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A DAUGHTER OF THE WEST

"WHOEVER YOU ARE, CAN YOU HELP ME?"

A Daughter of the West

The Story of an American Princess

BY

EVELYN RAYMOND

AUTHOR OF "THE LITTLE LADY OF THE HORSE"
"AMONG THE LINDENS," ETC., ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY

CHARLES COPELAND

BOSTON AND CHICAGO
W. A. WILDE & COMPANY

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PREFACE

THERE is no sweeter nor nobler human creature than a typical American girl; and such, as we comprehend her, is Patience Eliot, that Daughter of the West, herewith presented.

Born and reared in the freedom of great spaces, she early learned to regard the stern verities of life rather than its polished trivialities; which she disdained because she recognized beneath them a need that was more vital.

The position of our "Princess" was unique; yet neither impossible nor without precedent. From infancy accustomed to the exercise of her own individuality, she had also at command a vast wealth, which came to her as a gift from nature itself. It was inevitable that she should make some mistakes, and that the conditions of her life should emphasize both faults and virtues; yet if her judgment of others' hypocrisy was too severe and scathing, it was because Truth, Love, and Honor — the compound of

both — formed her own ideals. Herself, and all her belongings, she held as a trust, to be spent lavishly, yet withal wisely, in the service of others.

In every sense she was a patriot. She realized that American girlhood was to the girlhood of older civilizations as America itself was to older nations. Strong in this faith, yet without vanity, she was constrained to keep herself simple and modest, yet courageous and, if need be, daring. Like her native land still, she respected her own dignity, which should not be the less because of its youthfulness.

So Patience comes before those other young folk whom she hopes to make her friends; and may each daughter of America, east or west, who reads this story, realize that she also is a Princess in her own right; a being to whom all nobility is possible; and so realizing, walk uprightly, with that graciousness that sets her apart as one in whom the eyes of all the world delight.

E. R.

BALTIMORE, March 25, 1899.

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A DAUGHTER OF THE WEST.

The Story of an American Princess.

CHAPTER I.

IN THE CITY OF THE ANGELS.

IT was Christmas Eve in Los Angeles — or Lah-Sanglus, as the natives speak it. The fair southwestern city was alive from border to border with sights beautiful enough to well merit its significant name, "The City of the Angels."

Even Patience Eliot, who had seen all these yearly merrymakings ever since she could remember, found this particular Christmas Eve more delightful than any other. But her reason for this added enjoyment was easy enough to find. She herself expressed it exactly when she said, swaying lightly in her saddle toward the gray-

mustached gentleman who rode his black steed so closely beside her own white one: —

"I've always loved the 'Noche Buena,' dad, dear, but to-night I'm almost too happy to live. It's just the having you with me, I suppose, that makes the lights seem brighter, the flowers lovelier, and everything just — glorious!"

The gentleman smiled fondly upon the animated face bent toward him, then hastily clutched her bridle-rein, and skilfully whirled Blanco about out of harm's way.

"Take care! We're not on the plains here, Patience; and Blanco's restless. That trolley car very nearly hit him on the haunch. If it had, there'd have been trouble."

"He is restless. I don't see what makes him so to-night. He's been into town ever so many times, and behaved beautifully. He has always just acted as if trolley cars and street bands were beneath his notice."

"He's caught the fever of excitement that possesses everybody. If you've had enough of this street, let's go over into the Mexican quarter. It's quieter there, and ever so much more picturesque."

The fair-headed girl on the milk-white horse was herself already being gazed upon as one of the holiday sights; and though both she and her father were quite accustomed to this, he had never learned to enjoy it; and for that reason, quite as much as for Blanco's restiveness, had suggested the detour.

"Yes, let's go; and maybe there I can finish buying the gifts."

"Why, aren't they all purchased yet?"

Patience made a funny little grimace.

"You see, dad, dear, there surely was never before such an array of beautiful things to tempt me. The money you gave me is all gone; for, after I'd seen the handsome things, I couldn't make up my mind to buy any of the cheap ones. So there are still Rosa and Carlotta, Basilio, old Abraham, and my own Gaspar to provide for. I shall need a lot more money, I expect. Will it be all right, dear?"

"I suppose so, daughter. 'Christmas comes but once a year' is the old saying, and I reckon everybody spends more in buying gifts than they intend. But it's all right, of course. Don't let a cloud rest for a moment on your face to-night, darling. I've thrown care to the winds for once, and here we are."

Prancing and curvetting in a manner that still excited the wonder of the throngs they passed, but of which their riders took little heed, the black horse and the white, Blanco and Negro (Nay-gro), turned a corner and were in the Mexican quarter.

The long, low, rambling old adobe structures looked almost squalid, at first sight, in contrast with the palatial buildings of the streets they had just left; but the locality had a charm of its own for the Eliots, and they had soon tossed their reins to a couple of swarthy youngsters and entered one of the shops.

"How dark it seems after the electric lights of the streets! but how delightful, too!" cried Patience, as she caught hold of her father's hand to draw him farther toward a low counter, whereon were heaped a pile of blankets of brilliant coloring and odd geometrical patterns. "See! here is a beauty. That will just do for Rosa; she has none half so handsome!"

"And what does fat old Rosa want of another blanket? If I remember rightly, you've been buying them for her ever since she came to cook for us."

"Ah! but, dad, dear, Rosa has a hobby — it's collecting Navajo (Nah-vah-hoe) blankets. She has thirteen now, but she says that's an unlucky number; and she hinted very strongly to me that, if I were going to make her any Christmas gift, a fourteenth would be the most acceptable. So you see —"

"I see that the crafty Rosa works upon your sympathies, my dear. Well, ask the price."

Patience smiled upon the little dark-eyed maid who served her, in response to the familiar greeting and the pretty salutation of the season, uttered in the native's own liquid tongue; and her own reply was couched in Spanish quite as pure and musical. It was evident that she was no stranger in the little shop and was a welcome visitor.

The price was named, half apologetically; but Mr. Eliot repeated it in accents of amazement and the most distinct English: —

"Seventy-five dollars for that blue monstrosity! Why, Patience, you'll never —"

"Ah, but I will — if *you* will! Yes, it is blue. Very, very blue. As blue as the skies that whoever wove it tried to imitate."

"Poor sky, to be doomed to that hardness of tone! It's a libel on nature, child. Liken it to something else."

"Well, then, it's blue — as blue. But think of the skill which could find such dyes in just berries and seeds and barks, and use them for such a purpose. That yellow is as like our own California poppies as possible; and the scarlet — isn't that the very shade of a wild plum when it's ripe? And the colors never fade. Think of that, too. It's all the more wonderful that these poor untaught creatures are as wise as they are."

"Hold on, Patience! don't get on to the Indian question to-night, I beg. We haven't time."

"It's very fine, señor," interposed the shop-maiden, fingering lovingly the gayly tinted blanket, that was, indeed, fine almost as silk and thick as a carpet.

"Yes, dad, see! The weave is wonderful. Think of the weaver sitting day after day, passing these hair-fine threads back and forth, one at a time — for such an almost endless time. Why, I suppose, it took years of labor to finish this one blanket. I shouldn't think she could do more than an inch

a day — maybe not half so much as that — could she?"

"Not if she's like the average Indian," said Mr. Eliot, dryly.

"And if it took a whole year to finish such a beautiful thing, why, seventy-five dollars wouldn't be very much for the toil of a whole year, would it, dad, dear?"

"Even if the result is not to the taste of a practical Yankee. No, probably not. But I protest against any more such expensive gifts. Rosa has enriched herself at the cost of her fellow-servants. Though she's not the one to mind that. Not in the least."

Patience laughed and went with her eager attendant to the rear of the low-studded store, where were heaped upon a wide counter a medley of quaint and curious things; each and all having that half-foreign air about them that is so attractive to the average tourist, but which was as natural to Patience as the California sunshine into which she had been born.

Her other purchases were swiftly made. She had seen on the face of her beloved "dad" a little

look of weariness growing. Nothing weighed in this daughter's mind against real pain to her father. She knew he had made a sacrifice to come with her on this Christmas Eve; that the little trip was full of reminders to him of other and similar outings made long years before, with her own mother, whose early death had left the world so different a place to him. So she made haste to finish, selecting a heavy saddle of odd Mexican fashion for old Abraham, a sombrero for another, a pile of exquisitely wrought baskets for Carlotta; pipes and pouches and a gay waist scarf for her own groom, Gaspar; and in less than five minutes the two had emerged from the store, and instinctively Patience led the way out of that quarter toward the modern part of the old city.

The little dark-eyed lads followed, leading the two thoroughbred horses, who were as well-known to everybody as their owners, and feeling proud of the honor quite as truly as they would be glad of the generous tips sure to reward their service when the time for dismissal came.

"Now, this is jolly! How bright the streets are again! And such flowers! Surely the gar-

dens have all been stripped to deck the store windows. Look out, dad, dear! there's a fire-cracker just before you."

"It's as bad as a Fourth of July in the East!" exclaimed Mr. Eliot, springing aside, just in time to escape the explosion of a giant cracker. "But, I declare! it makes me feel as if I were a boy again and must take a hand in the business. Let's step inside this doorway and watch the fun for a bit."

Patience obeyed and took her place beside her father on the threshold of a jeweller's store, and for some time enjoyed with him the watching of the boys upon the street — busy with torpedoes and crackers, red fire or rockets, and all the rollicking racket so dear to the youthful heart. But finally the girl's ears tired of the noise, and she exclaimed: —

"Well, dad, dear, you'll never be anything but a boy, I believe. Shall we not have enough of fireworks at Santa Paula to-morrow without deafening ourselves here to-night? I'm going to study the pretty things in the window, and if I see something very fine I shall tax you for it as a gift."

The window was indeed well worth studying. Its decorations were not the usual wreaths of holly and mistletoe, but great branches of yellow and red roses, banks of maidenhair ferns and of mosses so deep and green that the diamonds displayed on them seemed like dewdrops flashing in the electric rays of the great lights overhead.

Patience had no fondness for the wearing of jewels, but she had a full appreciation of their beauty in themselves; and she was deep in her enjoyment of the shifting hues and brilliancy of an enormous solitaire, when something crashed rudely against her, and, before she could recover herself, her shoulder had struck against the glass with force sufficient to break it.

"What—" she cried, but got no further. Something heavy and fur-coated leaped to her shoulder and bore her downward, while her waist was clutched by the claws of another terrified beast. Shocked into silence she clinched her hands and waited for the sequel.

"Ah! ya, ya! Have a care, si!" called in Spanish a girlish voice, vibrant with distress. "But they are harmless — quite!"

Then Patience comprehended. "The trained pumas of Tulita, the 'lion tamer!' Some accident has happened."

"Call them off, girl! For mercy's sake save her!" shouted Mr. Eliot, pallid with anxiety and striving with his own hands to dislodge the sinuous, clinging creatures from his child's body.

"Oh, miserere, but they will not harm — surely they will not harm! Only hurt them not — I did not — "

The protesting outcry of the Indian girl was drowned in a babel of tongues, and the excitement of the crowd that had instantly collected about the jeweller's store grew fiercer every second.

"Take care!" "Take care!" "Oh-h-h!" A shuddering groan ran from lip to lip — the noise of the crowd was hushed; there was only that terrible trampling and beating of steel-shod hoofs upon the ground and upon the poor lion tamer who had fallen there.

CHAPTER II.

TWO DAUGHTERS OF AMERICA.

WHILE it froze others to horror, that sound recalled Patience Eliot from her own terror. "The horses have broken loose! They are killing her!" she cried, and leaped to Blanco's head. "Blanco — oh, Blanco — quiet at once!"

But the spirited horse had been too wildly excited by the unusual noise of the streets to respond as he commonly did to her word of command. He still plunged and snorted, gathering fresh fear from the presence of the pumas, which still clung about his mistress's slender person, and which she was unable yet to shake off. Meanwhile Negro had also wrenched himself free from the lad who had led him, and was clattering down the street, spreading dismay in his flight. What the outcome would have been can only be surmised, but at the instant when the danger seemed

greatest, a tall figure forced its way through the crowd to Patience's side, and a strange guttural cry overpowered all other sounds.

"Down! To me come at once! Instante! Ce, ce, ce!"

The effect was magical. The pumas ceased clinging to Patience, and slid from her to the newcomer — a dark, fawn-skinned half-breed of the Mexican-Indian type, whose age might have been anywhere from fifty to a hundred, judging from the parchment-like skin that covered his thin, majestic features.

Even Blanco, who rarely obeyed any other as he did his own young mistress, but who had at this time been regardless of her entreaties, stopped plunging and stood quiet, if still trembling, as the man's masterful tones fell on his ear.

As for Patience, infinite relief lightened her terror, and she caught his arm in an ecstasy of delight.

"Ah, Ramon, is it thou? Help her — Tulita. Is she hurt?"

Even while he stooped to lift the prostrated girl, the Indian smiled upon his questioner, though

his face was anxious; and he raised poor Tulita as tenderly as he might.

"Ah, so, my daughter! Art thou suffering?" he asked, in that patois of two languages common to his race.

The familiar tones revived the fainting "lion tamer," and with a feeling of shame that she had allowed herself to be overcome, even by the onrush of an excited horse, Tulita de la Vega (Princess Tulita, as her own people acknowledged her) shook herself free of the sustaining arm, and stood alone.

"Thou here, Ramon? Thou comest late!" she cried; but even as the words were spoken the faintness overcame her again, and Tulita would have fallen a second time had not Patience caught and supported her.

"You poor girl! You are hurt somewhere badly. Where is it? Oh, I see — your arm!"

"It is nothing," murmured Tulita, though she leaned heavily against her friend.

"Patience, are you injured?" cried Mr. Eliot, who had only at that instant made way through the press to his daughter's side.

"No, dad, dear; don't look so worried. But poor Tulita — won't you send somebody to help her?"

"Is there a doctor in the crowd?" asked Mr. Eliot, lifting his voice to be heard above the clamor.

No doctor responded, but the irate shopkeeper forced himself to the gentleman's side.

"It serves her right, sir. Those Indian fakirs and jugglers are the biggest nuisance of the time. I trust you won't take her part. *I'm* the injured party in this case. My plate-glass window is broken; my Christmas display ruined; my whole evening's trade stopped! See there!"

Mr. Eliot turned about and faced the damage, but before he could answer, Patience interrupted: —

"Beg pardon, sir; but it was I who broke that window. You will lose nothing by me, be assured."

"You, daughter?"

"Yes. Somebody threw a cracker, the horse plunged, poor Tulita was thrown down, and I fell through the window. What does that trumpery thing matter? The nearest doctor is what

we want to find now, and to get Tulita's wounds looked after. Where is one?"

A dozen voices answered, giving as many different directions; but all were silenced by that of the "puma princess" herself, who, having finally and fully recovered her senses, assumed command, as seemed her habit.

"I need no white doctor, I. Ramon has skill enough and to spare. Are the cubs secured and muzzled, tio?" (uncle).

"My daughter. Let us away."

The Indian flung the curiously woven horsehair rope, by which the pumas were led, across his shoulder and turned to leave the spot; but the people slunk before him as if the beasts still menaced their comfort, and the old man laughed maliciously.

"Fear ye that we will work you evil, my princess and I? Well, we might — we might, because of the treatment we have received this Noche Buena."

"Silence, tio mio. The pets are surely harmless, good folks. Their spirits have been well broken, poor things. We have cheated nature of

her rights just to give a gaping crowd a little amusement and ourselves a bit of Christmas bread. But, bah! The beautiful wild creatures have lost their freedom in vain. They have brought you no pleasure of sight-seeing and us no coins. Verdad, it is well. We will go back to the plains where we belong and trouble the city no more."

"But not so fast, young woman!" cried a police officer, who laid his hand upon Tulita's shoulder. "There's more damage done than you seem to acknowledge. You are my prisoner."

"Prisoner? — Prisoner! I? — I!"

"Exactly. No trouble, please."

Patience bounded from her father's side to that of this other girl, whose age was so near her own and who had had for her a peculiar fascination whenever a chance meeting in the city had brought them face to face. A wider contrast could scarcely have been afforded than between the haughty, ill-clad, but strangely beautiful Indian "princess" and the fair-haired, wealthy daughter of a higher civilization, and people paused to watch them as they stood thus for a moment side

by side — protector and protected — but American both, from the crowns of their shapely heads to the tips of their restless feet.

"What do you mean, sir?"

"Daughter!" remonstrated Mr. Eliot; but Patience was too excited to hear him.

"What do you mean? For what do you arrest — my friend?"

"Your friend? Er — I am sorry, but —"

"But what?"

The jeweller himself explained.

"She is deft-fingered, this puma tamer. Under the pretence of a bodily injury she has rifled my show-window of my famous diamond — the stone of which Miss Eliot must surely have heard, as all on the Pacific coast have heard."

But the obsequious bow which attended this statement failed to impress one whit the angry, romantic Patience. In reality she knew actually nothing of Tulita and her character, but the fancy she had taken to her in their former chance meetings sprang now, by this mischance, into a full-fledged friendship, impetuous and unreasoning as her nature was generous and trusting.

"I have neither heard of nor care for your diamond, sir. That is, as you mean. And if anybody has stolen it, it is quite as likely to be I as this poor, injured girl. It was I who fell through the window, or into it. I may have pushed the stone down into the moss where it lay. I noticed how pretty it looked, like a crystallized dewdrop, but Tulita hasn't taken it. I'll vouch for her."

Mr. Eliot laid his hand on his daughter's shoulder, and this time she heeded him.

"Dear, do you know this girl — this 'Princess Tulita'?"

"Oh, dad, dear, help us out of this scrape! Did you ever see anything so stupid? Accusing Tulita of stealing when she was down on the ground, being trampled under the feet of Blanco himself. I'm indignant enough to send the diamond loser to the lockup in her place for just the accusation. Make him understand, please, that what he says is impossible. Poor Tulita is in agony. She must not be so tortured. Please, dad, dear!"

Mr. Eliot's face had become suddenly abstracted. It wore, also, a look of pain, as if some poignant

memory had overtaken him and carried his thoughts far from the scene in which he stood. He was not fond of Indians as his daughter was, and against half-breeds in particular he had much reason to feel dislike. He did not speak till Patience touched him again.

"Please, dad, dear, help us."

"Have you ever seen this girl before, Patience?" he asked at length.

"Ever so many times."

"Where?"

"Here — on Los Angeles's streets. I've often stopped to watch her playing with her pets, and wondered how she could have trained them; but they seem to love her. She has charmed them, I suppose."

"And she has charmed you, it seems, but — but —"

He turned and scrutinized the face of the Indian girl, who stood so conspicuous a centre of observation. From her effort to suppress all sign of her physical suffering its expression was almost stolid, but there was an indignant gleam in her dark eyes and a proud carriage of her

head that impressed him favorably in spite of his natural prejudice.

Patience, always quick to read his countenance, saw its hardness soften and caught his hand eagerly.

"Oh, dad, do be kind to her! For my sake — for the festival we keep, the blessed Navidad — don't make it a sorrowful fast day for this poor heathen, as she may be!"

Tulita interrupted.

"Plead not for the daughter of La Vega — lady. You have called Tulita 'friend.' Thus you have made a blessed Navidad — no matter what befalls. I know you, even though you dare not say that you know me. You are the daughter of the rich white man, whose sheep are on a thousand hill-tops, whose vines drain the life from a thousand valleys. If you want silver, his servants dig it from our mountains. If you would journey from land to land, his horses are everywhere; even more, it is he who owns the monster wheels that run upon two slender tracks and crush the life out of our straying cattle, too ignorant — like their masters — to keep away from the white

man's path. All along the plains, las vegas, whence I came, you may count their carcasses, there by the white man's road where they have fallen. It has been a trap to lure them to death. This, too, has been a trap for poor Tulita, and she accepts what has befallen. I thought to make a holiday for my household with the coins I should gather to-night; it has been ordered otherwise. Plead not for me — I will not plead for myself — but let old Ramon go, and the poor beasts, back to their home, out of the sight of our enemies; for Tulita — she is ready."

A profound silence had fallen over the entire crowd while the girl had been speaking. It might have been due to the presence and interest of "Bonanza Eliot" and his fair-haired daughter; but something was also due to the simple dignity of the "princess" herself, and the rapid speech, which was yet so clear that not a syllable was lost.

"That ain't no common Injun. She's been taught in some mission, that's plain; and she's purty, too, for a redskin," commented somebody in the crowd.

"Greaser, more like. A greaser is good for nothing but to kill!" answered a comrade.

Old Ramon heard the comments and flamed with revengeful wrath. His hand sought his belt, where his knife lay ever ready to avenge an insult, and no taunt could fire his blood like that one, in his case undeserved, word, "greaser."

But Tulita's hand was as swift as his and stayed him with a gesture. His face sobered, and, bending on her a look of reverent affection, he ejaculated: —

"As the princess wills. But her arm must be attended!"

"Yes, yes, dad, dear! All this while Tulita is suffering. Do make the men let her go, and we'll find a doctor at once."

Money does many things. And to some of that gaping crowd David Eliot represented incarnate money. A moment later he had turned to the jeweller quietly and said: —

"Whatever is needed I will advance." Then, to the officer: "At this gentleman's desire you are not to make the arrest. Tell your prisoner that she is free, if you please."

It was certainly a proceeding not according to the "code," but one that was fully satisfactory to Patience, at least. She promptly comprehended the matter and again encircled Tulita's waist, crying, joyfully: —

"You see it was all a mistake, poor thing! You are no more a prisoner than I am; so let's hurry off to some doctor and get your hurt arm fixed. I'm so sorry it happened, and it was all my fault or Blanco's — and that's the same thing."

But Tulita resisted quietly.

"There is no fault, but — his!" and she fixed her glowing eyes on the jeweller's face. "But his time abides. I shall never forget — not for one hour — what you have done for me this night. Who calls the 'Princess of La Vega' friend — and proves it as you have proved it — has touched upon a spring within Tulita's heart that will never run dry. Till we meet again — farewell!"

Another moment and the "princess," old Ramon, and his pumas had been swallowed up in the crowd, nor could the direction they had taken be even guessed.

More amused than chagrined, Mr. Eliot looked into the perplexed face of his daughter. "Well, my dear, that's just as I expected. And I reckon this missing diamond will cost me a deal more even than old Rosa's blanket. It's been rather an expensive trip, this gift-buying one of ours, Patience. So, let's go home!"

"It will be all right, dad. Tulita will make it all right. This isn't the end of this business — you'll see. Wait awhile."

"Exactly!"

"But you'll never be sorry — as you would have been if you'd sent Tulita, an innocent girl, to the lockup to keep her Christmas. You'll see! She'll come back and surprise us some day, I know."

"H'm! 'You know.' How do you know, Miss Patty?"

"Well, I don't know just how I know, but I do know, all the same; I feel it."

"And what an eighteen-year old specimen of womanhood feels, is sure to be fact. Eh?"

"Laugh away, dad, dear. Time will tell. I've faith in Tulita, 'Princess of La Vega,' and all

your raillery can't shake it any more than I believe that the great diamond is really lost."

"You 'feel' that notion, too, I suppose?"

"Yes — strongly."

"Well, *I* 'feel' hungry. Let's take this cab and follow our runaway horses to the stable of our hotel, where we shall probably find them."

CHAPTER III.

THE HOME BY THE ARROYO.

TULITA and old Ramon travelled swiftly, but neither spoke a word until they had left the beautiful city, with its avenue of palms, its rose-covered homes, and its quaint mixture of ancient and modern civilization far behind them.

Then, at length, said Ramon: "It is three leagues now. Shall we rest?"

"La Vega rests not this night save in the shelter of her own home by the arroyo."

Ramon grunted his guttural assent and moved steadily forward. The miles they had journeyed under the stars had not apparently fatigued either in the least, though this new sense of pain which turned Tulita faint now and then had really hindered her movements somewhat. Commonly it was not Ramon who was the leader on any trail, and it fretted her proud spirit that he should be, even under these circumstances.

The girl spoke again and petulantly: —

"Thou makest waste of strength, tio mio (uncle mine). There are still two hours before the break of Navidad. We can be at our prayers long by that time."

"And Tulita tarries for her own hurt as she would not for that of another. While the night wanes, the wound swells."

"Let it swell, then, since it pains nobody save thy princess."

"Tulita asks the impossible. Ramon will meet thee at thy own threshold."

The old man made a profound reverence and leaped forward. For a few seconds longer the soft echo of his moccasined feet on the dry sward disturbed the silence of the night, then all was still.

When she was sure that she was quite alone, Tulita knelt down upon the herbage and raised her eyes skyward. If she were praying, she uttered no sound, and her injured arm hung limply by her side; but she rose again, after a moment, and pressed rapidly forward as if refreshed, with a light upon her countenance that outshone the stars.

"Friend! She called me friend! She, the fair paleface to whom fate has given all that should have been mine. Fate? Is not fate the Great Spirit? And she was just, as he is just. Maybe it is she and I, daughters both of this fair land, who shall clasp hands at last in peace! Home now, and rest for this degrading pain!"

A little later, and she had reached the osier-bordered arroyo where, amid a cluster of low adobe huts, was one slightly better than the rest, set apart by her people for the use of their princess alone.

On the threshold, as he had promised, was Ramon waiting. He had made ready a bundle of dry tule reeds and a moist plaster of native clay, but his manner was almost deprecating, even though his object was to relieve her pain.

To Tulita it had seemed an indignity that she should suffer any physical ill. From her infancy she had been trained to hardness and exposure, and no disease had ever touched her. It was with a shadow of repugnance, almost of refusal, that she looked upon the preparations Ramon had made. Then she rallied and was her proud self again.

"It will not heal without all this, tio mio?" she asked quietly.

"It will heal, surely; but forever after will the Princess de la Vega walk the earth like a bird which the hunter has snared in its youth."

"Let it be soon done, then," she said, and bared her swollen arm to the shoulder.

Few trained surgeons could have handled such an injured limb more deftly and tenderly than old Ramon. Indeed, he would far sooner have endured the hurt himself than that any such blemish should come upon his beloved Tulita, his relative and hereditary princess, the very last of their race.

He brought the experience of a lifetime to bear upon the task, which was performed in the silent secrecy of Tulita's own dwelling, and by the fitful glow of a burning rush dipped in some sort of oil. When it was over, the princess lay upon her rude bed in the hut corner, with a weighty mass of fast-hardening clay clasping her aching arm like a vise, and with a faintness creeping over her that frightened even old Ramon.

"Listen, Tulita, my daughter. I will watch beside thee always, till thou art able once again to

walk over thy plains free as thou hast always been. No other shall come near thee — not one of the chattering women. When thou art hungry I will feed thee, and I will bring milk for thy thirst. When thou callest me I shall hear — always. La Vega may rest in peace; and, before I go, drink this."

The old man held a cup of some Indian-brewed compound of herbs toward her. She took it obediently with her sound hand, and drank it all. Then she said simply: —

"It is well. Let Ramon go and keep his word. Not one must see Tulita thus. She understands her father in the tribe. She is grateful, and Tulita never forgets."

The rude door of the hut opened and closed, leaving the Indian girl alone to keep her Christmas festival in her proud solitude of pain. But outside the threshold old Ramon spread his blanket, and remained for many days a barrier between the princess and the curious women of her tribe, with their reiterated question: —

"What happened to La Vega on Noche Buena in the town, that she hides her face in shame and

makes no fiesta for her people as the good padres bade?"

"When Tulita keeps silence it is not for Ramon to talk. Get you all back to your baskets and your babies, and leave in peace the one maiden in the world who can yet hold her tongue."

Then, grown careless in security, it may be, this tireless guardian, under cover of the night-time, stretched his cramped limbs in a long run over the plains. As he went, an old squaw, more wakeful than the rest, crept softly to the door of the adobe hut and peeped cautiously in.

"Tulita! Tulita! light of our darkness, what ails thee to hide from us so?"

There was no answer. Emboldened by the silence, the woman entered. The moonlight shone through the doorway and lighted the narrow interior. The pallet of rushes and fern leaves was neatly piled in its corner; Tulita's blanket lay folded on its foot, but the hut was empty.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE HOME ROAD.

"COME, daughter, please to eat your supper. We must finish and be off. There is no moonlight to guide us, and we have a couple of hours' hard riding if we would reach home before midnight. Unless, indeed, you'd rather go out by the 'owl train' with Gaspar and the parcels."

"But you, dad, dear? Which do you prefer?"

"When did I ever choose a railway train if a horse's back would answer? Only, remember, this is your own Noche Buena. I am in your hands to dispose of exactly as you will, from buying Navajo blankets to bailing out Digger Indians from the lockup."

"Now, dad, they were not 'Diggers.' You know that! The old man was tall and stately, and the girl — why, Tulita is beautiful! A Digger, indeed! I've often heard that girl called 'royal,' and I be-

lieve she is. That her ancestors had a deal better right to California than we have. That for your Digger! But are the horses quite all right? Are neither of them the worse for their fright down town?"

"No worse, but rather more restless. That's one reason their owners should take the nonsense out of them by a sharp trot to Santa Paula."

"I'm glad you'd rather ride — this way. I had, of course. That goes without saying, and I'm quite ready."

As she spoke, Patience rose from the hotel table and crossed the great dining room with that alert decision of movement that was so like her father's own. He followed, pausing only to return the salutations and greetings — most of them obsequious — that attended their short passage to the street.

But the manner of both was far simpler and more natural than that of the two servants who waited their coming on the curbstone, each holding one of the horses which had created such excitement in the business quarter an hour or two before.

"Ah, Gaspar, is Blanco ready to behave himself at last?" asked Patience, barely touching with her foot the palm of her attendant's hand as he swung her to her saddle.

Gaspar was in holiday attire, and the height of importance. He was devoted to his mistress, but his vanity was extreme, and he could not lose this opportunity of displaying his grandeur to an admiring public. He swelled his chest, covered with a crimson velvet waistcoat, till he reminded Patience of nothing so much as one of the Bantam roosters at home on the ranch. Then he placed his hand over his heart and bowed reverentially.

"Blanco will have the honor to serve the señorita well."

"You silly, good Gaspar!" laughed Patience, under her breath. "Why don't you answer in just everyday plain English? But, anyhow, you'll take good care of all the parcels, won't you? And as you'll be at Santa Paula long before we are, please put everything into the great drawing-room and turn the key of its door. Don't let a single person go peeping, Gaspar boy, if you would have me enjoy my Christmas. Besides, I warn you, if you

let out my secrets beforehand, your own Navidad gifts will be wanting."

"I kiss the feet of my mistress, but Gaspar betrays no trust. In that he is different from some others — less fortunate," with which the Spaniard fixed a stern eye upon old Tomas, who had been less favored with commissions than himself.

Tomas flushed, but he tossed his head haughtily; and, foreseeing some little difficulties by the way, when these two should have gained the seclusion of the late train that would bear them over his private road to Santa Paula, Mr. Eliot's kind heart interfered.

"Here, Tomas, you can take care of this for me. I shall not need it, only pay a few tips to the hotel servants, please. You know the usual amounts. Then hand it to me at the ranch."

It was Tomas's turn to bridle and glow with pride, and Mr. Eliot's peculiar action was not so foolish as it might have seemed to any stranger. He had, indeed, forgotten the favors he had meant to bestow, and he would have answered for Tomas's honesty as positively as his own. The purse held an uncounted sum, not especially large, which Mr.

Eliot would not need on his homeward ride, and money he rarely carried about his person. But whatever amount the purse contained he knew would be returned to him, minus the deductions he had authorized made.

"Won't you give Tomas your purse, too, Patience?" he asked, himself pleased to see that he had already given pleasure to a faithful attendant.

"Will you have it, caballero?" asked the girl, merrily, and tossed a very flat little bag into the outstretched hand. "Look first and see!"

Tomas bowed and opened the bag. Not a cent was within, and, shaking its emptiness tragically above the pavement with that extravagance of gesture to which his race was given, he gravely closed it and placed it in his bosom.

A laugh arose at the pantomime, and before it subsided the riders had passed swiftly down the street toward that suburban road which led over miles of rolling lands to the vast hacienda (estate) of Santa Paula, their home.

Mr. Eliot rode in silence, which, for some time, his daughter respected. He was a busy man, working always with that clear brain of his at

one or other of his gigantic enterprises and keeping always a complete record of each in his mental storehouse. It was his theory that a man who had been so singularly prospered as he had been owed all his time to the world, and his own private life was a simple and unselfish one.

But finally Patience could endure the silence no longer. She was excited by her trip into town and its incidents, and eager to discuss them with her father.

"Is it to be a quiet ride all the way, dad, dear? Are you very busy thinking? Can't you take a real holiday just for to-night?"

"Thanks, daughter. I promised you all this Christmastide, didn't I? And you do well to remind me if I break my word. Talk away now, Patience. Dad is all attention."

"Well, then, where do you suppose that Tulita lives?"

"I couldn't 'suppose.' She had a different appearance from the ordinary Indians we meet on the plains, yet I do not know of any such race or family as hers on the mountains hereabout. She had a more cultivated speech than common with

her class. And are you so greatly interested in her?"

"I am. I cannot keep her out of mind. I've been trying to think of the things I want to do to-morrow, and all that, but every few seconds Tulita's sad, proud face comes between me and my thoughts, and I can't help it. Oh, I wish there wasn't such a thing as anybody — not a single body — being poor and unhappy. Unless —"

"Unless what, dear?"

"I had the power to make them all glad again. And Tulita must be very, very poor, I should think, to be willing to train wild-cats for a living. Whenever I think of how they sprang upon me when she was thrown down beside me, it makes me shudder and feel ill. Ugh!"

"Don't think of them, Patience. In any case she assured you that they were harmless; that their ferocity had been conquered. But the Indians understand nature and how to deal with animals of every kind better than we do, with all our civilization. One thing you can do. The next time you see Tulita on the street you can make her a present."

"H'm! I feel as if she would never go upon the street like that again. She was awfully offended at being accused of thieving."

"Well she might be — if she were innocent. Real scoundrels are all too plenty in this world, and God pity the soul that is unjustly accused!"

There was such an earnest ring to Mr. Eliot's voice that it surprised his daughter, well though she supposed she knew all his ways.

