country; or, failing that, to place them under arrest."

"They cannot cross the Sierra now," said Andy.

"The way south is open, to Taos and Santa Fe," Figueroa pointed out. "Would it be unreasonable, after a short period of rest, to require them to take that route?"

"The Señor Walker says that might be done," Andy translated back, "but the journey is distant and perilous, and he would prefer to rest here. He says also that he is prepared to resist arrest."

"You better tell him, Andy, that we're also prepared to see you get a fair deal, and that when we go we intend to take you along too," said Walker.

At this moment the door was opened by an attendant, and Ramón entered the room. Figueroa turned toward him a frowning brow.

"I am, as you see, occupied, señor," said he coldly.

Ramón bowed profoundly.

"It is not an intrusion, señor, as you suppose," said he. "I am Ramón Rivera, at your service. I speak well the language of these strangers. I may be of assistance."

Figueroa eyed him steadily for some moments.

"You are welcome, Don Ramón," he said at last, with the air of having come to a decision, "and I am pleased to make the acquaintance of another of your illustrious family. And," he added graciously, "to receive the benefit of your counsel in this affair."

"At your command, my governor," said Ramón, bowing again.

"I debate with myself," Figueroa spoke with soft deliberation, "whether immediately to send these *americanos*, who have arrived to the number of threescore at San Juan Bautista, out of our country by way of the trail of Anza, as a strict interpretation of my orders indicates——"

"And one of course obeys orders as a good servant of the government," observed Ramón.

"—or to use the discretion that is undoubtedly mine and permit them to remain until spring, when they may return as they came."

"A course which is, as you say, undoubtedly within your discretion as the personal representative of the Republic," supplemented Ramón.

"It is my duty to consider all aspects which are to the advantage of our country," went on the governor. "Undoubtedly there are among these strangers many who possess skill in the crafts whose knowledge might prove valuable."

"Undoubtedly, señor."

Andy listened to this interchange with some bewilderment, for he sensed beneath its banality an undercurrent of some sort which he did not understand. Nor did certain incongruities escape him. Why should Figueroa ask advice of a young man whom but a moment ago he had set eyes on for the first time? A young man furthermore whose reputation must have been well known to him?

But at this moment a confusion on the plaza outside drew the attention of all. Through the open window could be seen a great concourse of horsemen who paced slowly across the open space and came to a halt outside the governor's house. They were talking and shouting to one another, but as they drew rein the confusion steadied. Someone raised his voice in song. One by one others caught the air and joined in, until at last the chorus was lusty and full voiced. The three trappers glanced at one another startled.

"Why!" cried George Parker. "That thar's the 'Trappers' Song,' or I'm a horny toad!"

Andy nodded. “I taught it to them,” he explained.

“Wall, I wondered! But I don’t git the cute of them words.”

Andy did not explain the cute of the words, which were, indeed, a celebration of himself as composed by that gay minstrel, Carlos Lugo; nor that this version was not known as the “Trappers’ Song,” but as the “Song of Don Largo.” Figueroa listened, without expression, to the end.

“Who are these young men?” he asked Ramón.

“My friends,” replied the latter. “They come with me to Monterey. You see, my governor, we have held the *fiesta* at the *hacienda* of my family; and that *fiesta* is finished; and now, since we are all together, we come to Monterey.”

“Undoubtedly the names of many of them should be known to me,” suggested Figueroa.

“Undoubtedly, señor.” Ramón paused; then began slowly, one by one, as though calling a roll, to give their names—De la Cuesta, Lugo, Vallejo, Martinez, Salvatierra, De la Palma, Guitierrez—dozens and dozens more of singing syllables, on and on without pause for breath; and Figueroa listened attentively to the end.

“Monterey is honored,” he said then, “and the hearts of our ladies will be stirred at thought of so many distinguished *caballeros*.”

“And when we shall return, señor, then shall the *caballeros* kiss their hands,” said Ramón.

“Return?” said Figueroa. “Then you make a journey?”

“We make a revolution,” said Ramón lightly.

A blank silence for a moment.

“Revolution,” then repeated Figueroa sternly. “What mean you by that word? Revolution against whom?—against what?”

“Why, that we do not as yet know,” said Ramón with an air of engaging frankness. “It is now good weather for revolution. I think it will not rain for a long time yet. Is it possible you might suggest something, my governor? Have you no enemy for us? Los Angelenos? Los Diegans? Anyone *de la otra banda*? But no: I talk foolishness. That would be to make the war but not the revolution. I forget: revolution is to fight against the government, is it not? Well, perhaps we shall not make the revolution after all. That is a pity; it is such a fine weather for revolution. We shall see.”

During these long colloquies in a strange language the three mountain men had waited stolidly. Now their curiosity got the better of them.

"What's all the palaver, Andy?" they asked him apart.

Andy shook his head. Beneath Ramón's light tones he thought to catch the clash of steel as though of rapiers engaging.

"I can't make out," he replied in low tones. "Seems like Ramón is threatening him with a revolution if he don't let us be; but that don't make sense."

"Well, with us to back him I bet we'd get up a right tidy little revolution," asserted George stoutly.

"For a while," admitted Andy, "but that handful couldn't fight all California and Mexico. I hope Ramón isn't that foolish. And Figueroa doesn't look to me as if he scared easy. No, I feel there's something else behind it that I don't get."

Nor did he get what followed. Suddenly Figueroa leaned back in his chair.

"It desolates me, Don Ramón," he was saying, "to disappoint so eager and so gallant a body of *caballeros*, but I can suggest nothing further. If a campaign against the Indians seems to you undesirable, there is nothing more. Should occasion arise, I shall call upon your company, and I hope they may come to my banner with the same zeal that now animates them."

"I hope that may be the case, señor," said Ramón. He seemed to be waiting in expectancy.

Figueroa slowly drew toward him a sheet of paper, dipped the quill, painstakingly wrote a dozen words or so, signed his name with an elaborate flourish, sprinkled the wet ink with sand. A second sheet he likewise inscribed; and a third. Then he looked up. After several seconds he handed one of the papers to Walker.

"Tell him that is the permission he desires," he instructed Andy.

He tinkled a silver bell, and to the clerk who answered it he passed the second of the papers.

"This order for the lieutenant Cortilla," he commanded. "Send horsemen with it at once to search for the lieutenant until he is found. Following its receipt he will without delay and without return to this post proceed to the presidio at San Diego, where he will there take up his duties."

The clerk bowed and went out.

"This is for you, señor," said Figueroa courteously to Andy.

He arose from his chair.

"For the moment, señores, I must be excused. But," he addressed Ramón, "I cannot permit these *caballeros* to disappoint the ladies of Monterey. I must beg of you, señor, to request them to keep me in their good graces."

"At your service, señor," Ramón bowed. "In this as in all other things," he added.

The governor bowed in return and, before the Americans could gather their wits to express their thanks, he had vanished through the small door that opened at his back.

5

Andy stared at the paper in his hand. He was slightly dazed. The thing was too suddenly and too simply resolved. He had the same feeling he had often experienced in the mountains when groping and lost in a fog. One moment he was involved in a situation so serious that to it he must devote all his craft and caution lest he be destroyed; the next, as though by magic, the mists had disappeared. Ever since his first appearance on the valley plains of California, the young man had lived under the shadow of a situation that looked impossible of resolution. He could see no way out. And all at once the way through opened, quietly, without the clang of melodrama. But with the bewilderment was also a warm glow of satisfaction that again the "hunch" on which he had persisted had held good. But still it was to him incredible. The paper Figueroa had signed was not merely a passport for a temporary visit: it was a permission to become a resident, should he be so inclined.

