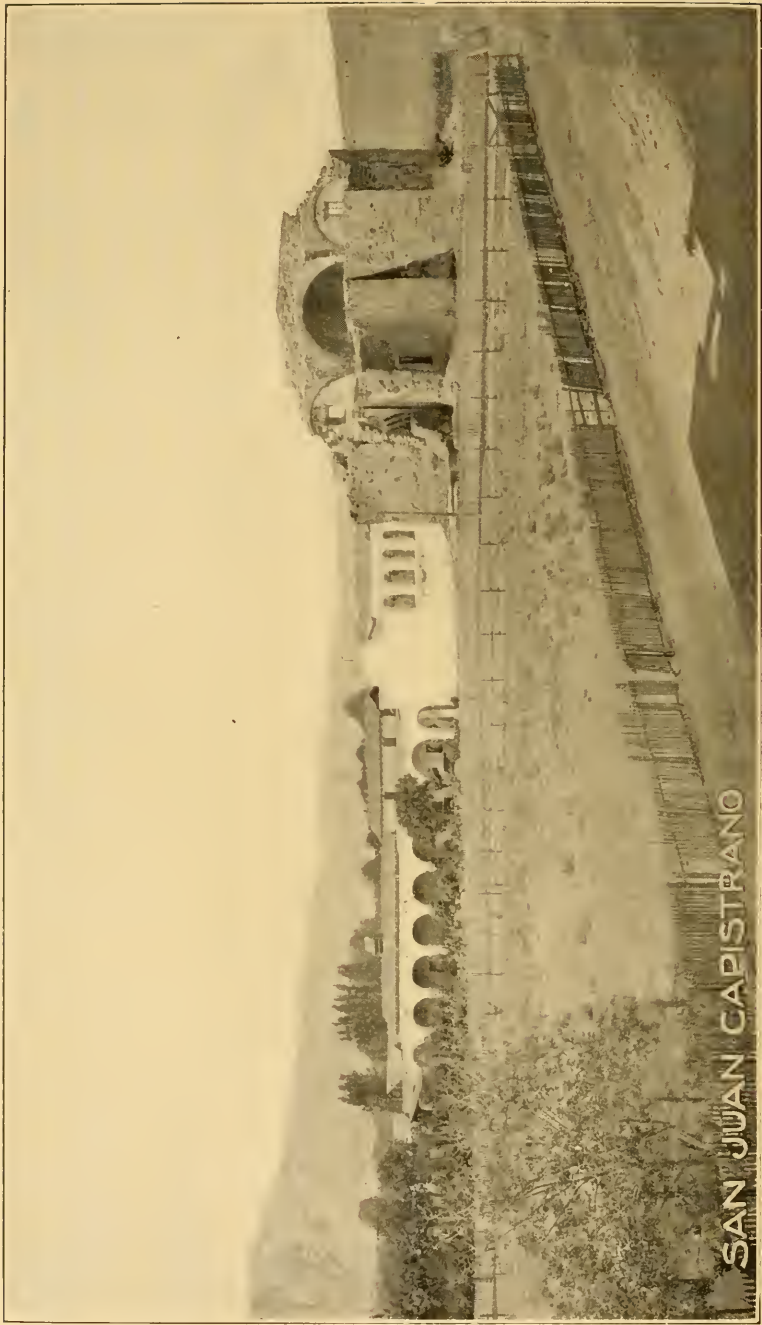


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The Bells of Capistrano



SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO

The Bells of Capistrano

novel By *Shel*
S^r H^r M^r BYERS

A Romance of the
California Missions



THE GRAFTON PUBLISHING CORPORATION

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FOREWORD

The California missions were established by Spanish Friars in the middle and towards the end of the eighteenth century. Capistrano itself was dedicated November 1, 1776. It is near the sea, at the village of San Juan Capistrano, between Los Angeles and San Diego. There were twenty-one missions, all told, along the California coast. They were connected by a road called "El Camino Real," or The King's Highway. California then belonged to Spain. It was the most romantic period of its existence. Most of the missions are in ruins; but they are the most picturesque ruins on this continent.

Capistrano mission was destroyed by an earthquake December 8, 1812. Forty persons were killed.

The description of life at the missions, as told in the poem, are from authentic sources.



THE BELLS OF CAPISTRANO

Would'st see a ruin of enchanting beauty,
And hear a story of its old-time splendor,
When all the land along the coast was Spanish,
Save the wild natives bivouacked in the forests?
Then turn thy steps to San Juan Capistrano,
Go there by moonlight, almost any season,
There is no winter in that golden climate,
Where blooms the rose in April or December.
There by the waters of the great Pacific,
Its back upon the mountain and the desert,
Stands the old ruin, silent in the moonlight.
Climb to some eminence and look about you,
Look when the moon is highest in the heavens,
And falls full on the mission's great quadrangle,
Illuminating all the dream-like, slender arches;
Each column lights, and all the corridors;
Or fills with glory yonder falling transept,
And thou wilt see a very lovely vision.
The nearby hills lie sleeping in the moonlight;
Below you is a fair and fertile valley,
All rich in lemon trees, and groves of walnut;
A little farther, the Pacific ocean;
All waveless now, but glinting in the moonlight
As if a glory had been cast upon it.
No sound is heard except a gentle river—
Or else a mocking-bird there sweetly singing.

* * * * *

On such a night one summer evening, sitting
Beneath that pepper tree before the mission
I and the old Alcalde talked together.
There was a village wedding on that evening

Within the chapel of that broken ruin,
And when it all was done the bells were ringing;
Two merry boys down on the grass were pulling
The long bell ropes that reached up to the tower.
A pretty sight it was there in the moonlight
These barefoot boys who rang the wedding marches,
While hills and valleys echoed back the music.
The bride, a dark-eyed Spanish girl, and pretty,
Walked out on roses strewn by little maidens,
And as the bells died off far up the valley
Guitars were heard, and castanets, and viols
Down at the inn where they would dance till morning.

