Benito and Loreta Delfin

Dorothy Lyman Leetch

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Children of Alta California

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BENITO AND LORETA DELFIN

Children of Alta California

By

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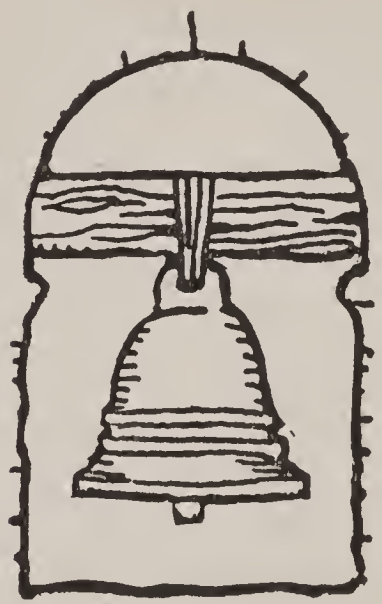

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Benito and Loreta Delfin

CHAPTER I

THE TWINS

"BENITO, Benito, where are you?" a girl called in a musical Spanish voice.

Benito lay hidden under a low bush near the top of a sandy hill. He was a tease, and pretended not to hear his sister as she trudged up the hillside. She was carrying a big flat basket such as the Indians made. In it were the fragrant leaves of the yerba buena which she had been gathering. The wind blew her orange-colored skirt into bright billows about her as she climbed. Her thick

black braids fell to her waist. A short blue velvet jacket covered a camisa, or blouse of sheer white muslin, which had short full sleeves that left her arms bare at the elbow. The smooth creamy skin of her cheeks was flushed with walking. Her sparkling black eyes looked searchingly for her brother.

She came so close to Benito before she saw him that he was able to catch her by the ankle and laughingly pull her down beside him.

"Oh, Benito," she said, "you have made me spill the herbs I've been gathering all the morning."

"There is plenty of that weed," he said, boy-fashion, but he helped her gather up the minty leaves.

Benito and Loreta Delfin were twins, and both were tall for their eleven years. They were the best of friends. Had Benito been a girl or Loreta Delfin a

boy, neither would have been more companionable for the other. They had grown up on the rancho of their father, Don Carlos Alejandro Flores, and a more carefree, happy life could not be imagined.

There were three brothers and three sisters older than the twins. Marcella, the oldest daughter of Don Carlos and Doña Maria Teresa, was married to an American, John Nichols, whom the family called Juan. When they were married he was a super-cargo on an American sailing vessel which traded on the California coast. Marcella and Juan lived at Monterey and had two children. The twins were the proudest aunt and uncle that ever lived.

Salvador and Domingo Flores were soldiers at the Presidio of San Francisco, where the Spanish flag still flew.

Prudencia was seventeen and still un-

married. People were beginning to call her "an old maid" and look up to her with respect. She spent much time praying at the Mission and taking care of sick Indians. Loreta Delfin loved this quiet sister better than the gay and beautiful Maria Gertrudis, who sang and danced and soon would be the most popular señorita at a baile.

Next came Tomas, who was two years older than the twins. He was the favorite of his father, and together they went for long rides over the broad lands of the rancho. It was hard to find a more daring and skillful rider than Tomas among the young men of the community.

Benito could not decide which of his brothers he admired the more. When he saw the soldiers in their gay uniforms drilling at the Presidio, he wanted

to be a soldier like Salvador and Domingo. At rodeo time he longed to be able to ride like Tomas and to be a vaquero on his father's rancho. But always his heart turned back to the sea and ships.

That very morning he had wandered away from Loreta Delfin and the boys and girls who were gathering herbs, and climbed the hillside where he could see the bay. It lay still and sparkling, surrounded by rugged hills, which were green, now, after the winter rains. Below him lay the little cove where some of the trading ships came to anchor. Beyond was the island called Yerba Buena, where the ships' crews got wood and water for their long voyage home. Benito was never tired of watching for the white-winged vessels which came to trade their stores for hides and tallow.

Neither did he tire of telling Loreta Delfin about his first visit to a trading-ship.

As they lay on their stomachs watching the blue water below them, Benito began the story his sister knew so well.

"I was a very little boy when Juan Nichols first took me to see his ship. You may not remember."

"You were not so very little," interrupted Loreta Delfin, "for I am just your age, and I remember well when Juan came to the rancho and brought me a doll."

"Anyway," went on Benito, "Juan took me on his horse. When we came to the shore, we got into a small boat and a sailor rowed us out to the ship."

"Not the horse, too," said Loreta Delfin.

"Certainly not, you silly! We left the horse on shore. When we reached the

ship," he went on, "we climbed right up the side of the ship on a rope ladder."

"You mean Juan carried you up the ladder. He would have had to if you were so very small," Loreta Delfin reminded him.

"Maybe I did sit on his shoulders and hold on to his head," admitted Benito. "While we were aboard, I climbed up to the top of the mast and mended sails and tarred the ropes. When the captain ordered us to lower the main topsail and run up the royal, we did it in a jiffy."

Loreta Delfin let him go on without more corrections. She knew very well that every time he told this story it became more amazing, for he put into it all the things he had learned about ships these six years since the day that young John Nichols had first taken Benito aboard the brig *Waverly* from Boston.

"I remember," said Loreta Delfin,

who also had a story to tell, "finding Juan and Marcella in the patio alone. I hid behind the big olla and heard Juan ask Marcella to marry him. Marcella saw me and afterwards made me promise not to tell any one, because Juan should have had his father ask our father about it first. Juan's father lived so far away that he got Padre Toribio to ask if Marcella could marry him. They fixed it up some way, for they were married."

"Juan has promised to take me into the trading business as a partner some day," confided Benito. "Maybe I'll own a ship myself and can sail around the Horn to Boston."

"What shall I do then?" asked Loreta Delfin, who couldn't imagine what life would be without Benito.

"Oh, maybe you could come as a passenger. You could if I owned the ship," he assured her.

"I think it is time to go home now," said Loreta Delfin.

Strands of fog were beginning to drift in from the ocean, which lay beyond the twin-peaked hill behind them. The shadows lengthened in the ravines as Loreta Delfin and Benito made their way down to the valley and followed a road leading from the shore to the Mission San Francisco de Asís.

The Angelus bell had just rung. Across the fields the Indians were coming on horseback or afoot toward the wide-spreading adobe buildings with red-tiled roofs and the church with columned fachada which belonged to the Mission.

The twins watched with delight a race between two Indian boys. The brown bodies of these boys lay close to their ponies as they sped homeward neck and neck. The riders were as lithe and as

THE MISSION SAN FRANCISCO DE ASÍS

fearless as the animals. Benito and Loreta Delfin laughed aloud as they saw the Indian boys come to a halt, dismount, and put on their coarse cotton shirts and trousers before they came near enough to the Mission for the watchful eye of Padre Toribio to see how happily they did without clothes and civilization.

In the courtyard of the rancheria behind the Mission, fires were burning under the great kettles of atole, that thick gruel of maize flour which, with vegetables and some beef, was the usual food of the Mission Indians. In return for food, shelter, and protection, thousands of Indians labored for the padres and accepted their ways.

Benito and Loreta Delfin soon left the road and made their way in the twilight around the Laguna de los Dolores. The frogs were croaking in the tulares, and little birds hopped and twittered in the

willows. A coyote barked his shrill, high call as they followed the path over the hill. There, on a rise of ground near a small ravine, in which ran a sparkling stream, stood their own low, rambling adobe house, the Casa del Arroyo, with whitewashed walls and tiled roof. Bare and plain as the house appeared, it was safer built away from the trees because of the possibility of a surprise attack by hostile Indians or wild animals. Behind the walls, masses of gay flowers bloomed in a tidy patio, which was the center of family life. The vine-clad logia was cool and pleasant even during the heat of the day, and in fair weather the Flores family spent much of their time out-of-doors.

The twins hurried through the fading light and were soon at the patio gate. They let themselves in just as the family were gathering for the evening meal.

CHAPTER II

A DAY AT THE CASA DEL ARROYO

AT daylight Doña Maria Teresa, La Patrona of the Casa del Arroyo, called her family together for morning prayers.

As soon as she was up, La Patrona unfastened the doors to the cell-like bedrooms of her family, for at night the sons were locked in by the father, and the daughters by the mother.

At the first call Juana and Josefina, the Indian girls who lived at the rancho, came from the despensa, or pantry-room, where they had been grinding maize on stone metates for the morning tortillas. The cook came from the kitchen, where

a fire was already glowing in the adobe oven, or hornilla.

"Come, muchachos," called La Patrona to the Indian boys, Felipe and Gaspar, who with the Indian major-domo were lounging near the gate. "Come, kneel and thank the good God for His care."

Prudencia was usually at her devotions when her mother unlocked her door, but Loreta Delfin and Gertrudis had to be shaken to wake them up. Tomas and Benito tumbled quickly, but sleepily, out of bed to their knees as soon as they heard their mother's voice. When all the members of the family had been roused and the servants gathered together, the alabado, with its thanksgiving for care, its petition for protection, and its song of praise, was offered by the household in unison.

After prayers the younger children

were allowed to go back to bed and to sleep, if an aged grandfather did not ask them questions from the Spanish catechism.

All through the childhood of Salvador, Domingo, Tomas, Marcella, Prudencia, and Gertrudis, the thin high voice of Grandfather Flores had asked them every morning,

"Children, who made you?"

"El Dios," would come the reply from those not too sleepy to hear the question.

"Children, who died for you?"

"El Dios."

The old soldier had died, and now only Loreta Delfin and Benito were allowed to return to sleep undisturbed until breakfast time.

After prayers Gertrudis and Prudencia dressed and went about their household duties. Every day chocolate was freshly ground in a small stone mor-

tar with a pestle. This work usually fell to Gertrudis, who cared little for such tasks. Juana and Josefina mixed tortillas from the meal they had just ground. Water and salt were added and small balls made of the paste. These were flattened by the Indian girls, who tossed them from one bare arm to the other until the cakes were very thin.

"Oh, you clumsy girl!" said Gertrudis, as Juana let a cake slide to the hard earthen floor. "Let me show you how to make a tortilla," and Gertrudis lightly tossed the soft dough from one arm to the other until it was as thin as paper.

"There, 'twill be a perfect one, if the cook does not let it burn," Gertrudis said, as she flipped it on to the smooth hot top of the adobe stove. To keep these thin cakes from burning, it was necessary to

watch and turn them often until they were crisp and golden brown.

When a pile of tortillas stood ready, Gertrudis took them with a pot of chocolate to her father and Tomas, who were waiting in their rooms for early breakfast, or desayuno. After they had been served, she joined her mother and sister, who were sipping their chocolate in a corner of the sala. This was a pleasant room with whitewashed walls on which were hung colored prints of the Virgin and the Saints. Heavy polished furniture covered with horsehair stood along the sides of the room, and in the deep window-ledges were potted plants, gay with bloom.

By the time Doña Maria Teresa and her daughters had finished, Tomas and Don Carlos were in the patio ready for their morning ride. They were a hand-

some pair. Don Carlos was tall and strong, with a fresh complexion. His eyes were large and black. On his head he had a wide-brimmed hat of soft dark felt with gay band and twisted cord of gold braid. The brim was lined with bright green silk. His white shirt opened at the neck, and over it he wore a vest ornamented with gold braid and filigree buttons and a short jacket of dark cloth. Velveteen knee-breeches were trimmed with buttons like those on his vest. A scarlet silk sash was wrapped around his waist, and its fringed ends hung down at the side. Botas, or leggins of fine soft deerskin, encased his legs. These were richly colored and stamped with beautiful devices and tied at the knee with a silk cord wound two or three times below the knee. Over Don Carlos' shoulder was thrown a poncho of black broadcloth, richly

THEY WERE A HANDSOME PAIR

trimmed in velvet. This marked his rank as a gente de razón.

Tomas was dressed much the same as his father. He did not wear vest or poncho, however. His black hair was bound close to his head by a red silk handkerchief, and over this he wore a felt sombrero trimmed with gold lace and fringe.

At the gate the Indian major-domo sat mounted, and Felipe held two spirited horses for Don Carlos and Tomas. Gaspar came in to the patio to fasten silver spurs, inlaid with gold, on his master's boots. Tomas put about his waist the armitas, which was worn while riding to protect the breeches from the chafing of the reata, or lasso rope. It was made of two pieces of well-tanned deerskin stitched to a narrow belt of the same skin. This was tied about the waist. Each piece fell over the thigh

and was fastened with small thongs below the knee.

As the two got into their richly ornamented saddles, Doña Maria Teresa came out of the house with Prudencia and Gertrudis to wave as they galloped off over the hill.

They were no sooner out of sight than a troupe of laughing Indian girls came up the path from the Mission to work at the rancho. They were dressed in loose garments made of the coarse cotton material woven at the Mission. Their black hair fell straight to their shoulders or was in plaits to the waist. One or two had gay striped Indian serapes around their shoulders. All were jolly and content.

Gaspar and Felipe loitered about the gate and called "Buenos dias" to the girls as they came up the hill. "Buenos dias" was the answer, and a jest passed here and

there, but not a girl lingered to talk, for Doña Maria Teresa was very strict, and every girl dreaded her displeasure and wished to keep the privilege of working at the casa grande, as they called the big ranch house. It was much more pleasant than working at the Mission. They loved gay Gertrudis and quiet Prudencia, and La Patrona was kind, though she did keep them hard at work and allowed no idling or fooling.

The girls stopped their chatter at the gate and entered the patio in silence. La Patrona sat waiting to give them their daily orders. Some, who were skilled in spinning, sewing, and weaving, went into the small rooms where they made garments for the vaqueros and family servants at the rancho.

Prudencia was teaching others to embroider and make lace. As they worked, she would talk to them in her

soft, sweet voice of God's love and care and how it pleased Him to have His children love Him and serve Him, and they never tired of hearing her message.

In the patio two Indian girls sprinkled and swept the hard earth as clean as a floor. Gertrudis wandered about, caring for flowers and plants that stood in pots and jars. She snipped dead leaves and blossoms from the roses that climbed over the wall, and trained the grapevines to cling to the rafters of the logia. Morning and evening it was the custom of the family to gather in the patio. At noon, when the sun was hot, they sought the shelter of the vine-clad logia or the cool of the long sala, where on this particular morning a half-dozen Indian girls were cleaning under Doña Maria Teresa's direction.

In the kitchen preparations were being made for the regular breakfast, or al-

GERTRUDIS WANDERED ABOUT, CARING FOR FLOWERS AND PLANTS

muerzo, which was eaten at nine o'clock, when Don Carlos and his son returned hungry after their ride over the rancho. Carne asada (meat broiled on a spit), steak with onions and gravy, eggs, tortillas of corn or wheat, and always the red beans or frijoles formed the usual morning meal.

While the business of the household was being carried on, Benito and Loreta Delfin had slept peacefully in their little cell-like rooms until the sun streamed full on their faces and woke them. Then Benito was up and into his shirt and trousers quicker than it takes to tell, and, with his light reata looped in his hand, he started for the patio to practise lassoing.

The Indian girls had finished working there and gone to other tasks. A few hens scratched about the shrubbery, and a mother cat and her kittens lolled in a

sunny corner. As Benito made the round of the patio, he lassoed the chickens. They squawkingly protested, and when he freed them, they prudently went to scratch elsewhere. Then Benito tried to catch the cat. She also took herself off, with ruffled fur and the kittens trailing behind her. On the steps of the logia he saw Gertrudis braiding red ribbons into her long black hair. He sneaked up on her, and before she heard him, he had her fast, begging for mercy.

"You little rascal!" she said. "I'll teach you to lasso me!" And up she jumped, struggling to free her arms as she ran after Benito, who dropped the reata and took to his heels.

Benito knew from experience that to be caught meant a sound whipping with the rope on his bare legs. He kept well ahead of his sister in their chase around

patio and logia. Both were laughing hard, and while Gertrudis had her arms bound, Benito could outrun her. As soon as she was free of the rope, however, she lifted her long full skirts, and

"YOU LITTLE RASCAL!"

her feet were as swift and light as his. Benito was all but caught, when their mother, hearing the noise, came out to see what was the matter.

"Come, come," she said, clapping her hands. "This will never do. It is nearly time for your father to return.

He will not be kept waiting for his breakfast, and you two are in need of a fresh toilet."

She looked first at the tousled boy with his shirt hanging out and then at her flushed and handsome daughter with kerchief awry and her long black hair partly unbraided and streaming behind her.

"Go," she said. "Make yourselves tidy before your father's return."

Benito and Gertrudis, without a word, went to their rooms to repair the damages of their merry chase.

While all this was happening, Loreta Delfin slipped into the despensa to beg from Juana a cake of coarse brown sugar, called panocha. She stayed in the pantry to eat it unobserved, and had just come into the patio when her father and Tomas rode up to the house. She ran to meet them.

"Buenos dias, little flower," her father called to her. And, as if noticing for the first time how tall she was, he said, "You will soon be too old to lie abed when we ride. Then," he added, "the last of my babes will be grown."

By the time Don Carlos and Tomas were ready for their breakfast, the rest of the family had come into the logia. Gertrudis' hair was now neatly braided with the red ribbon, and Benito had added a sash and jacket to his shirt and trousers. Doña Maria Teresa had unwrapped the gay silk work-turban from her own head, and her hair shone in glossy black loops above a high comb.

As the family seated themselves at the long table, no one would have guessed they had been up for hours and accomplished most of the day's tasks. Tomas and Don Carlos were unfatigued after their hours in the saddle, for no

amount of riding tired these slim athletic Spaniards of Alta California. All were hungry, and their generous meal was eaten with relish, without conversation.

After breakfast Don Carlos rode off on a fresh horse to the Mission to talk hides and tallow to Padre Toribio. Tomas remained at home, strumming his guitar as he sat with his sisters in the shaded logia. Gertrudis and Prudencia were embroidering, and Loreta Delfin was trying to learn a few stitches to decorate her doll's petticoat. Benito had left the patio to throw his reata where the temptation to lasso his sisters would not be so strong.

Shortly after noon the family met again for prayers and dinner similar to breakfast. During the early hours of the afternoon the household usually rested in their rooms. Later on, friends

often came to gossip and sip te, or tea, in the patio. At six o'clock the family gathered for devotions and a light meal. Unless there was a party planned for the evening, the rosario was recited early and another alabado chanted in unison. By nine the family would be in bed.

CHAPTER III

AN INDIAN FIESTA

BENITO and Loreta Delfin came running into the storeroom one morning.

"Oh, Mother," Benito called. "They are going to have a fiesta at the Mission. The Indians are going to have a holiday to-morrow. May we go to watch the games and the bull-fight and the dances in the evening?"

Doña Maria Teresa did not care about seeing the savages, as she called them, at their rough games, but she knew the children loved it. Salvador and Domingo, Marcella, Gertrudis, and Tomas had all, in their turn, begged to go to Indian

fiestas. The dirt and the noise and the barbarity never seemed to offend them.

"Yes," she said, "you may go, if your father will take you."

"Joy! Joy!" shouted Benito and Loreta Delfin, who joined hands and jumped up and down, yelling like savages themselves.

"Oh, children, children!" their mother begged. "Do go to the patio and shout to the skies. The house is too small for you."

When Don Carlos came in to his dinner, the twins were waiting for him.

"There's going to be a fiesta at the Mission to-morrow! We can go, we can go!" And remembering their manners, both Benito and Loreta Delfin said in their nicest voices, "If you will be so good as to take us, Father."

Don Carlos laughed. "You children hear the news more quickly than I do.

Padre Toribio told me only this morning that there was to be a special Mass, and later the Indians would celebrate with games and dances."