Ramón, naturally, was elated and jubilant, as were the young men outside. It took Andy some time to extricate himself. He did so as soon as he could; for his mind was still unsatisfied. Walker and his companions early slipped away.

"See you by and by, Andy," Walker told him, "when things are quieter."

He saw them a few minutes later in a small boat bobbing across the bay toward the just-arrived *Lagoda* and their friend Captain "Baggshaw."

At length he and Ramón made their escape. They found Don Sylvestre and Alvarado in the patio, conversing, smoking, and obviously waiting for news. They listened to the young men's joint recital in silence, but with evident approval.

"What is your opinion, Señor Alvarado?" asked Andy when they had finished.

“My opinion? What should it be, except that all things have come out most fortunately for you—and for us all.”

“But why did the governor so suddenly change his mind?”

“He did not change it; he made it up,” said Alvarado.

“But why?”

“Is not the reason evident?” queried Alvarado. “Here within less than a score of leagues are a half hundred or so of your countrymen with their long rifles, who, it might be supposed, would take your part. Here also is our dear Ramón with all his youthful *compañeros* breathing revolution against the tyrant. Is not that combination enough to convince Figueroa he must yield?”

“But surely!” cried Ramón.

Alvarado laughed at the expression of stubborn doubt on Andy’s face. Ramón too saw it, but Alvarado checked the young Californian’s impatience.

“No,” he said. “Your friend is not stupid, Ramón, he is on the contrary *sabio*. He sees farther than you. He sees that which you do not see.”

“No, I don’t see it,” disclaimed Andy, “but I feel it, and I want to know.”

“See what! know what, *nombre de Dios*!” cried Ramón, exasperated.

“Why, just this, my cousin,” replied Alvarado. “That, brave as is the *americano*, and armed though he may be, fifty men is only fifty men and may not stand against the power of a state; and, brave as are your companions, they are after all but few and bear no arms. Is not that it, Don Andrés?”

Andy nodded.

“And also that Figueroa seems to me a man who would not yield to threats,” he supplemented.

“*Viva!*” Alvarado cried approvingly. “You may not be practised as a *político*, Don Andrés, but I perceive you read men well.”

“All this talk is confusing to a simple *hacendado*,” complained Don Sylvestre. “Would it please you, *sobrino mío*, to say plainly what is in your mind?”

“With pleasure,” said Alvarado. “It is very simple. You recall what I have told you: that this new governor is not popular with the south?—that he is there threatened with an enmity that needs but an excuse? As for your friend Señor Walkaire and his people, I think it is a satisfaction to the governor to know that all of this winter there are at hand, if he needs them,

sixty good rifles. Even if he has no occasion to use them, their presence is known."

"Yes, that is simple and understands itself," agreed Don Sylvestre.

"But not so simple as all that!" warned Alvarado. "The *americanos* would be a very welcome addition to the military forces at Figueroa's command; but they, none of them, would mean anything without one other thing."

"What is that?" asked Andy, as Alvarado paused.

"The support of the *californios* of the north. That is why Figueroa hesitated. He did not know: he must find out. With both north and south against him, he would be lost. How does the north look upon these strangers?"

"I begin to see!" cried Andy.

"Which I do not," grumbled Ramón.

"Why," said Andy, "—and I beg of you, Señor Alvarado, tell me if I am wrong—thus it seems: it is as I thought, Figueroa did not yield to your threat of revolution, Ramón. But from it he became certain how the *californios* of the north felt in this matter. It taught him what he wished to know. Is that what you think, señor?"

"I think you are not bad as a *político* yourself, Don Andrés," said Alvarado. "And," he added, "I am beginning to believe this Figueroa, Mexican though he is, is a shrewd man who may govern well. And I think, would he at this moment give us his confidence, we would find him as well pleased as ourselves, for what with his own forces and the great families of the north—whose names, Ramón *mío*, you recall he had you say to him—and these *americanos*, he can face south with a tranquil mind."[6]

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[6] Figueroa's policy as respects the Walker expedition has never been explained, save on the vague ground of friendliness to foreigners. This is not completely adequate in view of the strict treatment of Jedediah Smith a short time before, and the immediately following attitude of hostility to subsequent immigration. Yet this governor not only accorded permission to Walker to remain over the winter, but offered him a tract of land seven leagues square if he would remain in the country. Only the political situation above ventured seems to make this understandable.

After a time Ramón and Andy took their leave and went out to the plaza for the purpose of finding some of their friends. At the door stood Panchito with their horses, in case they should wish to ride. The *vaquero* was all smiles, for already the rumor of the situation was abroad.

The young men mounted. Both were in the wildest spirits. To the astonishment of the bystanders, unaccustomed to that boisterous type of demonstration, Andy pounded his friend on the back.

"You turned the trick!" he cried, "you and the others! Let's find them! If it had not been for you—— It was just what was needed—in the nick of time! It was a happy idea!"

"But not mine," Ramón disclaimed. "No, *amigo*, I could not have thought of it. Even I," he made a comical face, "even I, the so-foolish one, would not have thought it anything but madness—why, consider, *valedor*, to come to Monterey, so few, so empty of the hand, and be gobble up *pronto* by the soldier if Figueroa tell them." He laughed and shrugged his shoulders. "You think I am so foolish I do not see that? And these others, are they so foolish also? No, no-no, you must not think that!"

Ramón, for the moment, seemed wholly intent on defending his reputation for sanity. Andy was puzzled and a little dashed.

"It was that Carmel," explained Ramón gloomily.

"Carmel!" cried Andy.

"Yes. Imagine to yourself, *valedor*, how she act. She talk to us like washer girl. She call us coward. She demand we do something. We ask her, what can we do? She say she don' care, but do it quick. It is one escandal for the *doncellita* to act thus way. Mamá, she try to estop her. No good. She is wild. She say if we do not go quick, she will go alone, by herself. So we say, all right: we will go; and then she want to go too, but that is too great a escandal, and Mamá would not permit. So then Carmel send us off. We ask, can we eat before we estart, and she estamp her foot; so we go without the eat." Ramón laughed. "At the last she want us to esteal the governor and tak' him in the mountain until he promise to let you stay! What you think of that? And do you know, *valedor*, if it do not come out so good the other way, I think maybe we do it! We got to do somethings. That Carmel say if you do not come back she go to be a nun, sure!" Ramón stopped speaking, and his jaw dropped. He stared after a billowing dust cloud which marked his friend's headlong departure from the plaza. Then he struck his spurs to his own horse and followed.

Even the swift *palomino* had difficulty in overtaking Andy's much slower mount, so urgently was the latter pressed. And even then Andy refused to check at Ramón's summons. Finally the Californian leaned from his saddle, seized the reins, and by a deft feat of horsemanship brought both animals to a half-circling halt. Andy's face was dark with momentary anger, but he was helpless against Ramón's practised skill at this sort of thing.

"You will tell me where you go!" the latter persisted. "No, I will not let you go until you do tell me!"

"For heaven's sake, take your hands off!" cried Andy. "I'm just going back to the *hacienda*. Come along, if you want to; but let go."

