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ABRIDGED FOR YOUNG READERS

The Squatter and the Don

BY MARÍA RUIZ DE BURTON

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by

María Ruiz de Burton

CORE CLASSICS®

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

María Amparo Ruiz de Burton

The Squatter and the Don, a novel description of events in nineteenth-century California, was first published in San Francisco in 1885. The author, María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, likely recognizing that a book written by a woman would not receive any attention, used a pseudonym: C. Loyal.

María Amparo Ruiz de Burton was born in Baja California, México, in 1832. She was a witness to the Mexican-American War, which determined that Baja California would remain a Mexican state, while Alta California would become territory of the United States. María's family, like many others during the time, were moved to Alta California and became United States citizens as a result of the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

She loved reading literature and history, spoke Spanish and French, and learned English while in California. Despite the differences of age and religion, at seventeen she married General Henry S. Burton, fourteen years her senior.

The Burtons lived on a ranch outside San

Diego, California for a while, then moved to the East Coast where they remained for over ten years. Upon the General's death, María Amparo Ruiz de Burton returned to her ranch in San Diego and found it had been destroyed, with some parts occupied by squatters. Squatters first came to California during the Gold Rush and took over lands relying on the California Land Act of 1851, which increased the population and caused conflict among the Californians. This act stated that former Mexican land was public domain and available for resettlement unless the legitimacy of the land titles were verified.

The main themes of this novel address the squatter situation and María Amparo Ruiz de Burton's ideas about property, gender, class, and corruption. The author's interest in Baja and Alta California's politics are depicted through the relationships and disputes between two families who fight for their rights to live their lives in California.

María Amparo Ruiz de Burton is considered the first Mexican-American woman author to write a novel in English that is a critique of her times as well as a romance that invites reflection.

LIST OF CHARACTERS

The Squatter and the Don

(Arranged by last name in alphabetical order)

ALAMAR, DON MARIANO — The “Don” of the title; wealthy owner of the Alamar rancho who built his fortune on the land while it was still part of Mexico; father of Elvira Mechlin and Mercedes, Carlota, Rosario, Gabriel, and Victoriano Alamar

ALAMAR, GABRIEL — Son of Don Mariano and Doña Josefa; brother of Elvira Mechlin and Mercedes, Carlota, Rosario, and Victoriano Alamar; husband of Lizzie Alamar

ALAMAR, DOÑA JOSEFA — Don Mariano’s wife; holds strong views on both the treaty that granted their land to the United States and the behavior of the squatters who have come to claim it; mother of Elvira Mechlin and Mercedes, Carlota, Rosario, Gabriel, and Victoriano Alamar

ALAMAR (NÉE MECHLIN), LIZZIE — Wife of Gabriel Alamar; daughter of James Mechlin; sister of George and Caroline Mechlin; niece of Lawrence Mechlin

ALAMAR, MERCEDES (BABY) — Youngest daughter of Don Mariano and Doña Josefa; sometimes referred to by her Mexican name,

Mercita; primary love interest of Clarence Darrell; sister of Elvira Mechlin and Carlota, Rosario, Gabriel, and Victoriano Alamar

ALAMAR, ROSARIO — Daughter of Don Mariano and Doña Josefa; sister of Elvira Mechlin and Mercedes, Carlota, Gabriel, and Victoriano Alamar

ALAMAR, VICTORIANO (TANO) — Son of Don Mariano and Doña Josefa; best friend of Clarence; love interest of Alice Darrell; brother of Elvira Mechlin and Mercedes, Carlota, Rosario, and Gabriel Alamar

ALAMAR, CARLOTA — Daughter of Don Mariano and Doña Josefa; sister of Elvira Mechlin and Mercedes, Rosario, Gabriel, and Victoriano Alamar

DARRELL, ALICE — Daughter of William and Mary Darrell; sister of Everett, Clarence, Webster, Clementine, and Willie Darrell; primary love interest of Victoriano Alamar

DARRELL, CLARENCE (CLARY) — Son of William and Mary Darrell; brother of Everett, Alice, Webster, Clementine, and Willie Darrell; upstanding and devoted to his mother's wishes, although rich from investments of which his father would disapprove; close friend of the

Alamars and Mechlins; primary love interest of Mercedes Alamar

DARRELL, CLEMENTINE — Daughter of William and Mary Darrell; sister of Clarence, Alice, Everett, Webster, and Willie Darrell

DARRELL, EVERETT (RETTY) — Son of William and Mary Darrell; brother of Clarence, Alice, Webster, Clementine, and Willie Darrell