"Why, dad, how strongly you speak. As if you, too, really felt sorry for Tulita."

"I do, assuredly."

"But she is an 'Injun'!" said the girl, mischievously.

"And dad doesn't hanker for her race. True enough; but whatever the skin that covers the flesh, human nature is pretty much the same. It's an awful thing for her to bear away into the future the thought that there is anywhere in the world a person who believes her a thief, — that is, if she is not one."

"Dad, you are always so strong on that point. You so continually warn me against unjust judg-

ment. Did you ever know anybody you cared for who was unjustly accused of any crime?"

Mr. Eliot halted so suddenly that Negro settled on his haunches. At the same instant he caught Blanco's rein, and, drawing so close to his daughter's side that he could see her face distinctly, despite the dimness of the night, he scrutinized it earnestly.

"Patience, what makes you ask that question? Has any one been talking to you of these things?"

"Why, dad, no; certainly not. Only you. Other people don't seem to care how much they hurt their neighbors by idle gossip. But you are always so thoughtful; and to-night, even about an Indian girl whom you don't think is more than ordinary, you seem more earnest than ever. That made me wonder; but I shall remember, don't you fear! I think I would die if anybody accused me of theft."

"No; you would live and prove them wrong."

"So shall my Tulita do."

"I hope so, but don't set your heart upon this new *protégée*. You have enough without her already. Besides, in the natural course of things,

you may never see her again. Guilty or not guilty, the streets of Los Angeles will not be tempting show-ground for her and her uncle again very soon."

"But you said I could give her a present."

"I was thinking more of diverting your mind than of really doing that. I hated to see you troubled about her."

"I have a notion that a present would seem an insult to her — after all this."

"And I have a notion that we are 'making a mountain out of a mole-hill.' The incident was a trivial one. We have let it take altogether too strong a hold upon our minds. Train yourself to keep the just proportion of things, my little girl. Thus you will save yourself a deal of needless worry."

"I'll try. Only this isn't going to be as trivial as you think — seems to me. I know I shall see Tulita again, though I don't know when or where. I have faith in her. I believe she is noble as she is certainly beautiful, even though she is but an 'Injun.' But what shall you do about the diamond, dad, dear?"

"After a reasonable time, if it is not found, I will make good the loss."

"Is it worth a great deal?"

"Yes."

"Then you must please consider it my Christmas present, and not give me any other. Indeed, I'd rather have that — I mean I'd rather know that Tulita was free to-morrow than have anything else you could give me. Wasn't it too bad her arm was broken?"

"Yes, certainly; but, Patience, do you know that you're a regular 'Yankee' for asking questions? Now, for a change, I'll ask one myself. Can you beat me to the Fairy Spring?"

"If Blanco's himself, yes. In any case I'll try. Give the word, please."

"Is your saddle tight?"

"As a drum," Patience answered.

"Get into line, then. Hi, there, Negro! No fantastics, if you please."

For appearing to scent some sport ahead, and tired of the slow pace they had been travelling, — or that seemed slow to this spirited creature — Mr. Eliot's black mount was giving his rider con-

siderable trouble to get him down to a smooth trot.

Presently, however, after a little of the overflowing life had been worked out of the thoroughbred's shapely legs, he fell into the graceful measured motion to which he had been trained, and which had already been adopted by his milk-white mate. Then the ranchman's voice rang out clearly: —

"In line now! One — two — off!"

Racing in such dimness of light, over such a soft and sometimes treacherous road, would seem perilous to many good riders; but to these two, whose lives were half passed in the saddle, the danger was just sufficiently present to give zest to the contest.

"Off! you splendid Blanco! And not even my beloved dad shall drink first at the Fairy Spring!"

Neck and neck they shot out into the night. They were sure of themselves, sure of their steeds, sure of the road home; but they knew nothing at all of the danger which awaited them at that lovely spot on the foothill trail which bore so romantic a name.

For the Fairy Spring was known through all that great countryside. Many the man and beast whose thirst had been slaked by its icy, exhilarating waters; but woe to those who should ride and drink that night!

CHAPTER V.

A CURBSTONE MERCHANT.

AMONG the motley crowd of foreigners and natives which thronged Los Angeles streets on that Christmas Eve, at the time of the accident to the Princess Tulita before the jeweller's store, none attracted more attention than a solitary figure, which kept to the curbstone and towered head and shoulders above all others.

This was an Indian, who, disdaining any of the modern "improvements" in the manner of clothing, such as his race are fond of adopting, stood distinguished by the barbaric simplicity of his attire. His buckskin shirt and leggings displayed his symmetry of body, but were unadorned by any fantastic fringes or embroideries. His feet were shod in serviceable moccasins, which yet rendered his tread noiseless. He carried a blanket over one shoulder and upon the other a lot

of bows and arrows. His head was uncovered, and his dark, slightly waving hair fell to his shoulders, save that the scalp-lock had been twisted into a coil, through which a single broken arrow had been lightly thrust.

Yet proud and noble as was his aspect, he bore a nickname that suggested a character quite the reverse, and he had been for some time under the surveillance of the police, though perhaps unjustly so. Traces of his presence had been found many times in street brawls and lawless escapades, but he eluded actual connection with all. It was as if he contented himself with inspiring others to lawlessness; and the worst that could be proved against him was that he was too fond of "fire water," and had sometimes to be lodged in the lockup over night.

On the other hand, he was useful in several ways. No person in the region had ever earned so much of the public money in slaughtering coyotes and gophers as he, and from this came the name by which he was familiarly known — "Coyote Jack." He rode a sturdy broncho in and out of the city, and nobody knew just

where his home was. Like Tulita, he was "just one of those Indians," and few gave him further thought.

Yet in his breast were all the human passions that moved his white-skinned neighbors, and his feelings were just then profoundly stirred by the misfortunes of "the princess." He did not heed the salutations of his usual customers — the street gamins — and not till a party of tourists had accosted him for the third time did he rouse himself from the revery into which he had fallen.

Then he heard a lady's voice saying: —

"Speak to him again, Clotilde. I must have one of those bows, if they are for sale. Touch his arm — that will make him attend to you. That is, if he is really alive and not just a wooden image like a tobacconist's sign."

At that the "wooden image" became so suddenly and so completely alive that Mrs. Rutger drew back in her carriage — frightened. She forgot that she was in the midst of a civilized populace, and for a moment only remembered all the tales of Wild Western-ness that she had ever heard. She looked askance at the arrow thrust

in the Indian's scalp-lock, and furtively felt of her own. Then she and he came to their senses at the same instant: and if he did not echo her amused laugh, he at least smiled gravely in response, and made a respectful salutation.

"Will the lady care to examine my wares?"

Mrs. Rutger started again. This time in surprise at the excellent English with which this red man favored her. But she recovered, thinking that of all the lands of surprises California led the world.

"Yes; that is if they are genuine Indian weapons."

"They are genuine, madam."

"But of the sort you — your people, I mean — use in hunting?"

"Each hunter has his own weapons — his own methods."

"But you? Do you hunt? Are you — beg pardon — are you a real Indian?"

He smiled again — ironically, the lady thought.

"I do hunt occasionally. I am a genuine Indian. I am of royal blood."

He looked it as he said it, and his questioner

believed him. As for Clotilde, the lady's maid, that forlornly homesick creature was shivering in her shoes and longing to be bidden back into the safety of the carriage by her mistress's side.

"Then I shall be delighted to buy. Please show them to me and explain all about them. I used to know a bit about archery — fashionable archery, that is — and I thought our bows were something tremendous. These, though — please lift one and show me how to hold it."

The Indian complied, turning slightly about on the curbstone and holding the arrow to a level with his eye as if poised for flight.

"Oh, how I wish I could see you shoot at something! But, of course, that couldn't be here. Well, never mind. I'm glad to have met you. I'll take that one — the handsomest — and these others, for myself. You hold them, Clotilde, while I get out the money."

Coyote Jack was cunning. He looked upon the white man's cash as his own legitimate spoil, and he promptly trebled the price of the bow, as any of the gamins could have told her, but Mrs. Rutger did not mind. She was enjoying her first trans-

continental trip, and she found everything wonderful and "unique" and had already made purchases of enough souvenirs to stock half a car, — or so Clotilde thought.

"Sure, ma'am, an' they're very purty, ma'am, but whatever will yez be doin' wid 'em? Sure we did be havin' all the budgets an' parcils we needed a-comin' out to Californy, but them same's not to be named in the lot we'll be afther takin' back."

"Oh, I'll express them, of course. And now, though I could stay and enjoy this scene for hours longer, I must remember that we have not yet dined. So, driver, back to the —— Hotel. Get in, Clotilde. Good night, Mr. Indian. I may meet you again."

Coyote Jack made a profound salutation as the carriage moved away, and again Mrs. Rutger was surprised.

"I didn't know that an Indian had any politeness whatever, did you, Clotilde? There's nothing aboriginal about that scion of a 'royal' race, as he claims, except his color. But he interests me — greatly."

Clotilde responded something as in duty bound, but she was herself more interested in keeping the ungainly bows her mistress had purchased from contact with the carriage wheels. There was not room enough for them to be carried upright inside the vehicle. They were so long they must needs be thrust through the opposite windows, and balanced as best they might be, but she smiled grimly when, on alighting at their hotel door, she heard a lounger on the curbstone remark: —

"Everybody'd know they were 'tourists,' for they buy everything in sight."

Meanwhile, the seller of bows and arrows had left his curbstone and passed rapidly down the street to a drug store he frequented, and where, from his well-known trade, he was able to procure a quantity of swiftly acting poison. This would not have been sold to him elsewhere; nor even here in such an amount as he now procured, but that the clerks were all extra busy with their holiday trade, and not inclined to stop and question.

As it was, he was supplied with the stuff he desired, and no other question asked or advice given than: —

"Trade good yet, Jack? You'll be a rich man if you keep on. But take care of that powder — it'll kill human beings, as well as coyotes. A merry Christmas to you! Good night."

The Indian grunted a guttural response — the first indication there had been in his speech of his savage descent; and had anybody observed him as he safely bestowed the precious powder he had purchased in the breast of his buckskin garment and left the store, they would have seen an ugly look in his eye. At the next corner he left the main street also, and made his way toward a lower part of the city, where lived the Indians who did not claim "royalty," "mestizos," and other reminders of departed glory and power.

Here he entered one of the squalid houses and was greeted by, "Halloo, Jack! What luck this night?"

To this friendly inquiry he replied with a sullen grunt of anger without deigning to notice his companions further.

"Ouleon, the brave, is on the warpath. He's got a job on hand that's desperate. 'Tain't no coyote-kill this time, neither. He's ugly. Best not to stir him up to-night."

The advice so strongly recommended itself, the sullen glow in the Indian's eye was so threatening, that an unusual silence prevailed; even those reckless spirits who congregated there having learned, long before, that there were times when Coyote Jack was a dangerous man.

Having finished his preparations, he went out, walking with a noiseless step. They watched him bring out his own broncho from the near-by stable where it had been stalled, and ride rapidly away, leaving an unpleasant impression behind him.

CHAPTER VI.

AT THE FAIRY SPRING.

OULEON'S broncho, the West Wind, travelled well. Within five minutes after leaving the stable he had borne his master well out of the gayly illuminated city into the quiet of the night, and the rider looked up to calculate the hour by the stars overhead.

"There will be time, ample time," he thought, yet urged his steed ahead as if his errand were a desperate one. Then he leaned forward and whispered in the West Wind's ear, whereat it seemed as if the creature had become endowed with human understanding, for he increased his pace almost to flight, yet managed to step so lightly upon the dirt road that his hoof-beats were scarcely audible.

Yet, light as these were, there was somebody to listen to and be guided by them. This was Long

Mark — Mark Corlear, by rights — a man who had heard his full name so seldom that he had almost forgotten it; a man who had travelled all over the globe, and found himself at home in every corner of it, but who was rather more at home, he was wont to admit, among the wide stretches of the Pacific coast than anywhere else in the world.

For purposes of his own he, too, was riding, on that evening, over the short-cut trail to Santa Paula ranch; and, being the most sociable fellow in the world, he heard and welcomed the faint sounds that told him he was to have company on the road. So it happened that, when riding at fiercest speed, with head bent forward and eyes half shut in a wicked glee, Coyote Jack heard himself suddenly accosted and the rhythm of another animal's footfalls keeping time to the West Wind's.

"Halloo, friend! Whither so fast?"

Ouleon recognized the voice. He and its owner had met before, and there was no love lost between them. He made no response, and dug his heels into the broncho's sides.

Long Mark caught his breath.

"He doesn't appear to hanker for company.

H'm! I won't bother him, but I'll just ride after an' see who 'tis that's so glum on a night when the milk of human kindness, *et cetera*, ought to be a-flowing, if ever. Catch 'em, Ichabod! Fetch 'em out!"

The gaunt, swift-limbed beast named Ichabod responded royally. He had been longing to stretch his legs at a different speed, and had already resented his master's mooning along over a road that offered a fine chance of exercise to the old racer. With a little toss of his ungainly head he sprang forward.

"Go it, my son! You're about as graceful as that traditional bull in the china shop, but you get there! Fetch 'em out!"

Ouleon set his teeth and flew forward. His quick ear had caught the sounds of the follower, and he had chosen solitude.

"Ps-t-t-oop!" he whispered or whistled, and the broncho did his best.

Long Mark's blood rose in his veins. Though the distance was considerable between them and the night only a starlit one, the air was so clear and the stars shone with such brilliancy that he

could distinguish the dim outline of the fleeing horseman, and perceived that he was certainly running away.

"H'm! that looks bad. What's he been doing that he doesn't want to see Long Mark? Ichy, my son, it's nothing very high-toned. He's an Injun. If he'd been a white man, I'd have taken the hint and concluded he knew his own business same's I know mine. But those snakes! I just guess I'll keep up the chase. That beast yonder's a bronc', Ichy — good, good as they make 'em; but you, my son — what do you say to remembering Araby — eh? Go it — go!"

And Ichabod "went" such a pace that the broncho was overtaken with an ease that made Ouleon ready to kill this tormenting intruder, who whistled and sang as he came alongside, and nonchalantly affected to think the whole affair a Noche Buena joke.

"H'm! well, I allow you clipped it right well; but, you see, you aren't in it! This horse of mine, he's a globe-trotter. He's tried hoofing it over every kind of soil old mother earth has spread around, and he's learned the trick of each. Nice

night, isn't it? My! how the stars shine! Going far — hey?"

"No."

"Don't know as I am, either. Did think some of clicking it over to San' Pauly. Eliot is an old friend o' mine, but — friends! My gracious! they're thicker'n blueberries. Got another living on a ranch — raisins, olives, and walnuts — right over yonder, about ten mile. Hires it off Eliot, of course. May change my mind an' go there first. Only did think I'd like a drink out of Fairy Spring. Know that place? Course you do. Everybody in these parts does. H'm that reminds me. Haven't remembered to introduce myself. Never too late to mend. I'm Long Mark; who're you?"

The Indian pretended not to hear. He rode forward at the same reckless pace, with down-bent head and eyes scanning the ground as if searching for traces of something. This angered Mark Corlear. He had already recognized the other, even as he had been recognized, but he did not suggest this till he had stooped and glanced into the averted face of his companion.

"H'm! ex-actly, Coyote Jack. I thought so. He's too tall a fellow to hide his light under a bushel. Well, Coyote, you don't look pleased. You look — well, to put it plain — ugly. I allow most of us do when we're riled. And it would rile me to be chased if I didn't want to be. Howsomever, no harm's done. I'll just ride on to the spring, and then we'll part company. How's everything down your way?"

Ouleon straightened himself in his saddle, and let the West Wind walk. So did Long Mark with Ichabod. The Indian watched his chance and loped forward again. Mark was with him neck and neck. Then Ouleon resigned himself to the inevitable with stolid indifference.

"I said how's everything? — meaning business. Hear you're making money out of government; clearing off vermin. Well, that's good. Hope the government'll keep at it till it 'radicates vermin of all kinds — two-legged and otherwise. Say, this road's been improved since I was here last. Travel it often?"

"No."

Their horses, themselves well knowing the trail

and the delicious draught that marked its half length, fell into a gentle trot and proceeded amicably side by side, even if their riders were hostile, till this trail grew so narrow and so steadily upward that only one could pass over it at a time. Long Mark took the lead. He was perfectly aware that in so doing he exposed himself to the treachery of the Indian behind him, but his purpose was to disarm suspicion and learn by strategy the other's errand.

"Strange to me that I seem to know he's bent on some mischief," he reflected. "Yet not so strange, either. There may be good Injuns, but I've never met one — not yet, an' I've travelled quite a jog, too."

In a few moments they were at the spring. A lovely spot where the trees grew thick and luxurious and the ferns were knee-deep. Long Mark threw himself from his saddle with a sigh of delight and face downward amid the bracken, reaching over the rocky edge of its natural basin to drink of the icy water. Then he let Ichabod drink, and afterward made room for the others, seating himself on a fallen eucalyptus to enjoy the beautiful scene.

"Queer, isn't it, Coyote? I can never seem to get tired of Nature. Prettiest thing in the universe, she is. Prettier even than that Tulity of your folks that you call 'the princess.' By the way, how is she?"

Ouleon scowled and lifted his dark face from the spring where he had been drinking.

"As my race always is! Suffering at the hands of yours."

"H'm! that depends upon the point of view, doesn't it? I've seen a considerable of suffering amongst our sort when some of you redskins got your dander and your underhandedness up, but — no matter. Seem to keep your language good as ever. Still hope to be a 'big Injun' some day and take a show in the general fights down at Washington. That's what I heard about you before I went to Asia last time."

"What Ouleon, son of the king, hopes or fears is nothing to you! One thing only do my people owe to yours, that you, or your forefathers, sent your priests among us and taught us the speech that means — 'feelings,' in your ears. We are quick to learn, Long Mark, and we remember what we learn."

"Good enough! Well, I'll not bother you longer. Nowadays, I don't talk such good book language as you and your Tulity do; but I understand 'feelings' all the same, and you remember that, too. So Ichy an' I'll jog down hill again. I'll travel to San' Pauly sometime else, but 'if you get there before I do just tell 'em I'm a-comin', too.' Good night. Good luck."

Ouleon heaved a sigh of relief — heaved it a trifle too soon, for Mark's ears were keen and he heard it. He had not, indeed, intended to retreat very far, but to wait and watch for Ouleon's next movement. That sigh convinced him, in some inexplicable manner, that he had best remain as closely as possible to the spot, and yet unseen. How to do this? He knew a way.

A few rods farther down the scrub-oaks and manzanitas gave him friendly shelter, and into the thick of these he forced the obedient Ichabod. Then he, too, stooped and whispered in the animal's ear, in the fashion that Ouleon had set some time before; when, immediately, a curious thing occurred. Ichabod kept on stepping, stepping up and down, lightly and more lightly, till the sound of

his hoof-beats was as of a horse retreating farther and farther away. Yet he did not advance a pace.

"Good boy, Ichy! Smart boy. Arab trick's good as an Injun's. Little better, too, sir. Guess we've about out-Injuned the Injun. Now for the next move. I'd feel meaner'n a coyote myself doing this if he were anything but a redskin. But nothing's too mean that helps a white man understand them! So long."

He drew a glass from his pocket and fitted it to his eye, focussing it through the branches upon the Indian, who stood upright in the clear space about the spring. Even in that light the glass rendered objects at a distance visible.

The action was none too soon. At that instant the unsuspecting Ouleon took a paper parcel from the breast of his buckskin garment, and, having plugged both outlet and inlet, emptied the contents of the parcel into the pool of water thus formed in the spring basin. Then he stirred this with a stick and, softly retreating, led his broncho back behind the eucalyptus trunks.

"The rattlesnake! He's — poisoned — the — spring!"

CHAPTER VII.

A FRUSTRATED CRIME.

THAT horrified cry rang clearly out and arrested the outstretched hand of the girl, as she already knelt beside the pool, sending her startled to her feet. It reached David Eliot ascending the slope at his leisure.

But it reached, also, the keen-eared, suspicious Indian, and, as Long Mark bounded from his hiding-place, crying loudly: "Don't drink! don't touch that water!" a bullet sped on its unerring way and the warning ceased with a gasp.

But it had done its work. David was at his daughter's side before the echo of that shot had died away.

"Patience, my darling! are you—"

"Not I, dad! Somebody over there in the brush."

They rushed toward the spot with a mutual

impulse of aid, and a second shot whizzed by them. At that they paused, fearing either to advance or retreat, listening intently. Then they heard the crashing of a horse's feet in the undergrowth beyond, the sound growing fainter with each echo.

"Whoever it is, he is running away!"

The girl's inference was correct. Ouleon felt that he might safely leave his dastardly work to its own completion. He had been surprised by the nearness to him of Colear, but he had acted promptly. He now rapidly calculated that these two against whom he had originally plotted would bear the body of the wounded man to the spring, to revive him by its waters. He did not believe that they could have comprehended fully the warning Mark had given — a white man was always slower of wit than his red brother! — and he would be rid of three at once. When all was still he would come back out of hiding, and plunder the bodies. He would not have far to track them. The poison was subtle. Where they drank they would fall, and where they fell they would die.

"Ugh! It is well! So perish all our enemies!" muttered Coyote Jack, as he retreated.

But this programme, that would have been so satisfactory to him, was not destined of fulfilment.

"The *assailant* may be running away, but a man fell at that first shot!" cried Mr. Eliot, hurrying forward.

In a moment he had reached the faithful Ichabod, who had remained stock-still during the whole adventure.

"Why, Ichy boy! You here? For you are Ichy, surely! Though I didn't know you were this side the world!"

"Ichabod, dad? Then dear old Mark is near. Can it be he who was wounded?"

"It must be, since he was never the man to run. I'll look this way, you that. Ichy, where is your master?"

Patience found him presently, nearly stumbling upon him in her haste.

"Here, dad! Hola! O hola!"

David reached her instantly, and bent above the prostrate figure lying face down upon the ferns.

He gently turned the body over and scanned the rugged features.

"Long Mark, for sure! To see that royal fellow come to this!"

"But he isn't dead, is he, dad? One shot wouldn't kill an old frontiersman like Mark!"

"There, stand aside, Patience. I'll carry him out into the open—to the spring. I can't see how he is hurt in here, it's so dark. Fortunately, I have a box of tapers in my pocket. Take them and light the way."

While Mr. Eliot lifted the tall, inert figure to his own strong shoulders, Patience deftly extracted the silver box from her father's pocket, and struck one of the matches on her woollen skirt. A tiny flame shot up, and she held the bit of wax close to Mark's face.

"Poor old friend! But he sha'n't die, dad! He shall not—like this. Who could have done it? I didn't know he ever had any enemies. He's always so jolly and kind. I wonder where he came from and when. He must have been on the way to see us, mustn't he?"

"It seems so. But it's all speculation. Have you your little drinking-cup in your bag?"

Patience pulled round the leathern pouch she always slung over her shoulder when setting out for a long ride, then remembered that she had already taken out the cup, and must have dropped it when she was startled by Long Mark's cry. She lighted another taper, and stooped to search for it by the spring.

"Why, dad, how strange this is! Somebody has stopped up the water. It neither flows in nor out."

"Did you find the cup?"

"Yes — here it is. But — look! See how queer the horses act! They are both just sniffing and nosing the pool, but neither of them is tasting it. Only — what's the matter with Negro?"

A love of horseflesh was second in Mr. Eliot's nature only to love of his kind; and though both he and Patience had been forgetful of any possible danger menacing themselves, he was alert to that which threatened his favorite thoroughbred. He laid his friend softly down, and went to examine both the spring and the horse. The former had certainly been tampered with, though its waters looked dark and cool in the flash of the taper's

light. But Negro was trembling as with an ague fit, and his superb body writhed slightly, as with incipient convulsions.

"Did he drink?"

"I don't know. Yes — it seems to me I did hear him while I was running toward Mark, though I scarcely remember. But he's been trained to drinking when out on the trail. I never knew it to hurt him before."

"It's not the drinking — it's what he's drank! Did you hear what poor Mark called?"

"Yes, distinctly; though I did not understand — should not have thought of obeying it. He shouted, 'Don't drink!' but —"

"And probably died with that warning on his lips! There's been dark work here, Patience. Lead Blanco away from the pool and don't let Ichabod come near. Don't touch it yourself — for any purpose."

"But — dad! How then can we help Mark? For we can't let him die. Dear, happy, good old Mark!"

Mr. Eliot did not answer. He bent down to the spring and thrusting his hand into it, raised some of the fluid on his fingers and smelled of it. It

was odorless. But he swiftly pulled the plugs away from the apertures where they had been stuffed and instantly the water burst out with a tinkling gurgle, glad to be relieved of its imprisonment.

"What do you think it means, dad, dear?"

"I think the water had been stopped and poisoned. *Why*, it passes my imagination to conceive. However, poor Negro!"

The horse had plunged into the thicket and they could hear him where he lay, threshing his shapely limbs about in the agony of dissolution. So swift had been the action of that simple powder which Ouleon had scattered.

They clasped hands and listened to him, reluctant yet fascinated, and expecting they scarcely knew what. But it was all over speedily. The plungings grew feebler and feebler, till with a cry of almost human anguish, the noble thoroughbred lay still. The silence reminded them of another's need, and with a sigh from Mr. Eliot, a blinding flood of tears from Patience, they turned again to the wounded man.

"What shall we do, dad? Will the spring clear itself so that we can use the water?"

"It will clear itself in time, of course, but not soon enough for our need. No! We must get him up the slope as quickly as possible. It is not far to the next spring — should that not be dry. If it is, push on for home as rapidly as possible."

"Dad, tell me just one word! Is he dead?"

"I cannot tell. The wound is in a dangerous spot, but his muscles have not the feel of a dead man's. Certainly, it would be out of all justice, it seems to me, that one so big-hearted and honest as Mark Corlear should die a dog's death on a lonely mountain side."

"Dad, do you suppose that the poisoned water was meant —"

She hesitated to finish the question, the suggestion that had come to her mind appearing too terrible to contemplate.

"I know what you would say. 'For us?' If so, this fiendish work has been done by somebody who knew that we would ride this way alone, as we did. There has been a desperate lot of thieving and lawlessness all over this portion of the state of late. Stand still, Ichabod, poor fellow! It's a sorry load you must bear away to-night."

For Mr. Eliot was busying himself as he talked, examining and tightening the saddle fastenings of Corlear's horse.

"Shall I go to his head, dad?"

"Yes, carita. Though it is scarcely necessary. Even in this dimness Ichy boy understands what is required of him, and seems to ask what is amiss with his comrade. They were fast friends, man and beast, and have travelled the wide world over together. It will break the Arabian's heart if Long Mark dies."

"Then you don't think he is dead, do you? Oh, I'm so glad! Can't I help lift him?"

"You can support him — so — while I mount behind him. There! — that's all right! He will ride as comfortably this way as on a stretcher. More, maybe, for a saddle was his natural resting-place, always. Go gently, Ichy boy! But there's no need to tell you that. It's not often in your life you've had to carry double like this."

"Nor ever two such big men, dad! I remember that you measured sizes the very last time Long Mark was at Santa Paula, and the little difference there was was in your favor. Slow, Blanco! Guay! have a care!"

Patience sprang to her own saddle, first making the white thoroughbred kneel down for her convenience, as he had been trained, then carefully led the way out of the bush upward over the height. But she had gone only a few rods before she halted.

"Caramba! I've just thought of something! If anybody did poison that spring out of malice to us, knowing we'd take this road home, he — or — they — would be apt to watch all along the trail, wouldn't they?"

"Possibly! Well?"

For, from the tone of her voice and his knowledge of her character, Mr. Eliot perceived that Patience had something better to propose.

"Well, I know a shorter trail. Gaspar and I discovered it the last time we were out hunting. I don't believe anybody ever crossed it before or since."

"Are you sure of it? — to recall it? It wouldn't do to run any risk of getting confused and wasting time."

"I never forgot a trail yet. And we made guide-marks on the rocks. It's rough — that's all!"

"Keep the tapers in your hand. When you are coming to a bad spot light one, so I can see, to avoid jarring Mark."

"Yes, and it leads by a shepherd's cabin. There we can find something to help him, quiera Dios!" (please God).

An Eastern horseman would have considered the original trail a rough and hazardous road, but he would have paused in dismay before that into which Patience Eliot now led the way. It appeared to be scarce wide enough for a rabbit's passage, and it wound in and out among projecting rocks and cacti, scratching the horses' sides and threatening to unseat their riders. Even Mr. Eliot, accustomed as he was to similar experiences, felt that he had never before tried a path so difficult.

Yet the only comment he volunteered was a cheerful one: —

"You needn't mind lighting those tapers over the rough places, niña!" (my little one). "You'd be doing nothing else. Only — toss me the end of that lariat on your saddle-bow. I'll fasten it to mine, and if at any time it pulls extra hard

— well, just stop and inspect things. Ichabod will have to move slowly. He carries a fearful load."

"En verdad! (in truth). But trust your Patience, mi padre (my father). She's never failed you yet. And she'll get you out of this a deal quicker than you could get yourself out. But, oh, what a Christmas Eve!"

"Indeed, yes; yet, Patience, how fortunate that it was you and I, not Gaspar and old Tomas, who rode the horses home to-night! Else — but I'll not think of what is not. Forward, a bit faster here. It's not quite so difficult."

It seemed as if the stars agreed to put their rays together to light their narrow way; for again and again they were guided past some deep cañon where another step would have sent Blanco's feet over the precipice, down the slope that was steeper than a house-roof. For the clear radiance never failed, and the air appeared to grow more transparent as they ascended.

It was a ride Patience never forgot. She sat erect in her saddle, peering anxiously ahead, and speaking only an occasional word of warning: "To

the right!" or "Stoop now, dad. Go slowly!" or the like. But in her heart was all the time an upward aspiration for speedy deliverance.

Nor was her wordless prayer balked of its fulfilment. Within a half-hour they emerged upon a bit of table-land, where stood the shepherd's hut and the surrounding corrals of which she had spoken. Then her voice took another, joyfuller tone.

"Here we are, dad, dear! Joaquin hasn't brought his sheep up yet, but everything is in readiness for him, and I know where the key to the locker should be. We'll have dear Mark made comfortable instantly!"

"And none too soon. Though I'm almost sure I've felt him stirring once or twice; if so, one trouble is over."

"Oh, dad! And didn't tell me!"

"It may have been the jolting of the rocks." Yet when Mr. Eliot unclasped his arm, rigid from the supporting of the wounded man before him, Corlear did make a visible effort to help himself, and this certainty that he was still alive gave fresh impetus to their efforts.

Patience slipped the bolt of the cabin door, went directly to a certain corner of the room, and found, as she had hoped, the key to the supply closet. There was abundance of food in tins, and a case of simple medicines and cordials. There were, also, candles and matches, and the light quickly produced showed them the welcome sight of Long Mark's wondering eyes fixed upon Patience, and seeming to gather intelligence and strength in their kindly depths the longer he watched.

"Oh, you blessed old fellow! Do you know me?" cried the delighted girl, running to the narrow bed where he had been laid.

"You — you're Patty Eliot. Hail from Santy Pauly! But — what in all creation are you and me doing here?"

"Never you mind that. Here we are, and here's dad."

"Well, Mark!" said Mr. Eliot, holding out his hand in greeting. "Well, what's the good word? Where from — last?"

"Oh, just over in Cathay. But what you been doing to me, Dave?"

"What I'm going to do is to make you drink

"YOU BLESSED OLD FELLOW! DO YOU KNOW ME?"

this. Instante! as Patty says. Then we'll all jog along to the ranch to keep a thankful Christmas together."

"You talk. Christmas is Christmas — anywhere. But the way you fix it to Santy Pauly — suits me."

CHAPTER VIII.

SANTA PAULA.

"BRIDGET, Clotilde, I mean, I'm tired of this city. So you'd better pack the trunks and we'll go somewhere else. The holidays have been delightful here, but I think I'll go up the coast a way, and see how I like that."

"Very well, ma'am."

Yet the maid heaved a sigh. She had done nothing but pack and unpack those trunks ever since her mistress had left the Atlantic coast for this restless pleasure trip of hers.

"Yes, I've been in almost all the Californian cities, and now I'm going to settle down in some coast village for the rest of the season."

"Very well, ma'am," said Clotilde again. "Where might you be goin' now, ma'am?"

"To a place called Eliotville."

"What's it like, please? Is it one of them purty ones where's the fruit an' all a-growin'?"

"I don't know; I suppose so. I know nothing about it except the name, and that it is a sort of community under one man's jurisdiction. A man named Eliot.

This was not wholly satisfactory to Bridget-Clotilde; but it was not her function to inquire why a man named Eliot should be of more interest to her employer than one named anything else. She merely opened the closet door and looked ruefully at a group of red clay jars and idols, all of Indian manufacture and each one uglier than the other.

"Whatever is to be done with all these, ma'am? Sure the trunks do be overflowin' full the day already."

Mrs. Rutger held up her hands in horror. "Do you suppose I'd risk those precious souvenirs in a trunk — with a lot of other things, gowns, and so on? No, indeed. You just put up the clothing and I'll get an expert to box and ship these curios. That doll, for instance. Why, Clotilde, that doll was made and dressed by a woman

so poor and uncivilized that she had absolutely nothing to work with. It's a great treasure to me."

Bridget-Clotilde took the earthen toy gingerly between her fingers. "Sure it hasn't any clothes at all on, to speak of. No more'n her you bought it of; and they do say in the servants' dining room that towerists frequent gets small-pox and such from buying stuff off them heathens."

"That will do, Bridget. I've no wish to hear the servants' gossip; and those things you mention are — well, not likely. The railway authorities wouldn't — But why argue? I'm interested in 'the Indian question.' Greatly interested. I value all these things highly."

However, the shrewdly observant maid noticed, with a quiet smile, that her mistress thereafter let her "souvenirs" most particularly alone, and merely indicated to the expert packer which he was to handle with greatest care, but did not offer to touch them.

So they went to Eliotville; and they had not been there twenty-four hours before another change was made. Still, this time an explanation was vouchsafed.