The horse plunged and struggled, but the Californian's wrists were iron, and the *palomino* stood braced, its ears laid back in virtue.

"But for the love of me, *valedor*!" pleaded Ramón in despair. "Listen, for one little minute listen; then you shall go."

"Well, what is it?"

Ramón released the reins and sat back in his saddle with a sigh.

"What is it?" repeated Andy, gathering his reins in impatience.

"If you do go to the *hacienda*, you will not see Carmel," said Ramón.

This directness had its effect. Andy's face fell.

"Not see her? What do you mean?"

"Now you must listen: just for one minute you must listen!" pleaded Ramón. "You shall not see Carmel. I know my peoples. It is already a so-great escandal. Nothing like this has ever been before."

"What are you driving at? Spit it out."

Ramón shrugged in despair. How make this direct young savage understand in two sentences the elaborate, graceful, delicate fabric of etiquette and ceremony so rudely rent by the circumstances of the past few days? How make him understand that consequently those conventions would in reaction more rigidly obtain? He could not. So he stated bluntly the bare facts.

"After what has occur," he told Andy, "it will not be permit that you talk with Carmel until you are engaged to be marry."

"Well, what do you think I'm going there for?" demanded Andy.

"But there is Papá!" expostulated Ramón.

"Well, what about him?"

Finally Andy was made to understand that this thing was not merely an affair of personal agreement between himself and Carmel; that Don Sylvestre must first of all give his formal permission for Andy to begin to pay his addresses, after which, in due and appropriate time——

"Is that all!" cried Andy, and was gone in another cloud of dust, this time in the return direction toward Monterey.

Ramón looked after him in comic despair. He did not attempt to pursue, but put the *palomino* to the shuffling Spanish trot. Let him discover the rest from Don Sylvestre. No one better qualified than the old grandee to bring Andy's impetuosity of ignorance to an appreciation of the spaced and prescribed elegancies of proper courtship.

But he had no more than emerged from the fringe of pines above the town when he discovered his friend, still at full speed, returning headlong. This time, however, Andy pulled up as they met.

"It's all right!" cried the latter joyously. "He consents."

"How? I do not understand." Ramón was bewildered.

"He says it's all right."

"You ask my papá, and he says it's all right," repeated Ramón stupidly. "Just that?"

Andy was gone.

7

Ramón rode on. It was too much for him, beyond all belief. In the village he sought out the head *vaquero*.

"Panchito," said he, "you will take three horses and you will ride on the road to the *hacienda*."

"*Sí, señor.*"

"After a time, I think, you will overtake Don Andrés, who will be riding very slowly on a very weary horse. It may be you will find the horse dead by the road and Don Andrés walking. But you will find him going toward the *hacienda*—of that I am certain."

"*Sí, señor.*" Panchito's eyes were twinkling.

"You will mount him on one of the fresh horses, and you will go with him to the *hacienda*."

"*Sí, señor*," said Panchito.

"That is all, Panchito. Do this at once."

"*Sí, señor*," said Panchito.

But as Ramón remained lost in thought, the *vaquero* awaited his dismissal.

"*Señor*," he ventured at last.

"Yes?"

"I stood with Don Sylvestre receiving orders. Don Andrés rode up at full speed. Without dismounting, he said to the master, 'Don Sylvestre, I wish to marry your daughter, Carmel.' Don Sylvestre answered him, 'That is well. God be with you, my son.' Then Don Andrés rode away. That was all: no more, no less."

"Why do you tell me this, Panchito?" said Ramón.

"Why, Don Ramón," said the *vaquero*, and the carved brown gravity of his face became more wooden, "all my life have I prayed the blessed saints that I might behold a miracle."

"It occurs to me that the blessed saints have answered your prayers," said Ramón.

"So it seemed to me," said the *vaquero*.

The two men looked into each other's eyes. Then suddenly both burst out laughing.

CHAPTER XI
Casamiento

ANDY saw no reason why he should not marry at once. He was no longer in danger from the government since Figueroa had issued his permission to remain: Carmel loved him. It might have been natural for the latter to wish for delay enough to prepare for the elaborate wedding Andy understood all women desired; but, as a matter of fact, Carmel proved to be as impatient as himself. The greatest coquette of her time as long as her heart was untouched, she became utterly devoid of caprice now that she was genuinely in love.

The family council smiled indulgently at the ardors of impatience. All but the little girl, Faquita. Her smile was of lofty disdain. Andy had promised definitely to be her *caballero*: he had deserted her for her older sister, and both of them were behaving like untaught children who had never heard of what is proper. Faquita looked down on them from the serene heights of scorn. In like circumstances she would have known correctly her rôle; while Carmel, who was older and presumably practised in the social graces, was acting like an ignorant *moza*. Not that Faquita would ever be called on to use this knowledge; for she had decided to be a nun. She crossed her feet and her hands and gazed at her sister with cool and clear-eyed contempt.

Only with difficulty was Andy brought to an understanding of how completely, up to now, he had overset all tradition, and that, really, there must be a line drawn somewhere. The Riveras, again with the exception of their youngest member, were quietly amused at his total lack of comprehension. Ramón finally begged permission to explain in English.

"But consider these, *valedor*," he told Andy, "what you have done. You see my sister; you love; *pronto* you want right off quick to marry her. You act just like she was *moza*, and she is a *doncellita*, a *hidalga*. Already what you do is like a escandal, but that is forgive because you are *americano* and

do not know; but more cannot be forgive, because we are Riveras, and we do know."

"But what is the matter?" cried Andy. An enlightening idea came to him. He thought now he had it. It was stupid of him! Of course! He explained carefully to Don Sylvestre that in spite of appearances he was not without resources. In fact, he was well prepared to take care of a wife. He carried with him a not inconsiderable sum of money from the last Rendezvous. In addition he had with the Company, in St. Louis, a much larger credit, the balance of what had been due him, as well as the savings of his years in the mountain country. Through one of the returning Boston ships he would make arrangements for a transfer of this credit. Andy elaborated happily. He was amazed at his stupidity. Naturally, no sensible man would wish to confide his daughter to a man without resources.

But he was still more amazed at Don Sylvestre's reception of this gratifying intelligence. The latter seemed to consider it wholly unimportant. He waved his hand.

"But there is always plenty of money and plenty of land, my son," said he.

Andy turned to Ramón in despair.

"What more does he want?" he asked.

Ramón was laughing.

"Now, listen, soul of my heart," said he, "while I do tell you all the things you must do if you were Espanish man. First of all, you must ask the consent of the papá before you do speak to the esweetheart at all of the getting marry."

"Well, I did that, didn't I?"

"Yes, you ride back and you say, 'Señor, I want your daughter. That all right?' and then you ride off quick. Now, if you are Espanish man you do not ask for yourself at all. That is very bad. Your papá, or your *compadre*, go to ask for you. And the papá of the *doncellita*, he do not give the answer right away. He wait a week; maybe ten days. Then he say all right; maybe. Then there is a ceremony of the betrothal. And after that you wait two years, and you do not talk to the esweetheart except there is present the mamá or the *dueña*."

"Two years!" repeated Andy blankly.

"Two years," said Ramón firmly. "All that time you are what is call *novio*; and some of that time you must live in the household of the papá of

the esweetheart, and you must work for him if he wants you to. And then there's a lot more things to do. And then maybe you get marry."