At dinner the family were eager to hear the news, and plans were made for all to go to the Mission for the fiesta.

Next morning the whole family was up earlier than usual. After prayers and breakfast, household duties were hurried. The Indian girls from the Mission did not come. Juana and Josefina were dismissed for the day and went off arm and arm with Felipe and Gaspar, gay in holiday attire.

Tomas and Gertrudis were to ride to the Mission with Don Carlos. Benito had begged to be allowed to go with them instead of in the carreta with his mother, Prudencia, and Loreta Delfin.

"I'm no baby," he stormed, "who has

to ride in an ox-cart! Why can't I ride with Father and Tomas, like a man?"

"Ah, Benito, a baby is not asked to escort his mother and sisters," said Prudencia.

Benito felt better at once. The old Indian who walked by the head of the oxen promised him that he might carry the long ox-goad to prod the beasts when they needed it. This more than made up for not being allowed to make the trip on horseback.

The carreta was a rude wooden cart without springs. The wheels were made of cross-cut sections of logs. Over the top was stretched an awning of gayly striped canvas. Two low-hung steps in the back of the cart made it easier for the passengers to climb in and out. The great hulking oxen, with wide-spread horns, were hitched to the cart on

either side of a long pole. Leather thongs fastened the yoke, which was tied to the back of their horns, close to the head. When the load was heavy, the poor beasts bore all the strain with their heads, which were drawn back in great discomfort.

As the carreta made slow and rough progress, it was to start first. Loreta Delfin and Benito were ready long before their mother and Prudencia. While they were waiting, Benito said:

"Let's play cuatrito! I'll bet you my buttons you can't throw to the line as often as I can."

"You've got your best jacket on," Loreta Delfin reminded him, "and I sha'n't let you cut your buttons off." Then she teasingly added, "So you think you can beat me! Let's see!"

Benito drew a line on the ground and counted off the steps they were to stand

away from it. He took two flat stones from his pocket and handed one to Loreta Delfin.

"My first throw!" they both shouted at once.

"We'll have to throw for it," Benito said, and tossed his stone with care. It hit the mark but slid several inches farther. Loreta Delfin dropped her stone nearer the line, and Benito gave her first throw. The game was going at a lively rate, with Loreta Delfin two points ahead. Then Benito dropped his stone right on the line, and Loreta Delfin threw too carefully and fell short. Benito jumped up and down for joy.

"One more throw, and I'm even," he shouted.

Just then Prudencia called, "Come, children. Mother is already in the carreta."

"Just one more throw," Benito re-

plied, and again he took careful aim.

"Come, children, come! We shall never get there," Prudencia repeated, just as Benito's stone fell atop the mark.

Laughingly the two ran to the carreta. Loreta Delfin climbed into the cart, and Benito ran to the head of the oxen.

"I guess it's safe to bet the buttons even on my best jacket with you," he called back to her good-naturedly.

With great creaking and groaning, the carreta started over the hill.

"That lazy Indian did not soap these wheels last night. We shall be deaf with the noise before we get to the Mission," said Doña Maria Teresa, but her soft voice was lost in the noise of the wheels as the clumsy team moved slowly on.

As they drew near the head of the valley where the Mission San Francisco de Asís stood, they saw other carretas going in the same direction. Horsemen, too,

THE CLUMSY TEAM MOVED SLOWLY ON

were in sight, for every member of the few Spanish families who had built their comfortable adobe homes near the Mission attended its services faithfully.

"Father has come," called Benito. "I see his horse tied beside the gate."

Don Carlos stood talking with two or three rancheros of his acquaintance. Tomas and Gertrudis were standing with a group of young people at the steps of the church. The bells began to ring as Señora Flores and her children climbed down from the carreta. The ladies shook out their crumpled skirts and straightened their black lace mantillas for each other. Loreta Delfin and Benito ran ahead to join Don Carlos. The Indian neophytes in holiday attire were already in line, two by two, waiting for the gente de razón to enter the church before they marched in, singing as they went.

Few were the fair Spanish faces in that congregation of Indians who filled the long narrow nave of the church. Indeed, it was the Indians' own church. A few of the older men present had actually worked on the building. Under the direction of the padres, they had built the great walls, four feet thick, of adobe brick. From long distances they had hauled great timbers for roof-beams, hewing them by hand and lashing them together with rawhide thongs. Some of the Indians, who were little boys at the time, remembered making pegs of manzanita wood, which were used in building instead of nails. The plastered walls and ceiling were gay with decorations, painted in bright colors by Indian artists. The floors were laid with tiles made by hand. There were no benches, and the congregation sat on rugs and mats.

Loreta Delfin and Benito thought the altar very beautiful with its bright decorations and pictures of the Saints, which had been brought from Spain. The altar ornaments were of sparkling silver and gold. Beautiful, too, were the rich robes the padres wore over their drab habits during the celebration of the Mass.

A choir of Indian singers chanted the Mass, using great music books held on a revolving stand. To help the singers learn their parts, the notes for each voice were painted in different colors.

To-day the sermon was short, for the Indians were restless and eager to be about their sports and play. After the benediction the church emptied fast, and there was scarcely an Indian to be seen near the building when Loreta Delfin and Benito came outside. Good

Padre Toribio and his fellow-worker, Padre Quijas, were at the door in sandals and loose-fitting, big-sleeved, hooded habits, belted at the waist with a knotted rope. They greeted each person who passed them.

"Ah, friends," Padre Toribio said, "I am happy to see you. Will you have a cup of chocolate with me before you start home?"

"Thank you, Padre," Doña Maria Teresa replied, "Don Carlos is to stay with the children to see the Indian games and dances. Prudencia and I must not wait too long before starting home, but a little refreshment will be welcome."

Padre Toribio led the way with Señora Flores and Loreta Delfin to the apartment where guests were treated to all the hospitality the Mission afforded. Prudencia, Benito, and Don Carlos fol-

lowed. Gertrudis and Tomas excused themselves to ride off with friends for breakfast at a neighboring rancho.

Benito was anxious to see what the Indians were doing, but his father said they were eating and that there would be plenty of time to see the games.

"I shouldn't like to be a padre," Benito said in a whisper to Prudencia. "I wouldn't like to wear that long gown. It must be awfully prickly and hot, and you couldn't ride horseback well or run so quickly."

"Oh," said Prudencia, "Saint Francis was willing to give up fine clothes for the loose, shapeless garment of drab wool, and these, his brothers, are trying to follow, in sandaled feet, the way he taught them to draw near to God."

Benito always thought Prudencia was right, so he didn't say any more. But he

knew he wouldn't like to have the hair taken off the top of his head in a little circle like Padre Toribio's, either. He wasn't quite sure how they got it off and was just a little afraid it was pulled out, one hair at a time.

When the guests were seated in the long, low cool room with plastered walls and beamed ceiling, Indian women brought bowls of fruit, chocolate, and plates of crisp brown tortillas. After their ride, all were hungry and ate heartily of the simple meal. Señora Flores and Prudencia were anxious to be off and sent Benito to see if the carreta was ready.

Don Carlos saw them safely started and then rejoined Padre Toribio and Padre Quijas to talk about the business of supplying the soldiers at the Presidio with food and clothes. Benito and Lo-

reta Delfin were allowed to go about as they pleased, watching the Indians at their games.

Some of the young Indian men were standing around a square which had been cleared of grass. They held cane-like sticks about five feet long. A small ring three or four inches across was set rolling, and two players at a time tried to pass their stick through it while it was in motion. If either player succeeded, it counted two points for his side, or one point if the hoop rested on the stick when it stopped. It was a lively game, as the hoop was kept constantly rolling, and the Indians ran and shouted as they tried to spear it.

The twins thought they would like to try this game in the patio at home. Loreta Delfin wondered where they could get such long straight sticks and such a little hoop.

"Perhaps we could carve a ring," Benito said. "I will ask Tomas to watch for long straight sticks when he is riding over the rancho. I may be able to find some down by the laguna myself."

Loud shouts and a kind of singing called their attention to a group of men and women not far away. Benito and Loreta Delfin ran to where a game of touseé was being played. Four men were on their knees on each side of a big Indian blanket. They swayed from side to side in time to a chant sung by the women standing behind them. The players on one side had hidden a piece of black bone and a piece of white bone in the hands of one of their number. The players on the opposite side must guess where the black bone was. If they guessed right, they got the bones; if they were wrong, one counter was placed on the side of the

winners. There were fourteen counters, and all must be gained to win the game. While the bones were being passed from one player to the other, the men held a blanket in their teeth to hide their hands. The women behind them shouted and made faces and gestures to distract the attention of the opposing side, while the sharp eyes of the Indians watched every move of their opponents for any sign which would help them make the right guess.

Benito and Loreta Delfin watched this game for a long time, until it grew so crowded about the players that they no longer could see them. Then they wandered off to watch another game being played by men and women divided into two bands. Each had a curved wooden stick, and half of the players were trying to push a wooden ball toward a mark while the other half tried

to thrust it back. This the twins did not think very interesting, and soon went where a crowd was gathering about a tall pole which looked like a ship's mast with something tied to the top.

Benito and Loreta Delfin learned that the pole was greased with tallow and sprinkled with dirt and ashes. The bundle at the top was a new suit of clothes and a gay serape for the boy who could climb to the top and get it.

A long line of Indian boys stood waiting their turn to try. There was shouting and laughing as, one after another, the climbers slipped and slid back a foot for every one they advanced up the pole.

"I don't think clothes are much of a prize for all that work," said Benito, "especially as the Indians would rather not wear any."

"They do like the gay serapes," said Loreta Delfin. "And besides, if they

have to wear clothes, I guess they think this is easier than making them."

One of the boys was well on the way to the top of the pole and the crowd was growing silent with excitement when Don Carlos came up behind the children.

"Come, children," he said. "The padres are waiting dinner for us."

"Oh, let us see if he gets to the top!" begged both the twins.

But Don Carlos said they could not keep dinner waiting and took the children by the hand and led them away.

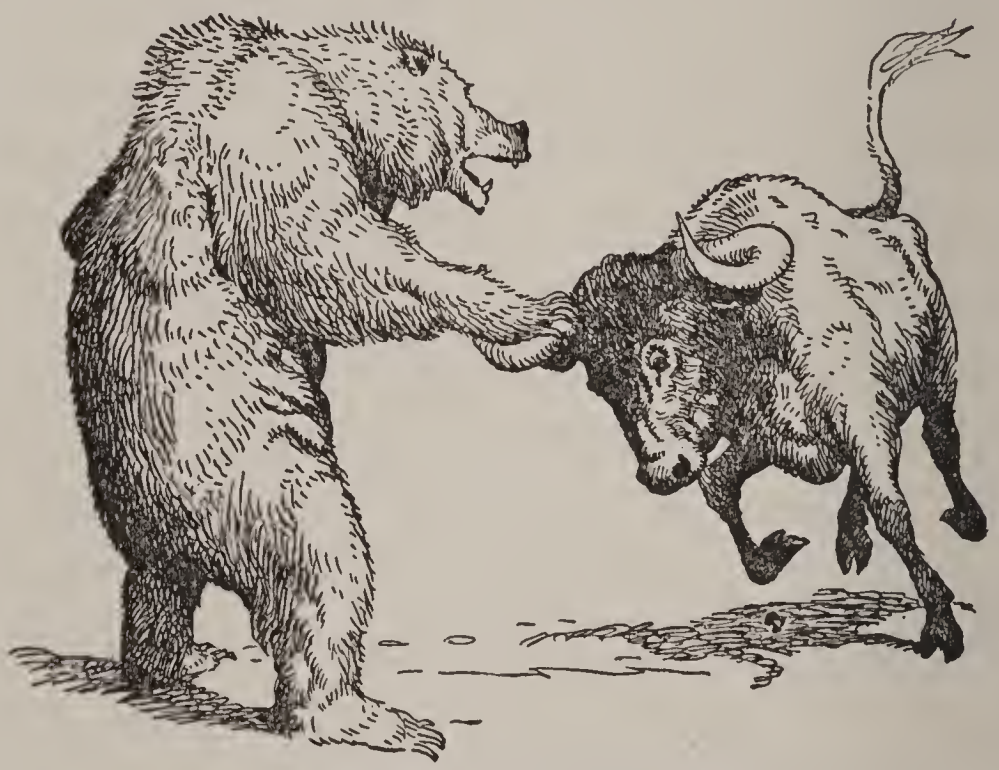
Just as they were going into the Mission, they heard a great shout, and Benito looked over his shoulder and saw that the bundle was gone from the top of the pole.

"Good!" he cried. "He got it, he got it!" and both he and Loreta Delfin joined the shouting.

In the afternoon there was to be a bull-fight. The Indians had trapped a grizzly-bear, the padres told them, and had been saving it to fight the fiercest bull they had. After dinner and a short rest, the padres and Don Carlos took Benito and Loreta Delfin into the inner quadrangle of the Mission. Here a barricade had been built, and crowds of men and boys stood watching the pen where the bull had been shut up for several days in darkness. The twins climbed up on a bench under one of the big arches of the logia. Here they could see over the heads of the Indians.

Not one of that crowd of Spaniards and Indians nor the gentle padres, who guided and watched over them, thought it was cruel to set a poor frightened wild beast and a half-starved bull, blinded by the sunlight, at each other to fight to the death.

Every one had chosen his favorite, and half shouted wildly for the bull and half for the bear. As the fight went on, the



TO FIGHT TO THE DEATH

growling of the cornered bear and the roaring and stamping of the wounded bull frightened Loreta Delfin, and she closed her eyes many times before it was over. She was really glad Benito was so busy watching that he didn't notice her. She just couldn't look, even if Benito did

laugh and say she was only a girl and, of course, a coward.

At last the bear was killed and the crowd scattered. The padres suggested that they look about the Mission, but Benito asked to ride with his father to the Presidio, so Padre Toribio said he would take Loreta Delfin with him on his rounds of the work-shops.

Together the drably clad priest and gayly dressed Loreta Delfin walked through the Mission. They went into all the small rooms where spinning, weaving, and sewing were done by the Indian girls, and saw the shops where men and boys worked with leather and metal, making shoes, saddles, harnesses, and farm implements. They saw piles of bags made of skins in which to store tallow. Great kettles filled with soap in the making, and dye-stuff for leather and wool stood in one corner of the patio.

On a work day all was as busy as a bee-hive, but to-day not an Indian was to be seen in the shop, and the footsteps of the two echoed on the tiled floors.

"Padre Toribio, they are to have dancing to-night, aren't they?" asked Loreta Delfin. "I like that better than bull-fights."

"Yes, my child," the padre answered. "I let them play as much as they wish on fiesta days. Afterwards, they work all the better for it and go more willingly to the services of the church. They are just brown children," he added, "and cannot leave off their strange ways too suddenly."

Toward evening the Indians gathered in groups about great kettles where meat had been cooking. It was truly a feast-day, and after their games they were hungry. While some were eating,

others were making preparations for the dance. A great bonfire had been built in a cleared space and small fires laid about it in a wide circle, ready to light when darkness fell.

Benito and Don Carlos came back before the Angelus bell rang, ready for their supper, too. Benito said he had seen some of the Indians painting themselves and getting ready for the evening.

"They are making stripes and patterns all over their bodies," he said, "and I wouldn't like to meet them alone. They look dreadfully scary, with white circles around their eyes and the big headdresses on."

After a light supper of frijoles, cold roast pigeon, chocolate, and tortillas, Don Carlos, the two padres, and the twins went out into the twilight. A great crowd of Indians were seated or

standing outside of the circle of small fires. These were being lit by boys with torches, and the flickering light began to brighten the space where the dancing was to take place.

The musicians had gathered and were beginning to make weird music on their simple instruments. Pipes of split reeds, castanets of bone tied with leather, drums of skin, rattles of tortoise-shells filled with pebbles, all made a kind of rumbling accompaniment to the droning hum of voices in a minor key.

Soon the dancers appeared; the men with painted bodies and strange headdresses, the women in skirts made of the tails of rabbits and squirrels, trimmed with bird feathers. Their arms were covered with shell bracelets and their necks hung with beads. The watching Indians took up a soft chant, which sounded to Spanish ears like:

"I-ah-we-lay; I-ah-we-lay-lah;
Ha-low-hal-wah-ah-kay,"

sung over and over again.

The dancers formed a circle about the central fire and slowly lifted first one foot and then the other in a sideways movement in time to the drums, rattles, and the soft clapping of many hands.

It was all very strange and beautiful, Loreta Delfin thought, out there in the firelight with the sky like dark-blue velvet and the stars coming out like fireflies.

Suddenly there was a shout. The dancers shot their arms outward and leaped into the air and whirled about with strange ecstasy, and then just as suddenly dropped again into the first rhythmical step, with a more rapid swaying of the upper part of the body.

After they had watched this for some time, Don Carlos said they must go home. Benito and Loreta Delfin

wanted to stay longer, but Padre Toribio said the same thing would keep up a long time, with new dancers taking the places of those who were tired.

So Don Carlos mounted his horse and lifted Loreta Delfin in front of him. Benito mounted another horse and promised to ride close behind. They thanked Padre Toribio and Padre Quijas for their kindness and hospitality during the day and then started for home.

As they climbed the hillside, the flickering fires became still bright spots on the dark floor of the valley. The dancers disappeared in the shadows. Loreta Delfin's head dropped upon her father's shoulder and her eyes closed. She could still hear the faint thump-thump of the drums and the queer sing-song chant of the Indians, but sleep soon put an end to a long happy day.

CHAPTER IV

A SHIP COMES IN

FIESTAS didn't come every day. Life at the Casa del Arroyo went on for several weeks in the usual quiet way before anything happened to give Benito and Loreta Delfin something new to talk about.

One morning Domingo rode up to the house in a great state of excitement. A ship had been sighted from the fort. As yet it was not known whether she was the long-expected relief from San Blas or traders from Boston or England. Some thought it might even be pirates from South America.

Benito, who had run out to meet his brother and was listening to every word,

openly hoped they were pirates. When he saw the serious look on his father's face and how white and silent his mother and Prudencia had become, he didn't quite understand.

His mother said, "Now run and play, Benito," and there was nothing for him to do but obey, though he did want to stay and hear what Domingo and his father were saying about the ship. His mother and Prudencia went indoors, and Benito looked for Loreta Delfin to tell her the news.

She was in the despensa with the Indian girl, Josefina, helping to grind chocolate in a little stone mortar.

"I think there is a pirate ship coming into port," announced Benito boldly, as he seated himself on a long wooden bench opposite the work table.

"How do you know?" demanded Loreta Delfin.

"Domingo rode over from the Presidio to tell Father."

"Did they see the pirates' black flag?" asked the exact Loreta Delfin.

"Well, no," Benito had to admit. "They only thought it might be pirates, and I wish it were," he added.

"No, you don't, either," said his sister. "Why, what would we do if they came ashore? Don't you remember what happened in Monterey when the pirates landed?"

"Well, of course," said Benito, "I wouldn't want to be driven out of our home and have to go to San Jose to live. Marcella had to go to Soledad with most of the women and children in Monterey, while Juan stayed behind to help defend the Presidio. If I could stay and fight," he went on, "I wouldn't mind."

"But you couldn't," put in Loreta Delfin. "You may think you are

grown-up, but you'd be put in a carreta with the women and children, just like me, and be driven away."

"Now, if you are going to be mean, I'll go see what Domingo and Father are talking about," said Benito, for his feelings were very much hurt.

"Don't go," said Loreta Delfin.

"Maybe Josefina will let us take a panocha," she said, looking into the jar where the flat cakes of coarse brown sugar were kept.