"I will tell you, Clotilde, that during my travels I am also trying to come upon the whereabouts of a — a relative whom I have not seen for many years. And now I am going to take a little drive — that's what they call it here — a 'little drive' of fifty or sixty miles and make a call. So, just please pack a big satchel with things we'll need for a day or two and we'll start in the morning."

"What might his name be, ma'am?"

"Eliot, Bridget-Clotilde. Eliot — with one l."

So Mrs. Rutger's restlessness was explained. In her persistent inquiries everywhere she had unearthed Elliots, Elliotts, Ellyetts, Endicotts, and similar — galore; but they had proved not of her race. Now she had struck a new "trail" which led to one authentic and genuine Eliot, of pure and concise orthography, with character to match. So rumor said.

But that proverbial falsifier had ascribed to this person powers and properties which should not have been his; for disgrace, he was given honor, for poverty, wealth.

"Well, 'silver king,' 'sheep king,' every other

sort of magnate which his start in life renders improbable, his name is 'David Eliot,' and I should never rest if I went back to New York without seeing him," was the lady's decision.

Yet both mistress and maid stepped with some reluctance into the surrey that was brought round for their use on the following morning. They were directed to go straight into the open country, and they had a stranger's fears for that trip. However, a few minutes' rapid driving completely changed all this. The road, a beaten path upon natural soil, ran smooth and faultless over plains and mesas, through picturesque villages and past well-tilled ranches, with a directness of purpose that was encouraging.

The Mexican driver was respectfully silent save when some inquiry evoked his valuable response. Bridget-Clotilde slept peacefully, till, finally overcome by her example and dazzled by the sunshine, Mrs. Rutger leaned her own head against the cushions, preparing for a nap, when Alonzo — Caballero Alonzo Maria Gonzalez Diego, etc., etc. — stopped before a wayside inn.

"If the worshipful señora pleases, here we will

dine and change horses — if the dinner commends itself to the most charming of patrons."

"Dinner, already?"

"En verdad. But it is the midday todavia, and only half the journey done."

The little white hostelry, with its green blinds and scarlet-runners, might have been transplanted from a New England village. A New England hostess, the very soul of tidiness and thrift, presided over a dinner of New England cookery, and seasoned the dessert of mince pie with the information that "He's a gentleman, every inch of him, ma'am, an' that's better than his money, of which their ain't no end. He's a widower with one darter, half-raised, that he thinks is perfect. He lets her do everything she's a mind, from riding on a 'round-up' to givin' away slews of things. She's right peart. Yes, this is his tavern. Everything's his'n, purty nigh, this end o' Californy. There! that man 'Lonzo's et a'ready; but he knows there's better victuals to Santy Pauly 'n I can get, do the best I will. Guess he's plannin' to have a good time when he gets to the ranch. He won't be in such a hurry when his

team's headed t'other way. Well, good-by! Hope I'll have better luck with my pie-crust if you stop, coming back. I'm ashamed—"

But Mrs. Rutger was already in the surrey; and, directly, the relay of horses had whisked it out of sight.

Another hour and the road bent to the coast again; when even the somnolent Bridget-Clotilde aroused sufficient enthusiasm to compare the scene with that beloved France-Ireland from which had been imported her brogue and her gait, her cap and high heels.

"Compare it to nothing, girl! It is itself—incomparable. Such color, such sunshine, such space! Drive slow, Alonzo. I must prolong this pleasure."

Alonzo checked his horses so suddenly that they fell back upon their haunches, but his face assumed a deprecating expression.

"Sta buen'! The gracious señora has but to command and the beasts will crawl. Ten thousand pardons, most generous, but, caramba! if señora will not have enough of the blue sea and the yellow sand before she has reached the residencia

of the great Señor Eliot! This beach is but part of the Santa Paula hacienda, though there are twenty miles of it between us and our supper."

"Twenty — miles — of sea-coast! On one man's estate?"

"In verity, señora."

"Drive as you like, then," responded the astonished Easterner.

In the early evening Mrs. Rutger alighted at her journey's end, before a wide, low-studded building that looked almost as strong as the mountains which formed its background. Its adobe walls gleamed white in the moonlight, save where they were hidden by luxurious vines, and the great porticos were illuminated by the light that streamed through the many windows, opened to the warmth of that southwestern January night.

The sounds of arrival brought out the housemaster himself, with an alacrity of welcome which augured well for the visitor's comfort, whether he were her Eliot or some other body's.

For an instant, while Alonzo performed his profoundest salutation, the aristocratic woman and the broad-shouldered man regarded each other; then,

in a tone of regretful conviction, the lady spoke: "I beg pardon for this intrusion, but I came here on the chance of finding an old friend. A similarity in names—"

"Good gracious—*Hortense!* I should know that voice anywhere! Hortense Eliot, in very truth! How glad I am!"

"Then you are—David?"

"Well, I reckon! Who élse should I be? Come in, come in; and—hola! O hola, Patience!"

"Grita, dad, dear!" cried Patience, as she appeared on the scene.

"A guest, carita. An old, old friend. Dad's cousin Hortense."

"Ah? Is it so? Bien venido (welcome), señora. But, dad, I—"

"Yes, yes, girlie. Didn't know I had a cousin. But I have, and proud we are to welcome her to Santa Paula this night."

Then they entered the great sala, and the lights showed the reunited Eliots what pranks a quarter of a century can play with the human countenance. But for the voices, which change not, they would not have recognized each other. Yet Hortense

saw at a glance that her young cousin Patience was Eliot clear through, save for the dark eyes which should have been blue and the tip-tilted nose which should have been Grecian.

Gently, but eagerly, the girl had the stranger's bonnet off, and was removing the gloves when Bridget-Clotilde aroused to the necessities of the occasion and took her mistress in charge. At which the girl in the white gown ran away to order dinner and hearth-fires in the guest-chambers, while Mrs. Rutger looked about her in admiration, greater even than her surprise.

"Well, David, I'm thankful I persisted."

"So am I, if persistence brought you here. You were always a little stubborn."

"And do you know that some of my hotel acquaintances told me it was actually a dangerous thing to do — to take that drive. Prophesied waylaying Indians, bandits, and other blood-curdling possibilities."

Mr. Eliot laughed so heartily that the traveller joined with him; then he asked, "But how did you find it?"

"Delightful — glorious! But, David, do you

live here alone — you and that lovely girl? And how could I dream that this 'Bonanza Eliot' and — and you — were one and the same? Yet I was bound to see, even if I were turned away at the door." She spoke tentatively, referring thus delicately to that unhappy past which she was glad to cover with the mantle of her charity.

Again the host laughed cordially — a laugh that had the ring of a clear conscience and complacency at his own lot in life. But he ignored the past, as was the habit of his cheerful mind.

"Yes, we live here — alone, if you call it so, with our hundred or more dependents. We are not, therefore, lonely; nor do I think we should be were there only our two selves this side the Rockies." His eye, eloquent of affection, turned toward his daughter, who reëntered at that moment, when dinner was announced.

A repast hastily prepared, yet which was composed of the choicest delicacies to be found in any market, and of some which no public market could offer, perfectly served by deft and noiseless attendants, and at which Patience presided with a graceful ease amazing to the society-trained guest.

It all seemed like a fairy tale; and when the meal was over and the young hostess had again departed — this time in answer to a summons about some accident, in which the words "cañon," "fell a hundred feet," "legs broke all to pieces," startled the visitor's attention if not the host's — Mrs. Rutger turned her surprised countenance toward the ranchman's chair.

He was amusedly regarding his old friend and foster-sister, and smilingly remarked: "You may as well out with it, Hortense. You sit there like a living exclamation-point, and you'll feel better to relieve your mind."

CHAPTER IX.

THE YOUNG RANCH MISTRESS.

"DAVID, where and how did she learn it all? — three thousand miles from civilization!"

"Is it so far? I fancied we had brought civilization to us." David Eliot waved his hand toward the long suite of rooms, bright with the clear radiance of electricity and furnished with the most harmonious of modern luxuries.

"Yes, I see. But money doesn't give breeding," answered Hortense, with some asperity.

"Maybe it is in the blood. Besides her being an Eliot with one 'l,' Patience's grandmother was a gentlewoman — one of the old Californians who claim to be the true Americans."

"But why mar the whole thing by that name Patience?"

"Because our great-grandmother Patience was, I think, an Eliot worth keeping in green memory.

You remember the old story that when her husband fell fighting in defence of their home, she seized his musket and shot a Britisher or two. I always had a predilection for the old lady, and so 'Patience' headed the list; also, with the common contradiction of life, she is not patient by nature. To please her mother, she was christened by a few other titles: Patience Margarita Ines Felisa—"

"David!"

"Confident that's the proper order. Anyway, there are several of them, and Maria comes next to Eliot. To be positive, I would have to consult the record."

"It is recorded, then? I thought Westerners were lax about such matters."

"Many Eastern notions concerning the West coasters need correction. Like the 'wildness' and 'woolliness' ascribed in cheap literature. Have you experienced it?"

"No!" positively.

"No-o," reflectively, when some time later Patience burst into the room, clad in a loose riding-habit, a sombrero on her head, a revolver in her

hand, and her dark eyes humid with sorrowful excitement.

"It was too bad, dad, but I had to kill him."

"H'm! Which was it?"

"The thoroughbred, Galano."

"Yes; I'm sorry. You were fond of him, too, querida (darling)."

"En verdad! I loved him. It was awful to do it. The poor beast knew me, and when he looked up at me my hand trembled."

"Who went with you?"

"Antonio, Larry Doyle, and José Martinez."

"Why not have given one of them the task, and so have spared yourself? They are all fair marksmen."

"Dad! Why, perhaps they might have blundered! As it was, Galano knew no hurt, save for the fall which made his death necessary."

"By the way, what was the disturbance in the court? I was going to show Cousin Hortense the old palms and olives, but there was so much racket in the woman's quarters that I feared she could not enjoy them as she should."

"I heard nothing. It was quiet when I went away."

"Please step and see."

Again Patience departed, and presently sounds of angry voices all talking at once, and in a jargon unintelligible to the stranger, but apparently clear to the ranchmen, reached their ears.

Mr. Eliot smiled.

"It's wonderful what a power that child has over those men and women. I always send her to manage them, if I can. For they adore her. Hark! They are all berating each other and excusing themselves to their mistress."

"How can you understand a word they say? What sort of a language is it?"

"A *patois* compounded of Spanish, Indian, English, and slang."

"Some of it sounds a little rough!"

"It probably is. There are a number of Mexicans — 'greasers' — about the ranch."

"Yet you allow a young girl like your daughter to go among them?"

"Why not? It is not shutting her ears, but keeping her heart pure that will make her a good woman."

Mrs. Rutger was silent. She was pondering her

novel surroundings and trying to reconcile the actual David she saw with the phantom David of her memory. There was something very confusing in finding the man toward whom she had felt, each in turn, contempt, pity, and forgiveness, quietly assuming to teach *her!* She was glad of the diversion of Patience's return, and she turned to the girl with a smile: —

"My dear, do you never rest? Are you always busy?"

"Why — I don't know. Yes; if you call it 'busy.' I hadn't thought about it. You see, I'm dad's housekeeper, and when there are so many people together there is always somebody in trouble." Then, turning to her father: "It was that Alonzo who drove for Cousin Hortense. He is betrothed to Anita Bernal, one of the waitresses, and she has been flirting with 'Yankee Jim,' the vaquero. Somebody told Alonzo, Anita denied it, and so on. The usual quarrelling and taking sides — what you call 'over-electricity in the air.' They were getting so furious that there would have been a fight directly, if I hadn't appeared. As it was, I had to drive the men all out of

the court and send the women to bed. I wish they wouldn't wrangle so. But the place is empty now. Shall we go out and see the old garden, Cousin Hortense? It is one of the oldest in California, and my great-great-great-grandmother planted the prickly pear hedge with her own hands. It was a wall of defence then, but it is only a curiosity now. The gnarled roots and branches are like some of Dorés fantastic pictures. And will you excuse my habit for the rest of the evening?"

"There is nothing to excuse, dear. It is very picturesque and becoming, and looks wonderfully comfortable."

"Dad says that to be comfortably and suitably clad is the highest art of dress. We designed this together."

That night Mrs. Rutger retired to rest, a victim to conflicting opinions. A vision of a young girl attended by three "cow-boys," riding through a cañon at night to shoot a crippled horse, mocked at another vision of the same maiden, exquisitely gowned, daintily presiding at an elegant supper.

Her last conscious thoughts were: "It is all

a hopeless muddle. I think — well, I don't know exactly what I think. Except that Patience has honest, beautiful eyes, and that I love her already."

CHAPTER X.

A BREAKFAST BOUQUET.

"SURE, ma'am, it do be very late. "It's about ten of the clock; but you was sleeping that sweet, an' the rain was pourin' as if the heavens was emptyin' out their wash-water — "

Mrs. Rutger sat up in bed and held up her hand protestingly. "I'm awake at last, anyway, so spare me. But what's that about rain?"

"It rains, ma'am; that's all," said the long-suffering Bridget-Clotilde, who had as yet not broken her own fast, and who felt about as agreeable as any other hungry person.

The mistress went to the window, and pushing aside the draperies looked out. "Rain! I should think it did! Why, I never saw anything like it. One can't see a rod from the door, seems to me! Well, there's no leaving Santa Paula to-day, evidently. However, I'll remember you're as eager

for breakfast as I am. Just give me that other gown, and I'll be ready at once."

"There's been bells an' bells a-ringin' constant. It sounds bigger nor any hotel we've been in yet. There must be a power of folks about; yet only for the bells I'd not know a body was alive in the place save our own two selves. Oh! ma'am, I don't know how to tell it right clear, but it's a pretty big house, an' built without no top to it, either. Leastways, we're on the top, an' yet you can see for yourself we're close upon the ground."

"Close to the ground, indeed, and our veranda flanked by the most magnificent border of callas I've seen yet in this land of flowers. It's six feet wide if one; and the lilies — they're innumerable. They are so white they really make a bit of light in this gloom outside."

Opening the door the lady passed out into a long, broad corridor, richly carpeted and adorned by lines of pictures as well as by trophies and "souvenirs" of various lands, sufficient to set Mrs. Rutger's bric-à-brac-loving heart in a flutter of admiration. "Well, I shall find enough here

to make a dozen days pass quickly, if we are storm-stayed so long!" she exclaimed, enthusiastically.

"Buenos dias, señora (Good morning, lady)," said a pleasant voice behind her, and the stranger turned about with a start to see a dark-eyed maid, as neatly capped and gowned as if she had just stepped out of an aristocratic New York house.

"Good morning—"

"Anita, at your service. The Señorita Patience bade me wait and lead the way to the breakfast room. It might be a bit confusing, she thought, señora. It's a biggish place, is Santa Paula; but it's easy to understand already. Did the señora rest well, blessing of God?"

"So well, Anita, that I fear I have hindered the others from their breakfast. Clotilde should have waked me earlier."

Anita looked a bit puzzled for an instant, then her pretty face cleared. "Ten thousand pardons, but breakfast is when the señora graciously wills."

"H'm! I can see where Patience gets some of her own gracefully courteous manner," thought Mrs. Rutger, following the waitress's lead through

passage after passage, and realizing that Clotilde had been quite right in describing this ancient structure as a "purty big place." "It's from associating with these Spanish girls, and — but I almost forgot the child is half Spanish herself. 'Old Californian,' David called it."

When they had already crossed what seemed a half-dozen lengthy passages, winding in and out in the most erratic fashion, Anita turned again with that radiant smile of hers, which showed her glistening white teeth. "There is but one more turn, gracias a Dios! It is a mere nothing."

Almost as she spoke they reached another doorway, and Anita pushed aside the Japanese portière which covered it; then, sweeping a profound courtesy, motioned the guest to precede her into the room.

"Oh, how lovely!" burst from Mrs. Rutger's lips.

Anita was gratified. "Does it please the señora? Then it is well, and my mistress will be also glad."

"But where is she? Is she not coming to breakfast with me?" asked the stranger, glancing with some surprise at the small table in the corner by

the hearthplace prepared for her own solitary meal.

"But no, señora; if the señora will excuse her, Señorita Patience has been long afield already."

"Afield! On such a morning as this? Why, it rains in torrents!"

Anita was deftly removing from a closet in the passage the daintily cooked food which had been ordered for Mrs. Rutger's especial refreshment; but she flashed her dark eyes windowward without pausing, and remarked, nonchalantly: "Rain? But this is not severe — no. By and by we hope to show Señora Rutger what a California rain is like."

"Can anything be worse than this? In the way of a storm, I mean."

Anita shrugged her shoulders suggestively. Then she begged permission to show Clotilde to her own breakfast, while she touched a bell-button to summon another attendant for Mrs. Rutger.

The Easterner took her seat, and glanced about her with something of the feeling one might have who stepped out of prosaic, everyday, modern life into fairyland. On the great hearth blazed huge logs of fragrant cedar, their smoke curling upward

through a chimney wide enough for many to stand upright in, while on every side were heaped pots of blooming plants, arranged with such skill that they seemed to be growing out of the very floors and window-ledges. The hangings and furnishings of the room were in delicate yellows, which gave the effect of sunlight even though the skies were dense and dark outside.

But the thoughtful care of somebody was plainest shown in the little vase of blossoms placed beside Mrs. Rutger's plate, and in the pile of California morning papers, each folded to the telegraphic column of Eastern news, anticipating the traveller's desire to learn the latest happenings at her home while she sipped her coffee three thousand miles away.

"Well, I shall have to pinch myself to make me believe that this is all real. I feel as if I had awaked in an enchanted palace, where anything I wished for might come instantly to pass," murmured Hortense, smelling the magnificent yellow roses at her elbow.

She had forgotten the noiseless Chinese servant behind her, till hearing her voice he bowed before

her, and begged in his choicest dialect to be told the lady's wishes.

"Wishes? Oh, I have none! They have all been anticipated."

John prostrated himself again, and returned to his station behind her chair.

"Well, whoever has been mistress here has done her work well; it doesn't seem as if all this discipline could have been achieved by a girl like my little cousin Patience. I wish I could see her bright face this minute, and thank her for her attentions."

And at that moment, as if in answer to this unspoken thought of her guest, a girlish laugh sounded in the passage, emphasizing the playful command: "But you *must* come, Long Mark, my dear old boy. Dad would be offended else. What! hang back and pretend to be bashful — *you* who have hobnobbed with — nobody knows who. And the very first time in all my life that I've seen a real flesh and blood relative. It's a shame, por cierto! But you're only teasing me, I know. Coming? Sta buen'!"

A curtain opposite the table lifted, and there was Patience, looking like a brilliant flower herself,

bearing her arms full of glistening yellow poppies. Her eyes were dancing with fun, her cheeks glowing, her curls wind blown and rain sprinkled — her whole appearance so cheer-provoking that Mrs. Rutger's heart went out afresh to the gay young creature.

"Good morning, cousin. Sorry I was so late, but I knew where I could find some poppies — though it's long too early for them to be common; and when I heard you say you'd never seen any, why, I hurried to get them. Aren't they beautiful? Fit emblem of our golden State. How did you rest? Isn't this a glorious rain? And — ten thousand pardons, dear Mark! Cousin Hortense, Mrs. Rutger, allow me to present one of dad's dearest friends, Mr. Mark Corlear — 'Long Mark,' for short, and a little shaky in the knees by reason of his just getting over a bullet wound. Received it in saving our lives — dad's and mine."

Long Mark came forward easily enough, though smiling indulgently at the comments of his favorite, who was evidently privileged to do with him about as she pleased.

"I have the honor to salute you, madam. It

does me proud to meet anybody who belongs to my Santy Pauly friends; an' Patience's tongue says a power of things it shouldn't. How do you like California?"

"Immensely, so far. Doubly since I reached here last night. But, Patience, my dear child, do you mean that you have really been out in all this terrible storm just to gather these flowers for me?"

"Por cierto — I mean, of course. Are they what you imagined they would be?"

"They are bright and beautiful — as their donor!" said Mrs. Rutger, cordially; "and I thank you a thousand times, even though I must remonstrate against such a hazardous proceeding as going through the rain to get them. I hope it was not far, and that you will not take cold."

"Cold? I never had one in my life; and I love to be in the rain. It wasn't far, either; not more — How far is it to Rattlesnake Glen, Mark dear?"

"H'm! — a matter of ten miles, maybe."

"You, a girl, have ridden ten miles through this deluge to get me a basket of poppies!"

"Why, yes," answered Patience, simply, amazed in her turn at the other's astonishment. "Why not, if they please you? And this rain is nothing. It is only the beginning. By to-morrow, maybe, we'll show you how gloriously it can rain at Santa Paula. It's fine."

"Do you like it?" asked the stranger, wonderingly.

"Like it! Surely. Isn't it the rain that makes the whole earth break out into a glory of color, with its millions of flowers? Every little seed sprouts, and the crops — why, the rain is Heaven-sent to everybody, but it's just the salvation of the poor, who haven't irrigation. Though they're not so many in that case, dad says, except my Indian friends. If it weren't for the rains *they'd* likely starve."

"And a good job, too," said Corlear.

"Now, Long Mark, you're not to prejudice my cousin against my friends. You see, Cousin Hortense, the Indian question is about the only one that Mark and I differ upon. But, John, bring some fresh coffee; and before we get into that matter we'll invite ourselves to a bit of extra

breakfast with you. Just for sociability's sake, and because I don't believe this old globe-trotter ever would eat if somebody didn't remind him it was necessary. I must tell you, he's been ill here ever since Christmas Eve, when he saved our lives—"

"Here comes the coffee, missy," interrupted the hero of that occasion. "And speaking of Injuns—"

"Beg pardon, señorita; but Gaspar says that he would like speech with you immediately, if you please."

"Something important, Anita?" asked Patience of the maid who thus interrupted.

"He said so, señorita. He was in his riding gear, and he made me bring your waterproofs all ready for you to put on. So I think—"

"Very well; I'll come at once. I'll leave Cousin Hortense to you, dear Mark, and to Anita to care for till I get back. I'm sorry to seem inhospitable by leaving you, but neither dad nor I have much time for just visiting. However, you'll consider yourself mistress of Santa Paula, please; and of everybody and everything in it. Adios."

The curtain fell behind the retreating figure of

the girl, and Hortense Rutger felt as if the day had darkened still more. She looked up and caught the eye of Long Mark beaming with love and pride.

"H'm! Nice girl, isn't she? I've been all over the earth more'n once or twice too, and I've seen none like her. She's what I call a typical American princess — which means the best specimen of a young woman living. Head clear, mind right, loving and giving, and just doing what she ought to every time. That's your typical American girlhood — that's our little Patience!"

CHAPTER XI.

AN INJUN IN THE CASE.

"WELL, Gaspar?"

Gaspar, equipped for riding in the storm and with his mind intent on business, was a very different person than the Gaspar who had strutted in holiday attire on the streets of Los Angeles. His trustworthy face showed no present trace of vanity; but, instead, a very great anxiety.

"There is a little trouble, señorita."

"So I supposed, from your summons."

"It's among your own people, Señorita Patience."

"My people? — the Indians? What do you mean?"

Gaspar shrugged his shoulders significantly. He could say a great deal with those gestures of his, and Patience had learned to interpret many of them.

"Do speak out, boy!"

"Well, then, there is a mutiny."

"Mutiny among the workmen on this ranch?"

"It is but the beginning. There has been whispering of trouble, caramba! ever since that night at Los Angeles. The story came — how? Who knows? Not by me, nor by old Tomas, was it told. For there had been some mutterings and displeasures even yet, already. And we know 'where the spark falls the flame flashes.' Sta buen'! The spark did not fall from our pipes — no! But it is at the Upper Folding. A what Yankee Jim calls 'strike.' Only rumors have yet reached here, and I came when I heard, yes. But Señor Eliot has gone elsewhere. Well, then, it is well, also. It is yourself, señorita, and none other who has influence over these redskins who will not work with the vaqueros or they with them. Will you ride there, no?"

"Certainly. But have you told your errand to anybody here?"

"No. Why wake children who sleep? A quarrel grows when women take a part in it. There are many women at Santa Paula, and only *one* has sense! The señorita's horse waits."

Patience laughed lightly at the high compliment intended her, and which Gaspar accompanied by his profoundest bow; but her spirit rose at the prospect of subduing the incipient "mutiny," and she remembered with considerable pride how often she had filled the *rôle* of peacemaker, and been commended for it by her beloved padre (father).

She stepped into a little room beside the door opening on the great veranda, and hastily donned the fresh suit of waterproof riding clothes which Anita had placed there for her. Then she went out and was swung into her saddle by Gaspar, standing bareheaded in the rain until she came.

"Around by the east windows, boy, please. I want to make our cousin's eyes open wide. She, who thinks it so strange that one should ride in the rain."

They made the slight detour, and Mrs. Rutger looked up from her paper to see the girl stooping low over her white horse and peering beneath the deep visor of her oilskin cap to smile and toss a kiss as she rode away.

"Oh, she's off again! Why, Mr. Corlear, would her father like it? It seems to me she runs a

great risk, and that her health is more precious to him than anything else. I wish I had asked her not to go!"

Long Mark smiled.

"Even at the chance of seeming impolite, I think she still would have gone. She generally does what she sets out to do."

"H'm! Then she is spoiled, as I feared she must be. A pity, too, a great pity! Such a lovely girl as she might be with proper training!"

The old friend of Santa Paula elevated his eyebrows: —

"Beg pardon, ma'am, but if it was 'spoiled' I suggested, I didn't use the right words. Did it ever occur to you that there are some things that can't be spoiled? Or some folks that don't need governin', because — they've been trained to govern themselves? Patience is young, and she's a bit heady and impatient with the wrongs of life, but — she's *thoroughbred!* Sensitive to the right, and swift to do it, no matter what it costs herself.

"How else, suppose you, got she the whip-hand of all the human beings in mixed lots that she

does manage? H'm! If she ever loses her temper it's against some mean thing; and if she makes mistakes she's noble enough to acknowledge 'em, an' do her best to set things square again."

"You are very fond of her, I see!"

"Who isn't, that knows her? The only thing we really disagree on is this pesky Injun question. She will insist upon believing they should be treated just like white folks, and there she's mistaken. For, if there's anything on this earth meaner 'n an Injun I haven't seen it yet, and I've jogged round considerable. Why, sho! I don't mind telling you that story Patience mentioned, about what she called saving her life. You'll see for yourself, then, that I'm right."

So Long Mark drew a graphic picture of that Christmas Eve on the mountain trail, and portrayed in scathing language the "inborn wickedness of a redskin."

"Why, ma'am, think of the contemptiblest piece o' wickedness you can, and then multiply it by a million an' you'll begin to get down to the poison-ness of the Injun nature. Ugh! It makes me sick to talk about them."

After listening to Corlear's thrilling recital, Mrs. Rutger leaned back in her chair, in much perplexity.

"I cannot understand this country. One moment it seems a very haven of peace, life here a truly pastoral existence; the next, its facts exceed in sensationalism the most lurid of cheap literature. It's strange — and fascinating."

"Yes; there is nothing like it on the globe. Once the real love of the West gets into the blood there's no cure. Better not catch the fever, ma'am! Unless so be as you're fixed to stay here the rest of your days. But I'm going out to see what's up. I didn't like the looks of old Gaspar's face when he rode off after Patience. There's trouble a-foot, and I'd like to know just what. I'll interview Ichy boy, an' if he's minded, we'll follow the trail ourselves."

Just then the sun broke through the clouds, with that suddenness characteristic of a California clear-up, and Mrs. Rutger stepped out upon the rain-washed veranda to inhale the fresh scent of the great gardens, and as she paced up and down she saw old Mark on his angular, but swift and

valuable, "Arabian" pass out from the home stable-yard and strike off up the mountain.

It was night when he returned, and he did not apologize for his rough entrance into the lady's presence, all mud-bespattered and travel-soiled as he was. His face was haggard and anxious, and his eager question sent a thrill of alarm through Hortense Rutger's heart.

"She hasn't come back, has she?—by any other road? Sure? Nobody here seen her?"

"No. I've been watching and anxious. What does it mean?"

Mark shuddered.

"Her father hasn't been back either, I suppose?"

"No. Or I do not know that he has. But where is Patience? I did not dream she'd be gone all day, like this! I'm worried—"

"Worried—is it? *Worried!* Por Dios! If you're a praying woman—and you look it—pray now, as you never prayed in your life before, that—"

"That—what?" she questioned, frightened still further by the distress in his face.

"That there's no harm befalls our Patience. For — *there's an Injun in the case!*" And overcome by the picture his own words conjured, honest Mark Corlear hurried out of the room.

CHAPTER XII.

HOLDING THE WHIP-HAND.

THOUGH Patience had ridden away in such lightness of spirit she soon found that the storm was growing much more severe than she had imagined it would be; and, settling herself more firmly in her saddle, she turned her face about and beckoned for Gaspar to ride alongside.

"Keep close to me, boy, so I can hear all you say. Then tell me everything. I don't want to waste time finding things out after I get there. Listen — can you hear me?"

The gray-headed "boy" responded: "En verdad. My señorita's voice carries clear."

"Who are in this mess up there?"

"It seemed to be about all."

"How did you hear?"

"The wife of a vaquero — Indian Nance — came down and whispered it. She hardly dared to say

anything, for it will cost her dear if she is discovered; but she remembered the dead papoose. Ah, my lady! It is these things that rule the women's tongues. What moves the heart — not the husband's will."

"Oh! I know. It was the poor little creature that was shot by accident. I tried to comfort her, of course; but it was so little I could do. Well, what have they done?"

"That I don't know; a thousand pardons. This was the message of Nance: 'Tell the señorita that there is war between the redskins and the whites. If she comes not at once, there will lie many corpses in the rain before the night falls.' She was frightened, and had crept around by the darkest ways so that none of the women should see her."

"Did she tell you nothing else, Gaspar? Give no names, or anything more definite?"

"Caramba! she answered to my question where the fault lay, 'Where it always lies — at the white man's feet.' And that is all. My heart is in the dust that I can tell you no more."

"Very well. I'll soon find out for myself.

But how the water does come down the fields! At this rate the cañons will soon be impassable. I wish the errand were over and we back again on this side the gulch. I wouldn't miss being at home to-night when dad gets back for anything. On, Blanco! Vamos!"

The great brown fields, or meadows, were a steady rise of ground all the way from the ranch-house to the border of the North Cañon, where the trail they must follow diverged at right angles and ran alongside the brink, or the precipice, for several miles to a pass where a steel bridge had been flung across.

"But the bridge will hold, señorita? Of a truth, did not the master have it built but yesterday, as it were?"

"Exactly," answered Patience, smiling quietly. "I hope it will hold; be sure of that. But did ever any bridge hold that was yet builded across the 'Devil's Pitfall'? Answer me that, Gaspar boy. And how many has mi padre put up on this spot? In verity, I think each time that one is swept away he but shuts his lips more grimly and starts another. The expert who stretched

that gossamer thread — it looks like little else — assured my father that it 'would be there when the last trumpet blew.' We'll see if it is. And that gust! It's almost like some trumpet sound, itself!"

Gaspar crossed himself devoutly; then clapped his hand to his head. "Guay! Ya, ya! The saints save us! The wind is a tornado! One's hair is not safe on one's head! It is best to turn back — instante! Señor Eliot will murder old Gaspar that he has brought the señorita into the face of this hurricane. It blew not thus at Santa Paula. What the housewives prate is true, en verdad! This spot is the camping ground of imps. They are loose here to-day, caramba!"

"Pouf! It blows, of course. But remember, faint-heart, that never a tornado came to our happy Santa Paula — and it is Santa Paula land still. It blows, en verdad! I never knew it blow so hard; but the rain is lessening. I can see farther ahead. In another moment we will be at the bridge, and, once over, the trail is against the face of the mountain and less exposed. Now a fresh spurt. On, Blanco! Make haste, Gaspar!"

The caballero's mount was also an excellent one, almost as good as the white horse that Patience rode; and he settled himself again to his work with the long stride that seemed to set the wind in defiance. They gained the narrow suspension bridge, that swayed from side to side as the gusts rocked it and threatened to tear it loose from the supports, even though its builder had guaranteed its marvellous strength.

"Wait, señorita! It isn't safe! Surely, you would not take your life in your hand? No; turn back! Let the Indians fight — if mortal will fight in such a storm. Ay de me (woe is me) that I ever brought you to this!"

For one moment Patience hesitated before she set her horse to cross the swinging pathway. A thousand feet below, the water, already risen to a torrent, surged and roared over the jagged rocks; but then, ashamed of her own timidity, she waved her hand to Gaspar and rode forward.

"I'll ride first. If I pass safely, you follow!"

The caballero would have preferred taking the first chance himself. Cowardice was not among his faults, and his devotion to his mistress was

entire; but he brought the roan he rode to as firm a standstill as possible and waited while Patience passed onward out of sight. For even then, while the downfall seemed slackening, the farther end of the bridge was veiled in the mist.

"Hola, O hola!"

The cry came to him where he waited, faint but sure.

"Gracias a Dios! She's safe! Let the imps rage, there are angels above!" And putting his spurs to his horse old Gaspar dashed forward at breakneck speed.

"Why so fast, mi amigo?" asked Patience, with a touch of mischief, when he drew rein beside her in the shelter of the farther mountain side. "Surely, Gaspar, the brave, wasn't afraid?"

"May I never know fear if I were not, then! There's many a ride I've taken, but I ride not back over that cobweb, with the wind blowing the flesh from my bones in shreds like this. Not I! In verity."

"In verity, you are an extravagant talker. But now, on again. Another half hour should bring us to the Folding."

It did, easily. The worst of the storm was over for that day, at least, and Patience adjusted her cap, shook the water from her dress, and tossed back her dripping hair as she drew near the little settlement where the two conflicting bands of mountaineers lived.

"It's true, Gaspar. There is trouble," she said, quietly pointing to the groups of angry men collected under one of the great open sheds, and whose voices, pitched high in anger, reached her as she spoke.

"But it will cease at sight of the señorita," responded the old man, reassuringly.

"I hope it will!" Then she rode rapidly forward among them, sending up the cheerful: —

"Hola, O hola!" by which she announced her coming to any point of the hacienda, and which was always recognized by an answering salutation wherever it was heard.