"But say—look here—two years!" Andy's face was so eloquent of his dismay that the Riveras burst out laughing.

"I have told him what is customary for the *novio*," Ramón explained in Spanish. They enjoyed Andy's evident discomfiture. But Doña Engracia's kind heart would not permit her to prolong the joke. It need not be so long in this case. As Andy was a foreigner, Don Sylvestre had, after consideration, decided that the full rigidity of the etiquette might be softened, especially in view of all that had already happened. But some concession must be made to the dignity of convention.

"How long?" asked Andy.

"Six months," said Don Sylvestre.

The statement was obviously final. Carmel smiled ruefully at Andy. The child Faquita was still scornful.

2

Six months seemed at first a long time; but they passed, and they proved to be not entirely barren. To be sure, the rule as to the mamá or the *dueña* was rigidly enforced; but there were many things to do. The ranch life interested Andy. He found he was able to carry forward certain plans and preparations for the life he was to lead. Some of these took him away from Carmel for various periods; but her absence was partly compensated by the fact that he was doing things for her.

Thus, after long consultations with Don Sylvestre and Ramón and his brothers, it was decided that the new household should establish itself on some of the unclaimed lands up the valley. They made an excursion on horseback to look them over. It turned out to be quite an expedition. Besides Don Sylvestre and his four sons and Andy were Panchito and two other *vaqueros* to take care of the horses, and three servants to cook and make camp. At the last minute the courtly moon-faced Benito joined them uninvited.

"These others know the grass and the range for the cattle, señor," he told Don Sylvestre, "but as for the soil and the frost and the sun, they do not know enough of these things to break a plate. For the honor of the Riveras, señor, it must not be said that we have placed the daughter of our house where she must eat only meat and the fruit of the cactus. I go to select the *milpas*."

“And how will your own *milpas* survive your absence, Benito?” teased Ramón.

“That is in the hands of the saints, señor,” replied Benito piously. “Also I have carefully beaten each one of *los Indios* that they may be heated to vigilance; for it is well known, señor, that flies do not seek a boiling pot.”

He rode, far in the rear, on a mule; and seemed placidly indifferent to the indignity.

They picnicked through the country for five days before they found what they wanted, in the rolling oak-grown hills a few leagues from the Mission of Nuestra Señora de la Soledad. There were green lands, and brush-covered foothills, and eroded deep *barrancas* with living streams, and a semicircle of brooding dark mountains. Wide meadows spread flat between the hills. On them, spaced apart, were great white oaks, their branches bare at this time of year, in which perched thousands upon thousands of band-tailed pigeons whose rising was as the roar of a waterfall. Benito shook his head and knit his brows, already worried as to the defense of a garden not yet begun. There were a great many of these flats, elliptical in shape, bordered by low hills whose sides were aromatic with sage, in which called multitudes of quail, and whose bare tops waved high with rich grasses. An ideal cattle country with dry and wet season ranges, and here the grounds for the *rodeo*, and there for *matanzas*. Benito grubbed about in one of the flats and found the soil good. He was much flattered and pleased that Andy spent so much time in his company. Indeed, for two days, after the general situation had been decided, Andy devoted himself to Benito.

“You know more about the cattle business than I,” he told his hosts.

Andy’s boyhood was stirring in his blood. The intervening years of adventure had cleared away the early complexes born of his stepfather’s harsh treatment. He had been raised as a farm boy. His ideas were expanding beyond Benito’s *milpas*; though he had every intention of raising as great a variety as possible of both fruits and vegetables. But there seemed to him other possibilities. Some of this soil looked to him like grain land—wheat, barley, rye. Grapes ought to do well, if the sage could be grubbed from the side hills. And he would not plow with a sharp stick, either! He made a mental note to request Captain Barclay to bring back proper plows. His mind once started on this train of thought, he was reminded of other similar desirabilities. He began a list. He did not speak of these ideas to anyone but Benito.

They returned to the *hacienda*, and messengers rode back and forth to Monterey; and after a time Andy found himself duly entitled to five leagues

of land. Figueroa made no difficulty in the grant. Things had settled down politically, and the governor knew his policy had won. For a time he favored foreign colonization of the skilled sort, being especially eager for settlers possessed of mechanics or the crafts. On their return from Monterey, after completion of the legal formalities, Andy and his Californian friends found John Price waiting. He was welcome; but it instantly developed that he had not come as a guest. Price was a sturdy and independent character who refused to be beholden or to disguise a purely business visit. He had decided he wanted to stay in the country, and before going to Monterey he wished to consult Andy's friends as to procedure.

"Why, I think the governor will make no difficulty," said Don Sylvestre, "provided this man can show the governor he is valuable. What can he do?"

"Do?" said Price, when this was translated. "Oh, a good many things."

"The governor, I think, does not want 'many things,' " said Don Sylvestre shrewdly. "What can he do that no one now here can do?"

This rather stumped John for a moment.

"Doggone!" said he to Andy, "what kin I do? I reckon they don't need Injun fighters or beaver trappers. I tell you: I can make shingles."

Andy had no Spanish word for this, so he repeated it in English.

"Tzn—tzn—tzngles?" said Don Sylvestre. "And what is that?"

Andy tried to explain; but succeeded none too well.

"Well," said the *hacendado* sensibly, "let him make some tzngles and we shall see."

John was furnished Indians, *carretas*, whatever he desired. He contrived himself a serviceable froe; he made an excursion to the near-by mountains in search of straight grained pine. In due course he returned with a load of very serviceable shakes. Don Sylvestre was as delighted as a child with a new toy, once the use of the new roof covering was demonstrated on some of the smaller outbuildings. This was something nobody else had. He wanted more tzngles; and it is probable he might even have ripped from the roof of the *casa* its beautiful and serviceable red tiles had not Andy begged Price as overseer of construction for his own new buildings.

These were rapidly taking shape on the site he had selected for them between the confluence of two streams atop a low rounded hill on which grew several magnificent spreading live oaks. Contrary to custom and against the earnest wish of all but Carmel, he insisted on preserving these trees. He saw no sense in cutting them out, of clearing bare the immediate surroundings after the fashion of all the Californian ranch houses. The habit

had probably originated as a measure of defense in the early days, and had been continued senselessly ever since until it had become a convention. So the new adobe structures, crowned with John Price's tzngles, spread widely and comfortably beneath leafy branches in which birds fluttered and sang. They took shape rapidly; as did all the necessary corrals and irrigation ditches and the other multifold appurtenances of a proper establishment; for there were many hands employed. Indeed, the regular business of the *hacienda* must have suffered. Its own labor was certainly pared down to the absolutely necessary minimum. Horsemen and *carretas* wore a deep road between the *hacienda* and the new *rancho*; between the *hacienda* and Monterey. Captain Barclay was astounded at the sudden and varied demands on his cargo, especially for small nails. He did not know about the tzngles.