* * * * *

“It all reminds me,” said the old Alcalde,
“Of that old tale I promised once to tell you.
That pretty bride you saw—that village maiden,
Could trace her line far back to higher people—
Such as Francisco, he the sweet musician,
And fair Dolores, loveliest of the valley,
When all the coast was famous for its beauties.”

* * * * *

Well, here's the story told at Capistrano,
You must have read in parchments old and faded,
How on a time a Spanish ruler, hearing
Of this bright land by the Pacific ocean,
Then all in heathendom, and half discovered,
Sent ships and priests to claim the blessed country.
Besides, they were to build great mission houses
Here by the mountains and along the ocean—
And when they could, convert the native heathen.
It was no race of wild and fierce born warriors
Lived in these mountains at the first beginning,
But simple people, weak, and little knowing.
Well, so they came, these pious priests and soldiers,
Built these great missions northward by the ocean;



And built a road, "The King's Highway" they called it,
Four hundred leagues, thus linking all together.
This was the seventh; and you know the story—
How friars came, brought with them bells, and vest-
ments—

As was their habit in the first beginning—
And started thus a mission in the desert.
First hung the bells on trees to call the heathen,
Then built rude huts of reeds and spreading bushes;
Had *started*, only, when a cry of danger
From other missions made them hurry to them.
Then leaving all, they went to San Diego.
The bells they left behind them in the forest,
Hid from the Indians and unholy people;
For they were sacred most as gifts from heaven—
Blessed by the Pope, and by the friars worshipped.
A great white cross they planted in the valley,
Then left the place their pious tears had watered.

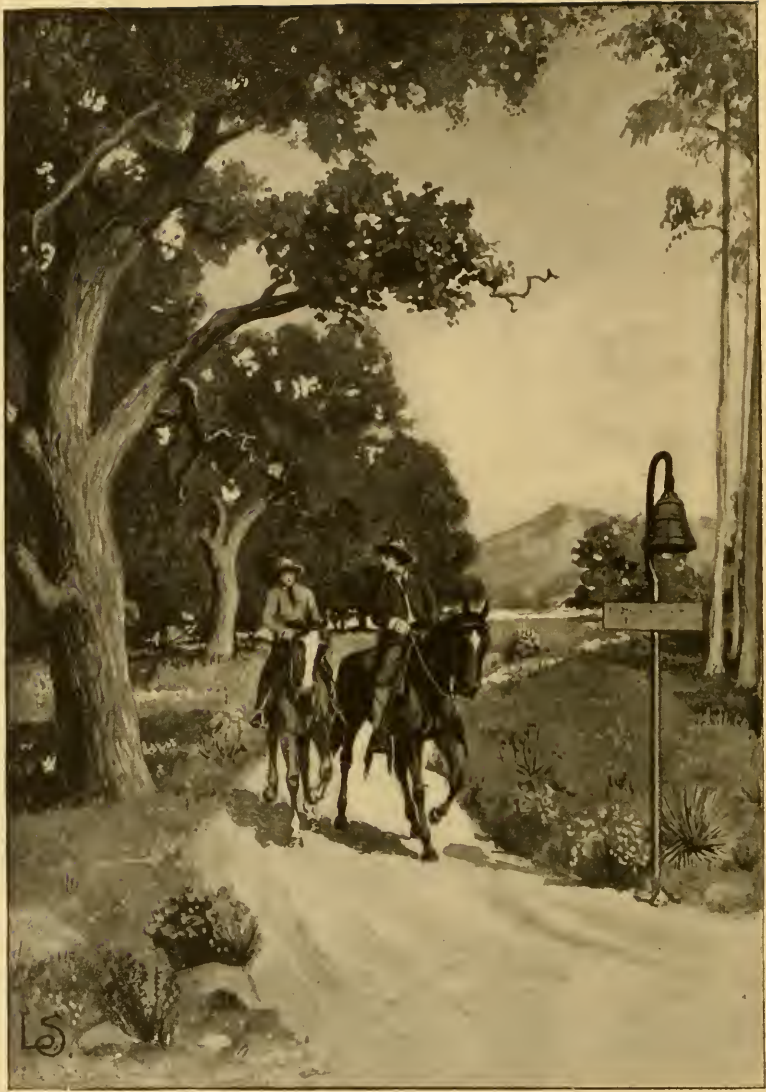
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A year went by, and stranger friars followed.
The cross still stood there, beckoning to the heathen,
Its great white arms forever skyward stretching;
For very fear the red man left it standing—
Told awful tales of strange things at the midnight,
Of groaning hills, and smoke up in the mountains,
And fires that blazed in all the little valley.

* * * * *

The bells were *gone*, and no soul answered whither;
If in the sand, or in some gloomy canyon.
Or if, perhaps, deep in the ocean's bosom,
For he was dead who only knew the secret.
So other bells were borrowed for the mission;
And once again the cry went to the heathen.
Who, seeing now the good life of the friars,
Themselves became a kinder race of people;

Came to the cross by thousands at the mission ;
Joined in the friars' labor, and the building ;
Learned many crafts, and helped in many places ;
A simple folk, that did the friars' bidding.
Day in, day out, the people carried burdens ;
With simple tools they worked, and delved, and quar-
ried ;
Made tiles of clay, and cut trees in the forest ;
So, laboring on, the mission was completed.
Then other friars came and their assistants,
And teachers came, across the farthest ocean ;
And every craft was taught to men and women ;
The busy loom, and shuttle, sounded ever ;
And schools began, and every craft and calling—
None dared be idle, neither man nor woman ;
For next to serving God, was honest labor.
So taught the priests, and gave themselves example ;
And next to these the art of being joyous ;
Indoors, or out, the busy hands kept moving ;
The loom, and spindles, occupied the women,
And tilling ground gave men their daily labor ;
This, and the vineyards, and the herds of cattle ;
Toil brought them sleep, and sleep new-born endeavor.
The rising sun saw all within the chapel ;
An early mass—a little song, and music,
Some simple breakfast, made of beans, and barley,
And then the fields rejoiced to see them coming ;
A noon-day rest, an evening rendered joyous
By song, and dance, and games for men and women.
Sometimes a flute was heard out in the garden ;
It was Francisco—he, the sweet musician,
The mission chorister for all the singers.
Straight from Castile he came, his music with him.
One thought he had—some day to be a friar—
A priest, perhaps, who knows, perhaps a cardinal ;
Such things had been—and might it not still happen ?