There was no joyful, "Grita, señorita!" this time. Instead, a sudden turning of heads and the gleaming of angry eyes with the flashing of something even more perilous.

If her spirit had been roused before, it rose to

the highest pitch of determination as this ominous silence met her. She drew her bridle tight and Blanco reared, then settled back, rigid and obedient.

"Hola, O hola!"

The echo of that clear cry alone came back to her from the surrounding mountain tops. All else was yet silence; and a strange look grew on Patience Eliot's face. A few women, wives of the vaqueros and hangers-on about the Folding, who were huddled together at one end of the buildings, fancied that expression so little that they slunk away in shame to the cover of their own cabins.

"She was never like that, our señorita. One would not know her for a laughing girl; no, she looks a *woman* — to be feared!"

"Ah! but how comes she to us at such a time as this, through the rain? Answer me that, Indian Nance!" retorted a shepherd's mother, suspiciously.

"Was ever the señorita afraid of rain?"

"When she rode in the rain before it was with a smile upon her lips. Not with a frown on her brow that makes it — a dark day for thee, Nance,

if thou hast told tales in the valley, or at the ranch-house."

But Nance made no reply. She was straining her ears to hear what her eyes no longer dared to look upon.

As for Gaspar, his hand was on his lady's arm, with the deprecating appeal of prudence to youthful folly. "Speak them fair, señorita, por Dios! They are angry men, a score to a side — and we are but two. Caramba! that my tongue had been palsied before I brought you into this!"

Patience shook his hand lightly off, scarcely conscious that she did so. Until that moment she had not known how utterly and terribly the passion of anger can take possession of a human being. Never before, in all her memory, had her coming failed to elicit a cordial greeting — rather, the greeting had already awaited her coming. For the first time, also, she realized her own position in the world, and a pride as unlike as it was unworthy herself swelled her heart to bursting. For the first time in her life, when her intention was right, her will was crossed. And — by such as these! The very lowest of all the dependents

upon the great estate, who ate of her father's food and were sheltered by his sufferance.

She saw at a glance that the men were mostly armed, this being not so strange, since their calling demanded that they should be prepared against menacing beasts which threatened the safety of their flocks; but, in the height of her indignation, it seemed to her that they were armed simply in revolt. Against her — Mr. Eliot's own appointed, if girlish, major-domo.

For the third time she called, "Hola, O hola!" And when again the third time only the echo answered, she cried out: "What does this mean? Why are you all idle and your work neglected? Why are all your firearms in your hands instead of in your pockets? Bring them to me!"

Gaspar could think of nothing but the slender steel bridge they had crossed, defying the storm; so the angry girl faced the mutinous men, indifferent to and ignorant of her peril.

At last one man stepped forth from among the crowd of white workmen, and made his obeisance.

"We are glad you have come, señorita. You have been always just. You will listen to the

people of your own race, and give us our rights!"

"You are glad I have come? Why, then, did you refuse me welcome? Did I ever come but to do some of you good?"

"No. En verdad! But of late the good has always been showered upon our enemies, yonder!"

He pointed to the Indians grouped at the other extremity of the shed. These had been for some months in Mr. Eliot's employ, and at his daughter's request. She had faith in them, and far more affection for them than for these others who had had a better chance in life and made less of it.

"Well, and what of that? Can I not befriend those I will? Who began this trouble?"

"We will not work with them! They must go. If every pesky Injun isn't out of this camp before the night falls — of his own accord — we'll send him out at the end of our revolvers!"

The man's words were interspersed with oaths, and his face was repulsive in its hatred.

"It isn't you, vaquero, but the whiskey in you that gives you the impudence to speak like that

to me. If you can understand, please do, that it is *I* who am my father's representative, and hire and discharge his herdsmen. One further word from you, save in apology, and I discharge *you*—now and here!"

They were certainly not afraid of her, but her voice produced a momentary hush. Mostly they were very fond and proud of her, and her present pluck deepened this pride, even in a case against themselves.

"Bully for the señorita!" cried somebody, and a cheer rose high.

For once it called no responsive smile to their young mistress's lips. Her face remained stern and unmoved.

"Sam Brush, come here. Will you give me a statement of all connected with this business?"

He stepped forward and tried to do so. Unfortunately, at that moment a wily old Indian, who had more than once presumed upon Patience's enthusiasm for his race, left the crowd of redskins and advanced toward her.

"Get back! Get back! White men first!" shouted somebody in the opposing party.

The Indian still advanced, and the white man leaped to meet him.

"Halt! Let any man — red or white — move one step more, and I shoot!"

The girl, sitting above them on her snow-white horse, with her grimly set lips and her outstretched hand, in which glittered a richly mounted revolver, was a picture that those who saw never forgot. Every man and woman watching knew her for a perfect shot. Why should she not be? Had they not spent their lives in teaching her, and in boasting of her skill?

Either the two advancing figures — the Indian's and the white man's — were alone unconscious, or they were reckless with fury. As with one impulse, each ran to meet his foe — and Patience's pistol-shot echoed among the hills.

CHAPTER XIII.

IMPRISONED IN THE CAÑON.

WITH that echo came regretful reflection to the angry girl. As in a lightning's flash she saw all the miserable results that would follow, and her late unreasoning fury died as suddenly as it had arisen.

Herself once more, the Patience who held the government of so many turbulent spirits in such easy grasp because, as old Mark had put it, "She had first learned to command herself," she rode forward under the shed.

"Stop! Don't shoot! Put up your arms! Listen — oh, listen to me!"

But it was too late. Her own shot had been the one "spark" that fell and "set the flame flashing." It was a battle to the death. Both groups of men were fierce and almost lawless, and one was savage quite. The slight restraints of a

frontier civilization fell away from them, and for a while there was chaos.

Patience, on her white horse, was in the midst of it always. In vain Gaspar tried to force her out of range of bullets, but he was himself forced to retreat and watch her from a distance.

"Ay de mi! but she bears a charmed life! See! but she cuts them right and left with her whip, and everywhere she brings peace. Caramba! If she lives!"

The affair was quickly over. It was maybe the sight of their own wounded comrades, or it might have been the passionate grief and entreaties of their young mistress, but the firing soon ceased, and the "strike" at the Upper Folding was subdued.

"Caramba! You fought well, señorita!" cried an admiring "greaser." "It was a sight for a lifetime."

"Hush! Call the women. There is work for them to do here now."

They came, still timid, or else ferocious; these last among those whose men-folk had been wounded, but all so far obedient that they ren-

dered mechanically the aid which Patience ordered.

"Here, Gaspar, you're an old soldier of many brawls, if your own tales of youth are true! Take charge of these, and we'll dress the wounds as fast as we can." Then she stood up: "A double-eagle to the man who rides first to Santa Paula and brings the doctor here. Two double-eagles if he gets back within two hours!"

"But that is impossible, señorita," said one, returning after a brief riding. "The bridge is down, and the cañon is a river — full of whirlpools."

Consternation fell upon all who heard the story. "*The bridge down!*"

This meant that they were cut off from all connection with the outer world, for the rain had made the cañon itself impassable.

Patience's heart sank. It was not, however, on her own account and because she was, also, effectually prevented from returning home, but because there was one among the wounded men whose case seemed desperate.

"The rest will do, yes. But Sam Brush will

die if help comes not. Old Gaspar's wit goes not so far as a broken head — of that sort, no. Then help will come."

Patience rose as she spoke and tightened her belt, as one preparing for a fight.

Gaspar shrugged his shoulders.

"Si? But how? Are there spirits in the air to carry messages? If so, then, yes. Otherwise, the end must be as it was to be from the beginning."

"That's what dad calls fatalism. It's not the truth. If help will save poor Brush, help he will have. Bring Blanco. He's tired, poor fellow, but he's better so than any other horse at his freshest."

"Caramba! What would you do, my lady?"

"Bring help, I tell you."

"You cannot! You dare not! *You — shall not!* No! For the love of your father, the señor, no! I will not bring Blanco."

Again a light flashed in Patience's eyes, but this time it was neither fierce nor unholy with unreasoning anger. It was pitiful with high resolve. A smile more sad than any her old at-

tendant had ever seen upon her lips curved them as she said: —

"You, also, mi amigo? Am I to be flouted and set at naught by everybody, all at once? Truly, I learn humility at a lightning's flash from every side. But it's all right. I will be neither foolhardy nor over-confident. I believe I can find a way to Santa Paula, even though the cañon is afloat. A spot I've noticed now and then, and always meant to try, only the bridge was easier. Now — necessity, you know! Wish me God-speed, good Gaspar, and fetch me Blanco from the corral!"

"If you go, I go also."

"If I go, you stay."

"Because I love you, señorita. Haven't I brought you up, almost? To ride as no other girl can ride? Would you dare what Gaspar dares not, old though he is?"

"Indeed, I think I would! Remember the bridge! But, if you love me, then, because you love me, stay! Wait! Listen! Swing me up to that scaffolding there. I will speak to the people first."

As if she were mounting a horse, he stooped and held his palm, and touching the old man's hand but lightly, Patience sprang to the raised platform and held up her hand for silence. She did not now have to command a second time. The two parties, whites and Indians, did, indeed, remain apart, but that was customary and not objectionable. Yet the hatred and violence had died in the presence of the suffering of a common humanity and in the prospect of a still graver ending to their late dispute.

The Westerner is said to regard death but lightly, but this was not true of these mountaineers, at least. Sam Brush had been their leading spirit, and he was known for a brave man. All men worship some hero, and these secluded creatures had made poor Sam their own.

"Listen, lads! There is a possibility that poor Sam may yet be saved, if I can get the doctor here. I'm going to try. I, alone. I think I know a way to ford the cañon — even in this flood, and I'm going to seek it. I rely upon you all to remain faithful and quiet while I am gone, doing your duty. I blame myself for this trouble.

If I'd been gentler and more patient, you would have been the same. Forgive me, and don't give me more to regret by further misbehaving. Gaspar is my agent here. Do exactly what he tells you, and take good care of the wounded. Also, those whose business it is, look after your sheep. They, poor creatures, are innocent enough, and they should have been corralled hours ago. What will the master say, when he comes? Good-by! We're off, Blanco and I. Wish us safe journey and good luck!"

Gaspar had brought the white horse round, and she leaped down upon his broad saddle, as she spoke, with an agility that many a circus-rider might have envied, and that was but another of the accomplishments her ranch friends had taught her.

A cheer went up that echoed loudly from side to side, even poor Brush moving his head slightly, as if some consciousness of what was going on about him reached his benumbed brain; and these superstitious folk took it as good omen that just as the thoroughbred disappeared over the rise that dipped down again into the cañon, the sun burst out with a blinding glory.

"Now, Blanco, for your honor, travel as you have never done before. It's to save life, my beauty — life that your unhappy mistress has endangered! Vamos! Pasa! Bien!"

For a brief distance the two journeyed downward into the ravine in a smooth trot. The thoroughbred was sure of foot and the way not so difficult, but at a turn in the cañon wall they found themselves suddenly confronted by a landslide that effectually barred their further progress.

"Oh, this is too bad! It was just this way, I remember, to the little pass I hoped to reach. What shall I do! But — well, when one can't go forward one must certainly go back. And it's dark down here. Hark! What was that?"

There was a rush, a crash of loosened rock and soil, and Blanco wheeled in terror.

"Oh, we're lost! Imprisoned! A landslide behind us now, too! Blanco! dad — poor dad! poor dad!"

At that supreme moment when hope seemed suddenly cut off from her, it was not of her own peril the loving daughter first thought. She

seemed for an instant numbed to her own suffering, but she saw as in a mirror the grief-torn face of the parent she adored.

Then she took courage and looked about her. The cañon wall rose sheer and straight, a wall just there of "living rock." Behind her and before her the whole ravine was filled with the mass of débris that towered higher than she could see. While below, in the bottom of the gulch, raged a torrent that would drown anything which tempted it, and down which were sweeping at that moment great blocks of loosened earth and stones, uprooted trees, and all the frightful ruins of a mighty flood.

For a second moment Patience felt herself sinking beneath a deathly faintness; then she rallied her courage and laid her hand upon Blanco's quivering neck.

"Courage, my pet! One thing we can thank God for — we are not dead!"

The chance she contemplated turned her giddy again.

"It might have struck right *here* as well as *there*, behind us or before. But — *it didn't*. There's a God rules still, my Blanco!"

And she raised her eyes in the devoutest thanksgiving her heart had ever known.

Raised them to rest upon a dark, sinister face peering down upon her out of the clouds above; or so, at first, it seemed. Her heart contracted with a fresh fear, the look was so forbidding; then expanded with new hope — it was a human face!

"Oh, whoever you are, can you help me?"

"I am the enemy of your race."

"I am the friend of yours. You are an Indian. I know you. I've seen you on the streets. You sell bows and arrows. Will you help me?"

"And I know you, daughter of the rich man. They call you 'Princess.' Well, we are in the same canoe here, paleface. All die one death, redskins and white, but the whites suffer most."

"You mean to be cruel, and that is your own affair. But you are, I know, wise in some things; you Indians know the mountains and cañons even better than we do. Will you help me out? I go to bring a doctor for a wounded man."

"I know. Wounded by one of my people — he's well served! You, too, are in my power."

"*I am not.* There is a Power higher than yours, and you mistake me. I am your *friend* — the friend of all your nation. I don't say this because I need you now; you may ask it of all who know me, Patience Eliot."

"And your father is our enemy. Where he rules now we ruled once. But for gold I will help you. I can; I know a way."

"For gold, then," answered Patience, and despite her desperation her lip curled scornfully.

Ouleon saw it and smiled with answering disdain; but he climbed down the crumbling mass of rain-soaked earth with the lightness and agility of a cat, and presently landed on his feet beside the white horse. As he did so his entire manner changed. He became, or affected to become, respectful, and his tone was altered to one of solicitude. This was intended to disarm Patience of any fear she retained concerning his actions, and it did mislead her.

"If you will let me blind your eyes you will ride with a surer head. The way is dangerous — you will fall otherwise."

"Ride? How can one ride out of this hole?"

"I know a way. I will take you over it if you will trust me."

She scrutinized him closely for an instant and, despite her romantic faith in his race, a misgiving shot through her mind. Then she looked upward, backward, all around. By herself, of her own wisdom, she could never escape from that prison of earth and water until the flood should subside. That might not be for weeks, since the winter rains were just beginning, and it might easily rise to drown her where she was entrapped.

"I'm in a desperate strait. I *must* trust you. But why should I not? Why should you wish to harm me?"

"Why, indeed! Will you lend me your handkerchief?"

She allowed him to bandage her eyes with it, and, as soon as this was done, she felt that Blanco was being led forward and upward. It seemed improbable to her that this should be over the soft mass of freshly fallen earth, but she realized that there was no other exit possible; and from the rough passage, the slips and flounderings of her

faithful horse, she knew that she was climbing almost perpendicularly.

But she sat her saddle as firmly as possible, and clung to it with both hands.

At the end of what she judged might be five minutes her progress was stopped.

"You will have to dismount and walk here."

"Surely I can ride wherever Blanco can step, and he mustn't be left behind."

"You will be safer on your feet. The ledge is narrow. To ride would be to brush yourself against the rocks — and off. The fall is very deep. You would be dead before you reached the bottom. Blanco is wise; he will step carefully, and if he falls, it is but a horse. Still, he will not fall, nor you — if you obey my advice. Ready?"

It seemed strange to her afterward, that even in the midst of that anxious pause she reflected upon the excellent English that Ouleon used, and how she would utilize it in argument on behalf of her schemes to educate his more ignorant brethren.

"Ready." She put her hand trustingly into the hand of her guide and felt herself led along the hazardous way.

"One foot exactly before the other. Hug the rock on the right; force all your weight that way."

That awful passage seemed to last forever; and, indeed, had Patience's eyes been unbandaged she could never have made it alive, because of the horror and dizziness that would have assailed her. As it ended she heard Ouleon sigh in relief, and realized that she had come into a broader place, and, after a few rods farther, she was bidden to "sit down upon this stone and rest a moment; I will go back and help the horse."

"Can I uncover my eyes?"

"Not yet. *Not until I bid you.*"

She sat obediently quiet, thinking so busily that she scarcely noticed, above the roar of the water and sighing of the wind, the sound of a heavy object being moved cautiously forward, till the sudden darkening of the little light visible through the folds of the bandage startled her. Instinctively she clutched the cloth away and found herself in an impenetrable gloom.

CHAPTER XIV.

LONG MARK AND OULEON MEET.

WHEN Long Mark left the home-piece of Santa Paula and set out for the Upper Folding he was half ashamed of his own forebodings.

"I reckon your master's getting an old fool, Ichy boy!" he said to his "familiar," the Arabian horse, "but I've noticed along back, I don't get over tumbles an' wounds as fast as I used to do. Getting old, Ichabod. So are you. Well, my lad, let's hope that when the time comes for us to shuffle off this mortal, *et cetera*, we'll do it in company and to the tune o' Yankee Doodle. Best tune ever invented either to live or die by, Ichy, isn't it?"

Ichabod neighed; whether in response to this pertinent question, or because he had been ridden so little of late that the breath of the mountains was sweet in his nostrils.

"That's right; never forget, my beauty, that

you've had your citizen papers out, so to speak, this dozen years. Doesn't make any difference if you were born in Araby the blest, you've been a good American for quite a spell. So long 't you've about forgotten everything else. That is, it would be if you were just some ordinary horse, not Ichabod. G'lang there!"

Then he rode swiftly over the plains, but by a different route from that taken by Patience and Gaspar, yet leading to the same goal.

"I wouldn't have my little Patience take the wind out of her sails by suspecting she'd been watched. No, siree. She's all right — if those redskins are all right. But she's been cosseting them, her dad tells me, more'n usual this while back, and they're the sort of vermin can't stand prosperity. Viper in the bosom, you know, Ichy. Well, you don't love an Injun any better'n I do; that's to your credit, my boy. And say, Ichy, you needn't bother to travel quite so fast. I — I hate to allow it, I hate to like poison; but — don't mention it, please — I'm not quite so peart as I was before I got shot that night. Patty's nursed me right faithful, an' David's done everything a mortal can. So's

the doctor; but — I'm shaky in the knees yet; an' — another secret, laddie — I'm not so young as I used to be. G'lang!"

It would have puzzled an animal less accustomed to the peculiarities of Long Mark to have known just when speed was or was not required of him; but the truth was that the very suggestion of impending age and its possible uselessness angered Corlear before it had left his own lips.

"G'lang, I tell you. I've no business to abuse myself, an' I'd knock any other fellow down that did it. Yet say, Ichy, isn't it clearin' up beautiful? Ever see such sunshine after a storm in any other part of this created? You know you didn't. Well, it's putting new life into me. I guess it isn't old age, after all, laddie; but just being cosseted. Too much attention isn't good for man nor beast. It's most as bad for us as 'tis for Injuns. But it's rainin' again. 'Rain when the sun shines rain again to-morrow.' Well, of course; that's what we want it to do here in Californy. G'lang there!"

For a long time they rode in solitude, then Mark espied a herder crossing the mesa beyond, and loped forward to join him.

"Hello, friend! where you bound?"

"To the Folding."

"Good enough; that's where I'm going, too. All serene up there?"

"No, nor won't be as long's there's Injuns mixed up with white folks."

"Don't understand why not," said Long Mark, to draw the other out.

"Well, you see, it's different. It's a new thing at San' Paula to use them critters for help. This has always been a white man's ranch an' run by white men. It's the doin's of Miss Patience, but it don't seem to work. There's been trouble afore, an' there'll be trouble ag'in if she mixes 'em. Leastways, till she trains 'em to be a little less sassy."

"Trouble? What sort of trouble? You needn't be afraid to trust me. I'm Long Mark. Ever heard of me?"

"Yes. Shake. I always want to when I meet a square man."

"Here 'tis," responded Corlear, cordially offering his hand. "Well, if you've heard of me you've probably heard, also, that I hate Injuns worse than

poison. So tell the whole business. You can trust it to go no further — unless it's for the best."

The herder was full of his subject and he ventilated it thoroughly; but when he had finished, Long Mark observed: —

"Well, I hate to own it, yet in this case seems to me it's some of those white fellars who are raisin' the rumpus. That's the way it looks to me. I wish friend Eliot wouldn't allow Injuns on the ranch; but seeing he does, why a fellow's got to be fair in judging of 'em. This row up at the Folding certainly began with the whites, according to your own tell. H'mm, no matter. Here we are about at the cañon, an' I propose to tackle a pass I know here. Haven't been across it in nigh on two years; but — Hello! sounds so the mis'able hole's full of boiling water! Didn't know so much had fallen already."

The two riders stopped on the brink of the gulch and tried to see what lay below. But an impenetrable darkness now hid the depths, which even in the brightest day were shrouded in gloom. So deep was it, and so precipitous the cañon walls, that even in the dry season few would

have ventured the descent to the pass, and though Long Mark rarely paused before any undertaking he had planned, he did pause now.

"That's mean. I thought I'd save time by crossing here. Though I don't care to waste any in delving down a trail like this, just to turn round at the bottom and crawl back again. Sound's if half the gorge was full."

"Reckon it is. There's been some big landslides a'ready. An hour of a good Californy freshet can gen'ally play the mischief with the face of natur', so to say. An' it rained all night. Well, we'll have to go on to the bridge," answered the herder.

"How do you know that's there yet? Never would one last much longer'n it was being put up."

"It was there when I went down. The wind's risen since, though. So — h'mm. Can't you see something moving down in the gulch? No; not over there — here! Right below us."

Long Mark leaped to the ground, and bending over the edge of the abyss peered into its depths.

"Yes, I do see something. It looks like an animal. Couldn't be a horse, could it?"

"Don't see how it could be — and there. The other slope's worse than this one."

Mark stepped behind a stone, and thus shaded from the sun knelt down and continued his observations of the deeps below. From time to time his ejaculations reached the herder, who had not left his own saddle but had contented himself with receiving the other's report.

"Say. It acts like a horse. Poor creature! How came it there?"

"Strayed, most like."

"Well, I'll wait for it to come up. If it's a ridden one we'll hear how the pass is. If it isn't —"

This time the pause was so long that the herder inquired, "Well, the critter's a-comin' up?"

"It — it is —"

"It — what? What ails you? Anything — wrong?"

Mark tumbled back on the ground and covered his eyes with his hand.

"Blame my eyes! They're weaker than water somehow. Can't see straight. Look down yourself. What is it?"

"It's — a — horse. A white horse. As white as Miss Patience's Blanco."

"You — sha'n't say it. It isn't Blanco. It can't be!"

"It is."

"Who — who's — riding him?" demanded Corlear, in a tragic whisper.

"Why, man alive, what's the matter? Crazy? The horse is all right."

"Who's riding him?" again demanded the old traveller.

"Looks like an — Injun! '*Tis* — an Injun! What does that mean?"

Mark groaned.

"It means that Blanco's mistress is — God help her!"

"Trash! She's probably lent him —"

"Trash, yourself! When it's her lifelong boast that no other human being ever sat that creature's back! Hold me — when he comes. Don't let me tear the life out of him till he's told his story."

The herder was now convinced that his companion was suddenly crazed. He was but recover-

ing from a wound-fever. It was natural, and he'd better lead the poor chap away from the chasm lest he should take a notion to throw himself over. Yet he hesitated to attempt this.

The white horse came clearer into view. The Indian who bestrode him was also recognizable; at least, by Mark Corlear, who stood with clinched fists and rigid face awaiting the result.

At last Ouleon stood upon the cliff, a few feet away. On his face, also, was the gleam of recognition.

"Well?"

This one word seemed hurled at the newcomer by the gray lips of the questioner, Mark.

"The señorita's horse. I found it wandering in the cañon," said Ouleon, quietly; yet with a curious gleam in his narrow, dark eyes which made the herder think he had not one but two crazed men to deal with.

"And the señorita, where is she?"

The Indian shrugged his shoulders, while something like a smile flitted over his otherwise impassive face.

"Ask of the flood below."

"Liar!" yelled Mark, and leaped at the red man's throat. But even as he did so the sickening possibility that the Indian's suggestion might be true sent his hand palsied to his side.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SEARCH BEGUN.

THE herder stepped between these two; but he need have feared no violence.

Mark felt that he was treating with a rattlesnake, yet he knew also that he would gain no point by further aggravating the red man's hatred. He asked, as quietly as he could: —

"What do you mean?"

"Is not the white man wise? Could one live in yonder torrent? Listen!"

The sound of the roaring water came distinctly to them in the lull of the wind, and the sun darkened appreciably. Mark looked upward. Heavy clouds were already sweeping up from every quarter to cover the heavens with a pall. It would rain presently — even as it had not rained before. One would want shelter then; but — Patience!

"Hark! Did you see her dead body?"

"No body could remain in one spot for an instant. Already there are trees from a score of miles away, lying down there. One should look for the young ranch mistress yonder." He pointed to the far distance westward.

Mark's anger suddenly flamed afresh.

"I understand you, scoundrel! What you know you will not tell. Well, then, I'll find a way to wrest your secret out of your body, or I'll die trying it! I know you. It was you I rode along the trail with that Christmas Eve. It was you, you serpent, who poisoned the Fairy Spring, where you hoped that the best friend an Indian ever had would surely drink — your reason, only Heaven and you know. But hear me well. I was sent upon your trail then, and in time. By whom?" Mark raised his hand above, and the superstitious nature of the mission-trained Indian recoiled.

"The white man is wise. If he wishes to seek the girl that some call 'princess' in the cañon, I will help him. I know the way, even in a flood."

"H'm! And a direct road you'd lead me,

wouldn't you? No, you obliging rattlesnake! I'll stay this side the gulch a minute longer. Then there'll be so many men out over these mountains, that you can't see the ground for the thickness of them. Men — *men* — I tell you, with souls in their bodies, searching for Patience. But, so long. What am I raging an' wasting time here for? Our Patience isn't dead; she can't be; that never was written — never! She'll come home all right. And maybe there won't be vengeance in the land! I've heard of you. You're a fanatic — a sort of leader or would-be leader in your nation! You aspire to sit in the great pow-wow at Washington, and smoke pipes with the Great White Father of this American people. That's why you're after money everlastingly, that you can go with a big spread of glory; and I believe that you are after *it* now. Well, *maybe* you'll get it, an' maybe you won't! I've heard there was plenty at the bottom of the 'Devil's Pitfall,' down yonder. *Go seek it there!* It's a safer way, even that, than buying it with the blood of an angel — of our Patience!"

Before the awestruck herder could realize what

was happening, or the Indian defend himself, Long Mark had lifted Ouleon in his mighty arms and hurled him over the cliff.

Then, with the air of one who had tried to do his first duty, and was eager for the next, he sprang to Ichabod's back, slipped his hand through Blanco's rein, and rode furiously away.

The herder pushed his broncho after. The little beast had caught the infection of the hour, and "did himself proud, for he clicked it with the 'Rabian," his master afterward explained.

Presently he came alongside, and Long Mark paused. He had thought over a dozen plans, only to reject each in its turn. He turned to this native mountaineer in a last hope of aid.

"Can't *you* find another way — a shorter — to the Folding? Mine didn't seem to work" — he smiled grimly — "yet I'm glad I took it. I always am glad when I go it blind. Before we raise a general hullabaloo on the strength of an Injun's lying — because like as not he stole Blanco, and our Patience is up there waiting for him this minute — it's common-sense to go to the last place we know her to be at, and find her there — if we

can. If we can't, an' if — *if* — she is nevermore to be found, then prepare for an Injun war such as never went down in any United States history; and that'll mean a clean extermination, root, branch, and blossom, of the whole breed. Do you?"

"We'd better try the bridge. An' there's sense in what you say now. I don't believe harm's come to the señorita. Turn this way — north."

But when they reached the spot where the bridge had stood, it had long been gone. Fragments of its glittering strands hung fluttering from the abutments, and Long Mark's heart sank lower still; for, despite his bravado, he was full of dire foreboding.

"Well, that looks bad. The Folding's on the other side; but we've got to get there. *We've got to.* Now, how?"

It was by a roundabout road; a road that nobody save one who had tracked sheep over those desolate mountains could ever have remembered, and found again to follow; a road so difficult that more than once they gave it up and faced about, only to discover that the path they had just crossed

seemed equally impossible. Then they took heart of grace and crept forward, inch by inch, till at last, spent in strength and drenched by the freshly-falling rain, they reached the camp and staggered into it.

The first to meet them was old Gaspar, who questioned eagerly, looking all the while at the exhausted Blanco, "Did she send him back?"

"Send him back? I fetched him back, you mean. Didn't he run away?"

"Yes — *with the señorita in the saddle!* the only way he ever ran."

"What do you mean? What's been doing up here? What —"

"Ten thousand pardons, Señor Mark, but this is not the time for jests — no. Did my little mistress reach her home? Has she sent the doctor yet? Else Sam Brush will surely die already. I can do no more."

"Let him die, then. Who is Sam Brush, that he should come before our Lady Patience?" for Mark Corlear was again almost beside himself with fear and anxiety.

Gaspar was wise, and understood the other man's

distress. He briefly told all the happenings of that day at the Folding, and the bravery with which Patience Eliot had ridden away on an errand no other would undertake, to bring assistance to the wounded man.

Mark paced up and down as he listened, gradually growing calmer, with the calmness which is born of despair. Everything seemed forcing him to believe that the Indian Ouleon's story was a true one; yet again and again did his loyal heart refuse this credence.

"It cannot be; it shall not be. Only this morning I saw her coming through the rain, fair and rosy, laden with blossoms, fuller of health and life than anybody else I know — and now — por Dios! I can't bear it; I must be after her!"

"Where?"

The single word of interrogation arrested him. Where, indeed? He leaned his head against Ichabod's shoulder, and that sympathetic animal seemed to shudder in unison.

Then something came into his mind that he had once heard his beloved Patience say: "If ever there is anything I can do for anybody that will

help them, I will do it. That's life, dad says, to be kind and helpful always."

"Bless her! she's showing me the way, and I'll follow it blind. Who knows where it may lead?" As this thought came to steady his resolves, he turned quietly toward old Gaspar. "Where is this Sam Brush? I'm a sort of doctor myself, and I've taken enough bullets out of people to sink a ship. I'll help him."

He was quite able. He had had a surgeon's education in his youth, and his roving life had given him a wider, if less profitable, practice than he could possibly have attained in a quieter sphere. A short time enabled him to give the patient relief and a possible chance for recovery. But he had gotten himself into business. All who had been injured in the *mêlée*, save a few of the Indians, pressed round him to have him examine their own wounds, and to assure them that old Gaspar's skill was sound.

"Great Cæsar! Do you think I can stay fooling here? Don't you know that the girl who came to stop your quarrelling, and shame you into manhood again, may be lying at the bottom of

yonder gulch? However, she went for a doctor, and I'm he. If not the one she was after, maybe as good a fellow, too. Now, is that the end? Yes, you're all right. Then, I'm off. Who'll lend his fresh horse to me? Who will ride with me himself? For Blanco and my old Ichy boy must rest first. Now, quick!"

"Where to, señor?"

"Heaven knows. Anywhere that it directs—straight to our precious señorita, if it pleases!"

In ten minutes a goodly band had assembled. Not so large as it should have been by the loss of the wounded, and of those who must do double duty at the corrals, yet still enough to scour every at all familiar trail which should prove passable between the Upper Folding and the ranch-house.

But fruitless of result, to end, or halt, that search by Long Mark's questions as he entered Mrs. Rutger's presence with the announcement. "There's an Injun in the case."

CHAPTER XVI.

TULITA AND DAVID.

IT was a fortnight after the uprising at the Upper Folding. During all this time not a trace had been found of the missing Patience, though thousands of men were still, and had been, continually searching for some sign of her whereabouts, alive or dead.

Opinion was about equally divided as to these two possibilities, and nothing was so widely discussed through all the reading world as her misfortune; for those who had never heard of David Eliot, the "Sheep King," heard of him as the stricken father, bereaved of his only child. By this affliction ministers in their pulpits pointed a moral on the vanity of wealth, and how little all possessions would avail if one lost what was dearer than his own soul.

What, indeed, were David Eliot's dollars to him

then? In themselves as much, perhaps, as they had ever been — a power for good in the world; but she who was to have lived after him, and taken her lifetime to dispense what it had taken his lifetime to accumulate — where was she?

Mrs. Rutger had not left Santa Paula. She felt that her coming there had been a fortunate thing, for she was able, somewhat, to relieve her cousin David from the strain of meeting people and answering questions; though save for the haggard look upon his fine face and the sad alteration in his appearance, the man gave little sign of what he endured during that fortnight of suspense.

This night she felt impelled to seek him, where he had shut himself in his own library; and on the way thither she met old Mark, who looked scarcely less worn than Mr. Eliot himself, but who had not once abandoned hope.

"Oh, Mr. Corlear! I want advice. There's a girl in one of the rooms who says she must see my cousin — that she has news for him."

"Who is she?"

"An Indian princess."

"They're all that. The whole race is made up of the nobility. That Ouleon was one—"

"Don't! please don't mention him. You always get so angry, and—"

"And, ma'am?"

"I—somebody told me—it seemed—"

"Sort of wild and Westerny, eh? Well, I know what you mean. The herder told you—he told you true. I did send that treacherous snake flying over the cañon wall, and—"

"Oh, how dreadful!"

"And—I'd do it again for half the provocation. Humph! Call that a sin? I call it righteous judgment and not half enough of it. The fewer such creatures are alive the better for the world at large. That's your Injun for you. Like them still?"

"I think they can't be all bad. This girl looks noble, and she is beautiful."

"That rat Ouleon was noble-looking, too; I reckon you'd call him beautiful. I've seen him on the streets—but you seem flustered."

"I am; I never knew until just now—until this girl told me—that the suspected murderer, the man you killed—"

"Hold on, ma'am; the snake I *hope* I killed. Proceed."

"Was that fine-looking seller of bows and arrows that I patronized in Los Angeles. So he must have been the same who poisoned the spring, also?"

"Exactly. Nice chap, wasn't he? That's the kind women make fools of; like the real murderers in prisons whom they load with posies. Bosh! life disgusts me."

Mrs. Rutger smiled patiently. She had grown to have a great regard for this rough-spoken old traveller, and she did not mind in the least his contempt for many things she approved. She returned to her subject with a gentle smile.