The regular labor of the *hacienda* at last was almost at a standstill. Its *vaqueros* drove in cattle from somewhere. They disappeared for a week to return with a great taking of wild horses from the valley. Andy would have liked to have a part in this expedition, but he could not be spared; so Ygnacio Rivera went instead. That kind of hunting must have been fun. They waited at the watering places and rode the animals down, riding without saddle for swiftness' sake, with a loose rawhide surcingle to which to attach the reata. When caught, the wild horses were tied together in pairs, the easier to drive them home. They were then thrown in with tame stock and handled until they had been accustomed. Where the tame stock came from Andy was never quite sure; nor the bands of cattle that seemed continually to be drifting in under charge of strange *vaqueros*, who sometimes remained for a time to familiarize the beasts with their new range, and sometimes rode away again at once. The whole affair seemed to have gathered a momentum that swept it beyond his understanding. He never paid anybody anything; he never signed any papers; he never knew whether or not he had anybody to thank. It was out of his hands. At first he tried to get some information; protested vigorously. He was assured it was all right. In due time the business end of it would be arranged. He hoped profoundly that someone was keeping track of all this. He was just a little frightened at times, for he could not even begin to guess how deep his obligations were getting to be. Ramón, cornered, gave him only the vaguest satisfaction.

"The cattle?" said he. "Why, they are for make you the beginning for the *rancho*. You must have about two thousand horses and about fifteen thousand cow before you are *ranchero*."

"But where do they come from? Whom do I pay?" insisted Andy.

“Some come from the mission; some from the *hacienda*; some come from the other *rancho* where are friend of the Riveras—and also of you, Don Largo. You do not pay for heem. After five year you give heem back. By that time they breed you so many you have enough of your own.”

“I don’t understand,” said Andy.

“Why, these—they just lend them to you,” said Ramón.

He seemed incapable of understanding that this amounted after all to an outright gift of the increase.

“But they get them all back,” insisted Ramón. “What is lend a few cow? If someone ask you to borrow a few cattle, you would surely not refuse!”

In the same way, it seemed, most of the labor that swarmed to the construction had been “borrowed”—the Indians from the missions, the *vaqueros* from the other *ranchos* round about. Ramón failed to see any great obligation in this.

“They work anyway,” said he. “What difference whether they work here or somewhere else?”

Andy gave it up. The whole thing had passed out of his hands. He made one last despairing effort.

“But how do I know to whom I am to return these ‘borrowed’ cattle and horses?” he demanded. “I ought to keep a list. How do I keep track?”

“Oh, that all right,” Ramón assured him comfortably. “You don’t have to keep track. Each one will remember all right, and will tell you when it is time.”

Benito was in his glory. He had a small army of “borrowed” Indians at his disposal, and he utilized them in constructing the irrigation ditches and checks of a super-*milpas*. Andy had discovered that the *Petrel* carried a number of plows destined for Hawaii, and these he had managed to buy. After the *milpas* had been turned over, he continued the cultivation over the broad flat. Here was something he himself could boss. It was a refuge to him for his sense of independence. Here he intended to sow a crop of wheat and barley. Nobody but Benito seemed even interested. But Benito was a comfort. He seemed to be the only one who understood the significance or the possibilities. At first he was doubtful. The cattle, the wild game would be sure to destroy the crop. *Vaqueros* could not keep them out, barring a day-and-night watch, which was not practicable. There were no fencing materials within many miles.

“There are Indians, many of them, right here, Benito,” returned Andy. “You shall see.”

He set the Indians to digging a ditch, so wide and so deep, that it must prove an effective barrier. Benito was filled with admiration. His last doubts vanished.

3

Andy saw comparatively little of Carmel. He could not make out whether he liked this or not. The *dueña* business was most embittering to a young man of Andy's direct temperament. Some might get satisfaction in polite and stilted speeches with such surreptitious side glances of adoration as occasion permitted. But not Andy. And not Carmel, who was naturally a rebel against conventions. At times it seemed to Andy that he would almost rather not see her at all; and he welcomed the hours of business which took him so much from the *hacienda*. But as soon as he was out of her sight he wanted to see her again. He was constantly inventing errands that none could do but himself; so that the size of the *remuda* necessary to keep him in horseflesh was a joke. Ramón was unsympathetic.

"You are very lucky," he told Andy, "for you wait six month only, and already three are pass. I have still the year to wait, me."

"I think it's all damn foolishness!" cried Andy angrily. "Don't they think I can be trusted?"

Ramón opened his eyes wide.

"But, *valedor*, me, I would consider it not a compliment at all that one should think *I* could be trusted! No, no-no!"

Not that the condition of affairs outlined above was unbroken. By no means. That would indeed have been out of character with the whole spirit of the people. Andy's impatience sometimes thought there were more holidays than working days, and all of them must be celebrated. Andy hoped they had a good time. He spent them on the road, arriving at the *hacienda* toward sunset, and leaving again the next morning at dawn. Nobody but Carmel could see any sense in the way he drove himself. She understood. Ramón thought he did.

"But you are too fierce, *amigo*," he expostulated, "too *serio*. These other now will do the work all right without you. Juan Price is there. Better you walk with me and talk with the *mozas* who make wash the clothes."

But Andy was single hearted; a one-woman man, incapable of the lighter relaxations so natural to one like Ramón. Indeed, he did not even comprehend what Ramón was driving at; so Ramón shrugged and gave it up.

"It seems," he confided to Panchito's wife, "that for a time I must resign myself to madness."

"It were better if you were touched with a little of that madness yourself," said the privileged Vicenta.

Ramón shrugged again.

"I like better the ass that carries me than the horse that throws me," said he. Like all Californians, he would make Conchita a model husband—when the time came.

From time to time small parties of the trappers, encamped for the winter at San Juan Bautista, drifted through the *hacienda* on sightseeing tours. Andy heard of them, but for a time his visits did not coincide with theirs. Some of them left messages for him. He fully intended to ride over to San Juan, but somehow never quite got around to it. The iron grip of impatient circumstance held him. He was spiritually tight-muscled, driven inexorably in a groove, incapable of letting go. Of course, he wanted to see them all; would do so—*mañana*. After all, Andy had no intimates of old days among these men. Most of them he had never heard of at all. Nevertheless, they were his people, his kind. He would surely find time to ride over there shortly. Something always came up to prevent. By chance he was at the *hacienda* when Joe Walker and Zenas Leonard passed through. He had a satisfactory evening with them. He felt better after it. The mountain men appeared to understand perfectly; to be mildly envious of his good fortune. Andy sent messages by them.

When the weather settled, along toward spring, the women, in *carretas* and on horseback, journeyed to the new *rancho*, where they camped out in such of the buildings as were completed. This was better. Though the *dueña* idea was unrelaxed, Andy and Carmel had now something they could talk about, could do, in common. It was no longer necessary to sit stiffly in chairs and utter platitudes. They could plan things. They were enabled at least to press closer against the invisible inflexible barrier that separated them. For a week Andy almost had a good time. Then Doña Engracia announced that they must return. She shook her head in smiling denial of Andy's pleading.

"But the home now is all prepared," she pointed out, "and there is still much to do at *la casa*. And I think you have not yet thought of *las doñas*. Is it not so? Then I think you must go to Monterey."

"*Las doñas?*" repeated Andy.

"I think you may ask Ramón," said Doña Engracia.

Ramón was chagrined that his friend had not thought of, had not known of *las doñas*; he was even more chagrined that he had himself overlooked the matter.

"But always that is the business of the *novio*!" he cried, "always! always!"