That was his room, there by the right hand corner—
The second door beyond the mission portal.
It was inborn in him, I think, this music—
But much from nature, too, he must have captured;
Birds, and the waterfalls, and every gladness
To him had melodies of untold sweetness;
But most his flute afforded joyous rapture.
Dark-eyed, dark-haired, and very young, and Spanish,
And handsome, too, almost beyond expressing;
Fra Angelo a face like his had painted—
But, giving wings, had made an angel of him.
Music his joy, nor even love nor passion
Had touched his heart, or changed his true devotion.
Not love he knew, nor any of love's pleasures—
Not love he knew, nor any of love's sorrows.
There still was time. Who knows to read his future?
He loved his music, day and night and morning;
And so, at last, not one of all the missions
Could boast a choir like that of Capistrano.
Nor anywhere was the Te Deum chanted,
The high mass sung in such a glorious fashion,
As when Francisco and his choir of singers
Filled all the mission with enchanting music.
The very hills seemed listening and in gladness,
As if they heard the violins and viols,
The flutes and drums, the castanets and voices,
But most of all the voice of fair Dolores.
She, from far Carmelo, the blessed valley,
Had come to learn of him the sweet musician.
At far rancherias they knew her beauty,
At rich estates where lived the exiled Spanish;
For such there were on all the sea-line border.
So over a time came gay Antonio riding
His great white stallion to the mission service;
His silver spurs, and jeweled bridle shining,
His great sombrero, decked with gold and ribbon,

His silken vest, and trousers made of velvet;
Down low he bowed, and crossed himself, and entered.
Dolores saw him, thought him very splendid—
But turned a little seeing he was looking
Straight at her face, where she was standing singing,
Ashamed to be so gazed at there in public,
Yet in her heart a little proud at knowing
It was her beauty kept him looking at her.
For where was woman yet that needed telling
If anyone were looking at her beauty?
And she was beautiful, and good as beautiful,
For goodness, too, is but a kind of beauty;
Without it beauty is not even beautiful.
Fair face she had, and hair all richly golden,
And eyes like violets in the early May time.

* * * * *

And this was he, Antonio, the handsome,
With raven hair, and eyes black as the midnight.
A hundred times had she not heard his praises!
The finest rider, too, in all the valley;
Possessed of lands that reached clear to the ocean;
Exiled from Spain when Bonaparte was ruler,
When despots' heels were on his country's border.
Once on a time, in some great broil or other,
He took a fort, and won the young king's favor.
Great grants received, of lands in California.
Then came the French, and drove the king to exile;
Antonio, too, was chased across the ocean—
Where now he lived among his mountain acres,
Lord of great fields beyond all computation,
Square miles of valley, reaching north and southward,
Square miles of mesa, chaparral and mountain,
Where roamed his droves of horses and of cattle.
Dolores saw him when he was not looking,
Saw all the richness of his velvet costume,



The gold and silver of his spurs and bridle,
Saw the white stallion prancing there and pawing,
Best blood of Monterey's world-famous horses;
Saw him, Antonio, the handsome rider—
The princely bow he made in passing by her;
Saw all and wondered what fair maid would win him;
And as he rode far off, and up the valley,
Still, longing, looked, and wondered who would win
him.

Now he rode off and onward in the valley,
Forever thinking of the mission music,
And why it was his soul was so estatic?
Or why the world seemed better now and brighter?
Men have been smitten in a single moment,
Such sudden ways love often has of doing;
And so Antonio, though he did not know it,
Had got a wound almost beyond explaining.
A change there was, but words cannot express it,
Some subtle thing awakened other feelings;
The wild rose, somehow, had another meaning,
And if a bird sang from some bush or olive,
His mind went back to yonder chapel's music.
Alone he was, yet one sweet face was with him,
As 't were a spirit in the air beside him;
So he went on, and upward in the valley;
Went to his home and waited, all impatient,
A certain festival down at the mission,
When all the people came to games and races;
Came from the mission down at San Diego,
From San Obispo, and a dozen others;
She, too, would come, somehow he knew and waited.

* * * * *

The spring had come with all its birds and flowers,
Such spring as comes to that fair climate only,
With almond blooms and gold acacia blossoms,

Bright orange groves, and walnut trees and lemon,
And ocean breezes sweeping up the valley,
And sunshine lying on the hills forever,
And misty mountains leaning up to heaven—
Such was the scene that made life there delicious.
Still at the mission, like a beehive's humming,
Each soul was busy with its love and labor;
Some in the shops a hundred things were doing—
Some saying prayers, and some reciting lessons,
For every neophyte must work or study,
Converted souls must know that labor's holy.
The idle Indian soon became a helper—
Learned trades, and crafts, as well as prayers and masses,
Still watched the herds upon a hundred hillsides.
In an enclosure, like an eastern harem,
Or old-time nunnery, well-kept and guarded,
The women toiled at many a lighter calling—
With busy shuttle and the needle going,
Clothed all the people living at the mission—
Made stuffs to sell, bright Indian robes, and blankets,
Strange baskets wove, of bulrush and wild grasses.
The girls their music had, as well as labor,
For pleasure there was hand-maid still of toiling,
And all knew music, flute, or voice, or viol,
The sweet guitar at every night was thrumming;
And oftentimes Dolores taught them Spanish,
Or thought out plans for this thing, or for that thing,
Helped find new shapes for baskets and for blankets,
New bead work taught them for their belts and sandals,
And pretty ways for them the Indian maidens;
Or stories told them of the old-time Spanish,
And other tales of that famed city northwards,
Of Monterey—and how the people lived there—
Soft luxury-loving, as the lotus eaters;
How pearls were found there in its glorious waters,
Enriching thousands living but for pleasure;



Of haciendas, in the hills, and valleys,
And richer lords than any Spanish nobles,
Dressed all in velvet, and with rich sombreros—
And one she thought of, while she yet was speaking.
Told of the jewels worn by dark-eyed women,
Great strings of pearls, each worth a prince's ransom;
Of sudden fortunes made in mines forgotten,
Or by vast herds of horses and of cattle.
How some from Spain had brought their fortunes with
 them,
Brought, too, their manners, and their Spanish customs,
Till all the coast was but a Spanish province.
Then tales she told of Carmelo the holy,
Her own fair home there in the blessed valley.
Told of Junipero the Christian leader,
Who built the missions for the heathen people;
And thus she won the hearts of all the maidens.