"This girl says that she must see David, and nobody else; that the news she has to give must be given to him personally; and that she must have his own personal pledge that the reward she asks shall be granted her. What shall I do? Is it worth while to disturb him? Yet she appears so straightforward and —"

"Spare me, ma'am. Well, let's put it another way. Neither you nor I believe her news is

worth anything. Well, that's all right. But if you were David Eliot, would you lose a single chance? There's a million cranks writing and offering suggestions; but if even one out of the million is good, why, it's worth trying, so it seems to me."

"You are right. I'll go to him."

In a moment she had been bidden to enter the library, but her heart sank as Mr. Eliot looked up so eagerly, and she realized that the father's hope of good news would never die. To encourage that hope only to see it wither again seemed the refinement of cruelty.

"Well, Hortense, what is it?" His tone was abrupt, and showed the strain he was under.

"There's a girl — an Indian girl — here, who says she has news for you, and she will give it to nobody else. Do you wish to see her?"

"At once!" He rose as he spoke, and it grieved her again to think of his sudden confidence being in vain, as it most likely would prove. "At once, Hortense! Where is she? Quick!"

"Wait here; I'll bring her. There are curious people about, eager to hear all that we learn, and she especially desires privacy."

"Quickly, then, cousin, please!"

"Surely."

She hurried away and came back immediately, followed by a tall girl whose bearing reminded David Eliot forcibly of his lost Patience. There was the same erect and graceful carriage, the same proud setting of the head, the same directness of manner; yet with these the resemblance ended. In place of Patience's fairness was this olive skin; the eyes, alike in color, were utterly unlike in shape; and this girl's head was crowned by a plait of smooth, dark braids, where, on Patience's own, would have glowed a mass of golden curls.

The ranchman rose as the stranger entered, rendering this daughter of the plains the homage he would have done her more fortunate sisters. "You wish to see me, Princess——"

"Tulita. She whom your daughter honored by the title of 'friend.'"

Mr. Eliot was puzzled. "Will you be seated, princess?" he asked, again using the title she had herself given. At the same time he observed with some admiration the simple fittingness of her attire — a blouse and skirt of soft buckskin, fas-

tened at the throat with a cluster of scarlet beads. The skirt hung nearly to her ankles, and these were covered by close leggings of the same soft skins, while her shapely feet gave graceful outline to her glove-like moccasins. Over her shoulders rested a fine scarlet blanket, and the picture she made was a charming one.

The first words she spoke fixed this picture forever in David Eliot's mind, and colored all his future actions.

"I have come, sir, to bring you news of your child."

The father's face whitened. He could not ask what kind of news; but Tulita spared him.

"The news is *good*, else I would not have presumed at all. But, before I give it, you must pledge me a reward."

In spite of his eagerness a sense of disappointment filled the ranchman's heart. Only for a moment, however. Let her be as mercenary as she would — what mattered it? "Speak quickly, and claim it; but tell your news first!"

"No; the reward must be promised first. I crave the life of my foster-brother. He has done

evil, and even I cannot forgive him; for I, too, love your daughter. But he is not evil *in himself;* he is wrong here" — and she tapped her forehead — "what the mission fathers called crazed. He has but one thought — his people and their wrongs. For his people he has sinned; but he is atoning — yes. Will you pardon him and save his life — if I give you back your daughter?"

"Surely — *surely*. No matter who or what he is! and — if it is in my power. Now, quick — where is she, and — and — how?"

He sank back in his chair, faint with eagerness and longing, and Tulita sprang to his side in fear.

"Courage, white man. Your daughter lives and is well. Give me your hand in pledge that you will keep your word, and you shall see her before you sleep."

He tried to extend his hand, as she desired, but the reaction after the long strain had been too much. David Eliot's head fell forward on his breast, and Tulita's cry rang through the startled house: —

"Oh! have I killed him!"

CHAPTER XVII.

OFF TO THE RESCUE.

MRS. RUTGER and Long Mark reached the library at the same moment, to find Tulita staggering under the weight of Mr. Eliot's body as she attempted to lift it from the chair and lay it on the floor.

With a rudeness for which he was afterward most penitent, Mark pushed the girl aside and caught his friend away.

"What's this? Another murder, and by one of your race, too? Truly, the heavens shall fall for this!"

She did not offer the least resistance to his brutality, but permitted him to do as he pleased, only watching him earnestly as if quite as anxious as he. Mrs. Rutger was wholly unnerved, and could merely stand idly by, wringing her hands and moaning.

"Water!" cried Long Mark, striving to loosen the collar about David's neck, and succeeding only in half choking the sufferer. "What ails this thing? Water, I say!"

"Go you for the water, sir; I will make him comfortable," said Tulita, casting one glance, half scornful, half entreating, toward Mrs. Rutger, "if it may be my privilege."

"I should think it had better be. What did you do to him, anyway?"

"I promised him his daughter. The water, please; I know not where to find it." As she spoke Tulita had deftly removed the stiff linen from the unconscious man's throat and opened his clothing so that nothing should impede his returning respiration.

As Long Mark ran out of the room, tumbling over himself and everything that obstructed his passage in his wild haste, he reflected grimly: "She did not make one single false move. I'd think she'd been a hospital nurse all her life, she was that sure-handed and wise. Strange that such a promise as that could kill, where his awful trouble has not. But folks don't die of joy—

not often. They don't get enough of it in this created. Here, you, somebody! Bring water — *water*, I tell you — right away, gallons of it! Your master — what are you all staring for? Why don't you bring it?"

"It's already been brought — poor señor!" said old Gaspar, coming up and laying his hand upon Long Mark's shoulder. "Go back to the library. The señor is coming-to all right. You'll be the first one he asks for. Come."

Mark faced about and started on a run down the corridor, but paused as the echo of a laugh greeted him. At this he wheeled about, glaring and indignant.

"Who's laughing? Who dares at such a time as this? Or is it — what! Anita, you? I thought you loved — alas, I'm growing a fool under all this trouble. I did not know I loved her so, even as if she were my own flesh and blood — almost my own little daughter, Patience. I'm a changed man, a changed man!"

Yet if he were, there were few at Santa Paula who did not love him nor ascribe to the right cause his anxiety, his excitable actions. Anita, the

last to be reproved, came forward, still smiling and showing her white teeth, while the light in her eyes was something good to see.

"Poor Señor Mark! No wonder that you know not what you are doing! And why should one not laugh at good news? Has not the little Indian girl told the master of our señorita? She is alive — she is well! En verdad, I myself must laugh so much now, that I shall never get my tasks done. Yes; but go, go! — they are calling for you, Señor Mark!"

"But how do you know? What you are telling me? Who said —"

"No matter. Ten thousand pardons, but why will you tarry? Do you not hear! It is the master's voice — yes. No matter now. Only you are wise, señor; you are always full of sayings and proverbs. One proverb you have never heard — yes? 'Joy is swifter than lightning.' No matter how — we know, we know!" And, forgetful of everything else but the tidings she had heard, pretty Anita went skipping down the corridor plump into old Gaspar's arms, who, though he was given to reproving the "silly maids" for

every bit of levity, had now nothing but approval.

"If it be only true, in verity!" he said.

"But why should it *not* be true, old croaker—no? Is not the same sky over the evil and the good? I, Anita, will believe that all is well, for I loved her."

"Loved I her not, bobilla?" (little fool). "But why waste I my breath with a woman? If there is news, I shall be needed—*I*, Gaspar!" and, strutting as he had not once been seen to do since the trouble came to Santa Paula, he joined the fast increasing throng of friends and servants about the library entrance.

"No, joy doesn't kill—not often," repeated Long Mark, as he stood gazing with beaming eyes upon the speedy restoration of his friend David; and half jealous that this restoration should have been so completely without his aid; for, when he had returned to the library, there was Mr. Eliot, still upon the floor, indeed, but in a sitting posture, with his head against Tulita's shoulder and his eager eyes smiling up into her face. For she, with sure intuition, was repeating again and again

the words that he could not hear often enough — the words which had caused his seizure, yet were its most certain cure: —

"Your daughter Patience is well, and you shall see her to-night!"

Long Mark approached. "Can't I help you up, old chap? What you doing there on the floor, with more lounges around here than you know what to do with? Courage! make a try."

"H'm, Mark, you're a doctor. You'd better come along. Are the horses saddled?"

"Which ones? There are always horses saddled here."

Mr. Eliot extended his hands and was assisted to his feet. Each instant his strength came back more rapidly, but he was still shaky and faint.

Mrs. Rutger interposed: "You must not ride anywhere, Cousin David, without some food. You have eaten nothing to day. It's more that than anything else which made you ill."

"Haven't I? I didn't know it. Well, of course. Quickly, though, and as I ride. The horses — quick!"

Gaspar placed himself in front of his master.

"Shall we take Blanco, señor? And which will you ride? My own bay is fresh, and fast almost as Negro was."

Tulita made a protesting motion; and, as she was now the chief object of David Eliot's attention, he observed this instantly and motioned for silence.

"If you please, sir, it is best to send all these people away, except the two or three who are most in your interest."

Nobody moved. Were not all there equally in the master's interest?

Again Tulita spoke, this time with a smile of amusement upon her lips: "That is well. All, then, but this lady, this Long Mark, and this Gaspar, are unnecessary."

The group in the room dispersed, though reluctantly. Not until the master had raised his hand again, and imperatively, did the last person, save the three privileged ones, disappear.

"That's the way with you, David, old boy. Always did spoil your employees; and now these misguided creatures think they've just as good a right to any good news going about Patience as

you have. If you'd only trained 'em not to love her—"

David smiled, and Mark was satisfied. He turned to the "princess" with an impatient gesture. "Now, out with the whole yarn. Don't keep us on tenter-hooks any longer. Where's our Patty, and what do you know 'bout her?"

"I left her but two hours ago. She did not see me, but knew that I was near her. I will take her father to her at once, if he is able to sit in his saddle. It is a spot where one must ride. There should be, also, a horse for her to ride back upon. Her own white one, if that may be. That is all. Besides us, nobody else must go."

"But what guarantee have we that you aren't up to some more Injun crookedness? David to go it alone, along with an Injun—male or female—after what we've experienced with the vermin? Well, I guess not! Not while Long Mark Corlear is in California. No, siree! Not a step do you stir with this Indian girl, Davy boy, unless I'm alongside. So, Miss Princess, just mark that down."

Mrs. Rutger nodded silent approval of this

decision. Mr. Eliot himself was impressed by it, though he walked about impatiently and feebly, awaiting the arrival of the word that the horses were ready. Tulita alone was not disturbed. Her resolute face lost none of its determination, nor did her eyes sink.

"It is well, maybe, and it is natural, enemies of my people, that you should mistrust an Indian girl. But does one betray the hand that has saved her life? What is dearer than life to the proud heart whether it beats under a white or a red skin? Honor. Well, know then, that it was your Patience, the white-faced princess, whom you love, who saved Tulita's honor. But for her I might now be in a prison — for a theft I never committed. She saved me my freedom, dearer to the daughter of the plains even than to you. Do you remember, sir, on that Noche Buena, by the jeweller's window, the poor puma tamer who sought to earn a fiesta for her people and was thrown down? Of course" — her lip curled scornfully — "when the diamond was lost it was the poor Indian girl who had stolen it! Only *she*, the beautiful one, she of the golden heart, was

merciful. She saved me. Shall I, can I, then, betray her?"

Mr. Eliot was convinced. With a smile he extended his hands toward Tulita, who took them modestly, yet flushing with pride.

"My dear girl, is it so? How could I fail to recognize you? Of course I trust you. It shall all be as you say. We two will go quite alone, taking Blanco for — for — my darling." His emotion choked him, but he forced it aside. "For yourself there must be, also, a good mount, and, Mark, just tell Gaspar to put a side-saddle on his bay for the princess. As for you, bring all the household with you and meet us on — at any point Tulita names, when I return. I leave it to you to make my Patience's home-coming as joyous as it should be."

A moment later he was in the saddle, his face radiant as a boy's, Blanco's bridle-rein in his grasp, and only waiting for the "princess" to be mounted and off.

"Meet us on the mesa by the olive grove, good sir," said the girl to Mark. "We will be there when the moon is two hours from setting. But

I will run instead of ride, Señor Eliot. It will be quite as swift."

"Impossible! Though I have heard marvellous tales of Indian speed. It isn't that. She who is such a messenger of good to me must ride in state. So I have left you Gaspar's own bay as the best we could offer you. Let him lift you up, I must be off."

"Very well, as you wish. Only, the saddle — I cannot use that. The bridle will do, and the blanket if you think best. That is for the horse himself. Otherwise —" She made a gesture of blowing thistle-down from the tips of her brown fingers.

Gaspar was in distress. He was proud to have had his horse selected as the mount of honor on this momentous occasion, and yet his pride was tempered by a certain distrust of anything Indian in any case, and that this one should elect to ride without a saddle seemed to intimate but one thing — if she didn't murder his master, she would certainly run away with his horse.

"Off with the saddle, boy! Why do you wait?"

Gaspar was forced to obey, but almost before

he had done so the Indian girl had leaped to the bay's back, and waving her hand with a glad, triumphant gesture toward the distant mountains, dashed forward at a speed which even the thoroughbred she rode had never attained before.

It was none too great a speed for David Eliot. He struck spurs into his own fine mount, and like a flash the three horses passed out of sight beyond the walnut grove.

"Well, it's sink or swim now! I wish — I — wish — Well, I promised I wouldn't. Else Ichy boy and I'd give 'em a taste of Araby the blest, for a race. However, let's prepare. I don't expect really — yet I do, too — ever again to see hide nor hair of those three horses, nor what's on their backs. Yet, I'm going along just as if I knew we'd have them and all creation coming back to supper. Come on, all you girls and boys. Come on, Mrs. Rutger. Let's show them the kind of a feast we can get up in California for a fatted calf exhibit. Fly around, now, you black-eyed Susans and Anitas, and all the rest. Your mistress is coming home! Three cheers for Tulita! And out with Old Glory! Run her up, boys, run up the American flag! Hooray!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN THE GREAT CAVERN.

WHEN Patience Eliot found herself alone in the darkness and silence she knew that she had been betrayed, and her knowledge of the mountains and their lore convinced her that her prison was one of the caves said to be numerous in that cañon.

For a long while she sat quiet, benumbed by terror and apprehensive of still more misery to come. Starvation, murder, torture — in all the horrible forms she had ever heard suggested by the stories told about the camp-fires of the ranchmen — rose in her mind to sap her strength and courage.

Then a little saying she had heard somebody use, under far less awful circumstances, came to her memory, "'While there's life there's hope.' Well, I'm certainly alive. I mean to just keep

saying that over and over, ten — twenty times. Maybe by that time I'll think of something else."

She did: "'He will give His angels charge concerning thee!'" And the comfort which those words brought her was deeper and remained longer than the first. "Maybe, Ouleon will come back soon. If he does I'll tell him about Tulita, and that I am a friend to all Indians. I don't see why he should wish to harm me. Unless he wanted to steal Blanco."

However, this supposition was quickly rejected.

"That couldn't be. He'd know, if he knew anything, that everybody at this end of California knows Blanco. He's one of the horses always being written about in the papers — even in 'Frisco they know him. Blanco couldn't be made off with and not discovered. That's because he's so white and beautiful and splendid. The grand fellow! If I only knew that he was safe! How is he ever to get out of the cañon? That's another reason why he wouldn't be stolen, because he couldn't be."

For a long time Patience sat still, waiting and

listening for the return of her captor, but when an hour or more had passed and he came not, she grew overcome with drowsiness and fell asleep.

She was wakened at last by the touch of a cold nose upon her hand, and by the flutter of wings about her head. She opened her eyes with a start, only to find herself in the same impenetrable gloom, and feeling stiff and numb from the long sitting upon the stone floor of the cavern.

"Oh, what is it? Where is it? Ouleon — *Ouleon!*"

Her terrified scream came back to her in muffled echoes, as from immeasurable depths, and she knew from visits made to other "exhibition" caves that this one must be a large one, extending perhaps for miles beneath the earth.

After an instant she reflected: "Well, I'm hungry, and I'll not sit still and die in one place. There's something besides myself alive in here, and I'll try to find out what. I'm not much afraid of animals, which is one good thing. But what if this should be the home of wild beasts? Pshaw! I'll not think of such a possibility! I'll think of everything hopeful. Ouleon will come

back. They say he loves money passionately. I've heard him called the 'miser Indian,' and maybe he's found me alone in the cañon and thought he'd a fine chance to make some money. Of course, that's it! Why didn't I think of that before? He'll go straight to dad and tell him I'm imprisoned somewhere, and demand a big pile of gold for me, and dad'll give it to him instante! That's exactly how it is. I see it as plain as daylight — as daylight used to be! I wonder if it is daylight still outside? I wonder how long I slept? I wonder —"

Again Patience felt a cold touch upon her hand, and snatched it away in fear. Then, ashamed of this, cautiously extended it again.

"What are you, you living thing? Are you all alone here in the earth as I am?"

The creature, whatever it was, came closer to her as she spoke, and seemed more like some tame thing than a wild beast. It even rubbed itself against her, as if trying to be friendly, and this gave Patience a keen relief.

"It isn't ferocious, at any rate. Oh, if I could only see!"

Moving forward carefully, testing each inch of advance by the pressure of her foot, the prisoner came all at once upon a projection in the wall which reached about as high as her waist. Feeling along this ledge with her hands, she touched a little pile of sharp stones lying beside some dry feathery stuff, suggesting pampas plumes.

"Flint and torches!" she cried aloud, and in another instant had struck two of the stones deftly together, as her Indian friends had taught her. There followed a spark of fire, and, delighted by even a particle of light, Patience again struck the flints, holding a bit of the grass in readiness to ignite.

The result was even more than she anticipated. The plume she had selected was so large that its burning illumined the whole surrounding darkness, and showed her better than anything else a little pile of tule reeds, soaked in fat, and lying beside a rude clay lamp. She had seen just such as these in many an Indian cabin, and she knew that Ouleon had prepared them for his own use in this cavern.

"That proves he's in the habit of coming here,

and he will certainly come back. But if he's here enough to need such a lot of rushes as this, he must be for a good deal of the time. I've heard that the Indians live in the caves, though nobody seemed to know just where. And I'm going to light the lamp and explore. I'll talk aloud, too, all the time, and then I shall not feel so afraid. I always did hate to be alone."

She fixed the rushlight in the lamp and lighted it, and while the flame thus produced did not give half the radiance of the blazing grass plume, it was steady, and by its aid she gradually examined her prison-house.

Yet when the light fell upon the animal which had touched her, her heart sank, the creature looked so formidable. Still, much of this timidity passed when she had scrutinized it as well as she could, for it had retreated to a corner behind the ledge of rock, as if the light were painful to it or else that it was disappointed in herself.

"Why, it's a fox!—a great white fox!—as white, almost, as Blanco. My! what a coat! and the tail—it's a beauty! It must be Ouleon's pet; that's why it's tame. Come here, you

pretty fellow. You mustn't hurt me, and I certainly shall not hurt you."

She set her lamp down on the floor of the cavern and extended her hand to stroke the animal. It responded reluctantly, but it's timidity lessened as it saw that this human being, though different from the one it knew, was equally kind.

When she had gained its confidence so that it would follow her, Patience laughed aloud. "Oh, this is just like a story-book! I'm a sort of Robinson Crusoe, and I ought to find all kinds of things ready to my hand in this wonderful cave. Come on, you beautiful white animal; let's explore everything.

She moved forward eagerly, yet cautiously examining her path, for she feared a pitfall; but the floor was worn smooth by use, and something about it suggested that it had been inhabited for years.

"If I could only find the entrance! There must be some way out. And I'm so hungry and thirsty! Well, I'll do what I can, and when I'm moving I'm not so lonely. Besides, this pretty beast is almost — folks! Heigh-ho! *here's* richness!"

Richness, indeed, to one in her pitiful plight; for in a niche in the wall, though higher than her head, she saw a pile of the jerked beef which the Indians prepare to withstand the changes of time. Beside this was also a basket of corn, ground fit for samp, a few potatoes, a tin box partially filled with hardtack similar to that issued on the reservations.

"Well, I sha'n't starve, that's certain; and I'm not in the dark. Now, if I could only find water! Perhaps I can. Ouleon couldn't cook that corn without it, and I don't believe he'd eat it raw; else why should there be a kettle or pail over there? I'm sure it's Ouleon's home, where he lives every day, and that he'll soon come back. I'll just help myself to one of those crackers, and then I'll hunt the water. I've found so much, the story won't be half perfect if I don't find that, too."

She had much ado to reach the food, it was so high above her head; and when she caught a glimpse of the hungry, gleaming eyes of the white fox looking up at her from the ground, she understood why it had been so placed. But she was

agile and ingenious, and she presently brought enough of the loose stones which lay around the wall to make a sort of stepping-block. Mounted on this she could reach the store of food; and, frightened by the fox's hunger, she threw him down a bit of the dried beef and proceeded on her tour of exploration.

"It's a big place. It's ever so much higher in some parts than any room in our house, and the walls are just lovely. The further in I go the whiter and more curious they are; the damper, too, it is. These beautiful things growing upward out of the floor are stalagmites, and those up yonder are stalactites — I remember reading all about them after dad and I'd been to see a cave near 'Frisco. Dear dad! if he were only here! He'd tell me more in a minute than I'd learn in a week studying all by myself. Well, it's wet here, surely; and, to make it all right, I *must* find that spring. Oh, here comes Sir Fox. After more meat? Well, you'll have to wait and ask your master for that."

Presently, as she stooped to admire an especially lovely formation of the limestone, she saw

what looked like a path, and, after a further examination, the actual imprint of a moccasined foot.

"That's good; it must lead somewhere — I hope, if not to the outer air, at least to water."

The last desire was realized. Beyond the path, where it terminated in a little grotto, was a pool of water as cold and clear as that of the Fairy Spring itself. The pool was fed by invisible springs, and the surplus flowed gently northward in a tiny channel with a continuous rippling sound that it was company to hear.

"Thank the dear God for that. I'll take a drink of it first, then go back and bring the little kettle. Probably there is brushwood somewhere in the cave for a fire. Ouleon is a tidy fellow in his housekeeping, and I'll praise him for it when I see him. He's evidently fixed everything here for a long stay — through the rainy season, I suppose. I wonder when he will come back!"

Ouleon *was* tidy, and thrifty as well. His life at the mission, where he had been one of the house servants, had given him ideas of comfort above that of his own tribe, and this was one

reason why, now that he had left the mission, he passed his days in solitude. He visited his own settlement when he wished, but of his comings and goings nobody there took great heed. To this thriftiness and forethought against a day of need, Patience Eliot would always owe her life.

"Well, if here isn't a bed! — or what will answer for one!" she exclaimed, when after several hours more had passed and the supper she had fixed against her captor's return had waited long, she set out in another direction on a second tour of discovery.

But it was not exactly a bed. It was a store of Navajo blankets, the sight of which would have made old Rosa's eyes grow big with envy. They had never been used, and had evidently been put where they were for safe keeping. However, Patience had no scruples against appropriating them to her own use, and returning to the larger part of the cavern she piled them up high and threw herself down upon them.

She did not mean to sleep just yet, but she did; and so soundly that many hours passed before she awoke to find the white fox lying at her

feet. She was dazed at her surroundings, so different from her luxuriously appointed room at home, and as the full significance of her situation forced itself upon her mind she buried her face in the blankets again and sobbed aloud.

"Dad! Oh, my precious dad! Can't you feel me calling you, even if you can't hear? I'm alone — forsaken — lost!"

An answer came. An answer so different from the loving response she craved that it seemed to curdle the blood upon the hearer's heart.

A cry, harsh, discordant, horrible, rose and filled the silence of the great cavern. Echoed again and again through its unknown depths and passages, till it seemed to come from above, below, and all about her; and fleeing, she knew and cared not whither, Patience ran screaming into the darkness beyond.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE VISION OF TULITA.

WHEN Tulita left her home by the arroyo on that night when Ramon so relaxed his guard, she passed swiftly from the valley to the mountains beyond, and halfway up the ascent lifted her face as if her eyes would drink in all the grand beauty of that vast solitude, even as her cramped lungs had already filled themselves with the pure air, so different from that she had endured within the hut.

High above her, perched on a rocky point, stood a majestic figure bathed in the moonlight, which, in that rarefied atmosphere, seemed to clothe it with a sort of halo.

Tulita caught her breath. "It is the spirit of the great chief, my father. He has come back from his unseen abode to counsel me."

The superstitions of her race and those of her

later mission-training mingled to fill her soul with a profound awe, and, prostrating herself at the foot of the crag, she cried aloud, "Here am I, prince of thy people; be it unto me as thou wilt!"

For a moment there was silence, and then old Ramon, who was himself half-fanatic and had strange seasons of "communion" with equally strange and unseen powers, sent down an answering cry: "What doest thou here, Tulita? Thou dost well to tremble before me. When gave I thee permission to leave the safety of thy home?"

At this assumption on the part of her old attendant, Tulita's spirit returned. She loved him sincerely, but she fully felt herself a "princess," and chafed at any tone of authority, even from one so faithful as Ramon.

"Oh, is it so? Is it only thee, my uncle? Well, then, know that the day has yet to dawn on which Tulita de la Vega will ask leave of any man to do what she wills!"

Habit is a great controller of men's moods. Ramon, in his ordinary life, was almost abjectly humble before this maiden, to whom he looked for the restoration of his decayed race. Had not

the stars foretold it? Was he not at that moment consulting them, and did they not promise that this restoration should be speedy?

"In verity, Daughter of the Mighty, thou sayest. Even now I read thy fate in the vault above. But I had not finished the reading. And if I reproved thee for that thou hast done, it was because no chance must be run that will endanger thy life. Thou art not for thyself, Tulita de la Vega, but for others. The wound thou suffered has not yet healed sufficiently for thee to cast aside all prudence. Seven times more should the sun have run his course before—"

"By seven sun-courses I should have been dead, surely. Tulita can endure much, but not imprisonment. Besides, hast thou seen my foster-brother Ouleon, the Eagle Feather, since I have been within my home?"

"No; nor have I wished to," answered the old man, gloomily. He had descended and she ascended till now they stood side by side midway the crag, able to gaze upon one another's faces and read in each other's eyes the things which the lips did not speak.

"Ouleon is of my blood, Ramon the Wise. He, too, is the son of a great chief."

"In verity; but the son of a chief who betrayed his people. So will Ouleon do."

"So shall Ouleon not do!" retorted Tulita, hotly. "He shall not be a traitor."

"What I have said I have said."

"What thou hast said I will unsay. Dost thou know where my brother is, old Ramon the Croaker?"

"No; and if I did I would not tell thee. He is unworthy thy anxiety. He! — 'Coyote Jack,' the scoff and plaything of the palefaces? Ugh! Ps-t-tt!"

Tulita's face flushed. There was something degrading, to her mind, in the fact that Ouleon was defrauded of his rightful name by their white neighbors, but she did not share the old warrior's contempt for her brother's calling.

"There is no need for anger, Ramon the Wise. Nor is there any hope of future battles which shall set our people back in the place where they should be. No; I, too, am ambitious, but not as thou. I, too, believe that I will yet live to see

these mountains thronged by the descendants of our forefathers. I, too, hope to see my Ouleon depart on his mission to the great village where the White Father of both his white and his red-faced children lives. But when he returns, will it be to sound the war-cry and perish — a handful against a multitude? No, indeed, no! It will be with the proofs in his hand that all this country is once more our own. In peace will the Shoshones and the Apaches, the Navajoes, the Piutes — all, all — wherever they are, whoever they may be — that bear within their veins one drop of native blood — all shall gather in one vast concourse upon these mountains which were once and shall again be ours. All our tribal quarrels ended, we will dwell in peace — a mighty and united nation. All the white men's arts which will tend to our glory we will copy. All that are silly and useless, reject. We will not give up the traditions of our ancients in whatever they were wise, but there is also wisdom among the white men. Else, how come their broad fields teeming with food, their fruits so much finer than the wild fruits, their wealth so much greater than our wealth? We

want none of their prison-like houses, their ugly clothing, their hurtful 'fire-waters' and their brutality. But all that is good we do want — and will have. Yes; *thou* wilt be among the royal braves who have already passed into the presence of the Great Spirit, whom those pale brothers of ours call God, but *I* shall see it — I shall see it! Have not the stars so foretold, Ramon the Wise?"

The girl had become so wrought up by her own eloquence and by the beatific pictures her imagination painted that her countenance now glowed as the face of one inspired.

Ramon, more obstinate and less wise, could not relinquish his own desires that the future glory of his tribe should be accomplished through the bloody extermination of the whites, but he was forced to acknowledge a certain power in Tulita's words which impressed if it did not convince him. After a moment he answered quietly: —

"Time will prove, my daughter. Meanwhile, thou shalt go back to thy home. There is a chill in the air, and thou hast been a caged bird for long. I will remain. I must look for a fresh supply of pumas. Those who went with us on

that Noche Buena suffered even worse than thou. A curse was on them, I think, and they are dead. I did not tell thee before, until I could bring thee others. Go back, and they shall come. See! I have brought the soft ropes, the traps, the drugged food."

For answer Tulita caught up the familiar receptacle, and with a gesture of infinite disgust threw them from her.

"So ends that life, old Ramon! I have done with all such tasks. I will be seen no more upon the street of the city for such a purpose. No; I have other plans for my people — far better plans, far greater good than the paltry calling I have hitherto followed can ever bring them."

"Tulita, daughter of my soul, what has come to thee? Thou wert never like this before. Is thy head gone strange with all this silence in the cabin?"

"What has come to me? A knowledge of better things."

"What better? How? Thou hast been shut up alone. Whom sawest thou to teach thee — strangeness?"

"A word changed me, Ramon. One little word. It was spoken by the lips of a daughter of our enemies."

"What word? By whom?"

"By that other 'princess,' as her own people call her. She whose head is covered with a fleece of gold, whose skin is fair as the lilies in the pool, whose voice is like the tinkle of the brook yonder among the stones, and whose laughter like that waterfall."

"H-hm. The daughter of the rich man, who suffered thee to go away as if thou had been guilty and he generous. Pouf! What are such to thee — these usurpers where we have ruled forever? But the *word* — what was the word?"

Ramon bent forward eagerly, scanning Tulita's beautiful face.

"The word was 'friend';" and the face into which he gazed became transfigured.

"Friend! Friend! Pouf! I tell thee, Daughter of the Plain, there is no *friendship* between thee and her. It is a lie."

"It is the truth. '*Friend.*' Hear it — learn it — believe it. Her lips could not lie, ever — nor

mine. We two girls, speaking that one word, have solved the problem of two nations. Thou wilt see. It has been revealed to me, Ramon; even as thy visions have shown thee other truths. Our hands, clasped above the hatred of two peoples, shall hide it forever. Oh, my Ramon! I see it — I see it! The comfort — the beauty — the peace that shall be over all this, through us, two princesses of one land, two handmaidens of one Great Spirit!"

She swept her hands about her with a gesture that included all that great stretch of land, and, overcome by her own emotion, sank down upon her knees with her face hidden in her blanket.

CHAPTER XX.

OULEON'S STORY TO TULITA.

RAMON waited until Tulita arose from her knees; then he asked: "Art thou yet ready to return to thy home by the arroyo, Daughter of the Plain? Whatever seems good to thee, old Ramon will do. There are other ways of earning money than by toying with savage beasts. Thou sayest truly, and dwell thou in peace. I, a warrior, will find food for the women and children. The youths of the village shall arise and help me. Too long they tarry in idleness, while thou—"

"Peace, Ramon the Wise. In some things thou mistakest. The youths will not arise and labor for women till they have been taught how. I—Tulita—will teach them. But not yet; let them idle still a few days—what matters it? In the end they will stand up—*men*. So I have seen in the visions of the silent days and nights, while

this was healing — for it *is* healed. I am no longer a prisoner to pain." The girl held up her arm that had been broken, and waved it gently to and fro.

"Yes; but healed bones are not always strong bones. Seven more suns — "

"Healed bones must gather strength where they will. Is it fit that I, Tulita, daughter of a king, should be as hard to cure of evils as poorer clay? No matter; it is well enough. I am not again going to the home by the arroyo till I bring my brother with me. Too long I have suffered him to toss the burden upon my shoulders; too long he has been heaping up the money that should feed our households. He must come now and show himself a prince, or — But he *must*. There is no other way."

"Coyote Jack — a prince! Take care. He is a fool. His head is in the clouds, his feet in the mud. By and by he will stumble and fall flat. Then who will lift him up? Place not thy trust upon the renegade son of a renegade chief, Tulita, my princess."

"As for thee, Ramon, though I love thee above

all who dwell with me, if thou speakest again one word against my Ouleon I will ask thy counsel no more, forever. I have said it; and what Tulita says, she does."

Ramon shrugged his shoulders slightly. Otherwise he gave no sign that he had heard and understood her.

"Where wilt thou look for Ouleon, my daughter?"

"Where, but in the secret homes of his people?"

"They are many, and the storms have been fierce; the roads to some will be impassable. Thou wilt take care, Tulita?"

"Yes; fear thou nothing for me. I will remember. I will take care, since through me, we both agree, shall come the blessing of the red man!" answered the maiden, smiling fondly into the venerable face above her.

"The blessing of the red man; thou art, indeed, to be that, Princess de la Vega. What matters it if we two, in our visions, reach the same end, though it may be by different trails? The blessing — take mine; and if good betide thee, or ill, thou wilt find old Ramon ready and waiting either to rejoice or weep with thee."

The girl knelt down, and the old chief muttered some words of his native tongue above her downcast eyes, then raised her to her feet.

"Farewell, Ramon! Thou remainest the last, the best, of all the warriors. I go for Ouleon. He shall give thee the money he has hoarded, and thou shalt buy all things needful for the village. He has enough for that, also to go bravely to the Great White Father in the far-away council. Have faith; I will bring Ouleon and money. Farewell."

They parted without further speech. Ramon took the way into the valley, Tulita sped upward and over the mountain; but neither turned in his tracks to gaze after the other, though both felt in some indefinable way that this parting was more than ordinary. Tulita, indeed, put some of her thought into words, though only the night-birds circling about her heard them; but they relieved her spirit of a tension too strong, and restored her faith in herself and in her future.