"If you take one," said Josefina, "your mother will say I stole it and will tell the padre, who won't let me come here any more."

"All right, we won't touch any," said both the children together, for they were fond of Josefina and didn't want to get her into trouble.

When the chocolate was ground, Loreta Delfin left with Benito, and to-

gether they went to hear the latest news of the ship. They found that Domingo and their father had ridden back to the Presidio, so nothing could be learned until evening.

When Don Carlos and Domingo returned for their supper, the household heard that the pirate ship had turned out to be the brig *Orion* with supplies of all kinds to trade for hides and tallow.

The officers at the Presidio were planning a ball and had invited the Spanish families at the Mission settlement to come. The ladies would have a chance to go aboard the brig and look over the supply of mantillas, ribbons, scarfs, and shawls. There would be fine muslin, too, and silk by the yard for skirts and jackets, also beads, combs, and laces. They would find for sale everything that girls and women treasured for their gay costumes.

"If it isn't too rough on the ocean, I would like to go out to the ship," said Doña Maria Teresa. "There are many things lacking in my pantries and household, and no doubt we can replenish our stores."

"Oh, for a new dress, fresh ribbons and beads and bangles!" said Gertrudis. "Just in time for the officers' ball, too.

"Domingo, is that handsome Lieutenant Castro still at the Presidio? I wonder if he will dance with me again?" she went on. "I've learned lots of new steps for the jota."

"Maria Gertrudis!" interrupted her mother. "That will do. You are talking nonsense."

Domingo looked at his sister and seemed to see for the first time how very pretty she had grown and that she was no longer a little girl.

"All right, 'Trudis," Domingo said,

"I'll take you to the ball myself, and you can show the others how to dance."

Gertrudis was so delighted that she threw her arms about Domingo's neck and kissed him.

As the dance was to be held the following Friday, Don Carlos planned to take the family over a day ahead to give them time to go out to the ship, which was anchored in a little cove near the fort.

For years the officers and soldiers at the Presidio of San Francisco had waited patiently for supplies. Uniforms had grown ragged, and ammunition had become so scarce that it was once necessary to borrow powder from a visiting ship in order to fire a salute of greeting. The only Spanish ships from San Blas to visit the port had brought about fifty more soldiers and no supplies. These extra men only added to the distress.

The Mission supplied food and

clothes to the Presidio, but trade with foreign vessels was carried on to supply the dire needs of soldiers and gente de razón alike. Even the Governor at Monterey closed his eyes to the breaking of the law, knowing how great the need was.

Salvador, who was in charge of the Presidio in the Comandanté's absence, asked his father for supplies for the banquet. His mother gladly set her Indian girls at work making tortillas and dulces, or sweetmeats. They would probably like tamales, too, and enchiladas, also chickens with red rice, to serve after the ball, and the household was soon busy getting ready for the festivities.

Don Carlos sent Tomas to tell two Indian vaqueros to bring in a fat young steer. Benito had seen steers brought up to within a hundred yards of the kitchen and killed for meat so many

times that he knew every step of the whole process, but he never tired of watching it.

The animal was lassoed by the horns and led in from the range. When the place was reached where the killing was to take place, a second vaquero lassoed the steer's hind legs and threw him with a great thud. Then the riders backed their horses until the reatas were tight. The man at the tail-end dismounted and tied the beast's forelegs together and drew them up to the hind legs. Then the vaqueros removed their reatas. The one on foot stuck his knife into the animal's neck. When the steer was dead, the two men worked together to remove the skin. If they were skillful and had done the work many times, it took them only one half-hour to lay back the skin and cut the meat up on it. By killing and dressing the meat on the ground, it

was sweeter, juicier, and more nutritious than when done any other way.

There was a use for nearly every part of the beef. At matanza, or the time of year when cattle were killed for hides, only the choice parts were taken for food. Some of these were cut in long strips and dipped into boiling brine full of hot red peppers. Then these were hung to dry in the sun. This dried beef, called "carne seca," was used for stews all the year. For not a day went by without a beef stew and the favorite red beans or frijoles. To-day only the choicest cuts were dressed and made ready to take to the Presidio.

Don Carlos was busy seeing that the stiff dry hides, folded hair-side in, and skins of tallow were piled on creaking ox-carts. As there was little money to be had in Alta California, the bills for

finery, ranch implements, furniture, and household goods were paid in hides and tallow. The traders' prices for merchandise were high, and often it would take ten or fifteen cart-loads of hides and tallow to pay for what the ranchero and his family bought.

Benito ran here and there, first watching the loading of the carts and then the dressing of the beef, and now and then stopping in the kitchen where all sorts of good things were being prepared.

"Oh, please give me an asderos," he begged as he saw fresh cheese being made into little cakes somewhat thicker than tortillas. "I like them best when they are just made." And the good-natured cook gave him a cheese-cake from the trayful on the table.

Loreta Delfin was helping Prudencia pack the food into big baskets, which In-

dian girls would carry over to the Presidio on their heads.

Next day, very early, the family was ready to start. Loreta Delfin, Prudencia, and Señora Flores started first in the clumsy carreta. Benito, Gertrudis, Tomas, and Don Carlos followed on horseback.

It was a fine cool day, and wisps of fog strayed over the hills from the sea. The wind had not started to blow, and the leaves were quiet on the scrub oaks, which stretched their long branches horizontally, like arms, as if to reach the tops of the steep ravines. Wild mustard, waist-high, was in bloom, and the copa-de-ora, or golden poppies, were beginning to color the hillsides. Geese and ducks were feeding on the laguna by the Mission. As they drew nearer the ocean, hares darted over the sandhills

between the chaparral bushes. Birds of all kinds flew about, and flocks of tufted partridges appeared almost beneath the horse's feet.

Tomas and Gertrudis raced each other uphill and downhill, shouting and swinging their arms as though they had reatas and were rounding up cattle. Don Carlos and Benito rode back and forth to watch the slow progress of the ox-cart and pass a pleasant word with the ladies as they rumbled along, shaded by the colored awning stretched over the top of the cart.

"Let's race," begged Benito, as they came up to Tomas and Gertrudis, who were resting their ponies in the shade after a lively gallop.

"All right," said Tomas, as he swung into the saddle. "We will go over that hill and back to the ox-cart."

"Hold on tight, Benito," said his father, as they urged their horses into a gallop.

Gertrudis joined in, and Doña Maria Teresa from the ox-cart suddenly saw what appeared to be four flying figures appear on the top of the hill almost directly over her head. Down they came shouting and laughing, with Tomas and Gertrudis a little ahead and Don Carlos and Benito close behind. As the riders crossed the road back of the carreta, Loreta Delfin clapped and shouted for the winners.

After the race, the horses slowed down and came alongside the carreta. As Don Carlos was anxious to see if the carts loaded with hides and tallow had reached the shore, he rode ahead, leaving Benito and the others to follow with the carreta.

Other carts and riders were seen mak-

ing their way to the same place. As they neared the Presidio, the road became filled with carts, oxen, and shouting Indian drivers. Friends called greetings to one another. This slowed up the progress of the whole group, and the twins grew restless.

"Oh, please, Mother, let me get out and ride with Benito," begged Loreta Delfin, who was cramped and tired from the jolting carreta and anxious to get to the Presidio, where she and Benito felt very much at home.

"We can go much quicker than these oxen," said Benito.

"Very well, children, but remember not to wander away outside of the wall. Tell Salvador we are coming."

So off the twins went and were soon out of sight.

The shabbiness of the soldiers, the dilapidated buildings, and the general look

of neglect about the Presidio were never noticed by Benito and Loreta Delfin. To-day the little garrison was dressed in its best and ready for review by the guests. One did not have to look closely to see how dingy the uniforms had grown and how often patched and mended they were. To the twins, the soldiers were as brilliant and jaunty as soldiers could be.

Indeed, these neglected men wore their broad-brimmed, flat-crowned hats with an air. Every man's plaited hair had a bit of green or red ribbon at its end. Loose about the neck hung the knotted kerchief, but no longer decorated with spangles. Their shirts were white and clean but of coarse cotton, oftentimes patched and darned, whereas once they boasted of the sheerest linen. The vests of yellow coleta were embroidered with black silk, and below them gay sashes of varied colors held up short breeches,

which opened on the outside of the leg above the knee. A few buttons and loops still clung to the edge, and some of the soldiers could show white lace-trimmed drawers below. Scarcely a man could boast of the usual white wool or cotton stockings worn under the buck-skin riding-leggings, which reached to the instep. The garters holding these up were now without tassel or fringe. Their shoes had been made by the Indian cobblers at the Mission and were not like the usual ones worn with the gay uniform.

"Look, there is Salvador, and Domingo, too," said Benito as he saw his brothers in the uniform of the officers of the Presidio. In contrast to the worn outfits of the soldiers, their scarlet coats, white trousers, and waistcoats faced with green made them look like gay tropical birds among sparrows.

In the quadrangle formed by the workshops, chapel, soldiers' homes, and the Comandante's house, the review took place. The scene was full of color and life. The gay costumes of the women and girls and the holiday attire of the rancheros nearly hid the drab buildings, which, except for the chapel and Comandante's house, were not even whitewashed, and in bad repair. A ten-foot wall of freestone shut in the merry party and seemed like protecting arms about these gay and heedless people alone in an unsettled country, with a great ocean before them and untraveled miles of forests, deserts, and mountains behind.

The review over, Benito and Loreta Delfin looked up their mother to ask her permission to go outside of the Presidio wall.

"Do let us go to see if there are any

strawberries left out on the hills near the ocean," the twins asked.

"You may," said their mother, "if other children go with you. Be sure," she cautioned, "not to go too near the cliffs, and do not climb down to the beach."

So off they ran to get up a party to go out to Fort Point to look over the berry-patches. Soon quite a group had gathered.

"Let's try to get a little food," one boy suggested. "We'll be awfully hungry before we get back, and the grown people may not leave us anything."

Not a child but knew how true this might be, for when there were picnics or large gatherings, the children ate last, and often only fruit and sweetmeats were left for them.

They went eagerly to the place where

dinner was being prepared in the open by Indian servants. Loreta Delfin saw Josefina and Juana and ran to beg a bite from them for all her friends.

"Please give us a little something for our picnic?" she asked her Indian friends. There seemed to be plenty for all, and while the other servants were busying themselves over the open fires, tending stews and roasts, Josefina and Juana collected a basket of food for the children, and off they hurried before it could be taken away from them.

Before going far, they sat down near a bubbling spring under a spreading oak tree and ate heartily of their luncheon. Every pastry, tamale, enchilada, and dulce disappeared in the most amazingly short time. Such a feast for the children was a treat not often to be enjoyed, and every boy and girl made the most of it.

After every crumb had disappeared, they stretched themselves on the grass to watch the leaves dancing in the breeze and the clouds floating lazily across the blue sky. Drowsy and content to do nothing, they lay quiet for a while. Before long, however, they were up and eager to be doing something. The girls gathered golden poppies, cream-yellow buttercups and blue brodiæa for flower chains and wreaths. The boys threw their reatas lazily about, lassoing limbs and shrubs and now and then an unsuspecting companion.

"Oh, look!" Benito said in a loud whisper. "See the deer! Lots of them over there," and he pointed across a little ravine where in a chaparral thicket stood a number of deer.

They had seen the children before Benito pointed them out and were watching quietly to see what would happen.

As soon as Benito spoke, several of the boys jumped up and made off toward the deer. The shy creatures, though curious enough, were not going to stand there and let their antlers be used for lasso targets. As the boys scrambled down the ravine, the deer turned and, with only a slight rustling of the brush, were gone before the boys reached them.

"Oh, why did you scare them away?" called Loreta Delfin. "If we had been very quiet and hidden in the grass, perhaps they would have come to the spring to drink."

After that the children wandered off to look for strawberries, but not even the vines on the shady side of the hill had any berries left on them, though the crop had been plentiful that year.

"My family came here to pick berries last year," said one girl, "and we camped

out for three days. We ate all we could and took loads home for jam."

"We were here this year," said a boy, "and I hope we don't come again. The grown-ups play and sing and dance and the children and Indians are supposed to do the picking, and it isn't any fun."

Nearly all had at one time or another come with their families, when the strawberries were ripe, and there were some who liked it and some who didn't, but as Loreta Delfin said, "If you like strawberries before you come, you don't when you go home. I think it's better to gather just a few instead of trying to take all there are on the hills."

Some of the boys and girls had gone up to the top of a hill where they could look down on the little harbor and the trading-ship lying at anchor. The road to the shore was filled with ox-carts, piled

high with hides and bags of tallow. The squeak-squack of the wheels and the yells of the Indian drivers could be plainly heard where Loreta Delfin and Benito stood watching. A small boat was being rowed toward land and several of the ship's crew seemed to be coming ashore.

"Have you ever been out to the ships?" one of the boys asked.

"Oh, lots of times," boasted Benito. "Once I climbed to the top of the mast and helped reef the sails, when a storm was coming up, and the wind blew so hard we had to hold on like monkeys."

"With your tail, I suppose," said a boy, and then every one laughed.

"Well, I hope it isn't rough to-morrow when Father takes us out to the ship," said Loreta Delfin. "Benito may like to play monkey, but I don't want to be sick, and I do like to see the goods spread on the deck and watch people going

back and forth choosing what they want. It's like the stores Mother tells about in the cities of Spain and Mexico."

The sun went behind a fog-bank and the wind was growing cold, so the boys and girls raced down the hill and made their way back to the Presidio. They reached there just in time to find Don Carlos telling the ladies that if they wanted to go to the ship to select goods, it would have to be done right away, as the captain wanted to sail as early in the morning as possible. The crew were to load hides aboard all night and there would be no time to see the goods in the morning.

This was a disappointment for most of the ladies. It would break into their siesta to go just then, and leave them scant time for preparations for the ball that evening. Lists were hurriedly made and entrusted to younger members

of the family, who were all too ready to do the shopping. Don Carlos with Gertrudis, Benito, and Loreta Delfin started for the ship.

"It is going to be a bit rough," Don Carlos said, but all vowed that they were good sailors and could not be persuaded to stay on shore.

They boarded small boats, with several other rancheros and their families. Benito found a seat beside one of the ship's crew, who let him help with the rowing. Loreta Delfin and Gertrudis were glad enough to sit close to their father, who put an arm around each. In spite of heavy serapes thrown around their shoulders and across their knees, the girls were wet when they came alongside the *Orion*.

It was quite a scramble, with such a choppy sea, to climb aboard the brig and Loreta Delfin thought Benito no more

THEY CAME ALONGSIDE THE *ORION*

of a monkey at climbing than the others. She didn't have much to say about it, however, for she was feeling a little ill and didn't want to show it. Time enough to tease her brother, when they were both safe on shore again.

It seemed as though most of the ship's cargo was on the deck. There were dishes, furniture, farm implements, groceries, bolts of silk and cloth, ribbons, buckles, combs, and laces, all piled together in a more or less orderly manner. The buyers had to pick their way carefully between piles and boxes of goods to see what was there.

Don Carlos and one of the ship's officers set about gathering up the articles required for his rancho and household uses. Gertrudis and Loreta Delfin were allowed to choose the things for the family's personal use and adornment. Benito was off somewhere with the sail-

ors, with whom he made friends easily. While Loreta Delfin was helping select material for a dress for Prudencia and linen for new shirts for her father, they heard their names shouted overhead. Looking up, they saw Benito in the rigging, and Loreta Delfin thought him brave, indeed, to climb so high.

When Don Carlos and the others finished making their selections and had reckoned the amount of their purchases and listed the goods with the ship's officers, the call "All ashore!" was heard. They scrambled down into the small boats and were rowed back to land. The Captain promised that the sailors should work all night to bring the goods safely to shore and take back an equal value in hides and tallow, which the rancheros had been hauling all day to the beach.

The ball that night was very gay, but

Benito and Loreta Delfin were too tired, after their long day in the open, to watch more than the opening dance. Soon the tinkling guitars and sighing fiddles were mixed in their dreams with the rhythm of the sea and the sound of the wind in the oaks and pines.

CHAPTER V

WASH-DAY

"WASH-DAY! Wash-day! we're going on a picnic," chanted Loreta Delfin, one day in early summer.

She had heard her mother, the day before, arranging with a neighbor from the nearest rancho, to meet at the Laundry Spring, a few miles from the Casa del Arroyo.

It was the custom to save soiled household linen and family clothes several weeks, or longer. When the supply of clean clothes was nearly exhausted, the soiled linen was carried on horseback to a great spring, where stone tubs were

sunk in the ground and filled with water. Wash-day was an occasion for a family outing, and Benito and Loreta Delfin were looking forward to a day in the woods, playing with their neighbors, Manuel and Jacinta.

At the first streak of light, the carreta was brought to the patio gate. Benito had been promised that he could walk beside the oxen and carry the long goad. The Indian driver was to plod along, too, in case Benito wished to run off after squirrels and gophers.

These little animals would sit up and watch the strange, squeaky cart as it ambled by, curious and fearless enough, until a great two-legged creature, called a boy, ran toward them. Then off they would dart to their holes, usually reaching safety before harm overtook them.

Baskets of delicious food were loaded into the carreta, and three sleepy, chilly

children climbed in. Gertrudis, Loreta Delfin, and Tomas, who had hurt his leg while trying to break a colt, were riding in the carreta. Doña Maria Teresa planned to follow on horseback, when her household duties were attended to. Prudencia and Don Carlos promised to join them for dinner at noon.

It was gray dawn as the little cavalcade made its way slowly down the hill. The Indian girls from the Mission went ahead leading the horses laden with bundles of soiled linen. The carreta followed, squeaking in spite of the soap on the wheels. In the ravines the fog hung in garlands. A few birds sang matins to the early travelers.

The sun finally rose to warm the world and cheer the children, who sat in silence, closely wrapped in their gay serapes to keep out the chill. Benito trudged along with the oxen, shouting,

"Hora," as he prodded them, now and then, with his goad.

"Do you remember," Tomas said to Gertrudis, "the time we went for a wash-day outing, and the coyotes howled so close to us that Mother was afraid to let us go into the woods for fear we would be hurt? Benito and Loreta Delfin were just big enough to run around and kept getting out of sight. When we were all little it certainly kept Mother busy watching us."

"Are we going to have breakfast as soon as we get there?" Benito asked. "I'm awfully hungry. You aren't doing anything," he said scornfully. "I am working hard keeping these old oxen going," and back he ran to the head of the team to prod them along again.

"There are a bear and two cubs!" Benito said in an excited whisper a few minutes later.

"Where? Where?" They all said, looking around.

The horses ahead of the carreta had seen the bears, too, and were shying and snorting. It was all the Indian girls could do to hold them on the trail.

"Oh," groaned Tomas, "if only I were riding, I'd get you a cub with my reata! What a chance to miss! I've wanted to lasso a bear ever since I can remember and Father won't let me go to the hills to hunt them with the Indians. He said any good bear could pull me off my horse. This would have given me a chance to show him."

"You don't think any bear would let you lasso her cub and just stand by and watch you do it?" asked Gertrudis in disgust. "You'd be torn to pieces by the mother. No wonder Father refuses to let you go bear-hunting! You need more sense, as well as strength!"

THE HORSES HAD SEEN THE BEARS, TOO

While Tomas and Gertrudis were talking, the bear family turned and walked away at a leisurely gait to finish their breakfast elsewhere.

"Oso! Oso!" shouted Benito after them, "you know there are nothing but women and children along, don't you? We couldn't harm you, if we would."

The family from the neighboring rancho were already at the springs when the troupe from the Casa del Arroyo reached them. Manuel was busy fastening small lead balls to the ends of a strong line, several yards long. Jacinta was helping her mother and the Indian girls spread clean clothes on the bushes to dry.