* * * * *

Francisco now was busier than ever,
Preparing all things for the great fiesta;
A hundred neophytes in chorus training,
Young clever souls with castanets and viols.
And dancing, too, that was almost religion;
Were they not Spanish, they, and all the people,
Save yonder natives on the hills and desert,
Was this not Spain, and all its customs Spanish?
Would they not come, the dark-eyed Spanish ladies,
From haciendas by the sea or mountains,
From Monterey, too, and the farther border!
So day by day went on the getting ready.
Dolores helped in all the gladsome labor,
A favored one, as niece of him the Padre,
Child of his brother in Carmelo valley.
Her duty was, beside her music lessons,
To be the guardian of the churches' treasures—

The silken stoles, the chasubles all golden,
The altar cloths, with silver all embroidered,
The silver candlesticks from Spain brought over;
To gather roses for the mission altar—
“The lady sacristan,” the friars called her.
A pleasant labor, too, was now Francisco’s,
With fair Dolores in the work assisting.
Quick thought was hers, so many things devising,
Flags and festoons from arch and column swinging,
And yellow poppies banked on cooling waters.
Strange feelings now Francisco’s soul were moving,
Strange but delightful, and beyond expressing.
No thoughts had he of love for any woman,
For he was pledged, some happy day or other,
To be a priest with no thought but of serving.
Yet somehow still grew pleasanter the labor,
Somehow he lingered in Dolores’ presence,
Not knowing why, save that it was so pleasant,
Did things twice over that he might be near her,
Still stayed and stayed, nor knew why he was staying.
Perhaps Dolores could herself have guessed it,
Girls are so quick at knowing things so subtle;
Besides, she, too, had feelings, more than tender,
Although Francisco never once had seen it,
So hid were they in other thoughts and fancies—
Of one she saw his great sombrero waving,
And wondered who if any one would win him,
Not knowing then that she herself had won him.

* * * * *

The day was done, the Angelus was ringing,
Francisco heard, and led the chapel music,
Then all the night lay thinking of Dolores.
And when the dawn another day was bringing
Across the hills, and downward to the valley,
Lighting anew the olive groves, and orchards,



And casting gold upon the waking ocean,
He wandered fieldwards past the Indians' cabins—
Adobe huts with roofs of reeds and grasses,
Looked at the river from the canyons leaping;
Still went and wandered by the cliffs of ocean;
Looked at the ships with mission-cargoes loading,
Saw pelts of oxen by the thousand loaded,
Thrown from the cliffs down to the waiting sailors,
Great tons of wheat and barley brought for shipment,
And casks of oil, and wine, from their own vineyards;
Then turned his steps and went a little hillwards—
Each moment thinking of the fair Dolores,
Of things three days now burning in his bosom—
Of that old hope some day to be a friar;
How now the vow was somehow slipping from him,
As slip the dews in sunshine from the grasses;
And in its place a beauteous face, and figure,
Yet never knew that it was love possessed him.
Still roamed in happiness across the meadows—
Saw nothing fair that did not mind him of her,
Thought out sweet names by which sometimes to call
her,
“The poppy girl,” or “Golden-haired Dolores.”
Wild roses grew beside him on the heather—
They were so fair, he wondered would they please her?
Then plucking many, “this will deck her bosom,
This double one will suit her hair so golden,”
Then poppies plucked, the great wild yellow poppies,
And peach tree blossoms clustered with the others,
And many more, not knowing why he did it.
All these he took and found the sweet Dolores,
And almost bashful gave to her the poppies,
The roses, too; she took them, smiling sweetly.
“You knew my fancy for the yellow poppies?”
Demurely said she, glancing softly at him.
“But this one's yours, Francisco—let me fix it,”

And reaching towards him with the pretty blossom,
Her eyes now shining, looking clearly at him,
Her lily hand just touched his cheek a moment;
A sudden thrill went through Francisco's being—
And in that thrill love had its way, as ever;
There was no need of any further telling.

* * * * *

That day the festival had beginning,
And, when Dolores in the choir was singing,
The golden poppies lay upon her bosom.
The mass once sung, the happy people gathered
Around the mission for the games, and dances.
From every valley and the far rancherias
They came by hundreds bringing gifts, and prizes,
So, too, the Indians from the inland country,
And scattering seed, the sign-word of their friendship.

* * * * *

Now rang the bells, the signal all was ready.
First came the races of the Indian maidens,
Half-naked women, from the neighboring desert,
Against the girls now at the mission living.
Then games of ball, the desert girls excelling
By very strength, a hundred plaudits winning.
A little pause, the great event was coming—
Out on the plaza, seawards from the mission,
The bear and bull fight was about commencing.
Gifts had been offered by the mission friars
For some wild beast, the fiercer one, the better.
And many days the mission youths had hunted
In wood and canyon till at last they found him,
A wild grey monster, savage and ferocious.
All unawares they sprang on him with lassos,
And brought him growling to the safe enclosure.
Around the square the excited people waited,
Priests in their robes, and dark-eyed Spanish women
From far pueblos and old Spanish ranchos.