"As I have left the village by the arroyo and the home where I have dwelt in ignorance till the visions came, so have I put all the old life

away. I folded it in the blankets and buried it in the ashes upon the hearth. The old Tulita is dead; the new Tulita lives to grow noble and great in blessing — worthy of her who called La Vega *friend!*"

There was magic in the little word. The girl's sadness all fell from her; her step became again buoyant, and her rich voice broke into the wild, sweet strains of one of her tribal hymns. Still singing, she came after a while to a cavern in the cañon, down which she had descended, and paused before its low opening to give a shrill, peculiar cry.

There was no answer; but Tulita had resolved to begin with this, the first of a series of cave-dwellings which honeycombed that gulch, and if she did not find Ouleon there, to try the next and the next till the last. Even all these failing, she would not be discouraged; there were other cañons among the mountains, and almost innumerable other secret dwellings.

"They are the last homes the palefaces have left to us undisturbed, and among them somewhere is that one which shall some day be dis-

covered, that the old, old mission-fathers knew, where the yellow gold lies deeper and richer than anywhere else in all the land. Where? I wonder; and when will it be found? If it might be by me, and soon, how swiftly would I make this wilderness a garden such as no white man ever owned! In it — But I must not dream again; dreams are for the time of illness, action for health. Ouleon! my brother!"

This time she sent her voice down the hollow opening in the cañon wall with a cry like the eagle's itself, and this time an answering cry greeted her.

"So soon? That is well. I had not hoped so much. Only the cry was faint; and lest I be mistaken, and make the long journey inward upon a fruitless quest, 'Halloo!' again. Ouleon, art thou within?"

No person who had not previously known it would ever have supposed the small aperture down which Tulita proposed to pass was the entrance to anything save the burrow of some beast; and the fresh débris piled about it showed that it had been undisturbed since the rains began. These

had now ceased for a time, but it was too early to consider them over for the year, and Tulita had remembered this in her decision to set out that night to find her foster-brother.

"Tu-li-ta!"

"It is Ouleon! He knows my voice," cried the girl, and approaching the well hidden opening she began working her way swiftly through the long, narrow passage by pushing her hand before her and clutching at the roughnesses of the wall. Very speedily she disappeared from the outer world, as one of the native serpents might have retired into its hole and with something of its same startling rapidity.

But when she had thus proceeded to twice her body's length the passage suddenly enlarged into a spacious chamber, from which other passages led into other rooms, all showing traces of long occupancy, and some showing also the beautiful limestone formations which had so enraptured the eyes of Patience Eliot in her own prison-house.

"Ouleon, my brother!"

"Here, Tulita, my sister."

Her eyes quickly grew accustomed to the dark-

ness, which was tempered slightly by the few rays of light that penetrated the narrow passage. She was able at once to find her brother, but she became chill with fear as she perceived that he did not offer to rise and greet her, nor even to at all change his recumbent position.

"Ouleon, why art thou like this? Is it illness, or an accident?"

"It is the work of the white man, Tulita. For more days than I remember have I been here."

"Alone?"

"Why not alone?"

"Thou speakest of a white man. Who? When? Where?"

"And thou askest as many questions as the silly old women in the village. Listen! But, first, of thyself. Was thy hurt a bad one, Tulita?"

"No matter. It is past."

"It made me wild for revenge. I *tried* to avenge thee that very night. Upon those, also, who had caused thee thy trouble."

"Ouleon! Quick! What dost thou mean?"

"Art thou pleased, Tulita? I am glad. Then I know that I was right. I feared — a little —

that thou would blame me. Well, another time. Fate is fate. They cannot escape."

Tulita put her hand on Ouleon's forehead. It was cool, and his breath came evenly. He was not, then, suffering from that fever which did sometimes distort his thought, and which the old pardrés had called "crazed."

"Ouleon, tell me, first. Art thou in need of anything I can do now?"

"No. Ouleon is an eagle. The eagle may suffer a broken wing, but does it therefore complain? Wilt thou listen?"

"Yes, yes."

"On that last night in the city. Thou hadst been thrown down and injured. Had not old Ramon been there beside thee I would have been. But it was better so, I thought. It gave me a chance for that vengeance which I meant should be swift and sure. Besides, these white skins have more money in their pouches than I can earn catching my little beasts in many a day. To be rid of them, that they never more should harm a daughter of my people, and at the same time fill my bosom with that precious money

which we will need when we go up to the great pow-wow. Truly, I was in the highest favor."

"Ouleon, of whom art thou speaking? Quick, the names!"

"They call her the other 'Princess' Eliot. The rich man and his child, thou must surely know them. They talked with thee that night."

Tulita had become very calm. She was cold with apprehension, but she would not again interrupt this story by any question. Ouleon went on: —

"I knew a way. The best way and the surest. I took it. I got me a poison to kill me a hundred coyotes. Then I mounted and rode for life — for death! They, too, would mount and ride, but I would be the first at the Fairy Spring. Only — the old white man —"

"Well?" interrupted Tulita, with a gasp.

"But for him it would have been all well; exactly as the trap was set the prey would have been snared. But he came. He always comes. He came, I say, and he rode beside me all the way, or nearly. Then he pretended to go away to the lower ranch, and I was free. It worked.

I had planned it all before; how I could stop the coming and the flowing of the spring. It worked. Into the little channel it trickled safely; but in the pool, where I had stopped it well, where all men and all beasts which pass that way always must drink, I put the poison. Ay, it worked, for the horse lay dead that tasted it but once."

Even in the dimness Tulita could see the satisfaction which overspread the haggard, sinister face of the speaker.

"The others — did they also drink?"

"No; for that white man — my enemy — he had not gone away. He had hidden, and when they came he cried out and warned them. I shot him and he fell; I thought that he was dead, but when I went back after all was still he had been taken away. If he died he came back to life again, for he met me in the cañon, or on the mesa above it, and — here I am. But, that other princess — long will the days and nights be to her, where she is shut up in the darkness; for she will not have what Ouleon has had — sweet thoughts of revenge achieved — to comfort her."

Tulita's natural affection, always strong and pro-

tecting, seemed suddenly frozen within her. *This* — her Ouleon, from whom she had hoped so much? But her agonized curiosity was the only emotion of which she was conscious.

"How comes she in the darkness, Ouleon?"

"As fate willed. There was trouble in the rich man's places; trouble which Ouleon began, and the fool white men took up and finished. I had set them to fighting one another, like birds of prey, and I was satisfied. Then, afterward, as I went down the gulch toward that cavern beyond, I saw her — the white princess — imprisoned there by the storm. She was on her white horse, and only I might get her free. Did I? I went to her, and she trusted me. They are all fools, these pale-faces. So I blindfolded her eyes, and led her all the perilous way. Without me she would have died in the cañon, unless her own people had found her in time; or she would else have died crossing the Ledge of Death. But with my care she lived, and still lives, *a prisoner*, as I am; but not, like me, a prisoner by choice, who can free himself at his will — when his strength comes back."

Tulita sat silent, too moved to speak, and pon-

dering how best to accomplish the object which she had resolved upon the very instant that Ouleon had uttered the reassuring words, "still lives."

"Did I not well, Tulita?"

"I will tell thee that later. Let me hear the finish of the tale; there is more to come."

"Surely. I left her secure; but there is food enough. She will live a long time; and for company there is the fox and the owls above her head. When I can walk once more I will go back. I will offer her freedom for her money, and I will not release her without it. She will promise, but —I don't know; I get confused, some way. It was the fall he sent me to—"

"What fall, Ouleon, my brother?" asked Tulita, sisterly affection again returning to her heart.

"The man I shot and hoped to kill. When I had left the white girl in her prison I took her horse home. Ah! I remember. I was to demand money from her father, not from her. He would see the horse, and he would believe; and I would make the price a large one. But, instead—"

"Instead?"

"That man again! He was there at the brink

of the mesa, with hatred in his heart and revenge in his hand. He had loved the palefaces, his friends; so he hated me, their enemy. He spake with me, and he flung me. I rolled over and over. It was a long stretch to the bottom of the gulch, and any other would have died; but not Ouleon. A day and a night I lay there; then I crept — crept to this. It was the nearest. There is always food in these caverns. I know not in which I will ever pass the night, and what I do not bring to them other braves do. No bones were broken. I shall be well again; but my head — I like best to lie still and wait. When hunger comes I crawl away and eat, but it is little; and water is always here at my hand. Art pleased, Tulita de la Vega?"

"I shall be better pleased when thou tellest me in what cave she lives and suffers, this other would-be princess." The tone of her voice was intended to disarm his suspicion, and it did.

"Thou couldst not set her free, Tulita."

"Why should I try? But why could I not?"

"Because before the entrance is a rock which only many men can move, or — *he who knows its secret!*"

"Then, if I could not move it, nor be so moved by her entreaties, thou mightest as well tell me just where it is. I will go and look upon it from the outside, and reflect upon the revenge my Ouleon has wrought."

"I do not mind that, Tulita. Thou art a feeble child, and the strength of thy hand is the strength of a bird's claw. North, north, and north again, where the manzanite is thick and there is a cross of stones, such as the padrés used to heap in their journeyings to and fro."

"But such crosses are plentiful as the clouds in the sky."

"But not a cross all of white stones. Ouleon knows. Did he not help to build it just within the sheltering rocks? I tell thee, Tulita, that is the cavern where the gold will some day be found. I, Ouleon, will find it. I live there, mostly, just for that, so that no other brave may suspect and find it."

"The gold! Ouleon, art thou crazed indeed! These palefaces have sharp eyes. While thou liest here laughing to have shut her up, that other princess may already have been digging it

out herself. Her hair is of gold. I have heard it said in the city that her father has but to touch a thing and it turns to gold. Thou hast wrought thine own undoing, Ouleon, my brother. Unless —"

"Unless? Quick, Tulita!"

Forgetful of the wounds and bruises which had been so terrible, and which were still far from healed, the Indian raised himself upon his elbow and scanned her face.

The princess had lighted the rush-lamp and placed it beside her. Its rays illumined her beautiful countenance, over which so many conflicting emotions played.

"*Unless you tell me exactly how to find her*, and so protect the treasure."

"But if I tell thee, what good? Thou canst not move the door of rock. I might *show* thee, I could never tell thee its secret!" cried Ouleon, in despair; for his weakened brain could now grasp but one idea; and wholly merged in his fear of losing an unknown and doubtful treasure was the other fear of having his prisoner escape without a rich ransom.

"But is there no other way?"

"None that admits of entrance. There is one — a spot, a vein or fissure in the cañon wall itself — through which one might look down upon her and gloat upon her misery."

"Then tell it to me quick, my brother!"

He believed her at one with himself — and told.

CHAPTER XXI.

A TALK THROUGH THE CAVERN'S ROOF.

TULITA crawled back out of the cavern in which she had found Ouleon; but she had no sooner reached the outer air than she regretted having done so little for his personal comfort. Her love for Patience Eliot had sprung up suddenly in her heart — an absorbing affection, noble and beautiful, and that was to influence all her life for good. But the old saying, "Blood is thicker than water," is no truer anywhere than among those people who live according to natural instincts without the restraints of a higher civilization.

"He said that she had food and drink if she would use it, while he — poor Ouleon! Those whom the Great Spirit has deprived of something here" — and she tapped her forehead — "should be the especial care of their own households. I will go back and help him first; it is my duty."

In a few moments she again appeared in the cavern, and, to Ouleon's now greatly excited fancy, like a tormenting spirit. The fever which had lain dormant in his veins rose and burned fiercely, and his wild ravings frightened Tulita, while they all the more convinced her that she had been wise to return.

She resolutely put all thoughts of Patience from her as she set to work to allay his distress.

"He is suffering great pain, that is plain; and the heat in his temples is terrible. Well, I can help that, at least. I saw some of that fever-weed outside this very cavern; I will get it and bruise it at once," thought Tulita, and hurried back again into the outer air.

She cared little for the troubles of this difficult passage to and fro, and quickly returned with the plant in her hand. Bruising the great cool leaves, she bound them about Ouleon's head; and at the grateful touch he opened his eyes and smiled faintly. He was evidently a very ill man, and Tulita made haste to fetch the gourd of water fresh from the little spring that, as in most other caves of that cañon, bubbled close at hand.

All night she tended her foster-brother, though her heart ached with its longing to reach and set free the girl about whom all her young imagination clustered with ideal romance. And all night she listened to his broken utterances — fragments of the dreams which had filled his unbalanced mind, or of the sordid habits of his life.

But toward morning the tenor of his thoughts seemed changed, and Tulita listened with quickened interest as the words, "Gold," "Swing right — left — up — down," "The owls hoot," "Food enough," "Die, die, die!" and a great many similar disjointed phrases proved that his brain was then busy with his last piece of treachery — the imprisonment of Patience Eliot, and its possible consequences.

"Swing right — left — up — down," repeated the coyote hunter again and again, and once after such repetition he added, angrily: "Why dost thou tarry, Tulita? I have told thee! She will get it — she will get it all! The gold — quick! — if she is not free — she must not — *the gold!*"

Tulita laid her hands upon the tossing hands

of the sick Indian and held them firmly. The touch quieted his restlessness, and after a little he relapsed into a deep slumber from which Tulita knew he would awake a sane man, though a much weaker one. But she hailed the silence gratefully, glad of a chance to sit and think over the words she had heard, and which she knew referred to Patience.

"After he rouses once more I will cook him a breakfast of beef and biscuit; and I will make him tea of the slumber-bush; then he will lie at ease and peace for hours, and I — can set that other princess free."

Soothed by her own plans, Tulita also sank into a refreshing sleep from which she waked at daybreak, and set to work to care for her Ouleon as she had designed.

He, indeed, slept late under the healing effects of the leaves upon his brow; but he woke at length, and eagerly ate the food prepared by Tulita, and drank deep draughts of the sweet-flavored tea.

"Thou hast the gift of women, Tulita, my sister. Thou canst heal all ills. I have longed for thee

sorely sometimes, when the pain racked my limbs. But, mostly, I have not suffered much. Now I will suffer no more. I will drink and sleep, Tulita, and when I wake we will go together, thou and I, to that cavern in the north where she is, alone with the gold. There is gold upon her head, too, thou sayest. It is a part of that — But what — art angry, Tulita?"

"Not angry, my brother; but thou art comfortable and on the road to health. I will go now, and come again."

"Where wilt thou go?"

"To speak with thy prisoner. Is that not well?"

"Yes; but thou canst not let her out. No; I took care for that. Only, some day, if thou wilt swear to be faithful, I will show thee how to open the great door of the cavern. Nobody alive now knows but Ouleon. So I believe the Padré Miguel knew. He told me; but the padré is dead — peace be with him! and if Ouleon were dead — but he's not. Farewell, Tulita. Safe journey, safe return."

Tulita went joyfully away. She was always

fleet of foot, but she had never moved as swiftly as she did then; and very soon she had gained that point which Ouleon had described, where a crevice in the cañon wall admitted the descent of a human body. Narrow as it was, and easily overlooked by the ordinary passer through the main ravine, Tulita found, as her brother had described, a sort of stairway cut in the rocks. The care bestowed on these steps, and the smoothness to which some of them had been worn, proved that it had been a descent utilized for ages, perhaps.

"It may be true — that old, old story! This may, indeed, be the very way to the 'cave of gold,' though Ouleon has not yet found it, well as he knows the place; because if he had we should have seen some signs of his possessing it before. No; he thinks it leads to it, but at the end there is no trace. Well! I, too, am after gold; but gold richer than was ever dug from any mine — the sight of a golden head."

In a few seconds she had reached the uttermost depth to which it was possible to proceed; and there, exactly as Ouleon had told, was a small, flat

stone, whereon were traced some curious hieroglyphics. Indian paintings they appeared to be, and though Tulita had been an apt scholar during the few years that she had been under the care of the mission fathers, and had often seen such paintings in their possession, she had never been allowed to study their significance.

But at that moment she cared not one whit for any hidden message from any dead and gone Indian. She longed only for the welcome sound of a clear, girlish voice; and carelessly tossing aside the stone, which moved smoothly and easily, she put her lips to the aperture in the earth which this disclosed, and gave a loud cry.

"Hola, O hola!" the familiar halloo of that locality—that which was very often on the lips of Patience Eliot herself.

There followed a silence, and after waiting a reasonable time lest she might lose a return halloo, Tulita cried again. Again she waited, and again she cried; and at last, as hope was dying within her, there was borne to her strained hearing a faint sound that was too unlike her own summons to be its echo.

"She is there! *She lives!* But it sounds — Is she ill?"

It was no *echo,* surely; nor was the prisoner's response faint for the reason that Tulita feared. But the cavern was a mighty one, and Patience was at that hour taking the daily walks throughout its chambers which had helped to keep hope alive. Each day she had thought, "To-day I may find a way out;" and each day — till then — she had returned from the fruitless search disappointed, but not wholly discouraged.

"God would not suffer me to live so long if He did not mean me to escape at last," she said over and over to the white fox, who had become her constant and now loving companion; and as for the owls, whose screeches and cries had almost killed her with fright during that early portion of her imprisonment, these had become a most curious and interesting study to her. She had seen none of their sort before, and she often found herself laughing at the grotesque results of her efforts to tame and teach them.

So on that day when Tulita came, Patience was less startled than if she had given up hope in the first place.

"Hark, Reynard! Listen! You do! You can hear with your sharp ears even quicker than I. It is a halloo! It is somebody looking for me; it sounds this way. Come!"

She ran forward, following the rescuer's voice, but misled sometimes by the echoes of the cavern, and advancing in one direction only to retrace her steps and take another; and at last she came so near, the "Hola, O hola!" grew so distinct, that she could also make her own glad response heard.

"Thank the dear God!" she cried aloud. Then came a second thought: "What if it is Ouleon come again — only to do me more harm! Well, he is still a human being; he cannot be *all* bad."

Then her fears died wholly, for the next cry sounded so near and so clear that she could tell it was a girl's voice — an eager and glad voice — and she shouted with all the force which her intense relief and joy could give to her bell-like tones.

"I am here — I, Patience Eliot!"

"And I am here — Tulita, the Indian girl!"

"Will you let me out?"

"Be patient — I cannot; the door is too heavy. But I have only just heard of this — this awful

thing. I am going straight to your father himself. Listen. It was my brother — my poor, wicked, half-crazed brother who has shut you up. I will atone for it if you and I live long enough. So you will believe me, and keep heart while I am gone. The way is a long one, and I must run it. I have no horse, yet that shall not make me the later back if love can wing my footsteps. Take heart — I will return, and I will bring your father with me. He, and he alone, shall open the door of your prison and set you free. Do you believe me? Will you trust me?"

Patience strained her eyes to see the face above the aperture in the cave's roof; yet though she failed in this the words carried clear and distinct.

She was so happy that she could scarcely control her own utterance; but she replied, and Tulita heard, "I trust you; I will wait in patience." Then as another thought occurred, "That Ouleon — will he not also come?"

"Fear not; if I read the signs aright, Ouleon, the Eagle Feather, will come no more to his home in the North Cañon. He lies at rest and ill. Forget him; remember only Tulita, whom you called

friend — who will prove herself such, or die. Adios!"

"Adios!" returned Patience, and caught up old Reynard in such an embrace as astonished him into slinking away to the remotest chamber of the cavern, sociable animal though he really was.

"Never you mind, Reynard, my friend. There are others coming — and dad — my dad!"

CHAPTER XXII.

"SWING RIGHT — LEFT — UP — DOWN."

LONG MARK meant to do exactly as he was bidden; but, "Hang it all, Ichy boy! You and me have had enough of Injuns. If it had been a white-skinned girl who had run off with David Eliot on such an errand I'd have believed he and she knew their own business. But an Injun, male or female, I allow he doesn't. He's too trusting, is Davy. I — will — I won't — Plague take it! *I will!*"

With which enigmatical resolution Mark Corlear cut loose from the group of horsemen he had assembled at the top of the mesa where the mountain trail came clear through the herbage, and loped away. One or two started to follow, and Ichy's increased pace notified him of this, even though he did not hear them, so swiftly was he rushing forward. So he paused and wheeled to shout back: —

"You fellows stay where you are! I'm going on alone. I'm disobeying orders, but there's no call for you to do so. Unless— See this?"

He pulled a silver trifle from his pocket, and rapidly manipulating it, fashioned of it a long, slender trumpet, upon which he blew a gentle blast. The sound was unlike anything ever heard at Santa Paula—piercingly sweet, shrill, and with a power of sustained echoing that was truly wonderful.

"Ever hear anything like that?" demanded Mark, looking affectionately at the whistle, as a more persistent caballero than the rest cantered up to him.

"No. Where did you get it?"

"Where you won't care to go after its mate, my friend and fellow-citizen. Bought it, or was given it, on the inside of a Russian prison. On the way to that cool and comfortable little home of ice and snow—Siberia."

"No!"

"True. I might have been there yet, but I'm not. I'm down in California the blest, a-hunting Injuns—or keeping track of them. Well, so long.

I didn't give you a fair sample o' what this little jigger can do, but if I were to blow on her regular and strong, I allow you could almost hear her from here to 'Frisco. Well, if you do hear this music, you tumble to it. There'll be either trouble or something. When she blows, you travel. Si?"

"In verity. Good luck! I'm glad you're after the master. We none of us liked his riding alone, on a false trail, maybe."

The horsemen waited long. So long that some of them left their saddles and lounged on the grass, playing a game with pebbles that answered the usual purpose of any game which ranchmen affect. But in the midst of this quietude, while some were eagerly scanning the horizon for signs of the returning party, there floated out upon the air the echo of that strange Russian trumpet-call. It was so clear, so long-sustained — without break of any sort — that the horsemen were able to follow it as one would follow a beaten road.

Old Gaspar rode ahead. After he was deprived of his own bay, he had picked out the best mount he could for himself, and though all loved the household they served, there was none among that

loyal throng as devoted to the little señorita as her own body-servant who adored her.

"Into the North Cañon. On the road to the Upper Folding!" he cried to the nearest follower. And again love urged his speed to the utmost. So that it was he who came first to the dangerous descent down which Patience had gone on that fateful day whereon began her imprisonment in the cavern.

But where had then been a rushing flood, that had risen during the rains to subside again as suddenly when they ceased, was now a rough and rocky road, although one far less perilous than the Ledge of Death that, halfway up, circled the curving cañon wall, and over which Patience had been led blindfolded to the cave. Through this ravine they pushed as best they could, still following the leading-string of sound till they had passed the great landslides, and reached a more open spot.

"It's climb again!" said one. And climb again they did; but at last all stood grouped about the three who had preceded them, Mr. Eliot, Tulita, and Long Mark.

So far from being angry at this following, both the princess and her companion had been delighted when the "globe-trotter" appeared before them. Mr. Eliot had asked, merely, "How did you know where to come?" and Mark had answered, with equal brevity, "By the tracks of three horses in the fresh soil."

"Now you've come, open this door. She's behind it, my Patience!" cried Mr. Eliot, maddened by the delay and the apparently puny obstacle which prevented him from reaching his child.

"Of course. That's what I came for. But — is the door this rock?"

"Yes, I think so," said Tulita, anxiously. And she repeated to the newcomer, what she had previously told to Mr. Eliot, all that she had learned from Ouleon in the other cavern.

"This beats the Yale combination all hollow! That's where nature is ahead of science. H'mm! But now what's the use of waiting to find the key? Madam Nature, we'll try what the combined force of a score of arms can do against you!"

Whereupon Mark blew his marvellous signal, and a dozen men responded.

When they arrived he explained: "We've got to shove this rock aside somehow at once. Now, altogether and tackle it! As for you, Davy boy, clear out. You're too tremulous by half to be of any use."

Mark unceremoniously pushed his friend aside, and thrust his mighty shoulder to the mightier rock. As well have tried to move the whole mountain side!

Then, suddenly, with a wild light flashing over his dark face, old Gaspar leaped to the fore:—

"Wait!—wait!"

"Wait for what?"

"Chito! Buen! In verity! I remember—I remember! I was with him, the padré! I, a little lad, and I heard, I saw! Swing right—left—up—down! So—so—so—and—so!"

They held their breaths while he, alone and single-handed, essayed what all their combined force could not achieve. They too had tried the formula that Tulita had repeated, but from ignorance how or where to touch the stone which they had failed upon, and which now, from another source, Gaspar had learned and repeated with success.

The rock swayed slightly, clumsily, as an elephant awaking from sleep. It was not unlike that ungainly creature in shape, and — like it still — when once its mighty body really moved it did so with a smoothness and celerity that was surprising.

Yet moved noisily, also; and the sounds were welcome ones to the girl behind the barrier. She was at the cavern's entrance instantly, for, acting upon advice given her by Tulita through the aperture at the other end, she had passed her hours of waiting in the first entrance chamber.

However, long before the huge rock had rolled half round, David Eliot had forced his way past it and inward, as Patience sprang outward — into his arms.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ON THE LONG, STILL HUNT.

WHEN at length David Eliot and Patience could find a thought or word for any save themselves, so full were they of the supreme joy which that hour brought, they turned to look for Tulita.

"She must hear it all, too, my beautiful Indian princess! by whose hands alone I have been restored to you, dad — dear, precious dad! She must hear all each of us has to tell the other. Oh, isn't God good to set me free again, to make you happy, dad, my precious!"

"That depends on the point of view," said Long Mark; "but I don't see any amazing lot of good done by allowing such a little girl as you to be shut up in the first place. Howsomever, one thing always leads to another in this world; and your exploring that cavern might lead to our discovering

a gold mine! Same's a body might be struck by lightning, even in California, where it never lightens. But this is a circumscribed spot for a fellow to express such feelings as mine in. Let's move on."

Indeed, the overjoyful traveller had been trying to execute what he called "a fandango," but what to the observer closely resembled the war-dance of his enemies; and his long legs had more than once come in contact with Gaspar's shins.

The latter, jealous of his little lady's affection, and mindful of what all the rest seemed to forget — his own personal share in the liberation of their señorita — now retorted, rather proudly: "I should like to know *who* opened the door of rock? Where would the señorita be now if Gaspar had not come?"

"And where would Gaspar be if *I* hadn't called him?" asked Long Mark. "I did it with my little whistle. I'm a latter-day George Washington — I cannot tell a lie."

Everybody laughed, and the air seemed to clear of the over-tension of feeling which had pervaded it. But when the laugh subsided, Patience, from her happy perch upon Blanco's back, with her

hand stretched across to her father's saddle to clasp his own hand in that reassuring grasp which convinced her "this was not all a dream," looked round once more, and still in vain, for Tulita.

"Where did she go? Did anybody see her?" she asked, and, as before, nobody could answer that he had.

"Then she must have slipped away over the mesa. Let's get to the top, where we can see all about, and find her if we can. For she went so softly, how could I miss her? Only a moment before she was smiling into my face, glad in my gladness, and then — she was gone! Will you, somebody, look after Reynard? I want him to keep, always, if I can."

Nobody cared for the task, though anybody would do anything just then for their señorita; so one caballero disposed of that matter by throwing a lariat around the animal's neck, and, having thus captured it, proceeded to tie its feet with the same rope, which accomplished, the white fox, blinking at the unusual light in which he found himself, was ignominiously tossed across the horn of a saddle and so conveyed out of the cañon.

There was still no sight or sound of Tulita, and Patience felt a keener disappointment than she would have thought anything could cause her during that first happy hour of reunion with her father; but after they had journeyed for some distance down the ravine, seeking the nearest path upward out of it, they suddenly emerged upon a sort of plateau whereon a broncho was quietly grazing.

There was no person in sight, but the broncho had the look of one which had been left in waiting. A bridle and blanket were upon it, though rudely and loosely fastened, and old Mark at once ejaculated, "Indians!"

"Where?" asked Patience, eagerly, from her head of the little procession of equestrians. "Indians," to her, suggested just then as much pleasure as it gave displeasure to Corlear.

"Nowhere — yes — hark!"

As they rode slowly forward, listening and looking, a figure seemed to rise out of the earth before them. The point whence it appeared was slightly higher than that on which the cavalcade had now, as with one instinct, paused; and they

saw that the figure was Tulita's — Tulita, yet there was something about her at that moment which hushed the sound of their own voices as they beheld her.

Never had maiden, red-skinned or white, been clothed with air of greater majesty than she, as she stood there confronting them all yet set apart as in another world. Even Patience, whose heart leaped with pride and love toward her young savior, could not advance a step nor even speak.

It did not need the Indian maid's one gesture, that outward protesting motion of the arms with the palms spread, to arrest every eye, and to convince each watcher that here was being enacted one of life's tragedies. For their glances passed beyond La Vega to another figure, half recumbent, its head against a hillock of dead rushes.

"Ouleon!" "Coyote Jack!" thought one and another, nor did any move.

"Coyote Jack — *on his last, long, still hunt!*"

Tulita came slowly toward them. Her face was pale beneath its olive, but her eyes glowed with the light of a young seeress. She seemed not to

observe their presence any more than that of the insects crawling upon the ground; but she moved steadily forward to the broncho, and laid her hand upon his mane.

"Thy master needs thee, West Wind. Thou art to bear him on his last ride."

Even the horse appeared to feel the influence of the moment, for he offered not the slightest resistance, and followed her obediently across the few rods intervening to the prostrate man among the rushes.

There they paused together, and Tulita, stooping, laid her hand on Ouleon's head, now fallen forward upon his breast in the agony of approaching dissolution.

"Art thou ready, Ouleon, my brother? Son of a great chief, prince of thy people, Ouleon the Eagle Feather, art thou ready?"

He tried to respond, but his feebleness was too great.

Then Tulita opened the bosom of her buckskin tunic, and took from it a tiny leathern bottle. She opened this also, and pressed it to the sick man's lips; and, after a moment or two of silent

waiting, the potion, whatever it was, had its due effect. Ouleon's head lifted itself proudly upon his shoulders, and he made a motion to rise.

The movement was so pathetic and full of significance that even Mark, the "Injun hater," sprang forward to aid.

But La Vega waved him back. To her and her alone belonged the privileges of that scene. With a strength that was marvellous and only born of her powerful emotion so wholly controlled, the Indian maiden lifted the great, wasted frame of poor Eagle Feather and placed it upon the West Wind's back. Then, still supporting Ouleon with one arm, with the other she unfolded from her own shoulders the scarlet blanket which had covered them, and wrapped it about the dying brave. This done she took her station rigidly beside him, and with both arms clasping him as if she would withhold him from the grasp which was stronger than hers, stronger than any mortal clasp — she waited the end.

It came, but not at once. The cordial she had given had yet its work to do, and Ouleon spoke: —

"Art thou here, Tulita, my sister?"

"I am here, Ouleon, my brother."

"How dies a brave of our tribe, Tulita?"

"Mounted, with his face to the sunset, with no fear in his heart."

"Am — I — thus? My eyes — there is a mist in the cañon. Oh, my sister!"

"It is the mist of the Vast Unknown."

"It — chokes me. Is there no sun to shine? Will it rise, and still higher?"

"Till it folds thy heart in a dreamless peace as thy blanket folds thy shoulders from the chill of night."

"But — the chill is still there — Tulita! There, beneath the blanket!"

"And beneath the mist of death is the love of the Great Spirit. Thou passeth to His presence even now. Be brave, my brother."

Some wave of returning thought, some vestige of his wasted ambition, pierced the brain afresh. As Gaspar later said, "Ouleon died hard!" Life was, indeed, loath to leave her citadel, sapped though it was by the rust of the white man's "fire-water," and tainted by a white-man-like greed for gold. Without the curse of these two evils,

Ouleon had lived nobly as Tulita now sought to make him die nobly.

"The Great — Shall I, Ouleon, be in the pow-wow of all the tribes, La Vega?"

"In the great pow-wow of all the tribes which ever have been, or ever shall be."

"Will — I — be — heard?"

"Courage, courage, my brother! Thou shalt be heard *and answered.*"

The anguish of her cry thrilled every heart. It was "only an Indian" dying, but it might have been a royal son of earth's greatest potentate yet aroused no keener grief.

"It passes — it clears — I grow strong! I will not die, Tulita, but — live — live —"

"Courage, my brother. Thou shalt live, indeed — *eternally.*"

Ouleon's body sank in its place upon the West Wind, his head dropped against the rigidly erect head of the girl who still supported him, and the rescuing party passed silently out of the cañon.

CHAPTER XXIV.

FINDING TULITA.

PATIENCE stayed quietly at Santa Paula for three days after her return from imprisonment, enjoying to the utmost the festivities which were prolonged through all that time, for David Eliot made it open house to all who came, and they were many.

"It's a regular fatted calf business with chicken fixings," commented Long Mark, as on the morning of the fourth day a fresh batch of arrivals appeared on the great veranda; "but this keeping on your company manners so long at a stretch is rather wearing to the nerves. Hey, Patience, my dear?"

Patience was thoughtfully standing at that moment before one of the windows and dreamily looking out. She had little knowledge of any difference in "company" or "everyday" manners, though Mark had often tried to explain it to her,

but she turned to him as he spoke with a gleam of mischief breaking through her abstraction.

"Which means, as near as I can make out, that to be just natural and sincere is to be 'every-day' like, and to make one's self uncomfortable by pretending to be what one is not is to wear our 'company' ones. Well, I haven't any such, for which I'm glad. But, Mark, doesn't it look just lovely out there?"

"Prime."

"How's Ichabod?"

"Eating his head off in the stable."

"Let's go and see him do it."

"Couldn't. Too painful. How's Blanco?"

"Lonesome."

"Good enough. Let's put their two lonesomes together and go for a ride."

"If I do it must be for a long one, and one you may not like."

"Like *any* place — in California," he added, by way of caution.

"Well, I sha'n't ask you to go out of the state this morning. But — how's the 'Indian question' nowadays, dear Mark?"

"H'mm! What you driving at, señorita?"

"I want to ride and find Tulita, if I can. I'm going to try and get her to live with me," Patience answered.

Mark's face sobered.

"If the Indians were all like her, I'd have some hopes of 'em."

"If the white men were all like Dad David or Mark Corlear it would be a pretty good sort of country to live in, wouldn't it?"