"Buenos dias! Buenos dias! every one," the Flores family called. Greetings were exchanged and Señora Benicia inquired if the children had eaten.

"Only desayuno, and we are all ready

for our almuerzo!" Gertrudis answered. And what a second breakfast they ate!

"Oh, Benito," begged Loreta Delfin, "please leave something for our dinner and supper."

Benito thought perhaps his twelfth tortilla was enough, after all the frijoles and carne seca he had eaten, so over he rolled on the grass, more ready for a nap than anything else.

Manuel was anxious to be off with his goose snare. He had seen geese circling around, flying low enough to throw at. Benito had no snare line, but he was anxious to try Manuel's. So the two boys went off together.

"If you bring down a goose with that cord, you are a better man than I am," Tomas called after them. "It takes lots of skill to whirl that weighted cord so it will fly high in the air and fall with the weights on opposite sides of a goose's

neck," he explained to Loreta Delfin and Gertrudis after the boys had gone. "It brings down the goose, all right, when it works, but it takes lots of practice."

Loreta Delfin told Jacinta all about the bear and cubs, as they sat in the shade after breakfast.

"Tomas wanted to catch a cub for me, but I was glad he didn't have his reata and wasn't riding. It would have been a shame to have taken the baby from its mother. And besides, it would have scratched mighty hard. The mother bear would have fought for it, too."

"Our Indian boys brought a cub to the rancho once," said Jacinta. "Manuel built a little corral for it, but in the night it got away, and I was glad."

"Is your mother coming?" asked Señora Benicia of Gertrudis.

"Yes, she is, Señora Benicia. She is

going to ride over later and Prudencia and Father are coming in time for dinner," Gertrudis replied.

"Don Julio went to San Jose yesterday, so he cannot join us."

"Yes; Father wanted to go with him, but he has been busy rounding up and branding some broncos. That's how I hurt my leg," Tomas said. "I was riding one of the wild things and he tried to scrape me off against a tree."

Before noon the Indian girls had finished soaping and rubbing the clothes on the smooth stones and rinsing them in the cold clear spring water. Loreta Delfin, Jacinta, and Gertrudis helped spread them on the bushes and ground to dry, and then went off to gather wild flowers before it was time for dinner. Tomas sat in the shade, his back against a scrub oak, strumming his guitar and chatting with Señora Benicia. Dinner

was being prepared when Doña Maria Teresa and Prudencia rode up with Don Carlos.

Benito and Manuel came back just as dinner was ready, and they actually had a goose! Benito was the one who had brought it down and he was the proudest boy ever seen.

"Benito certainly did learn to throw the line well," Manuel said. "I never saw any one learn more quickly."

"Oh, it was just good luck that I got the goose," Benito said. "Manuel can throw much higher than I. This goose was flying low."

"The trick," said Manuel, "is in watching your goose and deciding when he is going to light, and to whirl your line so as to catch him before he gets too near the ground."

Dinner was delicious and eaten with relish. As there were only the two fam-

BENITO HAD BROUGHT IT DOWN

ilies present, the children were allowed to eat with their elders and had their full share of game-pie, pastry, broiled quail, and sweetmeats. After every one had eaten all he could, the Indian girls were allowed to have what remained of the dainties, which was a treat for them.

Every one sought a cool quiet spot for a siesta. Jacinta and Loreta Delfin were not sleepy, and they giggled and whispered until Señora Benicia was obliged to come over where they were lying on the ground playing, and ask them to be still and not disturb the others.

When the shadows began to lengthen in the cañada, Don Carlos, Benito and Manuel went up on the wooded hillside for a walk. The Spaniards of Alta California rarely went a dozen paces, except on horseback, and so it was a treat

for the boys to have Don Carlos with them on a walk.

They had not gone far, Benito and Manuel running ahead, when Don Carlos called sharply, "Watch out! A bear trap!"

The boys stopped short and looked about them on the ground, but saw nothing. Don Carlos came up to them and pointed to a tree just ahead. There, from a long horizontal limb, hung a quarter of beef.

"And just underneath," he said, "has been dug a deep pit."

"I don't see where," Benito replied.

"Look closely, but don't go too near, for it may be larger than I think," Don Carlos told them.

On looking closely, they saw that branches and a light covering of earth had been put over the pit to hide it from the bear.

"That trap was set some time ago," Don Carlos said. "How the meat smells! I think they will not catch anything here, it is too late in the year. Bears aren't so hungry now."

"What happens when a bear falls into the pit?" Benito asked.

"The bear tries to get the meat, of course, falls through the branches, is unable to scramble out, and the Indians shoot it with bows and arrows," Don Carlos replied. "Then they haul him out, skin him, and have a great feast and a welcome one, too, after the everlasting porridge they get at the Mission."

The three rambled on a while longer, looking for more traps and hoping to see a bear, but as twilight began to fall, they walked back to the spring only to find every one gone. Don Carlos' horse and Prudencia's were tied to a tree, impatient to be off.

"Well, Manuel, you and Benito had better climb on to Prudencia's horse and come along with me."

It wasn't long before the riders overtook the carreta. They learned that Loreta Delfin had gone home with Jacinta, and Manuel was to spend a few days with Benito.

"Hurrah, hurrah!" shouted the boys and galloped off into the twilight, Don Carlos after them. It was too dark for races, however, and they trotted back to ride beside the carreta.

The Indian girls led the horses, piled high with the fresh linen, neatly folded, now, and wrapped in serapes, to keep it clean. Now and then, the Indians would break into a low song, usually a hymn, which the padres had taught them. They sang it with a rhythm and tone much like their native chants, and

for a time no one realized that they were singing a Christian hymn.

So, under a sky of deepening blue, where big bright stars came out one by one, the family came back to the Casa del Arroyo. Lanterns twinkled at the gate where Gaspar and Felipe waited to unload the linen and take the saddles from the tired horses. Supper was waiting for the family.

After they had eaten, evening prayers were said and all went to bed early and slept deeply, guarded by Hercules, the Kneeling One, whose brilliant stars shown in the eastern sky above the Casa del Arroyo.

CHAPTER VI

HARVESTING AT THE MISSION

THE fields around the Mission of San Francisco de Asís were yellow with ripe wheat, and the time for harvest was at hand. Padre Toribio gave orders for cutting the grain and threshing it, and the Indian neophytes set about the task of gathering in the fruit of their labors.

The weather was fine, the harvest promised plenty, but something was amiss. The good padre was disquieted and the look of great trouble showed in his face. Only the night before Padre Quijas had returned from a journey, which had taken him as far down the

Camino Real as Santa Barbara. The news he had brought was the cause of Padre Toribio's heavy heart and sad face.

Word was on every tongue about taking the Mission property away from the Church, of setting free the Indian neophytes, and giving them their share of the Mission goods and lands. Years before, letters from Mexico had hinted of such a scheme. In Alta California the decree had not been taken seriously and the padres had gone on with their work. The fear of Secularization, as this scheme was called, haunted fields and workshops, shaded cloister and quiet cell, as up and down the Camino Real the padres talked to one another, prayed alone, or watched over their brown children at work.

Padre Toribio left his fellow-worker to take charge of the harvesting and

made his way alone across the fields and up the hill to the Casa del Arroyo. He wanted to think and to talk things over with Don Carlos, who had never failed him in times when he needed advice and help.

It was still early when Padre Toribio knocked at the gate. He found the family at breakfast in the logia.

"Padre Toribio, what brings you here, so early?" was the unspoken word on every lip.

His solemn face sent a chill to their hearts, but every one did his best to be cheerful and make the good man comfortable, and hospitality bade them keep their questions to themselves.

"Come, sit here, Padre," Don Carlos said, as he brought forward a big chair made of well-tanned hides.

Prudencia served him with chocolate and tortillas and the old man smiled,

IT WAS STILL EARLY WHEN PADRE TORIBIO KNOCKED AT THE GATE

grateful for their kindness. The food refreshed him, and after he had rested a while, he seemed more like himself.

"Don Carlos, could we talk a little, and you, too, Doña Señora?" Padre Toribio said, at last.

"Certainly, Padre," replied Don Carlos. "Certainly."

"Go, children," he said to Gertrudis, Tomas, Benito and Loreta Delfin.

"Prudencia," said her mother, "see that the Indian girls are put to work. Josefina will need extra help for cleaning the despensa," she said. "Give her two of the Mission girls for the work."

When the elders had been left alone, Don Carlos said gently and respectfully, "What troubles you, good Padre? How can we be of help to you?"

"Oh, my friends," Padre Toribio replied, looking at them earnestly, "the time has come when the Missions and

the padres need friends on earth as well as in Heaven. It is Secularization closing in on us, this time in earnest, I fear, and not to be put off.

"Brother Quijas came home yesterday from a trip to the Missions south of us. He has been studying better ways of working in the fields and shops, that we might improve our methods and increase our prosperity. To the Glory of God and Saint Francis," he added.

"All along the way, the talk is about giving over the Mission property to the State, turning the Indians free, and giving them a share of the land and goods. In Spain, it is said that our work is finished, now that the Indian tribes have been subdued and the way prepared for settlers. The plan is to make pueblos and presidios flourish, where the Missions now stand."

"What folly!" Señora Flores said.

"Yes, daughter, more than folly," the padre went on. "What do our rulers in Spain know of Alta California and the conditions here! They only know that we have grown rich and our work has prospered. They care nothing for the years of labor, watchfulness and devotion we have given, and must always give to the work, if it is to continue to be prosperous.

"The Indians," he said, "what could they do alone? Savages!" but added, quickly, "No, children; my brown children; able to work under direction, helpless without guidance. How soon they would go back to the state in which we found them, without the restraints and limitations the Church puts on them.

"I fear, greatly," the old man added, "for what will become of them, when we are gone."

"And what will become of *us?*" Doña Maria Teresa asked.

Don Carlos, who had sat in silent thought, as Padre Toribio spoke, now leaned forward and asked,

"Has a decree actually been issued, or is this only rumor?"

"At San Carlos and San Juan Bautista, where the padres most quickly hear of the actions of the Governor at Monterey, it was said that Sola has received an order to demand the surrender of the Mission properties. He has sent no word to the Presidente of the Missions, as yet, I believe."

"Well," said Don Carlos, "perhaps it is not too late to prevent a decree being issued. Padre Toribio, if necessary, I will go to Monterey to see Sola myself. I cannot promise success. I will get as many of my influential friends as possi-

ble to help me and perhaps we can make Spain see how necessary the Missions and the padres still are to Alta California."

"My son," said Padre Toribio, with tears of gratitude in his eyes, "God's blessing on you, and your friends, and may success crown your efforts. We will pray for you and, if possible, I will send word to my brothers in each of the other Missions, and prayers will go up for you from San Rafael Arcángel to San Diego.

"And now," he said, rising, "I must go back to the harvest."

As he walked out into the patio, he saw Benito and Loreta Delfin playing their favorite game of cuatrito.

"Who wins?" Padre Toribio called.

Benito was just about to toss his stone. Padre Toribio stopped to watch him. The stone went past the mark.

"Loreta Delfin wins," Benito said, as

MISSION SAN CARLOS DE BORROMÉO (CARMEL)

he picked up his stone. "She has outthrown me every time."

"Would you two like to go with me to the threshing-field," the padre asked them.

"Oh, yes," they both said at once, "if we may."

"I will ask for you," the padre said.

"Oh, then I'm sure we can go!" And they were right.

It was such a fine day that all three decided to walk. The drab-clad priest, with Benito on one side and Loreta Delfin on the other, soon forgot his worries as the three set off to watch the grain being trodden out in the primitive fashion used by the Mission Indians.

When they reached the era or threshing-floor, a large quantity of bundled grain had already been put on the hard smooth ground. Three or four Indian vaqueros had rounded up about seventy-

five mares and were waiting to turn them onto the threshing-floor.

As the last bundle of grain was dumped, the signal was given and the band of horses driven into the enclosure. The vaqueros, on powerful horses, with long whips in their hands, were skillfully lining up the mares to drive them round and round over the grain, to tread it out.

"Yeguas! Yeguas!" they shouted as the horses started on their way. Chaff and dirt filled the air, and at times only the shouts of the Indians and the tramping of the horses could be heard above the clouds of dust, which completely hid the era. When the mares grew dizzy, they were halted and turned the other way and the work was continued. As the grain was threshed out, Indians shoveled it aside, keeping the space clear for newly cut wheat, which was being unloaded continually.

"Padre Toribio, how do they ever get the grain whole and clean out of all that dirt?" Loreta Delfin asked.

"Haven't you ever seen the Indian women toss it into the air on a windy day from big, flat baskets?" Benito asked Loreta Delfin.

"The wind carries off the dirt and chaff, and the good clean grain falls to the ground," Padre Toribio told her. "We often have the men toss it into the air from large wooden shovels. We thresh beans in the same way, only the beans are broken easily, by the tramping horse."

"If the wind blows this afternoon, the women will winnow the grain and you shall come back to watch them, if you please," said the padre.

"Oh, yes, do let us," the twins said.

"Come now, children, we will go to

the Mission. It will soon be time for our dinner."

Padre Toribio beckoned to a neophyte who came running to him. "Amad a' Dios, higo! (Love God, my son)," the padre said. The neophyte replied, "Amad a' Dios, Padre (Love God, Father)."

"Bring us two horses, Gregorio. We would ride back to the Mission."

"Yes, Padre," the Indian replied and went off to do his master's bidding.

No caballero would ride a mare in Alta California, but the gentle padre was not proud, and when Gregorio brought two mares from those waiting to be used in the era, he thanked the Indian and accepted his help into the saddle. The children rode bareback, Benito holding the reins with Loreta Delfin behind him.

At the Mission they were met by Padre Quijas. Indian servants took the horses and others brought a refreshing drink and wafers to the four of them in a quiet, cool room.

Padre Quijas was a young man and a great help to the older friar. He was skilled in the crafts, as well as in learning, and under his teaching the Indians were turning out beautiful work in leather and metal. He was full of the new things he had seen on his trip, but, as yet, had scarcely had a minute to talk to Padre Toribio about them.

There was a new water-power mill at San Gabriel for grinding grain, the first one at any Mission, he thought. He was enthusiastic about the way the simple wheel, moved by the flowing water, had been made to turn the stones that ground the flour and meal.

"Oh, so much better than our old ar-

rastra with the blindfolded oxen going slowly round and round, hitched to the beam of the upper stone," he said.

"Perhaps we could build a water-mill here," Padre Quijas went on. "Water could be brought from the hills, as it is at San Gabriel."

"Yes, my brother, yes," the older priest replied, "if only things would remain as they are." And Padre Toribio's face grew thoughtful and sad and he soon walked away leaving Benito and Loreta Delfin with Padre Quijas.

"Do tell us," Loreta Delfin said, "What is it like at the other Missions?"

"Oh, no!" said Benito. "Tell us a story, won't you, please, Padre?"

"Yes," agreed his sister, "I'd rather have a story, too, if you will tell us one."

"Do you know the story of the Angelus bell of San Gabriel Mission?" Padre Quijas asked.

"Please tell us; please tell us!" Benito and Loreta Delfin said eagerly.

So the friar began, and the children settled themselves to listen. "Near Seville, in Spain, was the bell foundry of Paula Ruelas. One day the monks and nuns, with the poor of the town, gathered around a fire-pit to watch the moulding of a bell. Two men stirred a big cauldron brimming full of molten copper and tin. The model shell stood ready, waiting to have the hot metal poured into it.

"It was the custom to ask for a silver offering to sweeten the voice of a bell. To-day, Ruelas feared nothing would be given, for the gathering was humble and poor. When the request was made, up stepped a nine-year-old boy named Miguel and dropped his only silver coin into the pot.

"Miguel came every day to the foundry to watch the workmen trim the bell. After each cutting, the tone was tested with a swinging clapper, and every day the tone grew sweeter. At last it was declared perfect, and the bell was called Angelus.

"A day was set for the christening of the bell and Miguel was to be its silver sponsor. How proud and happy he was, as he stood there with a lighted taper in his hand! The Bishop and two attendants began to intone the prayers of exorcism against all evils of the air. The bell was washed with pure water mixed with salt, and dried with clean towels. It was then breathed upon to drive out the Devil. They anointed it with oil, and finally the censer was set beneath it. As the fragrant smoke rose within, the priests sprinkled the bell

thrice with holy water and named it Ave Maria Santissima. The Bishop said, 'May this bell be hallowed, O Lord, and consecrated in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Praise be to Thee.'

"Miguel felt bound to the Angelus bell by bonds neither time nor distance could break. When he grew up, he became a Franciscan monk and, as Padre Miguel Sanchez, he consecrated his life to sacrifice.

"A call came for workers among the Indians in America, and he felt it was for him to go as a missionary into that far-off land. He traveled from Spain to Mexico and from Mexico, with an Indian guide, he set out for Alta California.

"It was evening of the fourth day of his journey in the wilderness when he came to the Mission of San Gabriel just

as the Angelus bell was ringing. Its sweet tones wakened memories in his heart. He found the bell marked:

AVE MARIA SANTISSIMA
PAULA RUELAS
NE FECIT
1730

"With gratitude, he thanked God that he had found his bell. Through all the long years of his work at San Gabriel, he rang the bell at Angelus, with his own hands.

"It is said that as he went to his last rest, an old man, the bell rang itself, and from the sunset sky were heard the bells in Heaven ringing out a welcome to his pious soul, as it came into the company of the angels."

"What a beautiful story," said Loreta Delfin.

"Thank you very much," said Benito.

Just then a bell was heard calling the Indians in from their work. Padre Quijas excused himself and went to see that the noon meal of porridge and vegetable stew was given each neophyte, as he walked in line past the great pots in the courtyard, holding out a closely woven basket for his portion.

While the Indians ate and rested, dinner was served by the Mission servants to the two padres and their young guests. The food was good, but simple, and was eaten in silence.

Following dinner came the usual siesta, and when it was over, Benito went out to watch the Indians winnow the grain they had threshed in the morning.

"May I try tossing the grain?" Benito asked an Indian in charge of the winnowing.

They gave him a shovel and he tossed

some grain into the air. Unfortunately, at that moment, a gust of wind came from the wrong direction, and blew all the stubble and trash back into his face. His eyes and mouth were full of dust. When he could see again he dropped his shovel and went away in disgust. The Indians were skillful about their work, seeming to know from which way the wind would come and turning just enough to avoid Benito's accident.

Loreta Delfin spent the afternoon watching the Indian women and girls at their lace-making and embroidery. Some of the girls, who had learned to do the finest stitches, were embroidering vestments and doing drawn-work for altar-cloths, to be used at the Mission.

Padre Quijas was going to take Benito and Loreta Delfin out to the rancheria, where the Indian families lived, in eight long rows of huts, when Don Carlos rode

up to the Mission gate to take the twins home. They were disappointed not to visit the Indian huts, but were too polite to complain. Padre Toribio had a horse brought for each of them, and this helped to make up for not seeing the Indian families.

"Thank you, Padre Toribio, for giving us a wonderful day," said Benito.

"And thank you, Padre Quijas, for telling us such a nice story."

"Come again, children," said the friars, and waved to them from the Mission steps, as they started off, eager to tell their father about the experiences of the day.

CHAPTER VII

A TRIP TO ROSS

DON CARLOS did not forget his promise to Padre Toribio to go to Monterey to see the Governor, but important matters kept him at home. The summer was nearly over, when one day he quite surprised the family at dinner by saying, "Tomas and Benito, how would you like to go north with me to the Russian settlement at Ross? I want company, as it is a long trip."