A hundred youths in festal day apparel,
With jingling spurs, and jewel-mounted saddles
Sat on their steeds, encircling all the plaza,
Receiving smiles and their own smiles returning.
There, too, Antonio most of all was noticed,
On his white stallion, gold and lace apparelled,
His broad sombrero with its jeweled ribbon,
His dark eyes glancing when he saw Dolores
There on a bench, Francisco sitting near her,
And golden poppies fastened on her bosom,
Ten times as handsome as she ever had been.
He spurred his stallion, galloped nearer to her,
Waved his sombrero, as he once had waved it
That other morning when she saw him passing,
And wondering thought who is the maid to win him—
Not knowing still, that she herself would win him.
A moment more the signal bells were ringing;
The mission portals to the plaza opened,
There was a cheer, and waving fans and banners;
The great black bull was slowly coming forward—
Back in the patio, decked in flowers and ribbons,
He had been waiting for the sign of battle.
Amazed he looked a moment at the people,
Then sudden saw the monster thing before him,
A grizzly pile of hair, and claws, and clutches.
The bear arose and on his hind feet standing,
Reached out his arms as if to do him honor,
Blinked his small eyes, and calmly stood and waited.
His very calmness scared the bull a moment,
Not knowing quite if he should run or battle;
Then shut his eyes, and bent his great neck downward,
And with his horns lunged at the thing before him—
A little missed—the bear was quickly on him,
His mighty arms around his neck were pressing,
His awful teeth deep in his throat imbedded—
With roar of pain around the ring he started,

Grim as grim death, the bear held on the harder,
Till, by sheer dragging once his hold was broken,
And bruin rolled a little distance from him.
Again the bull with a terrific bellow
Plunged at the beast with his red eyes distended;
Again the bear as in a vise has caught him,
And bear and bull roll in the dust together.
It was not long, for bruin all exhausted,
By loss of blood lay still a little moment,
When, with a roar the bull in pain and maddened,
Rushed on his prey, and goring, left him dying.
There was a cheer, a thousand people rising,
And cheers once more, and all the bells were ringing.

* * * * *

Now changed the scene, the horse-race is beginning.
Three leagues of road straight northward from the mis-
sion—
There all the crowds again are come together.
One thought alone moves every man or woman,
One idol only worshipped in the province;
Next to religion, were the people's horses.
"Who loves his horse alone can love a woman—"
It was a saying in the Spanish province.
No Arab flying on the wasted desert
Had better steeds, or better knew to ride them—
Men's lives were spent so wholly in the saddle;
Their greatest treasure often was expended
On jewelled trappings for the horse and rider;
And he was rich who rode his jewelled saddle,
Though he were homeless else, and wholly friendless.
And fleet they were, these California horses,
Fleet as the wind on mountain or in desert;
And all one's riches oft were staked upon them.
And so today, one saw great bags of silver
On carts piled up, and at the roadside waiting,



There to be gambled on a favorite racer.
An hour or so, and fortunes most had vanished—
Lost on this horse, or that one, in the racing.
Then came the last the *piece de resistance*—
The horses running without any rider.
'Ten splendid steeds stood stripped there for the starting,
White stallions, known as swiftest of the valley;
Antonio's horse was there among the many;
No bridles theirs, nor saddles, nor yet riders—
Just bells, and spurs, to madden them to running.
'The signal fires, and wildly they are started,
Not knowing where, save that they must be flying;
Like a tornado they have passed the people,
Who hold their breath too moved for any cheering;
One league, two leagues—and faster fly the horses,
Great clouds of dust the races most obscuring—
One runner now is leading all the others—
Just by one neck, Antonio's horse is winning—
And with a bound the final goal he crosses.
A shot announces that the race is over;
A thousand throats the victor's horse are cheering,
And he is led among the crowds of people.
He walks on roses scattered now before him,
As comes a hero from the battle's thunder.
Dolores, too, has cast a flower before him;
Antonio sees it with a smile of gladness,
Picks up the rose, and kissing throws it to her,
Then leading now, the splendid steed before her,
With a great bow, and all so courteous looking,
Presents the stallion to the fair Dolores.
"Oh, signorita, look, your gladsome beauty
This day eclipses every beauty present,
The horse is yours. You know it is a custom
Who wins a race must make some gift or other
To her he deems most fair of any women.
Adieu! Adieu!" he waved his great sombrero,

And left Dolores standing there and blushing.
Still on her arm the silver bridle rested,
A little while she stroked the horse's shoulder,
Then saw Antonio passing to the plaza—
And wondered still if any maid would win him.

* * * * *

The day is done, the Angelus is ringing,
An evening prayer, and then the feast and dances.
Francisco's choir, with castanets and viols,
His many singers have already gathered
Where hang the lanterns from the palms and peppers.
The wilder Indians, from the hills and canyons,
Have started homeward, going up the valley,
Save two or three now hiding in the brushes.
Bright is the scene and brighter yet the dances;
Gay cavaliers, and wondrous dark-eyed women,
And brown-robed priests, and olive-colored maidens,
Young neophytes, the children of the mission,
And soldiers, guardsmen of the mission people,
And sailors coming from the ships at anchor.
Some danced the waltz, and some the gay bolero,
Still others in the wild fandango reveled.
And there were smiles and pressing hands and whispers,
And praise of eyes that shone in soft replying.
Dolores radiant as the scene before her,
Danced till the midnight with her two adorers,
And on her breast the golden poppies carried—
Yet, in her mind, she saw a gay sombrero,
And heard the words "most beauteous of women."
Francisco, often as his music let him—
Beheld her, fairest there of all the dancers;
Beheld the poppies, too, and rested happy.
But 'twas Antonio who danced so often.
And kissed her hand as every dance was finished,



Looked at the poppies resting on her bosom,
Nor guessed, one moment, what could be their meaning.