Andy learned that though of course the bride would come to him well equipped with trousseau—had the confounded women been doing anything but sew, he wondered?—nevertheless, certain articles must, by rigid convention, be furnished by the groom. They must ride to Monterey, where such things could be procured from whatever ship happened to be in the harbor. Or if there were no ship, then from the *padres* of the mission, who kept a certain store of such things; though, as the excellent fathers were shrewd and expected a goodly profit, that was more expensive. They set out at once to remedy the oversight. The *Petrel* had not yet sailed. Captain Barclay knew exactly what was required, and he and Ramón and Phelps, the supercargo, took Andy's purchases in charge.

So he bought one black and one white mantilla, and a piece of fine lace, three bright-colored Roman sashes, a comb of shell bound with gold, a rosary of amethysts, a necklace of topaz, a string of pearls from Baja California.

"How big is your girl?" asked Phelps.

"How big?" repeated Andy.

"Yeh; how big around?"

He was rummaging in a chest and now produced an armful of garments, Ramón was laughing at Andy's expression.

"I suppose you want the finest?" Phelps asked. "We've got others."

He laid out on the transom, in a row, a number of *camisas*, fine as cobweb, transparent, trimmed with lace.

"Take your pick," said he. "There's different sorts and different sizes."

Andy stared at the dainty garments. He had never dreamed of anything quite like them. He turned helplessly to Ramón.

"No, you must pick them," said Ramón, "it is ver' bad luck if anyone pick those but yourself."

4

Andy never knew how it happened; but suddenly the time of the wedding was at hand. The months had seemed interminable; he had been

caught in an acquiescence of time that could never end. And it had ended! He came to realization of the fact belatedly, as one comes into daylight around the corner of a tunnel, almost with a sense of panic. There were so many things he had intended to do. Time had been too long: now it was too short. He had not even fulfilled his intention of a visit to the mountain men at San Juan Bautista. What must they think of him! What must he think of himself! He hastened to send a messenger with an urgent invitation to attend.

Andy seemed to himself to have entered a dream world of which he was a part and yet a spectator. He moved and spoke and saw; and yet at the same time he lived in a suspension of reality. People gathered, as for the *fiesta*, people, people, and yet more people. He knew them and greeted them and saw them do things, and did things himself with an appearance of competence and intelligence, but only a smaller portion of himself seemed to be involved. They had a feast. They had ceremonies of some sort. Through Ramón the *doñas* were formally presented, and unwrapped, and laid out for the admiration of all. All but those blessed cobwebby *camisas*. These Ramón had laid aside. Andy came to for a moment of relief. But shortly after he was made to pack the things in rose leaves and himself to bear them to the bride as the final gift, and everybody applauded decorously. Carmel was beautiful, her cheeks bright with color. Faquita stood at her side, very dignified, but in obvious excitement. Andy's mind played him tricks. He caught himself wondering how the things would fit; then, fantastically, whether the whole performance were not some kind of a nightmare joke for his embarrassment; and incongruously there flashed across his mind a solitary camp he had once made high in a hanging meadow beneath the cold austere peaks of the Grand Tetons, and a longing for that camp that lasted but an instant until Carmel gave him her eyes in a trust and worship that emptied his heart toward her.

Then everybody was drinking wine; and there were a number more of confused happenings; and it was starlight, and the *hacienda* was settled in slumber.

Ramón came to him at dawn; and a *moza* with chocolate. He was assisted to dress in his gayest garments. When the two young men emerged into the gray first light of day he found to his surprise the space before the *casa* crowded. Everybody, old and young, was there. Panchito led up Ramón's "silver" horse, the *palomino*. It was bridled in silver; and bore a carved and silver saddle with a pillion of broad aprons embroidered with colored silks and silver and gold, around whose edges depended a string of alternating pendants and little plates of polished steel. Panchito held the

palomino by the bits. Carmel appeared, and Andy's heart stopped, then raced tumultuously. She was all in white, with a high comb in her hair and over it draped a mantilla of finest lace. She mounted a horse before the old gentleman who, Andy understood, was her godfather. He himself took before him in the saddle a dignified elderly lady whose name he did not know, but who, he was told, was godmother to the bride. They rode down the slope of the hill across the plain; and after them slowly paced a long, colorful procession: on horseback; in *carretas* gayly decorated with colored coverlets, with silk kerchiefs and ribbons, with branches and flowers; the humbler even afoot, so that at last the *hacienda* was left deserted by every living thing but the chickens and the dogs.

The sun crept over the mountain rim; the mists of the bottomlands melted. No one spoke. Only the subdued shrieking of the *carretas*, especially greased with soap for the occasion, and the songs of the meadowlarks, and the soft fall of hoofs broke the silence, a silence, however, embroidered with the golden thread of distant mission bells.

And then, without intermission of journey or distance, as it seemed to Andy, they were dismounting before the grim and fortress-like structure dedicated to Nuestra Señora de la Soledad. Things happened like that: one moment here, the next moment there, at a leap, without time interval. Then next Andy was kneeling before the altar and Carmel beside him; and the stir and rustle of decorous multitudes back there in the incense-blued dimness; and before him shining spiritual as the moon the benign and lovely face of Father Seria. To right and left stood Faquita, Conchita de la Cuesta, Ygnacio and Felipe Rivera. They placed about the necks of the couple a silk tasseled cord—there were things said—there was music sounded—the newly married pair were standing before the doorway in the brilliant sunlight, and there was a great burst of musketry and shouting, and lively music struck up, and friendly people crowded about.

5

As the couple emerged from the doorway of the church Andy came to a definite focus of his surroundings. It was as though he awakened from automatism. He looked about him in recognition of the company with a certain surprise. Alvarado was there—he did not remember to have seen Alvarado before; though the *político* must have been present all the time. And Captain Barclay of the *Petrel* had made the journey from Monterey to see married his countryman and the daughter of his old friend. And young Carlos Lugo, who had composed the song of Don Largo—and many another

of Andy's acquaintance whom now he greeted as though he saw them for the first time. But he looked in vain for the mountain men, Joe Walker's party, and a little pang shot through the brightness of the occasion. He reproached himself belatedly for his neglect of them.

All the company were mounting their horses. Andy found that on the return journey from the church he was to take Carmel before him on the saddle. As he sprang to the pillion behind her, she leaned back for an instant against his chest in a quick birdlike pressure of caress, then straightened to the grave and ceremonial dignity that befits the bride. Across the flower-starred plains the colorful procession moved. A little group of young men with musical instruments playing gay and lively airs preceded them for a few miles; then fell back to give place to others who converged on them from concealments in the willows along the route.

But, it proved, the objective was not the *hacienda*, as Andy had thought it would be; but a smaller *rancho* nearer at hand; a rude affair of adobe, with hardened earth floors, but dignified for the moment with the beautiful hospitality of its owners. Here all dismounted. The horses were led aside by the *mozos*. Carmel disappeared within, in company with her little sister and Conchita. The company sipped wine and ate little cakes, chattered and laughed. Strangers were brought forward to shake Andy's hand. A very gorgeous, fiercely moustached person in gold-laced cocked hat and strapped trousers bent stiffly before him and made a little speech. Andy gathered that this was the personal representative of the governor, Figueroa. Everybody was very gay, very kind. Don Sylvestre did not leave his side. The old *hidalgo* said nothing; and stood very erect, very dignified, very much the grandee. But from time to time, almost surreptitiously, he patted Andy on the arm. Doña Engracia, too, hovered near, smiling at him gently, her eyes misty. Andy's heart swelled within him.