"Being one of the interested parties, my testimony couldn't count."

"Will you go with me to try and find her?"

To Patience's real surprise Long Mark answered earnestly: "I'm agreeable — entirely. I owe her considerable, an' I'd like to begin to pay the debt."

"What do you owe her, Mark?"

"It was I who pitched her brother over the mesa down into the cañon. I suppose that's the trouble he never got over."

"Why — Long Mark Corlear!"

"Well, it's not so surprising as you appear to think. I did it to save your life; or, at least,

I did it because I thought he'd taken it, and he had no right to live any longer. He surely deserved death, the poisoning vermin! yet—"

"Dear Mark, don't! You are trying to make yourself feel ugly toward him again. I can see—I understand. You must have been born hating Indians as I seem to have been born loving them; but after you saw poor Ouleon die you felt a 'little uncertain of your premises,' as dad says about business things. Well, keep on being uncertain. It's better and happier and sunshinier all round to fancy people are good than to believe them evil. When I think a mean thing about anybody, I feel afterward just as if my face was dirty. Don't you?"

"Well, not to put it exactly as strong as that, I may feel like washing my hands."

"Will you go?"

"After Tulita de la Vega?"

"Yes—of course."

"Is David willing?"

"Surely. He feels quite as I do. We both want to have that noble creature become one of our own family. That's what I'm going to ask her now—if I can find her."

"I've found her already."

"You dear old Mark! Have you, really? I don't mean to doubt your word, of course; but it seems too good to be true. When and where?"

"Say, Patience, there *is* some Yankee blood in your veins, isn't there? Sometimes you've seemed all Californian, and sometimes Spanish, and sometimes even a little bit Indiany — the good kind, I mean — Tulita's kind. But when it comes to asking questions, New England's to the fore. I know; I've been all over —"

"Beg pardon, Long Mark. I don't care to make the tour of the world again this morning, even in your company. But tell me about Tulita."

"Not I. I'll show you, though, as Gaspar showed us about the secret hinges of the cavern door. Shall I order our gallant steeds?"

"If you will be so kind, while I get myself into riding clothes."

Presently they were off over the mesa, almost as fleet as the birds on the wing, and quite as merry; for no two happier people ever drew breath than old Mark Corlear and his favorite,

Patience. Unlike as they were in most things, they were of one mind in this: to make the world the brighter for their being in it; and, as all do who follow such a plan, they found an overflowing delight returned upon themselves.

The road was a direct one, and very quickly they had come to the village by the arroyo, and to a group of women idling about its wet sands. The women peered curiously into the faces of the equestrians, but nobody spoke to them and no civilities were offered. These women were, almost without exception, dirty and unkempt, and upon their dark faces they had the hopeless look of dumb, hardly used animals. The men — if men they were — belonging to the settlement had all disappeared save one, whom, even at a distance, Patience recognized as the guardian of her princess whenever the latter had been seen upon Los Angeles's streets.

The old man was approaching over the plain, and, seeing no nearer chance of gaining information, Patience suggested going to meet him there. Long Mark wheeled Ichabod into line, and they passed away from the miserable village.

"Does it seem possible that one so beautiful and proud as Tulita could have sprung from such a source?" exclaimed Patience, as they rode away.

"There *has* been a white crow now and then!" answered Long Mark, sententiously.

When they came up to old Ramon the girl saluted him cordially. "We have come to see Tulita, Ramon the Wise. May we do so?"

"That is as she wills."

There was a deep gloom upon the old chief's face, but Patience was not to be deterred by this.

"Will you tell me where she is?"

"In the mountains among the braves!" responded the other, with anger and contempt.

"What is she doing there? Which mountain?"

"She has been burying her dead. She is now haranguing the youths. She, *a squaw!* and they *men*, or should be!"

"She must, indeed, have greatly offended you that you should speak like that. You have always seemed to hold Tulita in highest respect. But I'm sure she means you nothing but good, and with your leave I'll seek her there. Will you not kindly point the way?"

He did so without showing sign of pleasure in the action, but he did, indeed, feel such. He hoped many things from the intercourse of Tulita with this rich man's daughter, but the things he hoped all tended to material benefit. So did Tulita's hopes, if by quite a nobler way.

They found her where he had indicated, seated among a group of Indians, old and young, but all equally interested in the talk of this girl they each acknowledged as their princess. She was trying to incite them to action, peaceable and industrious — to make them promise to abjure the "fire-water," which had wrought Ouleon's downfall, and to look forward and toil for a time when they should cease to be the scorn of their white neighbors and become their envy.

As Patience and Long Mark drew near, the contrast they presented to the men about her pointed Tulita's eloquent language with a fitting moral, and if Patience had so planned it she could not have come to the Indian maid at a more opportune moment.

She heard and understood, from its finish, all the nature of Tulita's speech, and springing lightly

from Blanco's back she held out her hands to that other girl, so like and yet so wholly unlike herself.

"The picture you draw is good, Tulita, my friend. Come with me. Live with me for a time and learn all that is to be learned. Afterward you and I together will make your picture real for all these, your own and my adopted brothers. Will you come?"

Tulita cast one earnest glance upon the other's face. Then she turned to the braves: —

"You have all heard her. The white man's language is plain in your ears. She has called you brothers. Shall I go with her and learn of her how to keep the flocks and raise the crops that our people may have always food?"

"Go in peace, our princess. There is peace between us. We have said it!"

"But you, my brothers, will you do as I have asked you already? Will you hunt the game and till the fields, as you have knowledge, until I come? And when I come shall it be to find the tribe of Ouleon the Eagle Feather lying lower than he lies this day? or resting high above the valley of want and pain and — sin?"

One, a man older than the rest, rose from the circle about the place and prostrated himself before her.

"Go in peace, Princess de la Vega. I, the oldest brave among them, will keep them to their pledge."

"Farewell, for a time, my brothers."

"Farewell."

Without another word Tulita sprang upon the back of a broncho standing near, and guided the animal close to Blanco's side.

CHAPTER XXV.

EASTWARD, HO!

MRS. RUTGER'S sense of the fitness of things received a slight shock when Patience and Long Mark came riding home that day, bringing Tulita with them, and the heiress of Santa Paula quietly remarked: "I have brought me a sister, Cousin Hortense. I hope you will welcome her, and love her as you do me."

The lady had fancied she was most cordially interested in the "Indian question," with a leaning toward affection for the much-discussed red man, yet when her young relative put a similar predilection into actual practice it was, as Long Mark expressed it, "A black horse of quite another color."

"Certainly," she replied to Patience, but there had been more of confusion than warmth in her manner. Tulita in her buckskin attire, riding over the plains, seemed to the Easterner quite the "cor-

rect thing," but the same Tulita, in the same garments, seated opposite herself at table, gave her a very uncomfortable feeling — almost as if she herself were a part of some great "Wild West Show."

However, Tulita, with her native directness, solved this difficulty speedily: —

"Dear Patience, if I am to live with you, I must know exactly how? Am I to be your waitress, or — "

"I have called you *sister*. I mean it. You are to be my equal in all things which I can control for you. A waitress is a servant, and I am too good an American ever to be served by a princess of the line! Save in the service of love, which we will render toward one another."

Tulita stood earnestly regarding the eager, beautiful face of the generous white girl, saying this, and as Patience finished the Indian maid bent forward and touched the other's golden head with her lips.

"With this I pledge myself to thee, daughter of my enemies, sister of my soul. In all that I can I will make myself like thee. Thou shalt not be ashamed of the friend thou hast chosen."

"I could never be anything but proud of you, Tulita."

The princess smiled and arched her brows.

"Thy people will look with curiosity upon me, clothed with *these!* While I am with thee I must appear as thou dost."

She pointed from her own clothing to that of Patience.

"Of course. If you will, I shall be so glad to have you. But, first of all, I want you to feel at ease and comfortable. Will you not dislike such gowns as I wear."

"I shall hate them! I shall be miserable in them. But what is a little discomfort of the body to the discomfort of the soul? No; if thou wilt give them to me — whatever is fitting — I will wear them, and learn to do so quickly."

"But why, Tulita, do you use the 'thou' and 'thee' to me and to nobody else here?"

"Dost thou not like it?"

"Yes. It's quaint, and seems to set me apart especially for you."

The Indian girl clapped her hands softly, and a beautiful light shone in her dark eyes.

"Ah, thou hast thyself said it. My people speak thus to one another, when there is closest love between them. Thus I spake to Ouleon. Thus old Ramon the Wise speaks to me. 'Thou' makest us — sisters in speech as in heart."

Patience was silent. There was such a depth of feeling about this new "sister" that she was sometimes startled, but she slipped her arm affectionately around the princess's waist and drew her away toward her own rooms, there to try on and select such clothing as would completely change Tulita's appearance. Indeed, when the two appeared at dinner, soon after, Mrs. Rutger was infinitely relieved to find that the Indian maiden, arrayed "as a civilized Christian should be," was a very beautiful and queenly young person. A person that anybody, even Hortense Rutger, might be proud to chaperon.

Indeed, it was quite wonderful how swiftly Tulita adapted herself to all the Santa Paula ways. Her native intelligence, her early training at the mission school, where she and Ouleon had been for a time pupils, but most of all her intense desire to please Patience in all things, made her efforts successful in a wonderfully brief time.

So that Mrs. Rutger had almost forgotten that the new member of the household was a "savage," or that the smoothly running affairs of the household had ever been disturbed by the unusual events which have been narrated, when letters from home arrived and set her to reflecting how protracted her own visit to Santa Paula had been. Recalled by these to the necessity of a return eastward, she sought David Eliot in his library to lay the matter before him, and to expostulate — as she was daily moved to do — against his peculiar upbringing of his young daughter.

"For, David, it will certainly spoil her."

"Beg pardon, Hortense, but it certainly will not."

"There is no limit to your indulgence."

"None whatever — so far as my ability goes."

"This very morning I heard her ask you for a thousand dollars, and you gave it her without a question."

"Surely. Why not?"

"A girl like that! Scarce more than a child! What can she know of money?"

"She fully knows its best value — the making of the world a happy place."

Hortense gazed curiously upon her cousin, whose glance was through the window toward a group of vaqueros and caballeros all mounted upon fine horses, with the ranchman's daughter in the midst, also mounted and wearing that comfortable habit which gave freest motion to her supple form. With Tulita beside her, the girl was directing and gesticulating in the pretty, graceful manner natural to the Spanish half of her blood.

"I do not understand it. I came here to hold out the olive branch of forgiveness to this unhappy man, and he just utterly ignores the past. It's terribly disconcerting to bask in the halo of my own goodness and generosity, as it were, and have him so blind to it all! But I must certainly do something for that child. She will be ruined, growing up — in such a fashion!" ran Mrs. Rutger's thoughts. Aloud she said: "But a thousand dollars! Do you mind telling me what in the world she could do with such a sum — here!"

"My dear cousin, is there a spot on this planet where a thousand dollars cannot be used? I have yet to find it. But I'll call Patience herself. We

never tell tales of each other, and maybe she will not care to disclose her purpose. Chi-is! Ha, querida!"

The daughter's bright face turned instantly toward the window, and she waved her hand in response; but she finished her directions to the men before she cantered up to the porch, and, dismounting, perched herself upon the broad ledge where her father's arm rested.

"Si, dad dear? What is it?"

"This good friend of ours thinks that I indulge you too much. Do you object to telling us what you did with the money I gave you this morning?"

"Why, mi padré? Do you care?"

"Oh, no! But I do not wish to 'spoil' you."

A look of perplexity flitted across the piquant face. "It is a case of the right and left hand not knowing each other's business, Father David."

"Then, of course, that settles it; though explain what you can to Cousin Hortense, please." But a look of unspeakable tenderness was exchanged between these two.

The girl turned to Mrs. Rutger. "You see,

Cousin Hortense, it's one of the things we never talk about — what we do in charity. I wanted it for somebody who hasn't very much money. That's all."

"But, my child, a thousand dollars! It is lavish. You will certainly be imposed upon, and continually. I assure you that a good business man would hesitate a long time before he expended that sum on a single object, no matter what his income."

"Would he? How strange! Yet dad says that I am an excellent business man! Why, do you know that I take charge of all the stock? — sheep, cattle, horses, and the men who attend them; though Tulita is going to learn to help me. Dad couldn't tell you, to save his life, how many bands and herds he owns; but I keep a record of every creature, even to the lambs, calves, and colts. That is, I do know all this three times a year at the round-up."

"What's a 'round-up,' if you please?"

"It's — fun!"

Mr. Eliot explained: "In simple and literal English, it is 'taking account of stock.' The men

ride round the whole hacienda and corral the creatures; then they are registered in each division-overseer's book, and from that the permanent record is duly made; so she knows exactly what will suit a buyer when she has occasion to sell a herd. The 'round-up' is a busy time for her and a jolly one for the caballeros. The affair ends with a festival, and their young mistress has instituted a series of prizes for the most helpful employees, which they are all eager to obtain. The trouble with that part of the business, though, is that every cowboy and shepherd on the pay-roll comes in for some sort of present. So the prize idea is a sort of farce, after all."

"No, dad; pardon me, but you misunderstand. The prizes and presents are quite distinct; but it makes everybody happy to receive some little token, and it's all part of the same business, you know."

"What business, mi niña?" though he asked the question merely for Mrs. Rutger's benefit.

"Why, you dear, obtuse padré! what's set you to asking foolish questions? Ever since I was so high, what have you taught me was the real busi-

ness of life but doing kindness to somebody? And now may I go? I want to break that gray colt this morning — if he'll let me. He's to be Tulita's, and almost as handsome as Blanco, I think. I feel for her exactly as I do for myself; I want nobody's hand but mine to touch a horse I'm going to ride, except, of course, to groom him." With a nod for farewell, she sprang to her saddle and galloped away, Tulita following close behind.

Mrs. Rutger's eyes filled with sudden moisture. She had never seen any one like Patience, whose attitude toward life was like that of the sunshine toward the earth — as unconscious and beneficent. How was it possible with such a father? and how could David's bearing be so noble and benignant? He seemed, indeed, like one who might be "king" of more precious things than silver — even of himself.

Then, as Patience disappeared, she asked, "Has it been the child's habit to go alone among these people?"

"Sometimes she was alone, sometimes old Gaspar was with her. Why, all of the boys feel it an honor to escort their little señorita."

"But how dare you allow it?"

David Eliot turned a startled face toward the questioner, and there was more of sternness in his tone than she had heard before. "She is as safe with any of them as she would be with me. The man does not live — certainly not at Santa Paula — who would injure her. From 'Frisco to Tia Juana the child is canonized, in human hearts if not in the calendar. But I am just now in perplexity about her. Do you wish to help me by advice?"

"Certainly, if I can."

"It is about Patience. Since that terrible thing happened to her — though I have no fear that she will ever again be imprisoned in a cavern — I feel unusually anxious about her, and this morning I have received a telegram which I must answer in person in Mexico. For several reasons it seems impossible to take her there at present, and, for the first time in her life, I must be separated for some time from my child. Could you stay here with her? or what shall I do with her?"

"I, too, have had news calling me home. Can you trust her to me there?"

"Are you — perfectly sure — that you wish it? Remember, please, that at Santa Paula we value entire sincerity above everything else."

"I surely do. I love the child."

"Of course. Who does not? She knows nothing but love. It is this which makes me anxious. You and I understand that, sunshiny though it is, there are still some dark spots in life. I do not wish Patience to *stumble* into them. In plain words, I left my old home in trouble. My daughter must not hear of that mischance."

Hortense Rutger's heart palpitated fiercely. The man's directness of speech took her breath away. All her delicate beating about the bush had been of no avail, for he had gone straight to the matter. When she recovered herself she replied, with great gentleness: —

"I am sure you may trust me for that. Don't you know it was for this very thing I came to Santa Paula? I did not know whether you were rich or poor, good or bad; a quarter of a century hides many things. But I wanted you to know before I died that I had forgiven all. So had my parents."

"*Thank you!*" David smiled; it almost seemed indulgently. "Sometime, maybe, Patience shall hear the whole story. But, if ever, I prefer she shall do so from my own lips. If you can manage this it is all I ask."

"It shall be as you wish. When do you leave?"

"As soon as possible. But don't let this hasten your departure."

"I should have gone before. You remember that I came for but two days, and I have stayed so long. I must go this week."

"Very well. Patience shall go with you. But, will you also take Tulita?"

"Yes, if Patience wishes it. Tulita, in a civilized garb, is very interesting, and she has stately manners. But how will your daughter bear the separation from you? I never saw such filial devotion as hers."

"Querida and I are bonny comrades. Still, it will not be for long, and you need not dread a scene. The child has a royal nature."

So it proved. When the news was broken to her, without preface or softening, Patience cast one distressed glance into her father's eyes, but seeing

there the same smiling serenity which had ever responded to her she rose to the occasion and smiled bravely back. Two days later, with all that she loved best behind her, the girl sat speeding rapidly eastward in her father's special car, while another fast train bore him farther and farther away.

Mrs. Rutger was solicitous in attentions. She even suggested that if Patience would feel better to cry, she should permit herself the luxury, for her composure seemed unnatural. "I shall not mind, my dear. Just have a good cry, and you'll feel better."

"Sha'n't you? I thought you'd be disturbed. But it wouldn't do any good. The ache is too deep down. However, if you won't be lonely, Tulita and I will go through the train while you're taking a nap."

"Go, by all means. It will amuse you. Only take Clotilde with you, please. I feel responsible for your welfare."

The two Californian girls exchanged puzzled glances. "*Clotilde!* Why, certainly, if you wish it."

Mrs. Rutger went to sleep. Her nap lasted for some moments; then an unusual sound awoke her. It was unmistakably an infant's cry. She sprang to her feet, wondering what had befallen her. "Why, Clotilde! what is the matter? What in the world is that?"

"A babby, ma'am, as Miss Patience was afther biddin' me fetch intil yez."

"*A baby!* Where did she get it? Where is she now? Quick! answer!"

"In the towerist car, ma'am. By the same token, it's a mis'able place; eleven babbies all cryin' to oncet, an' a big red-hot stove in each end of the same, an' the stench o' the coffee b'ilin' over! I'm thankful the day 't I'm a leddy's maid, an' not no pore crayther a-travellin' second class."

"But *whose* baby is it? What is it doing *here?*"

"Sure, it's chryin' here it's doin' the minute, an' it's the widdy's babby. Hush up til yez now, me darlint!"

"But why should—"

Patience answered the unfinished question in person. "Oh, Cousin Hortense! I'm so glad I

went! This poor woman has no mattress nor anything for her berth, and the baby so frail. Isn't it lovely that we have this great car all to ourselves, so that we can make her comfortable?"

"Pos—si—bly," said Mrs. Rutger, coldly.

"Why, aren't you pleased?" in a tone of surprise.

"That depends," answered the chaperon. Then she turned to the woman. "My young cousin is very impulsive and kind-hearted; she does not always consider what she does. Are you travelling alone? Is the little one seriously ill?"

The mother caught her breath with a sob. Patience's tender sympathy had banished her self-control. "Yes, I'm alone. We went to California for my husband's health, but too late. He died last week, and I — I fear I neglected the baby sometimes. I feared he would die, too; but he is better. I am fully aware that I am intruding, though the young lady was so urgent; and, indeed, she sent the child in ahead, so I followed. Of course I will take him back."

Patience's eyes opened to their widest extent. They were troubled and indignant, but she said

nothing, — only cast one searching glance into Mrs. Rutger's face, and then began moving her own belongings from an easy-chair, while she rang vigorously for the porter.

The baby stayed in the Santa Paula car for two days, during which time he had plenty of company. Old men and women, young men and maidens, all with some infirmity of purse or person, were gathered into the sumptuous carriage by the indefatigable benevolence of the "Silver King's" daughter. The girl herself passed most of her time elsewhere, leaving the happy Tulita to brood over and "mother" the *protégées* — grateful for something to do. But Patience moved about from end to end of the long train, chatting in the "sleepers," playing checkers with invalids in the "tourist," inspecting the mail-car, tipping the brakemen, riding on the engine, buying the train-boy's stock, and generally making the trip a memorable one to every one aboard.

At the end of two days the "special" was side-tracked by "request of the owner," and Mrs. Rutger sat dazed and speechless concerning this last "freak" of her charge, and beginning to

realize that she had assumed the responsibility of something more hazardous than the traditional "white elephant."

However, the "elephant" was perfectly capable of taking all responsibility upon itself, and quietly announced: —

"I find that the doctors told baby's mother to take him to the hot-springs here, and he would be cured of his hip-disease, and as she is so poor and discouraged, I'm just going with them to the sanitarium and settle them comfortably for several months. I'll pay her board beforehand, and then her mind will be at rest. Isn't it delightful to think we found her and may help her to save her baby!"

"H'mm!" replied Hortense. It was all which she was just then capable of saying.

"Clotilde may go with me. She's useful as a baby-carrier, though not for much else. Tulita is willing to stay with you, and you'll be as cozy here as in a hotel. Travelling is such fun! Dad said I'd be sure to find something to interest me on this trip because I always have on our other journeys. Bless his dear, prophetic soul!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

SOME NEW YORK EXPERIENCES.

THE travellers reached New York at last, and it was with a sigh of profound relief that the lady sat down in her own drawing-room, and reflected that here, at least, she would be mistress of the situation.

"Truly, you must have come home in delightful comfort," said the smiling housekeeper. "I was very pleased to get your telegram telling of the private car and all that."

"Private car, indeed! I assure you, Boden, that if I ever cross the continent again, I'll go with the 'tourist' lot; then I shall know where I am. But this Patience is — well, I'll leave you to find out for yourself what she is."

"I'm sure, ma'am, she has a sweet face; and it will be good to have a pair of young things like her and her maid —"

"Maid, Boden! That's an Indian princess! Oh, it's the genuine Wild West, I assure you!"

"Mercy on us! but they'll do to keep things from getting too quiet in the house."

"I'll guarantee that! But she *is* sweet, our girl, and she'll keep things stirring — surely. The other is just as sedate and womanly and adoring as if she were sixty instead of eighteen. She'll be a help, only she's Indian. I can't help loving Patience; but —"

"But what, ma'am?"

"The days of our peace are over."

"So, indeed! Yet you don't seem right sorry."

"That's just the worst of it, Boden. No matter what she does — and some of the things are positively outrageous — I can't be sorry. Where is she — they — now?"

"Clotilde showed them to their rooms to change their gowns."

"Depend upon it, *she* isn't there now — that is, Patience. You'd better look after her, and then we'll have lunch. Send Clotilde to me, please."

But Patience saved Boden trouble by entering at that moment. She looked more disturbed than

Hortense had ever yet seen her. "Why, cousin, I thought you said you lived alone with your servants."

"And so I do."

"Then you must have guests without knowing it, and I'm selfish enough to be sorry. I hoped you'd go about the city with me at once; now, I suppose, you'll have to stay at home."

"Are there guests here, Boden?"

"Not a soul, ma'am."

"What do you mean, then, dear? Where did you see anybody?"

"Upstairs, on every floor. In some of the rooms there were only one or two, but in others ever so many people. I didn't think they had much cordiality of manner, but dad says not to expect that in the East."

"Patience Eliot, have you been upstairs?"

"Why, certainly. I was eager to see all my new home. You see, it *is* to be home for a while, and I was never in a New York home before. We've stopped at hotels the few times we've been here. Dad says he had his darkest days in this city, when he was young and poor, and he never

stays here if he can help it. Pardon me if I did wrong. I thought you wouldn't mind. All Santa Paula belongs to our guests when we have them, you know."

"But, my dear, there isn't any 'upstairs' to this house, in your sense. It's an 'apartment.'"

"An — apartment — house?"

"Yes," whereupon the lady explained — as she thought, clearly — all the advantages of the form of dwelling she tenanted. "But don't mind about the matter at all. It was a mistake, and will soon be set right. I will explain in a note to each householder."

"But, dear cousin, why didn't you tell dad? I'm sure he thought you had all the money you needed, or he'd have given you some. Then you needn't have lived so any longer."

"*Now* what in the world do *you* mean?" demanded the astonished woman.

"I've always felt so sorry for the tenement-house dwellers. I've read about them in the magazines; and I didn't dream that you —"

"For goodness' sake! waste no more pity on me. I'm not rich, measured by *your* standard;

but here my husband was considered a wealthy man, and he left me his property. Is it *pity* for *me* distresses you? Quite a novel idea! For the use of this 'tenement,' how much do you suppose I pay?"

"I'm sure I don't know. It's not very big."

"You are right there. Nothing seems 'very big' after the West; but for this humble home I pay the trifling sum of eight thousand dollars per year. I live in it from preference, for it saves labor and care, and insures me excellent service. Each family is on a separate floor, and nobody knows his neighbor unless he desires. That will explain the Eastern want of cordiality you observed. In future, therefore, dear, just confine your explorations to the fifteen or sixteen rooms — rather pretty, I call them — of my double apartment, all on one floor, and you'll be kindly treated. My dear little cousin, you have a deal to learn."

Forthwith the girl set about learning it. The fact that they had been travelling for many days did not seem sufficient reason to her for spending a long sunshiny afternoon indoors; so, im-

mediately after lunch, in company with Tulita and under escort of Mrs. Boden, she set out on her explorations of the town.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Rutger sat down at her desk to read and answer the letters which awaited her arrival. The very first was from David Eliot, containing some directions regarding his daughter, which, as Hortense amusedly realized, but added to her care while seeking to relieve it. The letter concluded: —

"My darling has been accustomed to doing banking business, so far as a woman needs understand it, ever since she was ten years old. There is, practically, no limit to her wealth; and as the mines from which the greater part of it is obtained were found on the land she inherits from her mother, I am anxious she should feel it almost completely under her own control. Kittle & Gasseling, Wall Street, are my Eastern agents, and they will honor her drafts to any amount. I foresee the whimsical distress on your kindly face, but I assure you that you need have no anxiety on this particular subject. Patience is so simple and sincere that she will not be as easily imposed upon as you imagine. Begging pardon for the remark, she will detect deceit more readily than you or I, because her intuitions are fresher and keener. The mistakes she does make will teach her wisdom in the best way to learn it, and I think you will find her amenable to any reasonable re-

straint. She will receive a journal-letter from me, semi-weekly, and as she can telegraph me at any moment, I hope that she will feel our separation as little wearisome as possible.

"In conclusion, hoping that my little girl will make you so happy during the time she is with you that you will have to follow her back to the West, I remain your obliged friend and foster-brother, DAVID ELIOT."

To which, as follows: —

"DEAR DAVID: Patience will tell you how we crossed the continent. I couldn't. But we are at home. At least, I am. Your remarkable daughter is, at present, somewhere in town. I allowed her, or she allowed herself, to go out under the wing of that staidest of matrons, Mrs. Boden, our old housekeeper, whom you remembered. I expect her back when she is ready to come — referring to Patience. She is like your Western country — unique, irresistible in its fascination. That's Patience. Yes; I have most decidedly fallen in love with her. Spasmodically I call her Patience; but habitually 'Darling,' which explains the situation. If she were not so pure and true I should be afraid of her, for I have become as wax in her hands. She fondly imagines I'm like herself, and how can I bear to undeceive her?

"That banking business is superlative folly, even if she were a dozen heiresses in one. I warn you that I wash my hands of any responsibility in the extravagances she will surely commit. When I asked you to let her come

home with me, little did I dream what I was undertaking, but since I have her I am heartily sorry for you because you have her not. Only whenever you think of our little establishment please to do so as of Patience, Tulita, and the chaperon — not the chaperon and Patience.

"For yourself success and a speedy return. For all concerned I'll do the best I can; but, forestalling failure, please remember that I am mortal. HORTENSE."

Business and letters despatched, Mrs. Rutger turned to what she called her "dear, dirty, wide-awake old New York papers," and the loyal citizeness rapidly ran the damp folded sheets through her slim fingers. Opening the first one, she nearly dropped it with a scream. There, staring up into her aristocratic face, were the "scare" head-lines: —

"ARRIVAL OF THE AMERICAN PRINCESS, THE ONLY DAUGHTER OF BONANZA ELIOT, THE SILVER KING — STEPS OUT OF HER SPECIAL CAR AT THE GRAND CENTRAL — HER CHAPERON THE WEALTHY WIDOW, MRS. HORTENSE RUTGER.

HER PERSONAL ATTENDANT ALSO A PRINCESS, OF INDIAN BLOOD — NOW LET THE HOSPITABLE EAST DO HONOR TO THE BEAUTIFUL WEST!"

An hour afterward she still sat gazing into space with all the other newspapers unread before her, when a hasty knock announced the coming of Mrs. Boden, who scarcely waited the summons to enter before she was in her mistress's presence.

"Well, what other distressing thing has happened?" meekly asked that afflicted person.

"Oh! no, ma'am; not exactly distressing. But the young lady and Dundreary had a little — well, disagreement. That's all."

"That's all! Of what nature? Where is she?"

"I couldn't say just where now, ma'am, but I don't doubt she'll come home all right."

"Oh! Boden, that girl!"

"Indeed, ma'am, she seems a capable sort, and quite decided and clear-headed about what she wishes to do."

"Humph. Have her wiles conquered your sense of propriety, too?"

"Wiles isn't the word, ma'am. If she was wily I'd be a granite wall against her; yet she's so honest, and so sure a body feels the same as herself that she melts me quite down."

"Tell me all that has happened."

"Only this, ma'am. We drove first to the Park, and Miss Patience didn't care for that. 'It's like the country and I want to see the town,' said she. So we turned and went down the avenue, not meaning, I'm sure, to go below Madison Square. She liked that better though she didn't think the houses extra fine. 'We have as good in 'Frisco, and I always liked adobes best; but where are the "slums," Dundreary?' said she.

"'I don't know, miss, and if I did—' he began, but she cut him short.

"'If you did, and I bade you drive there, you would go. However, there isn't time to inspect them fully to-day, so it doesn't matter. But, oh, Tulita! those roses! They might have bloomed in a Santa Paula garden. I must get some for Cousin Hortense.'

"With that out she sprang and me and the Indian girl followed after. One as wild as the other over the things heaped in the florist's windows, but I thinking to look out for them both, as you wished."

"I understand. I, too, have had my experiences. Go on."

"Well, ma'am, the horses are over-high from being idle so long. They didn't like standing, and to steady them the coachman touched them once or twice with his whip. Which, Miss Patience said, wouldn't help matters. Betwixt her watching him and the beasts prancing, Dundreary got nervous. I could see that. And what does the young lady then but spy a couple of ragged children staring in at the shop door as she and Tulita came out with their arms full of the choicest flowers Thornley had. They looked at her eager like, so she stopped short.

"'Would you like some nosegays, little ones?' said she. Of course they would: so she gave them a lot of the prettiest 'Jacks.' Which at once made her think of something else.

"'Would you like to take a ride?' she asked them; and if you'll believe me, ma'am, before I could pull myself together, she had bidden me come home in the car, while she and Tulita bundled those youngsters into the carriage. Next, I saw her jump up beside Dundreary and coolly take the reins out of his hands. 'If you please, coachman, I'll give you a lesson in driving,' said

she, and brought the team round in a jiffy, heads Parkward again. Last I saw: there was Tulita sitting on the back seat, with an arm around each little beggar girl, Miss Patience on the box, cooing to the horses as if they were babies — getting them into their paces, too — while Dundreary sat gaping and staring, like he didn't know whether he'd best stick to his post or clear out from it. And Miss Patience had made out to tell me, between whiles, that after she'd exercised the horses she'd go around to the stable and see them properly groomed, which, she says, Dundreary neglects his business shameful."

When Boden's recital was ended, Mrs. Rutger's face was a study. Indignation, amazement, and apprehension chased one another swiftly, but anxiety remained. Patience might "understand horses," out there on her native plains: but for such a chit of a girl to drive a fractious team through the streets of New York, amid the nerve-distracting elevated trains and treacherous trolley cars — well! At that very moment, poor David's idol might already have met her death!

CHAPTER XXVII.

GIVING AND THIEVING.

"EN verdad! I wouldn't keep that Dundreary another day, if I were you, Cousin Hortense. He doesn't know enough to drive a burro."

"Patience, are you alive?" cried Mrs. Rutger, running to clasp the girl in her arms.

"Why, certainly! Why shouldn't I be?"

"But, Patience, you don't apparently understand. It's an unheard-of thing you've done. You've frightened me almost to death. And as for your father — what would he have thought?"

"The same that I do. Though he doesn't profess to know as much about horses as I do, for he wasn't brought up among them in the same way — which was his misfortune."

"My child, are you out of your senses? Just listen while I explain." And very gently and kindly the long-suffering chaperon tried to set

before Patience, and the equally attentive Tulita, the changed conditions of the life the former had come to experience, and that because she was so perfectly natural and sincere she would be considered a "savage" by the society she ought to adorn.

Patience sighed her perplexity. She had never heard of dissecting "happiness," and "environment" was a cabalistic sound in her ears, but she understood her cousin's kindness. She smiled, kissed her chaperon, and went away to her own bandbox of a chamber to write to dad.

There, too, she found Tulita, sitting with an open book upon her knee, and poring over its pages as if oblivious to everything else.

"Tulita, my sister, are you going to be happy here?"

"I shall be happy anywhere with thee, Patience."

"H'mm! That doesn't sound as if you were very hilarious. But if you could have the thing you wish most in this world just now, what would it be?"

"I should like best to go to that place — like

the old mission it was, something. As we drove up into the place called the Park, we passed it. Thou wert busy with thy horses, but—I just looked."

"You are always 'just looking,' dearie, and nothing escapes those dark eyes of yours. I see things, too, but such different ones from what you do. But, about the mission place?"

"It was richer and grander than the mission, but it was like it. The gates of the wall were open, and in the garden were persons walking and some were old and gray-headed. These had many young girls and children, and they were all studying—studying out of books. Already, I doubt not, they know far more than Tulita, yet still they studied. And—I envied them. If I had my wish, thou and I would be there."

"Tulita, you shall have your wish. You shall go there."

"How can that be?"