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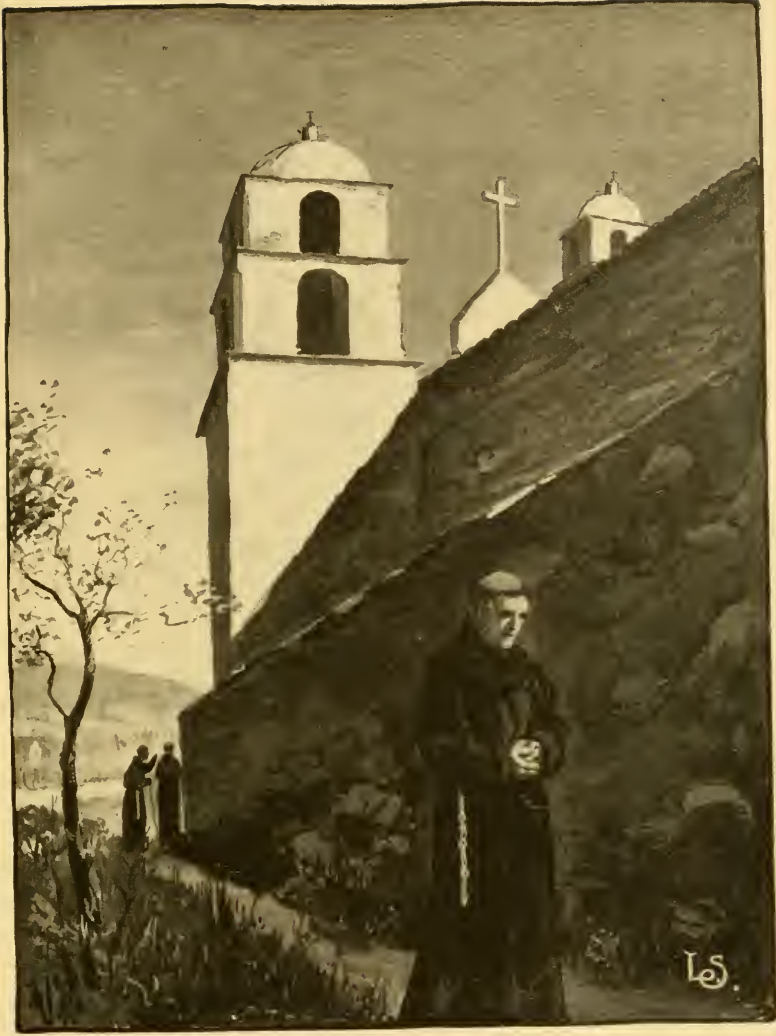
Once, when the music ceased a little moment,
Dolores went out in the moonlight walking,
A little neophyte her sole companion.
Scarce fifty paces from the dancers going,
They heard low talking, then a footstep nearing—
Three painted Indians from the roses springing,
Quick as an eagle unexpected pounces
Upon his prey, so pounced they on Dolores.
There was a cry, the neophyte came screaming—
“Dolores killed, the Indians have got her.”
Loud rang the bells, “The Indians were uprising”
So went the cry alarming all the valley.
A little while the child, her senses gaining,
Told how she knew the faces of the villains.
Of her own tribe they were, up in the mountains,
There were but three, and lived alone by plunder.
Before the dawn, a hundred were pursuing,
On foot, on horseback, priests and friends and soldiers.
All day they hunted in the woods and canyon,
And not a trace of either man or woman
With hope most gone the people half distracted
Gave up the hunt, “Dolores has been murdered.”
Francisco only kept up hope and sought her.
Footsore and weary through the forest went he,
By paths scarce known to any but the Indians,
Nor found a sign of where she might be hidden.
Antonio, too, on his white stallion sought her,
Dashed to the canyon with its dark recesses,
Flew to the edges of the far-off desert.
Once saw some trace of bandits in the mountains,
Rode faster yet, determined to o’ertake them,
And kill them ere they reached their secret cavern.

It was a plan if anyone should find her,
Dead or alive, the mission bells should tell it.
With heavy heart Francisco still was searching,
Sad and alone deep in the hills and forest,
When all at once the bells rang in the valley.
"Found! Found!" he cried, and hastened toward the
mission.

An Indian boy had signaled from the canyon,
That she was found and all went out to meet her.
Francisco, too, and saw Antonio coming
On his white horse, Dolores on behind him.
A mad'ning thought a moment overwhelmed him,
Yet thanked he God to know she had been rescued.

* * * * *

Two days, and then the festival renewing,
All sang and danced in fair Dolores' honor;
A little pale she was, yet fairer most than ever.
Antonio told them how he saved Dolores—
With that swift horse, he caught the bandits flying,
And fighting slew them there within the canyon,
Just as they reached their far and secret cavern.
It was most morning now, and yet they reveled,
Or wandered singing down beside the river.
There by its bank Antonio and Dolores
Sat down and talked of this her great adventure.
With thankful gratitude, beyond expressing,
Dolores prayed all blessings should come to him.
Antonio heard and took her hand and kissed it,
Told of his love, born that first day he saw her.
Would she be his, heaven's blessings would be on him.
"You have been kind," was all Dolores answered,
"While life shall last this day will be remembered."
Then there was silence, and a quick heart-beating—
A burning struggle in Dolores' bosom,
She dared not speak the thing she should have spoken;



And when again, with burning words he urged her,
"Pray, wait a little," was her only answer—
"I will go home to Carmelo tomorrow."
There I will weigh it all, so thought she silent,
And farther gave not any word of answer,
But slowly walked with him back toward the plaza.
The stars were down, the dawn was almost breaking;
The music ceased, and yet Antonio pressed her,
Told of the dangers he had passed to save her;
Told how the king would some day yet restore him
His Spanish rights, his titles and his castle;
Told how some day they two would walk together
Beside a lake within his Spanish garden.
Dolores heard, but gave no certain answer,
Her thoughts confused with all the past day's doings.
Her thoughts of that bright day when first she saw him.
How she had wondered who would some time win him,
Then suddenly, as seeking some delaying—
"Wait just a little," smiling, when she said it,
"Once on a time, beside this very river,
A little party of us young folks gathered,
And I had suitors pressing for an answer.
And I held daisies, counting them all over,
Each petal gave some pretty little answer,
Yet leaving doubt if either of them loved me.
'He loves me, loves me not,' you've seen them do it.
Well, that was when the fine new church was founded,
The dear old bells, long lost, were now so wanted,
The Padre said no other bells would answer,
These ones were sacred, for the Pope had blessed them.
So all the valley here was put at searching,
For many days, and no soul ever found them,
And there was sorrow here in all the valley.
Then, lovers pressing me, I made a promise;
The daisies first I threw into the river,
Their little play had settled nothing for me.