The boys' eyes grew big and they were almost too excited to say, "Yes, Father, we should be happy to go! When do we start?"

"Carlos, do you think it wise to take the boys?" Doña Maria Teresa asked anxiously.

"My dear, the trip will be hard, but not dangerous. The Russians are friendly, and I believe there are no hostile Indians between here and there.

"Besides," he said, "this must appear to be a pleasure trip. I cannot, of course, go officially as a representative of either the Governor or the Mission. There are matters about our trading which must be talked over and agreed upon, and Padre Toribio has asked me to try to arrange them to the advantage of all. We will take Felipe and Gaspar with us and call it a hunting trip."

Doña Maria Teresa knew from the tone of her husband's voice that it was useless to say any more against the journey. Tomas and Benito were overjoyed

at the prospect of a real adventure, and were bursting with questions. The next few days were given over to preparing and packing such provisions as they would need for the trip.

"I wish I were not a girl," Loreta Delfin complained, "so I could go with you to Ross."

"No girls on this trip," said Tomas. "They say there isn't a Russian woman at the settlement, either."

"Oh, well," said Loreta Delfin, "girls can do some things boys cannot. By the time you get back, I'll know all the steps to the bamba and some day you'll be proud to pile your hats on my head as they do to show approval of the best dancers."

Loreta Delfin whirled gracefully around and held out her hand, as though balancing a glass of water on it, and bent

lithely over to pick up a handkerchief with her toe, in imitation of one of the parts of the bamba.

"Bravo, bravo, sister," cried the boys, "you will be a great dancer some day."

The day came for the departure to Ross. Don Carlos, Tomas and Benito were ready for an early start. Gaspar and Felipe held the horses at the patio gate. Don Carlos inspected the pack horses, which were laden with food and camp equipment. They would pass no ranch houses at which they could eat or stay at night, in the part of Alta California through which they would travel.

"Come, boys," said Don Carlos, "all is ready."

Gaspar and Felipe started ahead, leading the pack horses. There was a round of good-byes and good lucks, and the three were off. At the bottom of the hill they turned and waved to the girls

and their mother watching them from the patio gate, with Domingo, who had come from the Presidio to stay while the others were away.

It was a bright sparkling day and the bay was blue and clear. There was not breeze enough to use a sail, and Don Carlos said they would have to row across the bay. Tomas and Benito kept looking across the water to the mountains on the other shore. Every ridge and almost every tree seemed to stand out, clear cut, in the morning air.

The Indians called the highest of these mountains Tamalpais, the Sleeping Maiden, and on so clear a day, the outline of her figure, against the blue sky was plainly seen.

"Do you see her?" Tomas asked Benito, "that's her head, there," he pointed. "Her feet are toward the ocean."

"Oh, yes," said Benito, "I see her.

That's her hair streaming down the long slope to the bay."

"Do we have to climb that mountain?" Tomas asked Don Carlos.

"No, we go by boat past Alcatraz, named after the pelicans which live there, on past the Isla de los Angeles and up the bay to San Raphael. There we find a new Mission, where they send the sick, I believe. We will get horses there and guides and go over the hills to Bodega and then up the coast to Ross."

They found the boats ready; the sturdy Indian oarsmen idling on the shore. It took some time to unpack the horses, stow the goods away in the boats, and decide in which boats they were to sit. Benito and Tomas wanted to be together, Don Carlos wanted to be with the boys, but felt that he should be in the other boat to take command. He finally decided to let Tomas, Benito, and Gaspar, the

older and more responsible servant, go in one boat while he and Felipe went in the other.

The loads were about equal and the oarsmen well matched, and the two boats kept together during their trip across the bay. At the start the bay was smooth enough, but as they got out, where the wind blew in from the ocean between the cliffs, it was rough, and harder rowing. The Indians were strong and steady, and before noon they had reached the quiet waters of the other shore.

In a cove where there stood a sausalito, or small grove of willows, they found a landing-place. Ships' crews came here for water and fuel. Both boats were made fast, and the men and boys went ashore to stretch their legs and eat some lunch. Not much time could be spent in pleasant idling, though Benito and Tomas wanted to stay and explore, for it

would take most of the afternoon to row to San Raphael. The bay was sheltered all the way, and Tomas and Benito took turns at the oars. The shadows were long as they landed at San Raphael.

"My legs are certainly stiff," said Benito.

"Our arms will be stiffer by morning, I am afraid," replied Tomas. "We aren't used to rowing."

Gaspar and Felipe went up the hill to the Mission San Raphael Arcángel, to get horses to carry their stores. They were gone so long that the boats were unloaded and several of the Indians had started with packs on their backs, before Felipe and Gaspar returned with one lone mule.

"Is this all you could get?" Don Carlos asked.

"Yes, Master. Padre do not have many horses, all gone up into hills. No

one can find," Gaspar answered in his limited Spanish.

"Let us load up the mule," said Don Carlos, "and the rest will carry what is left. Did you tell them we were coming to spend the night?"

"Yes, Master, padre he says, 'Welcome.' "

The Mission San Raphael Arcángel had been established but a few years. The buildings were small and crude compared with those at the other Missions. As yet, but few Indians had been persuaded to work there for the glory of God and Spain.

Padre Sarria and his fellow-worker came to meet the strangers and welcomed them heartily.

"Your name, traveler?" the elder of the padres asked Don Carlos.

"Don Carlos Flores, ranchero from near the Mission San Francisco de Asís.

These are my sons Tomas and Benito. We are on our way to the Russian settlement, Ross. A pleasure trip," he added, "to give the boys some hunting and a chance to see the country"

"Welcome to you," the padre replied, "and God's blessing."

When they had unloaded their packs, an Indian servant brought a tray of earthen cups and a pitcher of aguardiente and water, for the refreshment of the travelers. Gaspar and Felipe took charge of Don Carlos' stores and then went off with the Indian servants to chat in their own language.

The two padres were eager for news from other Missions and the affairs of the country. Don Carlos was kept busy answering their questions.

"The Secularization threat is troubling the padres again," Don Carlos said. "Padre Toribio is much worried, and I

have promised him to plead his cause before the Governor at Monterey."

"What the Presidios would do without the Missions to supply them with food and clothes, I do not know," said Padre Sarria, and added, "these Indians could never make the land yield as it does now, or produce the cloth, wine, hides, and tallow they do, without the padres behind them."

Benito and Tomas were glad when an Indian servant told them that dinner was ready, for they were drowsy and tired and hungry. As soon as they had eaten, the boys were shown a clean, cell-like room, where their blankets had been unrolled on a bed made of hides. They felt strange so far away from home, but the day in the open made them fall asleep quickly without talking.

At daybreak they were wakened by Felipe, who helped them roll up their

blankets. A good breakfast was ready for them in the refectory. Don Carlos was just finishing when Benito and Tomas came into the room.

Gaspar and Felipe were waiting with the pack horses loaded. Two Indians who knew the trail over the hills to Bodega were told to go with them as guides. While the boys finished breakfast, Don Carlos went down to the boat-landing to see the two boats start back to San Francisco. He had trusted them with a letter to Señora Flores and one to Padre Toribio telling them all was well and that they were about to start over the hills to Bodega.

When all was ready, the padres came to give their blessing to the travelers. Good-byes were said, and off they started, with a promise to stop on the return trip. As they reached the top of the first hill,

they heard the Mission bells ringing to call the neophytes to early Mass.

"I wonder how many hills like this we shall climb before we come to Ross?" Benito asked Tomas, as they rode along together.

"As far as I can see," Tomas replied, "there are just hills and hills, but we keep going toward the ocean, so we shall come to the end of them some time."

For three days they followed the Indian guides over golden-brown hills. During the heat of the day, they rested in the cool ravines, where ferns grew under the oaks. At night they camped in the open under the stars. Gaspar and Felipe kept the camp-fire burning all night to keep away bears and wolves. They saw many elk and deer, and feasted on quail, hares, and fish which they caught as needed.

"AS FAR AS I CAN SEE, THERE ARE JUST HILLS AND HILLS"

On the third day they came to the top of a hill from which they could see the ocean. There below them was the port of Bodega. They could plainly see the big warehouses for storing supplies for the settlement at Ross and the Russian colony at Sitka.

There was considerable activity to be seen. A small fleet of large skin boats, or umiaqs, manned by fifteen oarsmen each, had just come in from the Farallones Islands, laden with oil, dried meat of gulls and sea-lions, sealskins, eggs and down from thousands of gulls and other sea birds which had been killed on the islands.

Since seals were no longer plentiful on the Farallones, the fur-gathering activities there had almost ceased. Only one Russian with from six to ten Aleuts lived on the rocky islands. There they fought the winds and storms, climbing,

day after day, to gather the eggs of sea-birds, which nested high on the cliffs; hunting and killing sea-lions that came to sun themselves on the rock of sheltered coves, and working unceasingly to prepare the products of this industry. Five or six times a year, only, the frail skin boats made the perilous trip from the mainland. These brought wood and water and news of life at Ross and tales of the hardships at Sitka, to the men whose lives were lived in earthen huts on the storm-beaten rocks.

Benito and Tomas felt strange, indeed, in Bodega, for no one there spoke Spanish. The Aleuts and Indians spoke a dialect strange to their guides, and the Russians neither understood nor spoke Spanish. At last Don Carlos found a Russian officer who could understand him and speak a little Spanish. He told him of his plan to go to Ross. The Rus-

sian was very friendly and offered to be his escort for the rest of the trip. He was going to Ross that same day, so they could go on together.

Don Carlos dismissed his Indian guides and sent them back to the Mission with the horses he had borrowed from the padres. New animals were packed and the trip to Ross was made in the company of the Russian officer.

Ross was a most surprising place. High on a seventy-foot cliff, overlooking the ocean was about a square mile of nearly level ground. A stockade, formed of thick beams set upright, about ten or twelve feet high, was surmounted by a horizontal beam, on which were wooden and iron spikes. This stockade was pierced with loopholes. Six-sided block-houses, with high steep roofs, were on two corners of it. In these towers, and on the gates to the inclosure, were

cannon mounted on carriages. It looked more like a fort than a hunting and trading-post.

Inside the stockade were Commandant's house, officers' quarters, barracks for the Russian workmen, a chapel, and various storehouses and offices. Don Carlos and the boys were taken at once to the Commandant's house and were given a most cordial invitation to stay there while they were at Ross. This they accepted with pleasure.

Next morning, before their host was about, Tomas found Benito feeling of the glass windows.

"Don't you know what glass is?" he asked.

"We don't have it in our house and I never saw it at the Mission," Benito replied. "It must be to keep out the cold and the rain and let in the light."

"Oh, look at all these books, Tomas,"

Benito said, pointing to a wall lined with books in beautiful bindings.

"What is this?" Tomas asked, cautiously touching the keys of a piano.

Neither of them had ever seen a piano, and they were both surprised to hear it make musical sounds. As both boys played the guitar and sang well, they were soon interested in picking out a tune, and did not hear the Commandant enter the room. It startled them when a voice spoke in a strange language. They could not understand what was said, and stood abashed, not knowing how to reply.

The Russian officer was friendly, and seeing they were interested in the piano, he sat down and played a lively, tinkling melody. Then he sang a song in Russian, and Tomas and Benito clapped their hands to show their appreciation and pleasure. The little musical enter-

tainment went on until breakfast time, to the delight of the boys, who soon forgot they did not understand Russian.

At breakfast Don Carlos discovered that several of the Russian officers had been to Alta California and had learned some Spanish during their trading activities. They were apparently pleased to have guests, and eager to show them about.

Everything was in perfect order, well equipped and provided for, so different from the dilapidated and run-down condition of the Spanish Presidios. Here there was strict discipline for the Russian workmen, as well as the Indians and Aleuts, who lived outside of the stockade in earthen huts.

The work of fields and shops was being carried on ably, but it was hard to make successful farmers out of the Aleuts, who were born hunters and fish-

ermen. However, the Spanish in Alta California kept the granaries filled, and they could raise enough vegetables to supply their needs.

Benito and Tomas were very much interested in the workshops, the tannery, and the windmill. At the foot of the cliff was a small wharf, a shed for the skin boats, a warehouse for lumber, and a blacksmith shop.

A vessel was being built, and Benito and Tomas were allowed to climb up on the hull and watch the workmen at their tasks. All day long they scrambled over the rocks along the shore, raced on the beach, or went from one activity to another, watching the workmen.

That evening, the best that Ross could offer was set before Don Carlos and his sons at the Commandant's house, where the Russian officers had gathered to entertain their guests. After dinner there

was music. The Commandant played again for them, and asked Benito and Tomas to sing a Spanish song for the company. This they gladly did, and at the end of the long ballad they were applauded loudly by the Russians. Don Carlos and the officers who understood Spanish, talked long and earnestly. It was agreed that it were better, here in the wilderness, if all could be friends, even though fear and jealousy existed in Europe between the Governments of Spain and Russia. If the Spaniards would trade grain, tallow, and hides for the manufactured articles the Russian ships brought to Alta California, every one would be more comfortable. Each year more and more of the rancheros, like Don Carlos, made friends with the Russians, and the Spanish Governor, himself, closed his eyes to the illegal trading.

Next day, an umiaq was to go from

Ross to Bodega. Tomas and Benito were overjoyed when Don Carlos accepted the invitation to make the trip in it. Felipe and Gaspar were equally delighted when Don Carlos sent them off with the pack horses overland to Bodega. The Indians were at home on any kind of a horse, but the thought of a trip on the ocean, in a boat made of sea-lion hides, gave them no pleasure at all.

Indeed, it was an adventure! It was necessary to go quite far out from land to avoid the rocks and shoals. To Tomas and Benito, brought up on land, the roll and dip of the boat as it slid up and down over the waves did not altogether give pleasure. They were plucky and said little of their discomfort, but the Aleuts, who took to the water like seals, were very much amused at the uneasiness of their passengers. When they were safe on land again, both boys de-

INDEED, IT WAS AN ADVENTURE!

clared they wouldn't have missed the trip, even if it had frightened them a little and made them sea-sick.

The remainder of the journey home was very uneventful. They traveled back to San Raphael over the same trail they had come over, and down the bay to the Presidio of San Francisco, but, as Benito said:

"Things look different when you go backwards."

CHAPTER VIII

TO MONTEREY FOR THE WINTER

DON CARLOS left the rancho after the last harvest of grain was in at the Mission San Francisco de Asís, and arrived in Monterey on a warm day, when the bay was bluer than the sky. The low, white-washed adobe houses with red-tiled roofs were scattered about, back from the water front, in friendly irregularity. There were no streets and only a few fenced-in yards and gardens. Behind the town rose wood-covered hills.

The Presidio of Monterey was much like that at San Francisco. An open square surrounded by barracks, work-

shops, the chapel and the Governor's house. Within the square were six or eight cannon, some mounted, some not, all looking peaceful enough, and for the purpose of defence they were quite useless. A wall ten or twelve feet high surrounded the Presidio and the settlement. Outside this wall were a few houses belonging to foreigners who had settled there.

The home of Marcella Nichols was within the wall, and there Don Carlos found his daughter and her little family. Her husband, Captain Nichols, who now owned his own ship, was away on a trading voyage, and Marcella was glad to see her father. From her, Don Carlos learned that the Governor was about to start on a long trip.

After hearing this, Don Carlos hastened to see the Governor and made his plea. Padre Toribio's faith in his friend

was well founded, and his arguments must have been well received, for nothing was done to enforce the Act of Secularization for ten years or more after this, when Alta California belonged to Mexico.

Don Carlos was pleased with the success of his talk with the Governor. He wrote at once to Padre Toribio and Doña Maria Teresa and rode to the Mission San Carlos Borroméo to give his letters to the courier going north on the next trip. It would probably take several weeks for his letters to reach their destination, for the mail service was slow and uncertain. Twice every week two Spanish soldiers were dispatched from each Mission, in either direction, each going as far north or south as the next Mission. Schedules were planned and an attempt made to keep them, but a courier taking letters never knew

whether he was going to be a week behind or ahead of the messenger who would relay the mail. Except for matters of urgent business, letters were seldom written. One's friends and relatives came visiting often enough to spread what news there was of interest in the province.

Marcella and Don Carlos were eager to have Doña Maria Teresa spend the winter in Monterey but how to persuade her to come, and bring Prudencia, Gertrudis, Tomas and the twins was another matter.

About the time they had decided to write to her, Captain Nichols' schooner arrived in Monterey Bay with a full cargo. There was great rejoicing in the household, for the *Shark* was to lie in Monterey Bay a week or more before going up and down the coast to trade.

It was Captain Nichols who thought

of a scheme for getting the Flores family to Monterey for the winter.

"Why couldn't we bring them all down here, aboard ship?" he said one evening, as they were talking over plans. "Don Carlos and I will ride up the coast ahead of the *Shark* and give them warning of our plan, and when the schooner has finished trading at San Francisco, we can put them all aboard."

"A splendid idea, Juan," said Marcella. "I will write Mother a letter and tell her that I have need of her this winter. What a happy time we shall all have together! Benito and Loreta Delfin can go to school, Tomas and Gertrudis can have a much gayer time here than on the rancho. Prudencia will find plenty to do here, as well as at home."

They all agreed that it was an excellent plan, and not long afterward Don Carlos and his son-in-law started north.

They made a slow trip, for the first rains overtook them, and mud on the Camino Real was deep and sticky. For three days they were held up by the storm at the Mission of San Juan Bautista. Jolly Padre Arroyo was good company, and, as he and Don Carlos had both been born in Seville, they found much to talk about while kept indoors by the rain. As soon as the roads were passable, the travelers started out again, stopping next at the Pueblo of San Jose.

Here they found friendly people, happy and healthy, living in a beautiful spot. Their stone houses were very simple and clean, surrounded by vineyards and gardens. As Don Carlos and Juan entered the town, people came out of their houses to invite them in, with true Spanish courtesy and hospitality.

Don Carlos and Juan wished to stop only long enough to change horses and

refresh themselves at Pio Pico's dram-shop. Here for two bits one could get a drink of aguardiente served in an ox-horn. Juan was much amused to find that the horn had a false wooden bottom. The good-natured host explained that the horns held less than a tumbler, but were very popular as they appeared to hold more.

When they left San Jose there was only a day's journey ahead of them, before they came to the rancho and the Casa del Arroyo.

Benito was the first to see his father and Juan as they came riding up the hill to the house. He shouted with a great burst of joy:

"Here come Father and Juan Nichols!"

All the household came out to greet them.

"Welcome home! Welcome home!"

As soon as they had dismounted, the travelers kissed and hugged Doña Maria Teresa, and then all the others.

After they caught their breath, Don Carlos asked his wife, "Did my letter reach you?"

"No, my dear, you know how unreliable the mail couriers always are. How long ago did you write?"

When Don Carlos heard this he said, "Then I had better go over to tell Padre Toribio not to worry about losing his Mission."

"You were successful with the Governor then? How splendid! My dreams have been haunted by the fear of the Indians gone back to savages, without the Missions and the padres," said Doña Maria Teresa.

"No need to worry at present, the Governor will do nothing to enforce the act until he is compelled to."

Juan was like a brother to the children. Benito and Loreta Delfin could hardly wait to talk to him. When the others were enjoying their siesta, the three sat in the sala, chatting along as merrily as though they had all been the same age.

"Where is the ship?" "Where have you been?" "What did you see?" "Tell us about it?" Loreta Delfin asked her questions so fast that there was no time for Juan to give an answer to one of them before there was another.

"Just one at a time, please," Juan begged. "The *Shark* is on the way from Monterey, and will be coming here very soon."

"Can we go aboard her?" Benito asked.