Ramón touched him on the elbow.

"She is prepare," he whispered. "Come."

Together they entered the little ranch house. Carmel had changed from the pearly loveliness of the wedding garments to a riding costume. From beneath the wide straw hat, with its half-concealing sun cloth, her eyes stared wide and solemn, a little frightened. She looked more of a child than did the little girl standing at her side. An uprush of tenderness filled his throat. He swept her into his arms and kissed her on the mouth.

For the briefest instant she clung to him, then pushed him away with a gasp. Faquita was staring at him with horrified eyes. Conchita uttered a small shocked exclamation. But Ramón uttered a crow of delight.

"*Holá!*" he cried. "This it is to be *americano*! I think I shall be *americano* myself!"

He made as though to seize Conchita; and laughed at her scandalized expression.

"But come; the day moves, and it is far to go. If you would arrive before sunset, you must go."

"Far?" repeated Andy, for the *hacienda* was a scant three leagues distant.

Ramón surveyed him in comic despair.

"This one has not heard one word of what I have told him two, yes, three times!" he complained. "Do you mean to tell me that you do not know that yet, today, you must ride to your *rancho*?" he inquired with elaborate patience.

"No," confessed Andy sincerely. "Did you tell me that?"

"Did I tell you that!" Ramón mimicked him. "Where else should you pass this, your first night? At the *hacienda*, I suppose, where shall be the music and the dancing all the night through? You think you like that better, eh? If you do, I think you're very funny. Where have you been all this time I have talked to you? Asleep?"

Andy grinned a little shamefacedly; then sobered.

"Yes," he said, "I think I have been asleep. All my life I have been asleep. I have but now awakened."

He looked steadily at Carmel. She made a little impulsive movement toward him. Their eyes clung together.

They went outside. Panchito held three horses by the bridle. One of them was the *palomino*. Ramón took the reins of this animal and placed them in Andy's hand.

"This is my gift to you," said he simply. "No, no-no," he answered the trouble in Andy's eyes. "Heart of my heart, how can I give you less than the dearest of my possessions? He will bear you well, for in all the Californias there is not another like him. Kiss me, *valedor*."

Andy kissed him, before them all, and felt no Anglo-Saxon shame.

They mounted. There was a moment's pause.

Andy looked from one to the other of their friendly faces. His eyes stopped on the figure of the child, standing near his stirrup. It seemed to him a little forlorn. On a sudden impulse he leaned over and raised her bodily from the ground, pressing her close to him and kissing her on the cheek.

“Now you are my little sister, remember!” he whispered, and set her down again.

Her face was shining.

Don Sylvestre raised his hand. They bowed their heads. He blessed them. Doña Engracia was crying softly. They rode away down the slope. Panchito followed. The people fluttered their hands.

“Go with God!” they cried. “Go with God!”

6

There is no more beautiful landscape in the world than one of the California valleys in spring. There is no more ecstatic experience than to ride through them with one beloved. There are few more satisfactory experiences than security after danger; calm after storm; repose after stress. Andy rode the *palomino* in body, but clouds of ecstasy in spirit. And yet through that ecstasy ran one little thread of uneasiness. Andy periodically forgot what it was, but it lay beneath the surface of consciousness as an influence. He wished the mountain men—some of them, at least—had come to his wedding. He wished he himself had not been so self-absorbed. In his present great happiness this regret had little power: it merely represented a missing ingredient to perfection. Carmel noticed the shadow that flitted across the depths of his eyes. Andy must tell her; and in the telling discovered himself just a little hurt. Carmel did not try to combat or deny the feeling.

“We now have each other, *querido*,” she said simply. “What else matters?”

“Nothing,” replied Andy fervently; but deep within was the small remote pain, like a pin prick, or a burr, that one can ignore, but which nevertheless persists.

They traveled slowly; that is, according to Californian standards, cantering for a mile or so at a time, then falling to the steady shuffling Spanish trot. They were wholly absorbed in one another. It was Panchito who spurred alongside respectfully to call attention to a strange cavalcade surmounting a hill a quarter mile or so to their left. They pulled their horses to a halt.

“What is it, *querido*?” asked Carmel, a little breathless—“robbers?”

Andy shook his head, unable to answer. After a moment he found his voice.

"The mountain men," he shouted joyously.

"I am a little frightened," confessed Carmel. "They look so wild!"

Andy laughed, and in his laughter there was a lilt of pride.

"I was exactly like that when I came to California," said he.

"If they are like you, then I am not frightened," said Carmel.

Their hands stole together and clasped briefly with quick pressure.

The mountain men were riding in single file, slowly, with great dignity. Their winter's sojourn in San Juan Bautista had added considerable delightful foofaraw, but their sturdy independence had refused to alter fundamentals. Indeed, a considerable number of the more conservative-minded had made no alterations at all, but rode in full buckskins, their heads bound in handkerchiefs, their long rifles across their saddles. These were the old-timers, long haired, shaven faced, the *hivernants* of already vanishing days. But among the bearded newcomers here and there gleamed a bit of color from *serape* or sash, or bobbed a *sombrero* with tinsel band, or glittered the silver of Spanish spur or bridle. They paid no attention whatever to Andy's eager shout of welcome, but came steadily on, their faces expressionless.

George Parker rode at their head. He shook Andy gravely by the hand.

"Good luck to you, Andy," said he. He bowed, a little awkwardly, to Carmel, eyeing her flushed face with veiled curiosity and admiration. "Howdy, Missus Burnett," said George. "You got ye a good man."

He reined his horse aside to give way to the next behind him. One by one they passed before the bridal couple, austere, silent, grave. Each clasped Andy's hand; each made his bow to Carmel. It was a ceremony, a serious ceremony. Except for the curt greetings and the formal good wishes, no other word was spoken. They sat their horses unsmiling, like graven images.

But after the last horseman had made his bow, the formality broke. George Parker, and a few of the bolder men who had known Andy in the Rockies, crowded about the pair. The rest chatted low voiced to one another, covertly devouring the Spanish girl with their eyes.

"We figgered to cut you off about here," said George. "Had to see you and wish you luck, Andy."

"Why didn't you come to the wedding?" Andy wanted to know. "Didn't you get my message?"

"We got the message, all right," said George, "and much obleeged. We did think some of coming; but the boys talked it over, and we figgered we

wouldn't do you too proud with your new people, and mebbe we'd better not."

"Nonsense!" cried Andy heatedly. "I reckon my friends are good enough for anybody."

"I reckon ary American's good enough for ary of these yere——" began Parker in cool level tones; then bethought himself that these were now Andy's people and broke off. "It wasn't that, Andy," said he, "but we figgered if we went to the celebration we'd shore git drunk."

They talked for a little time. Andy urged them strongly to ride on with him to the new *rancho*. Parker grinned and shook his head.

"We'll ride with you a little spell," said he, "but we ain't goin' to hang around no bride and groom."

"I'd like you to see my place," persisted Andy. "You can camp in the bottom of the creek, if you insist; and we can kill a beef, and——"

"We seen your place," George interrupted him. "We rode up thar yisterday for a look-see. She's a fine place. No, we got to be gittin' back. Cap'n Walker aims to pull out. He'd a-come himself, but he's busy gittin' a good ready. Told me to tell you."

They set their horses in motion and the strange procession proceeded for a mile or so on its way. Then Parker called a halt.