"Easily. The place you saw was a school or college. You will have a chance to learn many things in it, and as soon as you wish you shall go. Even I am not going to be any too comfort-

able and happy amid all this fol-de-rol of 'society,' and for *you* — it will be torment. Anyhow, it is but for a little while. When dad comes for us we'll go home and begin our work for your people together. Meanwhile, you shall certainly go to school. I'd hate it, but I'm not you, and we can each be just ourselves and keep on loving each other all the same. I'll have it fixed so I can see you every day. Either I'll go there or you shall come here. Cousin Hortense will help us, I'm sure. And so *your* wish is fulfilled."

It was all done as Patience promised. The more readily, no doubt, because Mrs. Rutger approved and stood responsible to the instructors of the school Tulita had herself selected, and which was one of the very finest in the country. The lady felt that it was an admirable solution of a social problem which had confronted her. Patience was to meet, as far as was right for her age, her equals in "society." Yet those who would be proud to know David Eliot's daughter would probably draw the line at an obscure Indian girl, no matter how proud she were; and Patience had already shown, upon several occasions, that when

she called Tulita "sister," she meant it to its fullest meaning.

Now, it happened, that Mrs. Rutger was not the only person who read with annoyance that startling announcement of her return to town. A lounger in a city park picked up a discarded copy of the same newspaper and remarked with emphasis, "'Tain't a fair divvy!" Then he folded and placed the sheet in such a way within his ragged pocket that the street number of the wealthy widow was handily accessible.

On that night following Tulita's departure for the school, Patience Eliot was awaked from a delightful dream of orange groves and fragrant vineyards by hearing a stealthy sound in her room. For one instant her heart beat with true feminine timidity; the next she had taken herself in hand with that readiness for emergencies to which she had been trained.

She had gone to bed with her one window wide open. Through it the light from the street shone sufficiently to show her a rough-looking fellow fumbling about her dressing-table.

The sight was like a spur to a spirited horse,

and she noiselessly drew herself up in bed. Then, from under her pillow, she produced two articles not commonly included in the furnishings of a maiden's bedchamber.

The fumbling at the toilet-stand increased. From undue potations, or some other unknown cause, grown clumsily careless and noisy, the burglar pulled out a drawer and stooped to examine its contents. Instantly there followed a swish of something through the air, a crash of costly ornaments, and the intruder lay on his back — choking to death.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A LITTLE MORNING TALK.

SO he feared, and that it would be death, certainly, when his protruding eyes beheld the dainty and deadly little revolver which Patience' brown hand held steadily before them.

"Lie still!"

Gasp, gurgle, protest, and a vain attempt to loosen the coil from his throat; then the ruffian was back on the floor, and the girl was binding his arms with a slip-noose, strong as steel and delicate as silk. A second later she had sprung to the bell and an electric peal rang through the whole apartment. Then she stood guard over him till help came.

Boden had more composure than any of them. It was Boden who summoned the police, relieved Patience from charge of the anarchist — whose im-

patience could not tarry the slow upheaval of society to make a "square divvy," and catechised everybody.

"For goodness' sake, dear miss, where did you get that curious rope, and why? And a *revolver?* My, my! It's glad I am you happened to have it, but I never knew a real young lady—"

"And all other kinds of young ladies," cried Reuben, the butler, ungallantly. "They wer' a callin' her 'princess,' in the noospaper the night, and it's royal she is! But, that same as Boden here, I saw never a rope like that."

"It's a lariat, riata, what you will. Old vaquero Carlos made it for me, and it took the prize for exquisite workmanship. See? It is of horsehair, and most beautifully fine. Dad advised me to keep it under my pillow at night in case of fire, of which he is always a little afraid in a city. It was Carlos himself taught me to throw it. He is very skilful with a riata, and I should have done better if I'd had more room."

"You have done excellently well. Allow me to congratulate you!" said the civil policeman, who had taken the burglar in charge. "A little 'more

room,' and I think this man's case would have been settled for him."

"Well, I hope they'll not be hard upon him. Dad says that we must always keep and enforce the laws; that it is lifelong regret if one does not; so I suppose he will have to go to prison. But if he's so poor, and will promise to give up thieving, I'll set him up in some small business where he can make an honest living as soon as he gets out again."

"Whe-e-w! That's not what I'd do. Come on, my man!" cried the policeman.

The next morning's papers bristled with the news, and the gleeful reporters hailed the advent of the "American princess" as a godsend to Gotham. The utmost Mrs. Rutger could do was to deny herself and cousin to all interviewers, little dreaming that the silent Reuben was glorying in the "pluck" of his young lady, and giving the matter all publicity possible — to the same news-gatherers, below stairs.

For several days after this exciting night Hortense insisted upon her charge "resting" in the retirement of her own home, going out only for a

daily drive and to test the skill of a new coachman, on trial to succeed Dundreary. But seeing that the girl chafed under this unusual restraint, and believing that the subject of dress was one to interest any feminine creature, she called Patience into her boudoir to talk about clothes.

"For I noticed that you brought but one rather small trunk with you, so I suppose you intended getting all new things here."

"I intended nothing. That is, I had thought nothing at all about it. It's such a trifle."

"Trifle? Why, my dear little cousin, the art of dressing is the most serious study of most of our modern women. It is one which you, preëminently, should consider, since you are able to bring it to perfection. Indeed, I thought you had done so, for though I have seen you wear but few gowns, they have been remarkably tasteful and appropriate."

Patience sighed. Existence, as presented to her by this society matron, was a great bother.

"Dad says it is foolishness to have more clothes than one needs. I'm sorry if you are disappointed in the number I own, and I'll write for more at once if you'll tell me what to get."

"I suppose you *could* safely order from Worth what you want," observed the lady, musingly.

"From a — foreigner? Not I, indeed!"

"Bless your heart, when I can accomplish the purchase of a Worth costume I feel very well satisfied, I assure you."

"But, beg pardon, it seems you ought to feel ashamed. Caramba! If I don't consider that the country which is good enough to give me a home is also good enough to furnish the trumpery covering for my body I must be disloyal, in truth."

"Patience, we'll send to Paris for you. Loyalty has nothing to do with dress."

"Has it not? It seems to me it has everything. I was born an American. Every comfort I enjoy is American, and every dollar I own came out of America's soil or industries. All I can do to show my appreciation of all this is to be American in every thought, word, and deed. You know what dad is. They tell me he is one of the richest men in the world. Well, when he had finished his collegiate course he had paid out the last dollar of his inheritance, and was as poor as any shepherd

on Santa Paula Ranch. Oughtn't he to be proud of and grateful to his native land? — as he is."

"Tell me what you know about his early days after he went West, dear."

"With pleasure. The story isn't so much in the telling, only in its being true. After he left your father's bank — odd, that I didn't know about you for so long! — he went to California. He was a newspaper reporter for two years. Then he got work as a ploughboy, afterward as a caballero on Santa Paula. Only it wasn't Santa Paula then, but Todos Santos — the Ranch of all Saints. It was my grandmother's property, but not one-tenth as large as it is now, and she lived there with Mamá, her only daughter. Dad and Mamá fell in love with each other, and abuela (grandmother) liked him, too. So they were married, and dad changed the name of the hacienda, because, he said, the 'one saint he had found was enough for him.' Then abuela died, and I was born, and mamma died, too, when I was a year old; and — that's all. Only some of the old people about the place think dad is a real magician, because 'everything he touches turns to gold.' But it is only

that he himself is so good and noble that he has the wealth given him. He tells me that I hold such a grand trust I must never rest in my endeavor to discharge it worthily."

Hortense was silent. Was it possible that a man could so far outgrow a dishonorable past that he could live such a life and instill such a principle as this? Then she asked, "About your education, where have you studied?"

"At home. Mostly with dad. I am almost fitted for college, but he doesn't wish me to enter till I am twenty-one. He thinks I will be mature enough by that time to appreciate knowledge — book knowledge."

"But did you never have any teachers except my cousin?"

"I have had a half-dozen governesses and two tutors. But we couldn't keep them. One of the governesses was afraid of tarantulas; and one was cranky and wouldn't teach me according to dad's rules; and one tried to flirt — yes, she did! — with my dad David. En verdad! You may believe *she* didn't tarry at Santa Paula! But the three pretty ones married caballeros and dad gave each

of them a little home. Then he sent East for tutors, and the first one had the asthma, so dad sent him to San Diego to manage a raisin ranch and get well. The last one stuck to the books for two weeks, then he pitched them all down and told dad he couldn't stand it. That he'd been shut up in schools and colleges for ten years and he'd never known what real life was till he came to Santa Paula; that he wanted to get out into the sunshine and stay there for the rest of his life. So dad set him to irrigating, and tackled the teaching himself."

Hortense looked at her watch. "For goodness' sake, child! The morning has gone and we've settled nothing about your clothes."

"Oh! that's no matter. Just tell me what I need and I'll order it. Dad had some models of my figure made, such as modistes use, and there is one at the largest store in San Francisco and one in Boston. All I have to do is to write — 'and they do the rest.'"

"How delightful! and — easy! and — expensive!"

"It is convenient. But, now, if you are willing,

I would like my lunch, for I'm going to the circus this afternoon."

"The circus! Going — to — the — circus!" gasped the scandalized matron, and sank back in her chair.

"Yes. I advertised for all the newsboys in the city to meet me at the door. I bought up all the disengaged seats in the house — practically all of them — three days ago."

Hortense Rutger actually fainted.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE REST OF THE ELIOTS.

WHEN Mrs. Rutger recovered her senses Boden and Clotilde were both attending her; and at first she failed to realize why she was lying on the lounge, her face deluged with cologne. When she did remember she nearly fainted again.

Then she groaned. "Where is she now?"

"Gone. She called me first and said we were to tell you she was sorry you objected, that she wouldn't wait for lunch, and if she had thought about it in time she would have talked it over with you."

"And talked me over, too, I suppose she thinks. But — circus! Oh, Boden!"

"As it was," resumed the other, gently, "she said she 'couldn't break her word. She'd never again be able to look a newsboy in the face if she lied to him.' That was her way of putting it, ma'am.

But the performance will be over and she be at home long before the dinner hour. Besides — " Then seeing the distress in her mistress's face the housekeeper paused.

"Besides, what? Boden, let me know the worst at once."

"Well, it isn't so 'worst,' as I think. It's right down generous and thoughtful. She dotes on newsboys, I do believe. She is always buying out their stock of papers and giving them back to be sold over again. And she got the reporter to help her."

"Wha-at? Who-o?"

"In the Park, ma'am. There was a sick-looking fellow there one morning and she heard him cough. Then she went and spoke to him and found out that he'd been ill and lost his place; and he 'didn't have strength enough to hustle any more, and the newspaper man who can't hump himself had better pass in his checks.' She sat down by him and talked to him a few minutes; and she told him that her father owned two newspapers in California, and if he'd write an article she'd send it and get it printed, and would 'pay him magazine rates for

it.' Does seem as if she knew the most about every sort of thing going, doesn't it?

"Well, about the reporter. It'd a done your heart good to have seen his face light up!

"'I'll be grateful to you,' says he, and then he looked doubtful like; 'for I've a wife and little boy depending on me.'

"In a moment it came to her, and she just clapped her hands like the simple young thing she is. 'Look here!' said she, 'I want to take the newsboys to the circus. I've been talking with some of them and they're all longing to go, but the poor little chaps can't afford it. Now,' said she, 'do you think your wife would go with me and help me? I'm David Eliot's daughter — you must have heard of him — and I mention it just to let you know that the money part of it is all right.'

"I tell you, ma'am, he fell in with it at once. Miss Patience says it was the reporter notion of 'getting into a beat,' and she laughed like anything. 'Dad was a newspaper man,' said she, 'and don't you be afraid I'll give it away to anybody else! You just buy up the seats and advertise for

the boys and attend to that part of the business, and I'll give you a check for the expense and your trouble.'

"And so, you see, the reporter and his wife are bound to take care of her. She said she was going to send them out to California, if they'd go, where he'd get well and her father would give him plenty of work, as soon as this affair is off her hands."

"Why didn't you tell me this, Boden, since you knew it all along?"

"Well, you see, ma'am, I was afraid you'd put a stop to it."

"Boden, you may go now. Clotilde will attend to me," said the mistress, with some sternness.

An hour before dinner Patience returned. She was so radiant that her cousin could not but admire the sparkling creature, though she tried to veil her admiration under a cold stare.

"I never had such a good time in my life!" cried the girl. "Dear little fellows! I'd like to take every newsboy in town out to California and give him a burro or a broncho. They're all so jolly and smart! I wish that you had been there, and I hope that you are better."

"Thank you. But, Patience, I must speak to you seriously. You *must not* do these unwarrantable things. For your own good, I repeat it; you *must* consult me about your affairs while you are here!"

Anger chased the happiness of the girl's dark eyes, and she drew herself up to her fullest height.

"Caramba! Guay! 'Must,' 'must not,' 'consult' — continually, to — *me!* Such words were never heard at Santa Paula, from menial up to master. I — have I not been trained to hold myself mistress of myself? Has not mi padré always said that I should humble myself for nothing but wrong-doing? Have I done wrong? No. In verity, a thousand times, no! I have made some pitiful little faces gay for once, as they should be always gay were the world what it might be. Es increible (it is incredible) that a freeborn American must put her generosity into a straight-jacket lest she should shock an invisible lot of humbugs who call themselves 'society.' Why, I've learned more this afternoon from those gamins than in all these other days from the people who drive in carriages to visit you. Look at dad. Isn't his wisdom a

match for that of any other man living? Or did ever a dishonorable action stain his soul? No. Yet *he*, this man among men, trusts *me*. He has hurled no 'musts,' nor 'must nots' against my heart — not once! He says I have as good a right to my personality as he has to his, and he is the more careful to leave me free because I am his child, and so under his authority, than if I were a stranger. Oh, dad — dad — "

The tirade ended in sudden tears, which were more than the warm-hearted Hortense liked to see. The girl had certainly sinned against conventionality and the social fitness of things; yet in any case the pitiful homesickness for "dad" banished displeasure from the chaperon's heart. In a brief time the impulsive girl and the society woman had their arms about each other, and two pairs of eyes, unused to tears, were winking troublesome drops away.

An agreeable diversion to this state of things was caused by the arrival of a messenger-boy with a note addressed to Mrs. Rutger and marked "Important."

Patience rose to go to her own room, but the chaperon's hand gently detained her.

"Listen to this, my dear. I am delighted. Now you will have young company whom, being relatives, you cannot neglect for all the city's scalawags. My only brother, Harold, and his family have arrived from England and are at the Hotel Buckingham. Wait a moment, till I answer this, and I will tell you all about them."

The reply despatched, Patience followed her cousin into the latter's dressing-room, where, while Clotilde arranged her mistress's hair, Hortense's tongue waxed eloquent.

"My brother left home before — before your father went West. He was there when the trouble — oh, beg pardon! I mean he married there and into a very aristocratic family. My sister-in-law was Lady Genevieve Waldron, and she's a leader in society abroad. They come across here once in a while, but I was not looking for them this year. Still, I'm very glad; for she will be just the one to impress you with the importance of those social forms which are recognized as good, the world over; and there must be something sadly deficient in my own make-up, because — *I* don't impress you at all."

Mrs. Rutger looked around, smilingly, at the girl perched upon the window-ledge, and was puzzled by the varying emotions of amusement, surprise, and contempt which her mobile face expressed.

"Why, my darling, aren't you pleased? There are three girls of them; the middle one, about your age, I think. She isn't 'out' yet, of course; but Madeleine, the eldest, made her *début* last season. She is very handsome and created a great sensation — so Genevieve wrote. She'll be somebody to pattern after, near your own age."

"Thank you, but I shall never pattern after anything foreign."

"Patience! What a prejudiced little girl you are! However, please go and dress, so that after dinner we can go to call upon them. The grace of such a thing is doing it promptly."

"Need I go?"

"You—" Mrs. Rutger was going to speak one of those obnoxious 'musts,' concerning Patience's duties to that "world" which did not peddle newspapers nor even write for them, but she changed her remark into, "I *hope* you will go, to please me. I am very fond of my English friends."

"Oh, to please you I'd do anything possible," said the girl, sweetly, and danced away.

In the matter of appearance Patience had nothing to lose by comparison with her English cousins. The selection of her small wardrobe was perfect; having wisely been left to those furnishers whose knowledge of the art of dress was equal to Patience's own ignorance of the subject. But, had anybody told Hortense Rutger that she held her new charge dearer than her own nieces she would have been surprised; yet she was proud of the contrast between the graceful American, so simply and suitably clad, and the heavier, more showily garbed Madeleine and Gladys. Dorothy, the third girl, was too young to be considered of much account, and she was clothed in a striking plaid, ugly and unbecoming.

To please Mrs. Rutger, Patience met the strangers with a natural cordiality which would have warmed to response anything less formal than the society-trained English manner. As it was, although Hortense's note had informed the Harold Eliots of Patience's presence and position, the Lady Genevieve could not divest herself of a haughty disdain

which at all times marked her intercourse with the world — a disdain rather of manner than of intention; for she was at heart a kindly woman, who regretted but one blunder in her life — her marriage with an American. However, having married him, she became the typical English wife, and rendered him that admiring respect which she withheld from everything else belonging to his country.

Save and except its "air." For "American air" she brought her English asthma across the sea whenever her native fogs became too suffocating, and the asthma was the cause of the present trip, which every member of the family considered a "dreary bore."

"It's so tiresome, you know, Hortense," said Harold Eliot. "Really, when we have everything else at home I don't see why we couldn't have a decent climate."

Patience turned round from a forced conversation with the two elder girls, and inquired, "What do you call 'home,' Cousin Harold?"

"Why, England, of course."

"Then I think you ought to be choked with asthma!"

"Why, why, my dear?" exclaimed the startled gentleman. Then he added: "Ah, I see! You are one of those 'wild Western' girls we read about in American novels, who think — ah — brusqueness is that 'smartness' on which they pride themselves. A little travel will — er — broaden your views, and, as I — er — might say, subdue your manner."

"Do you think so? But I have travelled — a little. Dad and I have made the tour of the world, and we plan to go round again before I enter college. I *am* a Western girl, and proud of the fact; but, first of all, I am an *American*, as you were born, and — begging your pardon — I hope that I shall never shame my glorious birthright by calling any other country 'home.'"

Hortense laughed and interposed: "My darling, please give Harold time to get into sympathy with his native environment afresh. Remember, he has lived abroad twenty-five years; you can scarcely expect him to feel as radically as you do."

The call terminated rather briefly; nor, during their drive home, did either Hortense or her

charge have much to say; but, as they settled themselves in the drawing-room, the lady asked, "Well, how do you like them?"

"I liked little Dorothy. She's good-natured looking."

"And the rest?"

"They're well enough, except — beg pardon, I forgot."

"Dear Patience, say it out frankly. I shall not mind in the least."

"Except Mr. Harold Eliot. He isn't an honest man. Dear, dear! that's dreadful, isn't it? But —"

"But?" demanded the other, more amused than angry.

"It isn't that he behaves so shamefully about his fatherland; it is something in himself — in his creepy movement and his shifty eyes. Not once while we were talking together did he look me fairly in the face. If a body can't look a body squarely in the eye, he has something to hide. So dad says, and he has taught me to look for that sign among my herders and caballeros. I never keep a man on the ranch who has that furtive way of glancing."

"A Daniel come to the judgment! You have known him but one half-hour, and I foresee that you will change your mind."

CHAPTER XXX.

PLAIN SPEECH BETWEEN FRIENDS.

IT was necessary that Patience should come into frequent intercourse with her hostess's friends, yet lengthened acquaintance but deepened her dislike of Harold into a contempt which she was all too natural to hide, or even seek to hide. Also, for some reason — unaccountable to his sister — Mr. Eliot bitterly resented this manner instead of treating it with the indifference common from an older person toward the opinions of one so young. The two rarely met without a little dispute; and one morning, during a temporary absence of Mrs. Rutger, when Lady Genevieve and her husband called, the climax came.

The trouble began in a controversy regarding "higher education," Mr. Eliot ridiculing the idea of Patience taking a collegiate course, which he declared useless for any woman.

"But dad thinks just the contrary. He says I will be better fitted to meet the world fairly if I have the benefit of the most thorough instruction obtainable — especially in a case like mine, where there is a vast property at stake. If your son should be college-trained — you said that he was at Oxford now — why not I, who stand in the place of both son and daughter to dad? I fear making mistakes. In a way, the eyes of my countrymen will be upon me to see how I discharge my trust. My ambition is that they may be able to point to me with pride and say, 'She is ours.' Why, in the newspapers they call me an 'American princess,' and I am proud of the title, because we are the only really royal nation on the face of the globe. Yet, if I am 'princess' among such, I must be wholly royal. So dad says."

Lady Genevieve took up the talk. "I wonder why you chose such a vulgar term as 'dad.' But you are very proud of his money, aren't you? Though he was once poor enough. My father-in-law was at the expense of his rearing."

"Not half as proud as of his generous heart and honorable life."

"H'm! his youth was not — was not — so honorable."

"What do you mean?"

"No matter."

"Beg pardon, but it *does* matter. Do you think I don't know the story of my father's youth? But quite often you have said something like that, then stopped; and, somehow, you all seem jealous of him. Then, the other day, Dorothy asked me how I could love a 'wicked man' as I love my father. I wish you'd explain yourselves. It's so cowardly to stab a body in the back — like a low-down 'greaser'!"

Lady Genevieve lost her temper. As Patience afterward tersely described it, "she got mad."

"See here, my girl! I've had enough of this insolence! You a 'princess,' when your father —"

"Wife!" cried Harold, warningly.

"I will say it! Patience Eliot, your father was a thief! If he had his deserts he would now be wearing prison-stripes instead of gentleman's broadcloth!"

Harold sprang up with pallid face. "Genevieve! wife! No, no; don't believe it, child! It is —

it is all past! It — oh, why couldn't you hold your tongue?"

"Because I was determined this arrogant young savage should get down to the level where she belongs! She's the most —"

"Genevieve Eliot, I command you to stop! You must not say one single word more. Here, put on your bonnet. The cab is at the door; go away at once!"

There was no longer anything supercilious or affectedly foreign about Harold Eliot. His voice had the rude sincerity of one driven to desperation, and no cowboy of the plains — worse, no brute of London slums — could have ordered his wife more roughly than now he this titled lady who bore his name; and she, because she was so utterly dumfounded, immediately obeyed.

"Don't, Cousin Patience — don't look like that! Let me explain!"

"Hush! You heard what she said. You told her to be silent, but you did not deny it. Why did you not?"

"I — I couldn't!"

"You couldn't! Well, brave man and polished

gentleman that you consider yourself, I tell you to your face it is a lie! — as plainly and entirely as you are one! There's a mystery somewhere, but I shall understand it. When I do, I'll make you retract those words your wife said, every single one of them! She has done her best to make me the 'savage' she called me. Any woman, girl or matron, will fight even 'savagely' for those she loves. My father is my world; he is above all sullying by such as you. But you shall unsay that vile epithet, and be able to deny it when next I ask you."

Then she went out of the room to her own chamber, her one haven of refuge in this cramped city home; where, ten minutes later, her chaperon found her raging fiercely up and down.

The whole story came briefly out, without prelude or excuse. "He called mi padré — *a thief!* And I called him a — liar! That is all I can do — yet."

"Patience! my poor, passionate, untutored child!" Hortense opened her arms, but the girl stood defiant of sympathy.

"Caramba! Don't pity *me!* I need it not.

But, tell me, have you also had this horrible thought of dad?"

The lady turned her sorrowful, too truthful, glance aside.

"Why, Cousin Hortense! You poor thing. But you need believe it no longer; it is untrue."

"My love, no wonder that the first shock of this discovery is terrible for you. But, remember that for all sin some atonement is possible. Your father's later life has atoned for his youth."

"Hush! It is a lie! A wicked, abominable lie! Don't talk, please. I loved you. I don't wish to say anything to hurt you. But I shall, unless—"

"Shall I go away?"

"If you will be so kind."

Mrs. Rutger went sadly out. The blow had fallen upon poor Patience, which those who loved her would have spared. What would be the result? Then she sent Boden to the girl.

"Boden, have you heard this dreadful thing?"

"Yes, my lamb."

"And—but, Boden, you don't look as if you believed it," cried the girl, impulsively clasping the housekeeper's hands.

"No, dearie. It never was easy for me to believe anything like that of young master Davy, whom I've tended as an orphan baby. Him that was always more like a son to his old uncle than master Harold himself. I didn't *wish* to believe it; and so I didn't feel that I was *obliged* to — so long as I held my tongue."

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE MYSTERY EXPLAINED.

"YOU darling, faithful, precious woman! But first, I want to ask you a favor. Will you go out with me? And will you keep a secret, dear old Boden?"

"As many as you like. Both secrets and favors."

"Then listen."

A brief, whispered conversation followed, and soon after the two went out of the house; but the housekeeper had notified Mrs. Rutger of their intention and promised faithful care over her wilful charge.

They passed the several hours of their absence in the private parlor of a hotel. Thence Patience despatched a telegram to Mexico; and there they had lunch, awaiting a reply.

The outgoing message had been brief, "Dad, is it true?" But the incoming one was even more terse, "No."

It was a long day for Mrs. Rutger, and she was devoutly thankful when the absent pair returned.

"Well, my darling, I am so glad you are back and looking so bright." For she could not conceal her surprise at Patience's evident quick rebound from that suffering which had seemed so overwhelming at the first. "There is nothing so reviving as the fresh air."

"Yes, thank you, Cousin Hortense. I do feel perfectly happy now; and will you forgive me, if you thought me rude this morning."

"I was not present, and know nothing save your own and Harold's stories; but, if you feel sorry for your brusqueness — let us call it merely that — to your English cousins, I hope you will be brave enough to tell them so."

"I am not sorry. Not the least bit in the world. I should again say exactly the same thing under the same circumstances."

"Patience!"

"Quite true. Yet, must I meet them again?" she asked.

"Why, certainly. It is unavoidable. It will

not be as difficult as you think, though, dear. Well-bred people always ignore such affairs as fully as possible. You may be certain the Waldron-Eliots will not refer to the matter again; and I wished you to do so only for once."

"I am sorry not to oblige you, but I cannot. However, I can and will show you that I know how to conduct myself according to the best 'social rules,' of which dad and I once made a winter's study. En verdad! The same 'rules' were a senseless lot and mostly untruthful. That is why I despise them so. Still, these foreigners of yours have called me an 'American savage,' and now they shall see that I am, also, an American gentlewoman."

That very evening the English family and Mrs. Rutger's were engaged to dine at a mutual friend's. They went, of course, and all were as placid and gracious as if no sore spirits lay beneath their polished manners.

But it was Patience who bore off the palm of social victory; whose natural grace and simplicity, whose keen observations and ready repartees, and whose perfect *savoir faire* charmed and amused everybody.

Poor Lady Genevieve sipped her *consommé* and ate her ices with a bitter relish.

"That chit of a girl in a white gown, who isn't even 'out' yet!"

This peaceful state of affairs continued for ten days, during which time Patience and little Dorothy became fast friends. But one evening, at the expiration of this period, when the apparently amiable family had gathered in Hortense's pretty drawing-room, the portière was noiselessly pushed aside and Reuben ushered in a would-be unannounced guest.

Patience's eyes were toward the doorway, near which she sat, and Harold Eliot was at the farther corner of the apartment; they, tacitly and invariably, placing themselves at the extremest distances possible. But both her eyes and his — one exulting and one terrified — flashed recognition of the newcomer.

"Dad, dad! I knew that you would come!"

"My darling! Querida, mi niña — my own loyal Patience!"

Hortense came forward, radiant of welcome, yet trembling with nervousness.

"David, this is an unexpected pleasure — so soon!"

"Thank you." But his glance turned from her and swept the room till it rested upon Harold Eliot, who shrank beneath its sternness. Strange that he did not add his greeting to that of his sister! Yet he uttered no word, and his blond, English-looking face grew hard and strained.

For the space that the two men gazed upon each other an ominous hush, like that before a storm, fell over the place. Boden paused in the act of arranging the teacups and Reuben forgot to retire. The rest seemed stricken motionless with apprehension.

"Daughter, what did they tell you?"

"That you were a — thief, mi padré."

David raised his hand as if it were enough, and his eyes pierced the soul of the man cowering in that distant corner.

"Harold, tell the story."

The other was mute.

"Then I must. But it would come with better grace from you."

"Dad, wait. He *shall* tell it!"

Patience sprang forward and confronted Harold. Standing with her clinched hands behind her, and the fire of intense determination flashing from her eyes, her will compelled his. He knew that for him was no choice but to speak and — truthfully.

"Yes. I'll tell. It will be a relief. Twenty-five years is a long time to bear the burden of such a secret."

He paused so long that the menacing girl rallied him: —

"Hurry up, time presses!"

"It is *I* — who am the thief! *I* — who robbed the vaults of my father's bank and beggared him in his old age. David found me out. It was David who saw that not the poverty — but the disgrace of knowing his only son a common thief — would break the old man's heart. I had stolen the money to go abroad and marry the titled lady to whom I was betrothed, and David said — "

The torrent of words which had fallen, when once the white lips of the man began their bitter task, came to a sudden turn.

"David," exclaimed Harold, piteously, "why — after all these years — force confession from me now?"

"Because so long as silence injured only myself, silence was endurable — was best. When it touched *her*" — and he indicated his idolized child — "silence became a sin."

Ordered Patience again: "What did David say, then? Finish the story."

Harold obeyed and resumed.

"He bade me go. He said that he would take my shame upon himself and spare my father, whose heart would, indeed, break for a son, but would not for a nephew. When I was safely at sea, according to his plan, the robbery was fastened upon him, but he had disappeared. My father gave up his fortune. Nobody suffered financially, save him; and — well, I must add one thing more: *The missing money was all returned before my father's death.*"

"By whom?" demanded Hortense, speaking for the first time during all that terrible scene.

"*By the man who was supposed to have stolen it.* By our — Cousin David."

"Oh, Harold, and you — *an Eliot!*"

The face of Patience expressed a strange study. Unspeakable pride and happiness shone through

the curiosity and repugnance with which she gazed upon the man before her. Then she turned to her father: —

"Come, dad, let's go home."

"Yes, carita, but by the 'long way round,' the shortest route for happy folks. I came in our yacht *America*, and we'll go back to Santa Paula by way of a tour round the world. Just step across and ask Hortense and dear old Boden to go with us."

Boden's smile told her consent, but Mrs. Rutger sat with her proud face buried in her hands.

"Will you go, dear?" asked Patience, kneeling by the mortified woman.

"I cannot. My spirit is broken within me."

"But I have spirit enough for two, and *I'll* chaperon *you!* Don't you know how dad says that nothing can ever really disgrace us save the evil we ourselves commit? Yes, mi padré, I will surely yet persuade her to go."

As she did.

CHAPTER XXXII.

CONCLUSION.

AS soon as the yacht could be provisioned for the fresh trip this happy company sailed away from the beautiful harbor of New York to call at many another port, strange and foreign and infinitely interesting, before they finally came to anchor off Santa Barbara, on their own California coast.

There were Mrs. Rutger and Boden, the nobly ambitious Tulita with her wise governess, David, Long Mark, Gaspar, and the "heart's delight" of all — Patience, the "American princess." Their way was truly a royal one; not by any fanfan of trumpets and ovations, but by the deeds of generous love to suffering humanity which were left behind them, as the trail of the waters behind their white-winged boat.

"For Dad David says rightly, as he always does! There is never a spot on the earth but one may find somebody to cheer. Never a jour-

ney, even from village to village, but some face by the wayside may be made the brighter for our passing," quoth Patience. And she sung for the very gladness that was returned unto herself from the gladness she made all about her.

The year of travel was a wonderful one to Tulita. It seemed as if her intelligent being imbibed knowledge at every pore, and her always liberal charity for others — so different from that feeling commonly ascribed to her own race — expanded till she grew mentally into as perfect and royal a creature as she was physically.

When they all were safely home at Santa Paula they set immediately about putting into practical shape the plans they had formed during their long tour; and to-day, where was once the humble Indian village by the arroyo, stands a beautiful town. The houses are no longer built of adobe mud, but tastefully and conveniently arranged "model homes," such as one sees everywhere in thrifty New England towns, sheltering busy and happy households. The people who dwell in these homes are still Indians, but Indians who command the respect of their white brothers the world over.

Nowhere in all America are better tilled farms than theirs; nowhere richer orange groves and vineyards, while their culture of the olive, in which the earliest mission padrés instructed them, bids fair to rival that of Southern Europe.

The water which used to waste itself among the foothills of the Sierras is now brought down, as "Dad David" taught them, to irrigate their own rich land. They have churches for all; and for all, as free as the air they breathe, is that education which Tulita so longed for and so thoroughly achieved.

Tulita herself is at the head of the great agricultural college, and the zeal with which she inspires her hundreds of students is due to her infinite love for them. Other instructors they have in abundance — men and women far wiser in technical knowledge than Tulita ever hopes to become; and to these the Indian students pay all due deference. But it is Tulita they claim to be their guide, as they also still claim her to be the royal Princess de la Vega.

Yet with almost equal admiration they regard that other "princess," Patience, their adopted

white sister, who spends a goodly portion of her time among her cherished *protégées*, and of whom they are never jealous when, as she sometimes does, she carries Tulita away to the great hacienda to pass a month or more. And the greatest curiosity among them all, to the transient white visitor, is the little Indian newsboy which Patience has evolved from the village urchin, and trained to be as fleet, as sharp, and as well-informed as his prototype of the great Eastern cities. To hear this red-skinned little fellow call out in his native tongue, as he hops nimbly on and off the electric cars which already run through the streets of his native town, "'*Erald*, *Times*, '*Ibune* — paper, sir?" is as amusing as it is also a powerful object lesson on the famous "Indian question."

Quoth Long Mark, riding over the plain: "A question that's about settled to my satisfaction, Ichy boy, so far as this particular section of this mortal hemisphere is concerned. I've been all over the world more'n once, and you with me, Ichabod, and we've never seen a more touching or prettier sight anywhere than those two princesses of ours joining hands like sisters across all the — the

great mistakes of the past century or so. Little white hand and little red one, God bless them both! Tender of touch and true as steel, long may they hold close to the bond that's between them — *Love!* Go long, Ichy boy!"

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