"Oh, yes," said Juan, bursting to tell them the plan.

"Why didn't you come with the *Shark?*" asked Benito.

"Now Juan is going to answer my questions first," Loreta Delfin told her brother.

"Which was next, 'Reta?"

"Where have you been on this voyage?"

" 'Way around the Horn to the United States, this trip. We took a big load of tallow and hides and brought back a cargo of groceries, furniture, dry-goods, hardware, and enough finery for every señorita and her mother in Alta California! We had a fine voyage and made good time, only eight months from Monterey to Monterey."

"I've been on a trip, too," said Benito, "Father took Tomas and me to Ross."

"Did he? That's fine. Tell me about it!"

"I'm not going to stay," said Loreta Delfin, rising. "I've heard about nothing but that trip ever since they came back. It's all right to talk about trips when you've been on them, but I do get tired of hearing about it all the time."

"Little sister, you will be going on a trip soon, so don't worry about not going to Ross."

"Shall I, Juan? Where? Where?" Loreta Delfin was jumping up and down with joy.

"Am I going, too?" Benito asked a little doubtfully.

"Oh, we are all going! There, I've let the secret out! Can you keep it to yourselves if I tell you?" Juan asked.

"Oh, yes, yes!" they both said.

"If your mother is willing, we are all going to Monterey for the winter and we are going to make the trip on the *Shark*."

"Hurrah! Hurrah!" cried Benito and Loreta Delfin.

"Quietly now, quietly, or all the household will know," warned Juan. "We mustn't let the secret out until your mother gives her consent."

"She will go, I am sure," said Loreta Delfin, "for she has been talking about wanting to see Marcella."

"I must go now," said Juan, "I see Felipe with the horses. Your father and I are going to the Mission. Now mind; not a word of the plan."

That evening Domingo and Salvador came over from the Presidio. Supper was very good. "Just like a party," the twins said. Afterwards several neighboring families gathered for a valectio casero, or informal party, to celebrate the return of Don Carlos and Captain Nichols.

The music of guitar and violin filled the sala, which was lit with many elk-tallow candles. Moonlight flooded the patio and there the children gathered to play gallina ciega, or blindman's buff. Indoors their elders danced and sang to the stately contradanza and jota, and the young men and women showed their skill and grace in the zorrita. When the bamba was danced, the boys and girls stopped their play and climbed upon the broad window-ledges to watch.

While the others were dancing and singing, Don Carlos broke the news of the trip to Monterey to his wife, and gained her consent to go.

Gertrudis and Tomas, who heard the news before going to bed, could hardly wait till after prayers next morning to tell Loreta Delfin and Benito about the thrilling trip.

"You needn't think you are telling us

anything," said Benito, who was a little sleepy and cross after sitting up so late. "We have known about that for some time."

"Oh, have you? Who told you? None of us knew it until last night after the party. You must have been listening to us when you were supposed to have been asleep," said Gertrudis.

"Never you mind who told us," added Benito, "and I wasn't listening last night, either!"

For several days Tomas and Gertrudis were kept guessing about how the twins found out about the trip. Juan Nichols wouldn't tell that he had given away the secret, and Benito and Loreta Delfin had great fun teasing the others.

"Well, what does it matter, even if you dreamed it?" said Gertrudis to Loreta Delfin. "We are all going, and what a trip we shall have! Just think, Monterey

for Christmas! The balls are wonderful, and they say the officers at the Presidio are handsomer than any in Alta California. You and Benito will probably have to go to school," she added, just to get even for the teasing.

"That will be fun, too," said Loreta Delfin, who hadn't the slightest idea of what school would be like.

Benito was doubtful about the need of learning to read and write, but the trip down was absorbing all of his attention. He pestered Juan with questions every time he came within hearing distance. He wanted to be a sailor, and would Juan please promise to let him learn how to do everything, so he could go on the next long voyage with him. Juan good-naturedly said "No" and "Yes" and "I will see," and "If your father will let you" to the torrent of questions, and Benito was overjoyed.

Doña Maria Teresa and Prudencia were as busy as could be, making ready for the trip. Extra girls came from the Mission. Clothes were made ready, household tasks done in preparation for the long absence.

Don Carlos and Tomas rode the ranges early and late with the Indian major-domos, leaving orders for this and that.

Benito and Loreta Delfin were so excited about the trip that they could scarcely sleep or eat, and were in the way of the busy household most of the time.

One day Domingo rode over from the Presidio to say that the *Shark* had cast anchor in the bay. Juan said that he would like to stay about a week to let the ladies at the Presidio and Mission settlements come aboard to get whatever they might be in need of for themselves, their families, and their homes.

After the ship came in, Juan was gone all day and sometimes at night, too, so Benito had to content himself without answers to the questions which kept coming into his mind from morning until night. One evening Juan came back for supper and said that he would like to sail as soon as Doña Maria Teresa could get her things aboard.

"But I'm not ready yet," she protested.

"You might as well go now, Maria," said Don Carlos, "for you never will be entirely ready, and Juan wants to get you all down to Monterey so he can go on to San Diego with the schooner." In spite of Doña Maria Teresa's protests, it was arranged to go at once.

Next day every squeaking carreta at the rancho was loaded with chests and bundles and boxes. Don Carlos stormed and fussed about taking so much, but his wife insisted that not an unnecessary

thing had been packed and said, "Clothes for six, with bedding and supplies, are not packed in a nutshell, and Marcella can't be expected to supply us all," and that ended the talk, and off the carretas started, followed by the family on horseback.

At the Presidio a farewell party had been planned by Salvador and Domingo, as a surprise for the Flores family. Just how they were to get their mother to come to the Comandante's house without telling her about the party could not be agreed upon. Domingo wanted to say that Salvador was ill, but they decided that would frighten her. Salvador thought they had better ask Juan to help them out.

So it was arranged that Juan was to say that the loading of the schooner would not be finished in time to get away until midnight, and that Doña Maria

Teresa had better go to the Presidio to wait.

The Flores family stopped at the Mission to say "Good-bye" to the padres and receive their blessing for the trip. Domingo met them there with Juan's message and, all unsuspecting, Doña Maria Teresa agreed to go with Domingo to the Presidio, and with her went Prudencia, Gertrudis, and Tomas. Benito and Loreta Delfin begged to be allowed to go with Don Carlos to the boat-landing to watch their things taken out to the schooner.

When they reached the shore, Juan was waiting for them. One load had already been taken aboard the *Shark,* and the boat was being reloaded for another trip.

"Can't we row out to the ship with the luggage, Juan?" asked Benito.

"Yes, if your father says so."

As the bay was as still as a pond, Don Carlos consented. Loreta Delfin and Benito climbed into the little boat on top of the boxes and chests and chatted gayly with the sailors as they rowed away from shore. Coming back with an empty boat, Benito was allowed to take an oar and proudly rowed back to the landing, while his sister watched him critically.

"You splash too much," said Loreta Delfin, to whom rowing looked easy enough, for she had never tried it.

"You would splash worse than I do, at first," said Benito knowingly. "It is not so easy as it looks. I tried rowing when we went to Ross, and at first all I could do was get wet and slow up the boat. It takes lots of practice."

The twins made several trips, and Loreta Delfin begged to take an oar on

the last trip back to shore. She surpised Benito and the sailors by catching the rhythm of the stroke quickly and pulling hard and steadily.

"Don't work so hard, Señorita, you will be all tired out," cautioned a sailor.

Loreta Delfin never liked to have Benito do things she could not do, so she stayed at it long after her hands were sore and her arms and back ached.

When all the luggage was stowed away aboard ship, Juan and Don Carlos took the twins back to the Presidio. There they found a gay party in progress, with singing and dancing in the Comandante's house and in the open, too. The night was fair and not in the least cold, and a full moon was rising. Benito and Loreta Delfin were tired and sleepy after the busy afternoon on the water. They watched the dancing for a while, but before refreshments were served, they went

off and curled up to sleep in the doorway of the chapel.

Juan was anxious to have the family aboard the *Shark* in time to sail with the midnight tide, so the dancing stopped early and supper was served to the guests. After supper quite a procession left the Presidio in the moonlight and went singing down to the beach to say good-bye.

As the Flores family were climbing into the boats amid shouts of merriment and advice from their friends, the twins were missed.

"Where are Benito and Loreta Delfin?" some one asked.

"Benito! Loreta!" they called, but no answer.

"Did they come with you? Have you seen them on the shore? Were they at the dance?" were the questions each asked the other, but the answers failed to locate the twins.

Don Carlos and Juan said that they had brought them back to the Presidio after seeing that the luggage was all aboard the *Shark*. Some one had seen them standing in the doorway of the Comandante's house watching the dancing, but where they were now was a mystery.

Juan asked a sailor if they were aboard ship by any chance, but they had not been seen along the water front since afternoon.

"Then they must be at the Presidio," said Don Carlos, and he and Domingo went back to look for them.

Doña Maria Teresa refused to go aboard the schooner until the twins were found.

"There is nothing to worry about, Mother," said Prudencia. "They are probably asleep somewhere and didn't hear us go."

After what seemed a very long time to the waiting people, Don Carlos and Domingo came back with two of the sleepiest children imaginable.

"Where did you find them?" their mother asked.

"Asleep in the chapel doorway. We had searched every nook indoors and were beginning outside, when one of the soldiers happened to see them," Domingo said.

There was no time for talking or scolding, and Juan hurried the family into the boats. Doña Maria Teresa sat with Benito on one side of her and Loreta Delfin on the other to be sure they didn't escape again. They were really far too sleepy to want to do anything but put their heads down on her shoulder.

As the dipping oars carried the boats out from shore into the very path of the moon, the soft, sweet voices of friends,

SAILING TOWARD MONTEREY

calling good-byes and good wishes, became part of a dream for Benito and Loreta Delfin. They were so sound asleep when the boat reached the *Shark* that no one had the heart to awaken them. Strong arms got them aboard without dis-

turbing them, and Prudencia and Doña Maria Teresa tucked them away in their bunks.

When they awakened next morning, it was with some surprise that they found themselves out on the ocean sailing toward Monterey.

CHAPTER IX

SCHOOL

"LORETA DELFIN, where are you?" called Benito. "Let's go out; it has stopped raining again." And out of the house the two darted.

For a week after they had landed at Monterey, it had rained. Between showers and sometimes in them, Benito and Loreta Delfin had explored the town. After living on the rancho all their eleven years, it seemed strange to them to have houses so close together. There were no streets, but on the winding paths between the houses one often met people coming or going about their business.

The ladies of the best families were

seen abroad only in the morning, in the simple black dresses worn for church, going to or from Mass. They were attended by Indian servants, who carried rugs and cushions to use on the bare church floor.

The plaza was the place to see the life of the town and Presidio. All day people came and went. There the soldiers drilled, and in the evening, when it was fine, gay young people danced and sang in the open square.

Public fandangoes and cock-fights were almost continuous and gave entertainment to the sailors and hunters who came to Monterey. Nearly every evening informal parties were given in the best homes for the members of leading families.

Doña Maria Teresa was busy getting her luggage unpacked and her family settled, and the twins were allowed to go

where they pleased. This morning between showers they went to the seashore. There was much of interest for them to see. The storm had washed long garlands of kelp up on the beach. Black surf-scoters swam and dipped for food and made short flights close to the surface of the ocean, alighting on the water with wings held high above their backs for an instant. Stocky gray or whitish fulmas floated in the bay, picking up, with their stout deeply-hooked bills, garbage thrown from a ship at anchor. A flock of gray and white sanderlings, in winter plumage, ran back and forth on the sand, following out the receding waves and hurriedly picking up their food. When a wave rolled in, they turned and ran up the beach with twinkling feet, keeping just ahead of the water, like a fringe of foam.

Benito and Loreta Delfin were so in-

terested in watching the little birds that they did not notice the people who were gathering on the beach. A brig, with white sails bellowed out in the fresh breeze, was coming into the bay. A group of schoolboys, shouting and happy, came up to the Flores twins.

"Do you live here?" one of them asked Benito.

"No, we live on a rancho near the Mission San Francisco de Asís," Benito replied.

"We came here for the winter," Loreta Delfin added. "We are living with our aunt, Señora Juan Nichols."

"Well, I guess you will have to go to school," the strange boy said. "Any boy who lives in Monterey has to go, or his parents are fined."

"Yes, I am going soon," Benito said.

"Can you read and write?" Benito was asked.

"No, I've never been to school."

"I'm sorry for you," another boy replied. He was very friendly, and the twins liked him.

"I am going, too," said Loreta Delfin.

"You will have to go to the girls' school," she was told. "Only boys can go to our school."

"What do you do there?" Benito asked.

"Wait and see!" one boy shouted, and ran off with some others.

"Don't you have to go to school today?" Loreta Delfin asked.

"Oh, yes, but when a ship comes in we are allowed to come to the shore to see it. I wish one came every day!" the boy said feelingly.

Benito and Loreta Delfin waited with the others to see the brig drop anchor and a boat, with the captain and some of the

crew, come to shore. Then they wandered back to the town.

"Those boys did not seem to like school," Loreta Delfin said to her brother.

"I hope I won't have to go," replied Benito.

"I'm sure we both will. That is one of the reasons Mother came to Monterey, so that we could go to school," Loreta Delfin told her brother.

Not long after this, at breakfast, Don Carlos announced that he wished Benito and Loreta Delfin to go to school. The twins were far too respectful and well-trained to question their father's plans, but they were quite sure, by now, that they did not want to go.

"There are two schools for boys and only one for girls," Don Carlos went on to say. "I inquired as to which one was

best for Benito, and to-morrow morning he will start in. I shall take him, myself, and introduce him to the maestro."

It was decided that Loreta Delfin would not go to school just yet.

"I'll teach you what we learn," Benito told her, for she was really very much disappointed not to be going to school, too, as long as Benito had to go.

Next morning Benito and his father started off after breakfast for school. The building did not look very attractive outside, and Benito felt more than ever that he would not like it. School had already started, and before they came to the door, the voices of the boys studying aloud could be heard.

Don Carlos opened the door into a long, narrow, badly-lighted room. After their eyes became accustomed to the dim light, they saw the schoolmaster. He was seated at one end of the room on a

rude platform behind a table covered with a dark dirty cover. As Don Car-

THEY SAW THE SCHOOLMASTER

los and Benito went toward the master, every boy stopped his reading to watch them, and not a sound could be heard.

"Good-morning, sir," said Don Carlos to the sour-faced man, past middle life, who did not even rise from his chair. He was dressed in a greasy, dirty uniform which marked him as a former soldier.

"I am Don Carlos Alejandro Flores, and this is my son Benito. As we shall be living here this winter, I wish to have my son receive the advantages of education at your school."

"Be seated, sir," said the schoolmaster. "Your son is welcome and I will assign his work at once."

"No, I will not stay," said Don Carlos, "for I see my presence has interrupted the studying."

"To your lessons," the master shouted, and every boy began his reading at the top of his voice, and the sound was deafening.

"Do you read?" he said to Benito.

"No, sir," Benito replied.

"Ramon, come here," the teacher roared. And one of the older boys came forward and bowed to the master. "Take Benito to his seat and start him on the primer."

As Ramon took the book from the master's hand, Benito looked at him and recognized one of the boys who had spoken to him on the beach. A flash of acknowledgment passed between their eyes, but neither boy dared to smile or speak.

When Don Carlos had seen Benito led to one of the rough benches along the dingy wall, he bid good-day to the schoolmaster and left the room.

Poor Benito was as unhappy as he could be. For a boy who had spent his life in the sun and air, as free as a colt on his father's rancho, it was like being thrown into a dungeon to come into this

poorly-lighted, close room. To Benito, the printed page meant nothing, as he had scarcely ever seen a book. The loud voices of the boys confused him. The letters were spread meaninglessly about the page. He repeated words from the primer, after his young teacher, neither knowing nor caring what they were about. All he could think of was getting away from school.

When reading time was over, coarse writing-paper was given out. Then a card with heavy black lines was passed around. Each boy, in turn, placed this under his paper and traced the lines. Then the boys took their papers to the maestro, who set a copy, according to the grade he had reached. For Benito the old soldier made a row of coarse marks and pot-hooks, to be copied on the lines below. Benito noticed that Ramon was

copying sentences from the catechism in small, fine, round letters.

As each boy finished his copy, he took it to the teacher's desk. Every mistake or blot was punished by a sharp rap on the knuckles with the ferule. Benito was disgusted and not a little frightened, for his own sheet was far from perfect. He was so slow about his work, however, that it was time to go home before he had finished and a great feeling of relief came over him.

He filed out of the school in silence along with the other boys. They had all learned to repress their joy at gaining their freedom, until well out of the maestro's hearing. They knew that a beating waited for any boy who was so foolish as to laugh or shout near enough to the schoolhouse for the teacher to hear him.

At home, Loreta Delfin tried hard to get Benito to tell about his school. All that he would say was, "I am glad you do not have to go."

"But I will, soon," Loreta Delfin replied. "Mother was asking to-day about a class in some one's home, where girls learned to read and write. She said she could teach me to cook and embroider and how to care for children. I love to take care of Marcella's children," she added. "They are such gay little fellows. You never know what they will do or say next."

For several days things went on at school as they had the first day. Benito would say nothing about it to any one at home, if he could help it. When they were alone, Loreta Delfin begged to be told what he did all day and he related the dreary routine.

"Every boy goes up to the platform

when he first comes in, kneels before the great green cross that hangs on the wall beside the platform, and says the Bendito aloud. Then we all kiss the maestro's hand and say 'Buenos dias' to him. The dirty thing!" he added half under his breath. "I hate to touch him!

"After that he tells us to go to our places. We all throw our hats on a bench in the corner, and when lessons are given out, we start to shout as loud as we can. I guess it is so that no one can hear the others."

"Poor Benito," Loreta Delfin said. "I do wish you didn't have to go to such a dreadful place. I go to a nice house with five other girls, and we sit in the sala or the logia and read in turn from a story-book, and sometimes write letters to each other."

"I hate school, and I don't learn anything but how to make scratches like a

hen and to say the catechism," Benito said.

His mother noticed that he took longer and longer to eat his breakfast, and one day he even said he didn't feel well when it was time to go to school.

"I don't think Benito is happy at school, Carlos," Doña Maria Teresa said to her husband, one morning after Benito had gone very reluctantly.

"Probably not, just at first," his father replied. "He has been too free, and is not used to work and confinement. Life is not all play, my dear, and doing a little of what he does not like will not hurt him."

That day Benito came home with sore and bloody knuckles. His mother noticed them at dinner, but Benito would say nothing about them.

"Have you been fighting, son?" his mother asked him.

"No, Mother," he replied.

"How did your hands get hurt, then?"

"The schoolmaster did it with his ferule."

Later Doña Maria Teresa told her husband that she thought such punishment rather severe, but Don Carlos replied, "No doubt the rascals need some discipline. A few raps won't hurt them, and boys can't be coddled. A teacher's life is no easy one, and boys can be a great annoyance."

This did not satisfy Benito's mother, especially after she overheard Benito tell Loreta Delfin that he had received the punishment because there was a spot of ink on his writing copy. And then he told her how every boy hated the school and the teacher.

Things went on for several days more, and one day Benito came home from school with flushed cheeks and blazing

eyes and fairly shouted at his mother.

"I'm through! I'll never go back again! Nobody can make me!"

He was so excited that his mother could scarcely get him to tell her what was the matter.

"I had to see a boy beaten," he half sobbed. "A little boy, who had giggled at a big boy making faces behind the teacher's back. It wasn't fair! He had done no wrong. The maestro is a brute! They took off his shirt, and two boys had to hold him down on a bench—" his words came fast and hot—"and the maestro beat him with the disciplina, a kind of cat-o'-nine-tails, made of hempen twine, with iron points. He bled! He beat the boy till he no longer cried out."