"Do they go?" Carmel inquired. "Tell them this, Andrés *mío*, that always our house is theirs, and that sometime they must come."

"Tell the missus much obleeged," said Parker, when this was translated, "and we, some of us, may take her up and glad to. We like this kentry. And now, reckon we must be leavin' you. So long, Andy. Be good to yourself. Raise you lots of cows, and don't fergit to throw in a few young 'uns while yo're about it. *Adiós*, Missus Burnett. You shore picked you a fine gal, Andy. Come on, boys, let's git moving."

They turned off the trail, amid a chorus of farewells.

Andy watched them go. His eyes were misted. Something in him was accompanying them. It tugged at his heart.

On the skyline they stopped, raised their long rifles at arm's length. A scattering volley rang out. The skyline was empty.

Carmel's hand was on his arm. He wrenched his gaze from the empty horizon to meet her eyes.

"I like them," she said. "They are strong. It is that which made me love you, the strength and the wildness. So you must ever be. Promise! Promise!"

They arrived at the *rancho* shortly after sunset. Three more surprises awaited Andy. The house was lighted with candles. The *vaqueros* and the Indians dressed in their best were grouped in welcome. But there were old familiar faces as well. The round-faced Benito stepped from the shadows to greet them; Vicenta, the wife of Panchito. Andy was astonished. He thought to have seen them among the wedding guests. That was true, they smiled at him; but they had ridden fast. Vicenta on a horse! Benito on a horse; for it was evident his beloved mule could never have made the journey so quickly! Benito waved the matter aside disdainfully: it was nothing. But Vicenta made a comical face and tried to conceal a limp.

"I am to be of your household, señor," Benito smiled. "Don Sylvestre has so arranged. And you shall see how the *milpas* and the new fields of grain shall grow!"

Vicenta enveloped Carmel in a vast embrace.

"And I, *chiquita*!" she cried. "Is it not wonderful! To be sure, there is that one!" she added with a scornful toss of the head toward Panchito, whose carved brown face broke into a slow smile.

"You too are with us, Panchito?" cried Carmel.

The *vaquero* nodded.

"*Sí, señora*," he replied. "So the master has ordered. And," he added, "for that I am very glad, for though it is said that a little gall spoils much honey," he glanced sidewise at Vicenta, "it is also true that the ox that tosses often throws one into a better place."

Carmel's eyes were shining.

"Panchito first taught me to ride," she told Andy, "and Vicenta to walk! And Benito! Benito," she repeated affectionately, "has made me to love all things. Is it not wonderful?"

"Wonderful indeed," said Andy.

They entered the *sala* together, arm in arm. This was their place, their very own. It was as yet new, crude, almost unfurnished; but it was spacious, nobly proportioned. It awaited its mellowing fulfillment of living; solid, substantial, enduring; so that faintly, from the dimness of its shadows, whispered elfin echoes of generations to be born. The *sala* of the *hacienda* had seemed to be filled with the past; this with the future. For a moment the pair stood in the doorway looking about. Then Andy uttered a cry of pleasure.

“Where did that come from?” He turned to Vicenta, who stood behind them, glowing with pride.

“That, señor,” replied Vicenta, “the señor Juan Price fashioned, before he left, as a gift to you.”

By the window stood a rocking chair of the type known in the East as the “Boston Rocker.”

“Sit in it, Carmel,” said Andy.

She flung aside her sun hat and did so; and began to rock, gurgling joyously like a child, for rocking chairs were a novelty in the California of that day. But shortly she looked up.

“What is it, *querido*?” she cried anxiously. “Why look you thus? What is the matter?”

Andy aroused himself and smiled at her reassuringly.

“Nothing is the matter, dear one,” said he. “My mind was remembering.”

“Remembering what, *querido*?”

“Another woman who sat in just such a chair, by another window, and rocked back and forth quickly just as you are doing now.”

“Was she beautiful, this woman?” asked Carmel.

“Very beautiful,” said Andy gravely. “She was a very great lady, Carmel, and she loved me very much; so much that she gave me that long rifle standing there against the wall and sent me away from her forever.”

Carmel had stopped rocking.

“And why did she do this, your so-beautiful one?” she demanded.

“That I might live true to my blood, she said; for my forebears did great things in the wilderness. I too was to do great things.” Andy sighed. “I do not know—but it has brought me here; and to you, darling.”

But Carmel continued to sit stiffly upright in the motionless rocking chair.

“And you did never see her again?” she asked.

“She died, that very year.”

“But still you love her?”

“Of course!” Andy was astonished for an instant, but swept on, engrossed in a desire for sympathy in a thought he had never before expressed, even to himself. “There have been times,” he continued almost bashfully, “times of danger, or when I had to make up my mind—well, when

things were really important, you know—when it has seemed to me that I have felt her very near me—or, not her, exactly, but her love—like a warm air all about me." He gave it up hopelessly. "It must sound foolish to you, sweetheart. It does to me as I say it. But it is as real as if Grandmother were actually there." He stopped at the expression on Carmel's face. "What is the matter, *querida*?"

"*Nada, nada.*" Carmel choked a little, then laughed.

"You think I am foolish," said Andy.

"But no!" Carmel sprang to her feet and drew close to him. "See, my head reaches just to your heart." She laid her cheek against his chest and closed her eyes. "Hold me close, *querido*," she murmured. They stood some moments in silence. She looked up at his glowing eyes. "We are to be happy, you and I," said she with a tremulous laugh. "You shall teach me to speak the English language, and I—I shall teach you many things you do not know."

Simultaneously they became aware of Vicenta smiling in the background and drew apart in a slight confusion.

"*Comida* is ready, when *señor-señora* desire to eat," suggested Vicenta demurely.

"Presently, when we have washed," replied Carmel, with dignity. "But what is this?"

She fluttered like a bird to the other end of the room where, against the wall, and hitherto unremarked, stood a gay and remarkable object. It was composed of beautiful aromatic smoke-tanned buckskin, stretched over a light frame, ornamented elaborately with beadwork, colored quills and little bells; a wonderful piece of craftsmanship. Carmel examined it curiously, for she could not guess its purpose.

"It is a baby basket," explained Andy, laughing, "such as the Indians of the plains and the mountains use. The women carry it on their backs."

"The *americanos* who were here left it as a gift for the wedding," supplemented Vicenta. "They talked, but none spoke our language. There is a paper," she pointed out.

Andy unfolded the paper.

"*We made this for you and the Missus*," Andy deciphered the rude characters. "*See that you keep it bizzy, you old horny toad.*"

They had eaten, and Vicenta had cleared away the dishes. After a time Andy extinguished the candles. The room fell into the silver and black of moonlight patterned through the windows by the trees. They talked little, overtaken by a sudden breathless shyness.

"It is very late," said Andy at last.

Carmel arose without reply and glided to the bedroom door.

"Wait here, *querido*, I will call," said she in a small voice.

Left alone, Andy stood, his back to the moonlit window, thinking of many things. After a little he crossed the room to take in his hands the long rifle, the old Boone gun. He carried it to the fireplace, in which the dying embers glowed, and laid it gently across the two pegs he had caused to be imbedded in the adobe of the wall.

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Spanish-California spellings of the 19th century have been maintained and not changed to Castillian or Mexican spelling.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

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[The end of *Ranchero* by Stewart Edward White]