Whoever finds the missing bells, and brings them
To yonder tower the day that it is finished,
I said it laughingly, 'him, I will marry.'
And so you see that I have made a promise;
I am fast bounden till the church is finished,
But if the bells are not then there and ringing,
I am released, and am no longer bounden.
Wait but till then, and you shall have an answer."
Antonio laughed, "If that be all, Dolores,
Then never day will come that you are married.
The bells, men say, were cast into the ocean.
But, true, or no, let us a compact enter;
Give me one word, and if, by chance, tomorrow,
Or any time before the church is finished,
Some happy soul should find the missing treasure,
That moment I release you from the promise."
So they walked on, still talking, toward the mission.
"Good night," Dolores said, "or rather morning,"
And did not know, or scarcely, she had promised.

* * * * *

They stayed good friends, Francisco and Dolores.
"Fate was unfriendly to me then as ever,"
So said he wandering on the flowering meadows.
"I should have known how far she was above me,
I, a musician only, he, a lordly noble.
I should have kept the vow to some day enter
The holy service of the Lord and Master.
But, somehow, love all resolution conquers.
I was but human—loved her without knowing—
And I am glad I never told her of it.
She never knew for certain that I loved her;
Nor had I any right to think of loving;
Save one dear glance she gave me on that morning
She placed the yellow poppies on my shoulder,
What right had I to think she ever loved me?"



So, many days, Francisco tried to think it—
He “had no right,” and so would overcome it—
Yet went on loving spite of pain and promise.
That very day Dolores had departed.
By chance, a ship bound northward, stopped a little;
To Monterey ’twas bound; Carmelo near it,
And so she went scarce knowing she was promised.

* * * * *

Antonio now came to the mission often,
Perhaps the memory of that morning drew him,
When first he saw Dolores in the chapel!
Its patron now, and many gifts he brought it,
And often helping showed the mission Indians
New ways of doing, sent skilled people to them.
So hurried, too, the great church they were building.
It had been years, so slow the work proceeded—
The only church of stone in all the province;
And stone by stone the whole was slowly carried
From yonder canyon by the men and women.
A little while the temple would be finished,
A house of God there standing by the mountains,
A house of God that looked forever seawards,
The bells alone they were not yet discovered.
Once more they hunted for them northward, southward,
So zealous all, Antonio most was fearing
They might yet find them, somewhere, always thinking
Of that strange promise made by fair Dolores;
And also thinking what himself had promised,
And so he hurried every day the building.
They were good friends, Antonio and Francisco,
And oftentimes Francisco heard him praising
Dolores’ beauty, and her thousand virtues,
Nor let him know how his own heart was beating;
Nor guessed Antonio once a thought of danger.

The time was near, the church was most completed;
Antonio's perfect rapture was approaching.
She would be there—be at the dedication,
Her voice would add to all the festive pleasure;
And then the day, the one day of all others,
Was it not coming with delight and music!
Then came the word no ship would soon be sailing
From Monterey toward Capistrano mission,
Not for a month would any ship sail southwards.
Dismayed, the friars talked with one another,
She must be here, our fairest, greatest singer,
The Padre, too, the head priest of the mission,
Would see his niece at this the great occasion,
And said, "Francisco, you I trust to bring her,
And some companion she may choose beside her."
Then came Antonio, too, and urged Francisco,
"Are we not friends—go you and bring Dolores."
But did not dream they ever had been lovers.
"Ride to Carmelo, on the king's great highway,
Tomorrow take the fleetest of my horses."
Astounded was he, yet he could not show it—
A thousand thoughts went through Francisco's bosom—
He made excuse—"he was at home much needed;
There were rehearsals of the music waiting."
Said this, said that, Antonio but insisted.
And so he went along the king's great highway,
Along the seaside and beside the mountains,
The sea no more perturbed than were his feelings.

* * * * *

One afternoon, among the roses walking,
Up at Carmelo, where the sea was shining,
Dolores saw him coming in the garden;
And, so surprised, she wondered at his coming,
A little while they wandered through the garden,
Glad of this chance to look upon each other,
Yet neither speaking of the thing the nearest.
For both were bounden, she who'd made her promise—



And he whom trust had sent upon this errand.
Once they climbed up a hillside from the valley,
There saw the ocean glistening bright before them.
Saw aisles of pine and heard their low-toned music,
Saw gentle hills with every blossom glowing,
A babbling river dancing to the ocean.
There lay Carmelo, heaven's own hand had touched it,
And made it beautiful above all others.
Its sun-kissed gardens and its snow-white lilies,
Its clustering roses and its field of poppies,
Made all the air a something so delicious
That every lover loved Carmelo valley.
Great memories, too, around the place were clinging,
There Junipero lived—the good, the holy—
The master hand, the soul of all the missions,
He who had brought salvation to the heathen.
Beneath a slab there in San Carlos mission,
Hid all in roses, he is softly sleeping,
Whose name in tender hearts will burn forever.
Three days in joy the happy lovers lingered,
For they were lovers, spite of bounden duty.
Each loved in silence though he dare not tell it,
Nor break a vow, for both of them were bounden.

* * * * *

"Tomorrow we shall ride," Francisco said it—
Down El Camino, there the beauteous highway.
Down the long way past sea and hill and mission,
To Capistrano. He will there be waiting."
Dolores smiled a little—then a shadow
Fell on her face and hid what she was feeling.
And so they two rode onwards on the highway,
Along the seashore, listening to its music,
She on the great white horse Antonio gave her,
Francisco riding on a coal black stallion,
With gorgeous saddles both, and jeweled bridles;