This shocking tale was told to Don Carlos, who was really a kind and just man and had never been known to strike a servant or even an animal.

"I will look into the matter," he said solemnly. "Benito need not go to school to-morrow."

And, it being Saturday, Benito felt doubly blest, for that was the day of review and examination. Beatings and knuckle-rappings were frequent that day, should the pupils fail to recite from Father Ripalda's catechism correctly.

What Don Carlos found out about the school was enough to make him decide to keep Benito at home the rest of the winter.

"I would like him to have an education," he told Doña Maria Teresa, "but if it cannot be had without beatings, I fear he will have to grow up unable to read or write. No child of mine shall be insulted and treated like a slave or an animal. They may fine me or punish me, if they like, but until schools are better, Benito shall not go."

The good news overjoyed both Benito and his mother. Loreta Delfin promised to show her brother, every day, what was taught her in the reading and writing classes, which she really enjoyed with the group of friendly girls.

Benito was free again to wander about the woods and shore, quite content at being unlearned in the ways of books and schools. On the days when a ship came into the bay, he saw the schoolboys on the beach. They envied him his freedom, but it did not make him popular with them. He really liked Ramon and wished they might roam together along the beach and through the woods. Then each could tell the other all he knew about the ways of birds and animals, of the sea and the rancho, unafraid of a maestro's ferule or disciplina.

CHAPTER X

CHRISTMAS EVE

MARCELLA and Loreta Delfin were sitting on the upstairs galeria, one fine day in early December. The rains had made a faint tinge of green show on the hills. The sun was getting warm and before long flowers would again bloom in the fields.

"How long before Christmas, Marcella?" Loreta Delfin asked.

"Oh, it is nearly here. Only three more weeks. What fun we will have together this year!"

"Benito told me that he heard Señor Rodriguez rehearsing his part in the Pas-

torela, down on the sea-shore, not long ago," Loreta Delfin said to her sister.

"Would you like to go out to the Mission on Christmas Eve and see the Indians act their Christmas play?" asked Marcella.

"Oh, yes," answered Loreta Delfin. "What fun! I think Tomas and Gertrudis must be going to be in a Christmas play, too. I saw Prudencia making costumes for them the other day. She put them away when she saw me coming."

"I think that was meant to be a surprise. Can you keep the secret?" Marcella asked her sister.

"Oh, yes, I can, Marcella," said Loreta Delfin.

"A group of young people give the play of the Shepherds, every year, going around from house to house during the holidays. They think it more fun when people do not know who is taking the

parts. Of course, we recognize our friends, but we pretend we do not know them at the time. It makes the play seem more real," Marcella told her.

"We should start saving our egg-shells, too," Marcella said. "Prudencia told me Lent began very early this year."

"What are egg-shells for?" Loreta Delfin asked. "What have they to do with Lent?"

"Don't you know about our Carnestolandas festival?" Marcella asked. "It comes three days before Ash Wednesday, and the whole town turns out to play. If you happen to be the favored one at any gathering or in the streets, even, you may find yourself hit with an egg-shell filled with bits of colored paper, cologne water, or oropel, which is gold leaf, finely cut. It is lots of fun trying to break an egg-shell on some one before he can do the same to you. Sometimes the air is sweet

with cologne and filled with flying bits of paper and tinsel. The girls go around with bits of tinsel in their hair for days after a Cascarone ball."

"On the rancho we never throw egg-shells but we always have lots of fun December 28th, at the Fiesta del dia de Innocentes," Loreta Delfin said.

"I remember. Do you still have buñuelos for breakfast and have a good laugh at the one who gets the cake stuffed with cotton?" asked Marcella.

"Yes, and last year Benito got it. He was so sure, too, that he could tell which one had the cotton, that when he bit into it he was more surprised than any one else. We just laughed and laughed at him."

"The first year I was in Monterey," Marcella said, "some one started the word around that a ship had gone ashore on the rocks. We all started for the

Point. When nearly the whole town was there and could see no ship, some one remembered it was the Fiesta del dia de Innocentes. No one ever could find out who started the story, which certainly fooled us all."

"I shall have to think up some good jokes this year," Loreta Delfin said. "It is harder to fool Benito than any one else."

The weeks before Christmas went by quickly. Loreta Delfin was busy with little gifts for all the family and the Indian servants, too. As Christmas Eve drew near, the Indian girls were busy all day grinding meal for the tortilla-makers. Benito and Loreta Delfin were allowed to grind chocolate and shell pine-nuts for roasting. Tomas and Gertrudis were home only long enough for meals. There was much whispering and hiding things away when footsteps

were heard coming toward the room where Christmas preparations were afoot.

Christmas Eve finally came. In the morning, Benito and Loreta Delfin went to gather shells in which to stand the candles that were to be lighted in every window. Don Carlos came home with his arms full of fireworks for the evening. Indian servants brought pine boughs from the hills, and Marcella directed the placing of them over windows and doors. They twined greens on the railings of the outside staircase to the galeria.

Doña Maria Teresa was supervising the cooking of the food. The tortilla-makers had been working since dawn. It did not seem as though all could be finished in time. But twilight found everything in readiness. Loreta Delfin and Benito, dressed in their best, stood

waiting, with tapers in hand, for the bell to ring that would be the signal for lighting the candles.

There it was! First, the deep voice of the bell in the chapel, and then others chiming in. Lights began to twinkle in the windows of every house in Monterey. Soon bonfires flared up in the plaza, on the hillside and the shore. More bells chimed, and glad shouts and songs welcomed in "la noche buena."

Guests began to arrive, and soon the house and the lantern-lit patio were full of people exchanging greetings. Supper was spread on long tables and the guests seated themselves as they pleased. Indian servants moved about offering tortillas from large trays, while others passed the meats and stews or served coffee, chocolate or punch from pottery pitchers.

The children, as usual, had to wait

until all the older people were served before they could eat. But it was Christmas Eve and there was a bountiful supply, so that the children and even the Indian servants had their share of roast meat, carne seca and frijoles, pasties, dulces and conservas.

When supper was over Don Carlos and Juan Nichols set off the fireworks in the patio. The children shouted with delight as every sky-rocket shot up into the deep blue sky and dropped its shower of sparks.

After the fireworks, Don Carlos called the servants into the patio. Two Indian men brought forward a big table laden with gifts marked with the names of those for whom they were meant. As Don Carlos called off the names, each person came to the table for his gift. No one was neglected. Every member of the family, every guest, and all the Indian

servants, with their families, received something to give them pleasure.

There were gorgeous embroidered shawls, lace mantillas, tall combs, or carved and jeweled rosaries for the ladies. Handsome spurs, silver-mounted bridles of the finest workmanship, bright sashes, a hat of the silkiest vicuña, or a poncho of the richest broadcloth fringed in gold delighted the men. The gay young señoritas received strings of pearls, gay fans, gold hair-ornaments, bright rebozos and sashes, carved necklaces and earrings. The boys were pleased with finely braided reatas, bright sashes, velvet jackets, or big hats. The girls, like their mothers and older sisters, were made happy with finery. The little children had beads to string, dolls, and animals made of wood, gayly painted and decorated with fur and hair, toy carts and boats.

Benito was overjoyed to receive a beautiful saddle of tooled leather with silver mountings, and a bridle of fine horsehair. Also a full suit of green velvet, trimmed with gilt and spangles, a red

LORETA DELFIN HAD A BEAUTIFUL COSTUME

sash and flat-crowned hat gay enough for any fiesta.

Loreta Delfin had a beautiful costume of embroidered muslin with a little velvet jacket, a light-blue sash and blue silk

slippers to match, besides a carved coral necklace and bracelets. She was delighted and felt that she had really grown up.

After the presents had been distributed, dancing began to the music of guitar and violin. The older children joined hands with their elders in the opening dance, the jota. All sang the verses as the two lines of dancers faced each other, the partners doing the figures of the dance in turn. At the refrain, hands were joined and a chain danced until some one started to sing the verse again.

The guests who wished to see the Christmas play at the Mission San Carlos Borroméo left after the first dance. The others were to follow in time for the midnight Mass. Don Carlos and Prudencia took Loreta Delfin and Benito as early as possible, so as to see as much of the play as they could.

It was a gorgeous night. The stars shone like diamonds. Along the way to the Mission bonfires were burning. Other town folk joined them as they rode along, and soon there was quite a procession. At the top of the hill looking down on the Mission, the riders stopped. They could see a long procession of Indian neophytes, each with a burning torch, winding its way back to the church, which was dark and quiet.

"We have missed the first part of the play, but are in time for the most interesting part, I think," Prudencia told the twins. "At sunset," she went on, "the Mission bells ring merrily and there is a light glowing in every window. When darkness comes, the lights are put out and the Indians gather in the quadrangle, where each one is given a lighted torch to carry. They form a procession and, with the statue of the Blessed Virgin, on

an ass, and Saint Joseph afoot, carried in front, they start on their long march, singing the while. This represents the wanderings of Mary and Joseph.

"Solemnly the Indians make the circuit of the inner court and then out through the big gate and around the outer walls and up to the hills beyond the Mission. Now they are returning to the church. We will go closer, so as to hear the singing as Mary and Joseph beg for admittance."

The riders went down the hill and dismounting at the Mission gate made their way to the church door where they could see and hear everything.

Again and again, in song, the pilgrims begged to be let in, out of the supposed cold and storm. But not until Mary proclaimed herself Queen of Heaven were the doors flung open. Then there was a burst of light, and to the chanting of the

Rosary and the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, the neophytes, with spent torches still in hand, slowly made their way into the decorated church and up to the chancel.

In front of the altar were wax figures of Mary and Joseph and the Babe lying in a manger, with the oxen lowing near by. Saint Francis, himself, was the first to make a Christmas crêche and had taught his drab-gowned followers to do so. Many of the Indians were so impressed that they fell on their knees in wonder and awe.

As the church filled, a hushed murmur passed around, as Indians and Spaniards alike mingled their joy and devotions. Then from one side of the chancel, a band of Shepherds entered. They were dressed in sheepskins and carried crooks, the Angel Michael, in armor, leading them. From the other side came a com-

pany of Angels, in white robes and golden wings. Together the Angels and Shepherds sang a song of praise to the Holy Family.

Now entered an aged hermit, with flowing white beard, carrying a missal and a long sin-chastening lash. Sneaking in behind him came seven Imps, representing the seven deadly sins. They were led by Lucifer, and all were dressed in long black cloaks. Their antics and grimaces delighted the audience to laughter.

A mimic battle followed, between the Angels and Imps, who tried by their pranks to hinder the work of redemption. Lucifer beguiled the aged hermit, who finally lost his soul. This success emboldens the Tempter, who then tries his wiles on the company of the holy Shepherds. Here, however, he encounters Saint Michael, who recognizes him.

Under the gaze of that invincible angel, Lucifer is obliged to fly. The end brings complete victory to the good angels over the evil spirits, and the audience bursts into shouts of joy as the forces of right march triumphant down the aisle of the church, driving the evil ones before them out into the night.

The play over, the neophytes marched out of the church to continue their celebration, singing and dancing, as they feasted on roast oxen in the rancheria behind the Mission.

Now quiet and the peace of Christmas filled the church. Candles were lit on the altar and the fragrant incense floated out over the company of devout Spaniards, who had gathered there for the midnight Mass.

Benito and Loreta Delfin were getting tired. After the long busy day and all the excitement of the evening, it was hard

for them to keep awake. The chanting and the intoning of the service lulled them into a doze. When the Mass was over, Prudencia woke them. Outside in the fresh night air, they were soon wide awake and enjoyed the ride home in the starlight.

In spite of the lateness of the hour, Monterey was still making merry. A troupe of players in costume passed just as Benito and Loreta Delfin were dismounting at Marcella's door.

"Oh, there are Tomas and Gertrudis," Benito said in a loud whisper.

"No they aren't," said Loreta Delfin. "Those aren't the costumes I saw Prudencia making for them."

Just then a long cloaked figure in a beard waved to them.

"There's Tomas," said Loreta Delfin, "and here comes Gertrudis."

And one of three Angels, passing

them, smiled and said, "Happy Christmas."

The twins wanted to tell their mother about the Christmas play, but Doña Maria Teresa was anxious to get the household to bed and said, "To-morrow, children. Tell me all to-morrow."

And off Benito and Loreta Delfin went to their beds. Before they went to sleep, it was agreed that "la noche buena" in Monterey was the nicest Christmas Eve they had ever known.

CHAPTER XI

A CHRISTENING AND A WEDDING

ONE morning when it was warm and spring-like, Benito and Loreta Delfin came into the patio and found Gertrudis combing Tomas' hair, as they sat in the sun.

"Ouch, Gertrudis, please don't pull it so," Tomas begged.

"How can I help it? It is so snarled," Gertrudis said, as she combed out the long black locks, so that she might rebraid them firmly and neatly into the queue, which was still the fashion for men.

Benito laughed at Tomas, who was making faces at each pull of the comb.

"Just you wait, Benito, until you have to wear your hair long."

"Oh, I never will," said Benito. "They will cut it off before I grow up."

Benito turned to his sister and asked, "Gertrudis, who is this caballero who comes around here, singing serenades all the time? He is a very dressed-up young man, not so bad-looking, but he certainly cannot sing," Benito teased.

"I don't know whom you mean," answered Gertrudis haughtily. "There are many young men playing and singing under my window."

"Yes, you do know the one I mean. I suppose his father will be coming around soon, dressed in velvet, fine linen, and lace, with a blue broadcloth poncho thrown over his arm, making low bows, with an expensive hat sweeping the ground, and asking for the honor of a marriage."

"Benito, you chatter like a squirrel! Stop your nonsense," said the blushing Gertrudis, crossly, as she finished winding Tomas' hair with black ribbon.

"Come along, Benito," said Tomas; "she's in love, and I am afraid there is nothing we can do about it."

When the boys had gone, Gertrudis and Loreta Delfin stayed in the patio, and Gertrudis confided, "I wouldn't tell Benito, he is such a tease, but I am in love, and Roberto's father will call soon to ask if we may marry."

"How exciting, Gertrudis. A wedding! Will it be soon?"

"I hope so, but you know how long it takes to arrange these matters. I am sure Father will consent. Roberto's family is honorable and rich, and we do love each other so much. But even after the families have arranged matters, it

takes some time for the groom to have the wedding clothes made. He must provide me with at least six sets of each kind of clothes I need, and Roberto says he will have the nuns embroider them for me. He says they embroider camisas as fine as cobwebs. I will give you all the best waists I have now, after I am married, Loreta, dear."

"Thank you, 'Trudis."

"Don't you dare tell Mother or Marcella," Gertrudis warned, "that I've been talking about weddings and such things. I am not supposed to know anything about it until after Roberto's father makes the proposal to my father."

"I promise not to tell," said Loreta Delfin.

Gertrudis went on to say, "We may have a christening in the family before we have a wedding."

"Oh, I hope Marcella gets a girl this

time. We have enough boys in the family now," said Loreta Delfin.

"Whatever comes, you have to take, and we will have a big christening party, whether it is a boy or a girl," Gertrudis added knowingly.

"I love parties, and we haven't had one here in the house since Christmas," said Loreta Delfin.

"I've been to enough bailes," said Gertrudis, "to last a long time. I've never known a place so gay as Monterey. It won't be long before you can go to them, too. How old are you, Loreta Delfin, ten?"

"Eleven, going on twelve, and I'm nearly as tall as you are now," Loreta Delfin answered.

Just then Doña Maria Teresa called to Loreta Delfin to come indoors to help her.

"Now don't tell any one what we were

talking about, please," asked Gertrudis again, as her sister went indoors. "It is my secret."

One afternoon not long after Gertrudis and Loreta Delfin had been chatting in the patio, Don Estevan Guadalupe Amador called on Don Carlos. Benito ran to tell Gertrudis that he had come, and she was so excited about it that it was impossible for her to eat her supper that night. Nothing, however, was said of the matter, but Benito took delight in teasing her on the sly. Doubtless a half-dozen calls would be exchanged before the proposal was made. The usual formalities could not be hurried. Young lovers had to hide their impatience and content themselves by exchanging flowers, which carried their messages of affection in a language of their own.

Every day, as Gertrudis tended the potted geraniums which filled the wide

window-sills of Marcella's home, she could almost hear them saying, "I will always love thee." And, in the evening, when she dropped one through the grating to her lover, as he strummed his guitar, he understood the message perfectly and in return tossed up a slip of evergreen, which said as loud as words, "My love will be eternal."

One day, not long after this, when Benito and Loreta Delfin returned from a picnic at Los Aguazitos, where the town-folks did their washing, they were welcomed with the news that a baby girl had arrived at the house ahead of them.

"I'm glad it's a girl," said Loreta Delfin.

"Let's see her," Benito asked. "Where is she?"

They were much disappointed not to see the baby at once. Señora Flores promised them they might hold the baby

HE STRUMMED HIS GUITAR

next day if they were careful not to make any noise in the house that night.

Benito and Loreta Delfin had never seen such a young baby as their mother brought into the sala next morning. It was wrapped in soft blankets and the top of its head and a little puckered face was all that could be seen.

"She looks like you, Benito," his mother said.

Benito pulled aside the blanket from the face of the sleeping infant and looked at it a long time. Then he went to the long mirror and studied himself. Finally he said, "If you think that thing looks like me, I don't know what makes you think so. The only thing I can see like me about it, is that we both have hair, eyes, nose, ears, and a mouth."

"You probably were not a bit handsomer than that when you were less than a day old," said Loreta Delfin.

Benito decided that he didn't want to hold the baby, so Loreta Delfin begged to hold it long enough for both of them. She sat down and her mother put the baby in her lap.

Benito came near to look at it.

"Oh, look, she is waking up," said Loreta Delfin. "Maybe she will open her eyes."

"I thought babies were like kittens," said Benito, "and didn't open their eyes till they were several days old."

"Benito, you didn't think anything of the kind. You are teasing."

"Yes, I did think so, truly," said Benito.

Just then the baby began to cry and Doña Maria Teresa came quickly back into the sala and took her from Loreta Delfin's arms.

The question of what to name the baby was discussed at every meal. Some

wanted one name, some another. Finally with the help of the godparents, it was decided to call the wee thing Maria Anita Rafaela.

The christening day was chosen and plans made for the volo, or special refreshments for the occasion. Then there were the presents to be gotten for the godparents to distribute to the guests at the christening feast.

The baptismal ceremony was to take place at night. Before the appointed time, the godparents, accompanied by several musicians who played as they rode, arrived at Marcella's house. Marcella and Juan with the baby met them at the door and, together with the other members of the family, marched to the parish church, playing and singing as they went. Benito and Loreta Delfin brought up the rear of the procession.

All the baby's relatives were expected

to be present at the baptism, without being asked. A number of friends had also been invited. These gathered outside of the church to wait for the ceremony to be over. When the family came out, they were greeted with skyrockets, music, and the ringing of bells. Friends and relatives, with the padre and his assistants, marched back to Marcella's home, making a long and gay procession. People came to their doors to watch them pass and waved and shouted. The baby slept peacefully through it all.

At the house, the padre and his assistants were given money and then the gifts were distributed to the guests. All ate of the panecito, or baptismal bread, and drank the health of the baby and its parents. The musicians were called, and dancing commenced, which lasted the remainder of the night. The young people returned next day and danced

again. It was quite usual for such a party to last several days.

After the excitement of the christening, the household settled down to a quieter life. Lent brought rest from bailes and fiestas. Gertrudis and Tomas were at home more, and church going and fasting became the chief activities in Monterey.

Señor Amador had asked Don Carlos for the honor of Gertrudis' marriage with his son, Roberto. Consent was given, and the young lovers were blissfully happy. The two families had many things to decide. The most important was when and where the wedding would take place. Naturally Roberto's relatives wanted it at Monterey. Don Carlos, Prudencia, and Doña Maria Teresa wanted it at the Mission San Francisco de Asís. Benito and Loreta Delfin were in no hurry to return to

the rancho, and they spoke for Monterey. At last it was decided that the wedding should be at the Mission San Carlos Borroméo, during Easter week.

It was customary for the groom to provide himself with the best horse obtainable and an elaborate saddle and trappings. He was also to provide most of the bride's clothes and all the food for the wedding feast. As Roberto's family were wealthy, they gave Gertrudis many wonderful presents. Every time Roberto or his mother or father called to see Gertrudis or her family, they brought something lovely; a lace mantilla, silk stockings, fans, Roman sashes, tall combs of shell bound with gold, pearls from Baja California, a necklace of topaz, an amethyst rosary, or a lace flounce from Spain for her wedding petticoat.

Benito and Loreta Delfin had seen a

good many wedding processions since they had been in Monterey. They were particularly interested to know what kind of a wedding Gertrudis would have.

"On whose horse will she ride to the Mission?" Benito asked, one day when wedding plans were being discussed at dinner.

"Don Carlos will take Gertrudis on his horse," Doña Maria Teresa replied.

"Will you use ribbon or a loop of gold braid tied to the saddle-bow for your stirrup?" Loreta Delfin asked Gertrudis.

"I think that, with Father's beautiful black horse and his gold-and-black saddle and bridle, gold braid would look best," Gertrudis said.

Prudencia was sewing on a lovely light-blue satin wedding dress. It was to have a tight bodice and a full skirt with tiny ruffles on it. There were satin shoes to match the dress, a necklace and ear-

rings of pearl, and a beautiful white lace mantilla, which Roberto had given her to complete the costume.

Gertrudis and her mother were busy going through the chest of fine linens and embroideries that had been laid away for her through the years. Bed-linens were most highly prized. Sheets, pillow-cases, spreads, and valances were elaborately embroidered and trimmed with lace. These had to be washed and bleached and carefully pressed with the flat of the hand, in readiness for the wedding.

In due course Lent came to an end. On the evening of Judas Day, as they called Good Friday, Tomas and Benito went with Don Carlos to see an effigy of Judas hanged on a gallows before the church, where it would be burned next day. Loreta Delfin and Gertrudis were

not allowed to go, as the crowd was mostly men, and usually pranks of all kinds were played. Sometimes petty thieving took place and was blamed on the evil spirit of Judas.

Tuesday after Easter had been chosen for the wedding day. Domingo and Salvador came down from San Francisco, and the friends and relatives of both families were gathered in Monterey for the joyous occasion.

By mid-morning of the wedding day, all who were to accompany the bride to the church gathered at Marcella's home to join Don Carlos and Gertrudis. The horses were decked in garlands of colored ribbons, flowers, and strings of tinkling bells. The riders wore gay velvet jackets of all colors with bright sashes. The men wore wide hats, trimmed with gold or silver braid and colored bands

tied round their heads. The women used lace mantillas over high combs and crossed them tightly at the waist, with the ends falling over bespangled skirts of every hue.

Gertrudis was pale and quiet as she came out of the house with her father. She looked as lovely as a flower and smiled to her friends, who were grouped about the patio waiting for her. When she was seated in front of Don Carlos, the others quickly mounted, and the happy and colorful procession started out for the Mission. Domingo and Salvador rode ahead, Juan and Marcella followed with Doña Maria Teresa. Loreta Delfin, Benito, Tomas, and Prudencia rode just behind Don Carlos. At the Mission they met Roberto with his family and friends.

After the ceremony, Roberto and Gertrudis were serenaded and greeted with

merriment. Don Carlos, Doña Maria Teresa, Marcella and Juan, with Prudencia, and Roberto's father and mother hastened home ahead of the others, in order to be there to greet the bride. Tomas waited to escort the padres back to Monterey for the wedding feast.

A band of musicians playing guitars and violins headed the procession home. Benito and Loreta Delfin were undecided whether to ride ahead with them or bring up the rear, where they could see all that went before. They finally decided that it was best to start at the end and ride ahead and then wait for the procession to pass, and when they found themselves in the rear, to start ahead again. Thus they did not miss anything.

As the procession entered Monterey, guns at the Presidio greeted them with a salute. When they approached the

GERTRUDIS AND ROBERTO

house, Gertrudis and Roberto were allowed to ride ahead and enter first. They were met by the nearest and dearest relatives, who with tears, gave the young

couple, kneeling before them, a blessing.

When all the guests had arrived, they sat down to the wedding breakfast in the sala. Gertrudis and Roberto sat at the head of a long table with the padres on their right and their fathers and mothers on their left. From a massive silver tureen, the guests were first served to an excellent mutton broth thickened with rice and garbanzos, or large round beans. Next came punchero, or stew of beef and vegetables flavored with red peppers, onions, and parsley, and served with puntela, or small dumplings of wheat flour. There were also roasted beef and mutton. Frijoles were served, of course, and tortillas a plenty. They finished with conservas of fruit, dulces, tea and coffee, and for the men, a small glass of spirits.

After the meal there was dancing in the sala and patio for those who wished it. Benito and Loreta Delfin were in-

vited to join a group in the dance and were delighted that they were not thought too young. They were both skillful dancers, and before the evening was over were in great demand.

Next day there was dinner at the Mission, then a baile at Roberto's home. A barbecue at a near-by rancho followed and the bride and groom, with their friends, were kept dancing and making merry for several days.

One night the young couple boarded the brig *Dale,* which lay in Monterey Bay, and before their friends knew where they had gone, the ship sailed away to give the young couple a quiet honeymoon on the ocean.

CHAPTER XII

HOME FOR THE RODEO

"HOORAY, hooray!" shouted Benito. "We are going home for the rodeo."

Don Carlos had just told him the plans and Benito sent up shouts of joy. The weather was perfect. Spring had really come and the green hills and meadows were glowing with flowers. There would only be Don Carlos, Doña Maria Teresa, Benito and Loreta Delfin to go back to the rancho. Gertrudis and Roberto were happily settled at the hacienda Roberto's father had given them for a wedding present. In a few weeks Tomas was going to South America in the *Shark* with Juan Nichols, and Pru-

dencia had decided to enter a convent.

Marcella's baby was growing fast, and was so sweet that none of them could bear to leave her in Monterey.

"Juan, couldn't you bring Marcella and the children up to San Francisco before you sail for South America?" Doña Maria Teresa asked one day, just before she left. "The trip overland is out of the question with three babies but, on the ship, they could make it easily. We'd love to have them all at the Casa del Arroyo while you are away."

Juan and Marcella thought this an excellent plan, so when it was necessary to say good-bye, they did so more cheerfully, knowing it would not be for long.

It was a sparkling morning when Don Carlos and his family set out on horseback with only the baggage necessary for the trip. Juan was to bring the rest of their things by ship, later on.

The Camino Real wound between green hills and fields gay with blue lupin, brodiæa, and scarlet Indian paint-brush. Meadow-larks and red-winged blackbirds poured out their song. The travelers journeyed slowly, enjoying the beauty of the spring and resting when they wished, so that none grew tired of the trip.

One night they stopped at the Mission San Juan Bautista, where Don Carlos was well known. He was made doubly welcome with his family. Good Padre Arroyo was especially happy to have Benito and Loreta Delfin. After they had had their supper, he sat with them under the olive trees looking down over the new pear orchard, just beginning to bloom.

"Do you know the story of the four cats of the Mission San Buenaventura?" the good friar asked the twins.

"No, Padre. Please tell it to us; we love stories," they both said at once. And so he began.

"My good brother Padre Francisco Uria was left alone when his fellow-worker died. There were the faithful Indians, of course, who cared for him, but he needed other companionship. One night an Indian servant made his way to a Spanish ship which lay off shore. There he found four kittens and brought them back to the padre's cell. The good man was delighted with the four soft furry creatures. He named and baptized them Concha, after Maria de la Conception; Lolo, after Maria de los Dolores; Pepito, after Saint Joseph; and Frasquito, after Saint Francis.

"The kittens followed him everywhere, and he taught them to sit and listen as he preached to them the virtues of a Christian life. And it is said they

showed every sign of understanding him. Frasquito was the cleverest of the four. Every morning at four, he aroused his master by standing and looking into his face and gently poking him in the cheek. Frasquito could also jump to the latch of the refectory door and let himself and the three other kittens in. They would take their place at table and wait patiently to be served. The padre had taught them that to snatch food was gluttonous and one of the deadly sins. At the evening Angelus the kittens would sit up with clasped paws and bowed heads while their master prayed.

"When it came time for Padre Uria to die, the faithful four gathered around him. After the priest had breathed his last, Frasquito, followed by the other three, walked slowly and sadly to the chapel and rang the bell which warned the Angels of the advent of another spirit

into Heaven, as is the Franciscan custom."

"What a nice story. Thank you, Padre," said Loreta Delfin and Benito.

A few days more of this peaceful journeying and they came to the Mission San Francisco de Asís. Padre Toribio wanted to keep them over night, but Doña Maria Teresa was anxious to get back to the Casa del Arroyo. Don Carlos promised to return and tell what news he had from Monterey.

Benito and Loreta Delfin were very happy to be home again. That night they went from one end of the house to the other, calling attention to favorite and familiar objects here and there. It was like finding old friends in a place one revisits after a long absence.

Next day Doña Maria Teresa was up early and at the business of setting the household in order. Loreta Delfin

found she was expected to take Prudencia's place in helping with home affairs. Don Carlos took Benito with him and rode off to see how the plans for the rodeo were progressing.

To protect their interests, the gente de razón, at rodeo time, directed this annual work of counting cattle, inspecting the old brands, and branding additions to the herd. At other times, the vaqueros, under the care of an Indian major-domo, were in charge of the half-wild herds.

Don Carlos and Benito found the countryside already astir with the activity of the rodeo. The corrals, enclosed by fences made of the horns and skulls of dead cattle, had been put in order. The hierros, or branding-irons, were ready for use. The vaqueros were driving the cattle in from the hills.

Other rancheros, like Don Carlos, were riding about giving orders and see-

ing that things were in readiness, for the rodeo would take place at the end of the week.

These rodeos were festival occasions for any community. The rancheros brought their wives and children, and, along with the work of branding and sorting cattle, there were feasting and dancing and general merrymaking for all.

Doña Maria Teresa rode off with Don Carlos, Benito and Loreta Delfin early the first morning of the rodeo. A crowd had already gathered at the corrals when they arrived. All were in holiday clothes and holiday spirits. Nearly every one was on horseback, though quite a number of carretas were to be seen. These carried the younger children and the supplies of food. Each day an ox was barbecued for the crowd, but

every family supplied for itself whatever other food it wished.

A large arbor had been built for the dancers. It was covered with branches and gay decorations. Musicians were playing and those wishing to dance were gathering. Dashing caballeros in black velvet breeches, brilliant sashes, bright-colored jackets, wide-brimmed hats worn over a red silk handkerchief bound round the head, tied their horses to the railing of the arbor and took off their spurs. Charming señoritas in full skirts of fine muslin, spangled with gilt, brightly colored jackets and high-heeled slippers and flashing jewelry, sat fanning themselves in the arbor waiting for partners.

As the young horsemen came into the arbor, they kneeled before their chosen partners and said, "Sabe que soy suyo,

(know that I am thine)." The señoritas then arranged themselves opposite the gallant señores leaving a wide space between the lines of dancers. The man at the head of the line began to sing a popular folk song. His partner took up the strain, followed by the next two dancers. Singing, the four pirouetted down the center and around the outside of the line to their former places. The next four followed, and so on until all had danced. With graceful swaying figures they kept perfect time with the music, which gradually changed from a grand crescendo to a faint whisper of song. Other groups took their places and the dancing went on and on all through the day.

While Loreta Delfin was watching the dancers in the arbor, Benito was with his father attending to the sorting and branding of the cattle. In the corrals, the animals snorted and bellowed in the

THE HOT BRANDING-IRON

dust. The frightened calves bawled piteously as they were lassoed and the hot branding-iron put to their flanks.

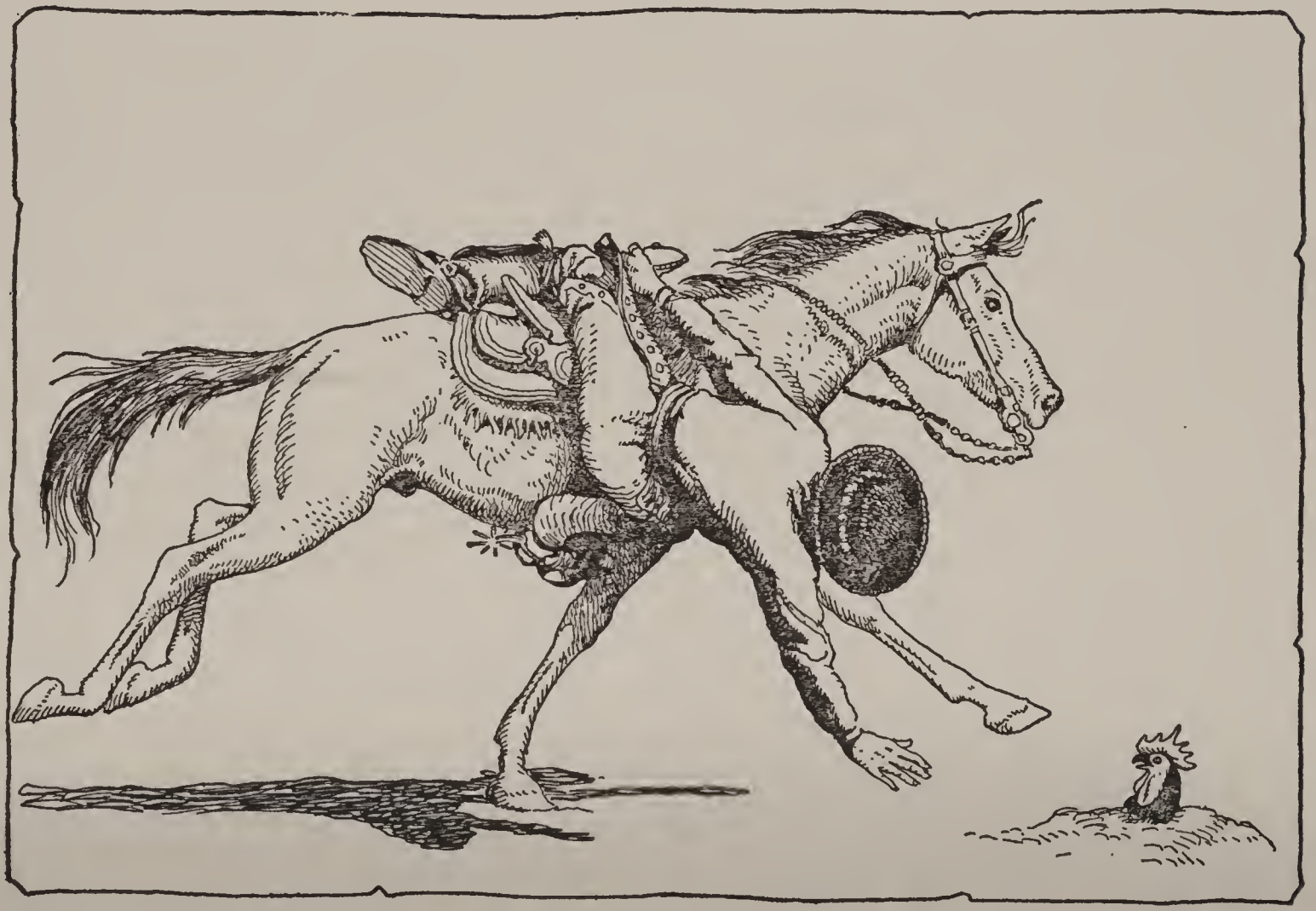
Now and again, as cattle were being headed into the corrals, an unruly cow or bull would break loose from the herd and suddenly dart away, running at full speed. A vaquero would dash after it. Coming up to the animal, he would lean over and catch it by the tail, spurring his horse ahead at the same time. Then by a quick movement, he would give a jerk and let go. The animal would roll over and over on the ground. By the time it got on its feet it was tame enough to be easily driven back to the corral. This display of skill and daring always delighted the spectators, who applauded the vaquero with enthusiasm.

In another corral, quite a crowd had gathered about a little group of Indian women, who were trying to milk a half-

wild cow. It took three of them to do it. One held the animal's head, another took firm hold of the reata which bound the hind legs, and a third tried to milk. Pails were unheard of, and the woman milked with one hand and held an earthenware cup in the other. This she emptied into a jug, each time it was filled. It was exciting and uncertain business, and little wonder that milk was not used more often.

All day long there was no lack of things to do and see. A race was arranged for the carretas drawn by the long-horned oxen. The usually slow-moving beasts could be goaded into quite a fast pace, and, in spite of the clumsy carretas they drew, the racing was exciting.

The young men on their spirited horses played carrera de gallo. A live cock was buried up to its neck in loose



THE YOUNG MEN PLAYED CARRERA DE GALLO

earth some distance from the starting point of the race. If, while going at full speed, a rider could catch the bird by the neck, he was loudly applauded. When he failed there was much laughter at his expense, and often he was unhorsed with violence by his comrades.

More thrilling and far more dangerous a sport was corrida de toros, or bull-coursing. A wild bull was put in the arena. A hundred or more horsemen were with him in the ring and as many more, less prominent persons, outside. The bull was baited with waving serapes and goaded with the rejón, an iron-pointed lance. When he became somewhat tired, he was driven out of the ring at full speed. The riders followed and were joined by those outside the ring. Then began a furious race to see who would be able to throw the animal by the tail. Several bulls in succession were

SEVERAL BULLS WERE THUS COURSED

thus coursed, and often riders and horses were injured during this rough sport.

Cock-fighting gave the less active persons a chance to gamble, for betting was the common practice on all sports and games. While money seldom changed hands, large numbers of cattle and quantities of hides and tallow were won and lost, as the rancheros amused themselves.

That evening Benito and Loreta Delfin sat around a great bonfire watching the Indians dance and listening to their strange and weird music. After the busy exciting day, the night air was refreshing and the darkness restful. The fire died down and quiet settled over the tired holiday-makers. There was laughter and singing to the guitar, but the noise of the day was gone. The air grew fresh and cool. A faint fragrance of mint made the twins sniff.

"Does that remind you of the day we

went to gather yerba buena, a year ago?" Loreta Delfin asked Benito.

"So many things have happened since then that it seems very long ago," said Benito, thinking of the trip to Ross, the winter in Monterey, with school, the christening, and the wedding.

"We have done so many things, and now that Gertrudis, Tomas, and Prudencia have left home, I guess we have become grown-ups, too," said Loreta Delfin.

And that is how Don Carlos and his wife felt about it, looking at the twins as they rode home that night.

For some years, life went on in much the same happy way for these contented people. The raising of the Mexican flag in the Presidios of Alta California, in place of the Lion of Castile, made little difference at first in the pleasant, pastoral

life of a people who sang and danced and made play of all their work.

Loreta Delfin was happily married and Benito was a partner in Juan Nichols' trading business, when the troublesome twenty years of strife began which preceded the transfer of Alta California from Mexico to the United States, putting an end to the carefree, happy days.

THE END