Had she been queen she had not then been greater.
Antonio's name was known at every mission.
Dolores, too, fair golden-haired Dolores;
Not less Francisco, he the famed musician.
Four hundred leagues, not less, the happy journey.
So they rode on, at every mission waiting,
(For all men knew Antonio's bride was coming),
A troop of girls, young neophytes, would meet them,
Pelt them with roses, scatter palms before them,
Sing joyous songs and lead them to the mission;
There feast and toast and castanet and viol,
Brought to a close each day of sweetest travel.
Sometimes they met a barefoot pilgrim friar
Making his way to Carmelo, or farther,
Who made the cross, and blessed them, ever saying,
"May God be with you as you fare together."
Four happy days like bees on roses sipping,
The lovers traveled by the sweet sea's border,
Yet not of love had either one yet spoken,
For each one knew he to a vow was bounden.
But once at noon they passed a field of poppies
All golden glinting, by the seaside growing;
Francisco saw them, leaped from off his stallion
And brought a nosegay to the happy maiden.
"My fancy yet, and you have not forgotten,"
She smiling said, and placed them on her bosom.
Yet was it true, a thought was ever with her
That heavier grew as now the journey ended;
Spite of the joy the golden days had brought her,
The very poppies made it all the harder;
And all the time there riding by Francisco,
She thought in silence of a half-made promise;
Thought of that night there by the little river,
Antonio's pleading—and her half-made promise;
How he had saved her from an unknown terror;
Then saw Francisco riding there beside her,



Felt something tearing every heartstring from her,
Love, and that promise, struggling with each other.
So they rode on—and still no word was spoken.

* * * * *

Francisco, too, now as the day was closing,
Felt as awakened from a pleasant vision—
A moment's joy, and then the dream departing
Left only shadow as the journey ended.
He had lacked courage; up there at Carmelo
He should have spoken—ventured all to have her
The trust he held, was it not forced upon him?
It was too late; he saw, as in a vision,
A marriage feast, Antonio and Dolores
Walk down an aisle with orange blossoms fragrant.
So they rode on and yet no word was spoken.
A little while, and now the sun was setting,
Drowning itself in the Pacific ocean,
With such a trail of glory left behind it
As only comes to sunsets in that region.
It was clear moonlight now at Capistrano
When these two lovers stopped before the mission.
Antonio welcomed them, he had been waiting,
And helped Dolores from her silken saddle,
And helping saw the golden yellow poppies.
Few words were said, Antonio, without telling,
Knew from that moment that he had a rival.
Francisco took the horses toward the river,
To give them water where the stream was clearest,
For now it was receded almost wholly
From a great drouth that fell upon the valley.
And while the horses stood there in the water,
Or in the sand where he himself was standing,
Their hoofs struck on some iron thing or other.
With both his hands Francisco delved a little
Down in the sand, when lo! there, deep imbedded,

He found the bells of Capistrano mission!
'Twas like a dream or some sweet thing from heaven.
A thousand joys, all in one joy together;
Now he could speak—was it not her own promise
Who found the bells—her hand should have forever?
And in her eyes had he not sometimes read it—
The hope that he might find the hidden treasure?
That she had loved and never dared to tell it?
Then in the moonlight friars came and labored
With all the mission glad almost to crying—
So thankful were they for the thing that happened.
That very night, through all the little valley,
The news was spread like prairie fires in autumn,
And eager hands in long procession forming,
Now bore the bells in gladness to the mission.
High mass was sung at daybreak of the morning,
“Regina Salve,” ’twas Dolores singing.
Antonio heard her, as he did that morning
When first he saw her at the mission chapel—
The day he waved his great sombrero to her.
The service out, the two went to the river;
To that same spot where in the moonlight walking
She once had promised without scarcely knowing.
Antonio spoke, “Bright honor’s left, Dolores,
Here is the spot, our trysting place last summer.
The promise, half enforced, you scarcely granted.
I saw tonight was thankfulness, not passion;
I was love-blind, too strong my great devotion.
We both have vowed, nor shall my vow be broken;
The bells are found, you are no longer bounden.
Take one you love, there I release you wholly;
Nor you nor I are any longer bounden.”
He strode his horse and rode far up the valley,
And no one knew Antonio’s heart was broken.
Dolores lingered, saw him disappearing,
With moistened eyes turned slowly toward the mission,



And that great weight was slowly lifted from her.

* * * * *

That day, almost, Francisco and Dolores
Walked o'er the hills and pretty vales together.
Then said Francisco, "Long, so long, I've waited.
May I not speak now, that you are not bounden?
There at Carmelo once I almost ventured,
And then I thought, the trust I had was holy,
Antonio trusted me, I dared not say it;
And when I gave the poppies to you, also,
I was most minded then to tell you frankly.
Again I thought, some other one might love you,
Might find the bells, and you would keep your promise.
Now I speak out; I love you, dear Dolores.
The bells are here and I would hear them ringing
On that dear day when we two shall be wedded."
And so the bells were kept a little, silent;
Although the church was finished now, and waiting,
Till on a day these lovers twain were married.
Then all at once the bells rang out their music,
And all the valley joined in song and dancing.

* * * * *

Without a change weeks passed there at the mission,
The old routine of labor and religion;
Save that the mission now was growing richer;
Great herds of cattle grazed upon the mountains,
And flocks of sheep that never could be numbered,
And crowds of Indians came and were converted.

* * * * *

Then came that day that made this place a ruin—
When all the coast of the Pacific ocean
For one short, awful moment, rocked and trembled,
And all the missions shook to their foundation.
But this one most, felt yonder earthquake's coming,

The twilight mass of a December morning
Was being sung there in the finished temple,
When all at once, the church dome reeled a little,
The roof spread open, showed the sky above it,
Then with a crash the whole fell down together.

* * * * *

For many days the buried ones were sought for;
Some said, Antonio, too, was buried with them,
But none were certain, in the dread confusion.
The hunt for lost ones was at last abandoned;
The little graveyard there, behind the mission,
Already full; but on a day when the great mass was
singing

For souls of all who had so sadly perished,
A ship came by, its captain had a letter—
Dolores' name was quickly seen upon it;
'Twas from Antonio written ere the earthquake
Had cast the mission in a sea of sorrow,
"Once sudden news," so ran it, took him northwards,
Nor gave him time for any farewell message.
And now he wrote to say he was not angry;
She had done well to marry where her heart was,
And now he *knew* 'twas gratitude, not passion
That made her promise to be bounden to him.
So went the letter, telling news from Spainwards,
He had been given back his castles, titles,
So had no use for lands so very distant;
His valley rancho, reaching west, and seaward,
She must accept it as her wedding present;
And so they would be friends forever after.

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