DARRELL, MARY — William Darrell's wife; having watched her husband lose prior land claims because he did not purchase the land properly from existing owners, she is determined to make sure the land in San Diego is fairly acquired; mother of Clarence, Alice, Everett, Webster, Clementine, and Willie Darrell

DARRELL, WEBSTER — Son of William and Mary Darrell; brother of Clarence, Alice, Everett, Clementine, and Willie Darrell

DARRELL, WILLIAM — The "squatter" of the title; a farmer who has left his farm in Alameda to give his family a better life by taking up a land claim on the Alamar rancho in San Diego County; husband of Mary; father of Clarence, Alice, Everett, Webster, Clementine, and Willie Darrell

DARRELL, WILLIE — Son of William and Mary Darrell; brother of Clarence, Alice, Everett, Clementine, and Webster Darrell

GASBANG, JOHN — A former hired man of William Darrell, now a squatter staking a claim on the Alamar rancho; friend of Miller and Mathews

GUNTHER, CHARLES — Friend of George Mechlin from New York; brother of Robert Gunther

GUNTHER, ROBERT (BOB) — Brother of Charles Gunther; suitor of Mercedes Alamar

HAGER — A squatter on the Alamar rancho

HALIER — The Alamars' French servant

HANCOCK — A squatter on the Alamar rancho

HAVERLY, FRED — An expert on mines; brother of Hubert Haverly

HAVERLY, HUBERT — Clarence Darrell's broker in San Francisco; arranges many of Clarence's business interests; brother of Fred Haverly

HOLMAN, ALFRED — Friend of James Mechlin and Don Mariano; father of Amelia and Corina Holman

HOLMAN, AMELIA — Daughter of Alfred Holman; sister of Corina Holman; friend of the Alamars

HOLMAN, CORINA — Daughter of Alfred Holman; sister of Amelia Holman; friend of the Alamars

HUGHES — A squatter on the Alamar rancho

LAWLACK, GRYLLUS — A corrupt local judge in San Diego

MECHLIN, CAROLINE — Daughter of James Mechlin; sister of George and Lizzie Mechlin; niece of Lawrence Mechlin; friend of the Alamars

MECHLIN (NÉE ALAMAR), ELVIRA — Daughter of Don Mariano and Doña Josefa; wife of George Mechlin; sister of Mercedes, Carlota, Rosario, Gabriel, and Victoriano Alamar

MECHLIN, GEORGE — Friend of the Alamar family and frequent visitor, although living in New York; acts as attorney for Don Mariano out east; husband of Elvira Mechlin; son of James Mechlin; nephew of Lawrence Mechlin; brother of Lizzie Mechlin

MECHLIN, JAMES — Friend of the Alamar family; father of George, Lizzie, and Caroline Mechlin

MECHLIN, LIZZIE — Wife of James Mechlin, mother of George, Lizzie, and Caroline Mechlin

MECHLIN, LAWRENCE — New York lawyer; uncle of George , Caroline, and Lizzie Mechlin

MILLER — A squatter on the Alamar rancho; friend of Gasbang and Mathews

MILORD — Mercedes Alamar's dog

MATHEWS — A squatter on the Alamar rancho; friend of Gasbang and Miller

PITTIKIN — A squatter on the Alamar rancho

ROMEO — A squatter on the Alamar rancho

ROPER, PETER — A disreputable lawyer; ally of Gasbang, Miller, and Mathews

SELDEN, ARTHUR — New York socialite; friend of Robert Gunther; suitor of Mercedes Alamar

SCOTT, COL. TOM — Railroad entrepreneur working to build a Texas Pacific rail line to San Diego

STANFORD, LELAND — Former governor of California and magnate of the Central Pacific Railroad

CHAPTER 1

SQUATTER DARRELL REVIEWS THE PAST

“**T**o be guided by good advice is to profit by the wisdom of others; to be guided by experience is to profit by wisdom of our own,”

said Mrs. Darrell to her husband, in her own sweet way. They were alone in the sitting room of their Alameda farmhouse. She was sewing Mr. Darrell's stockings and the buttons on his shirts. Their children, so called even though they were all grown up, had gone to bed. Mr. and Mrs. Darrell always enjoyed staying up later and talking. Tonight, the conversation was an important one, as he would leave the next day for Southern California, intending to locate a **homestead claim** on good land.

“This time let us be guided by our own past history, our experience. Let us be wise, my husband,” said Mrs. Darrell.

homestead claim: land taken under a nineteenth-century U.S. law that gave unsettled or unclaimed land in the West to people willing to live and work on it

“In other words, *Be wise, husband*, is what you really mean,” he said. “Because as far as we are concerned, had I been guided by your advice we would be much better off today.”

“That is not what I mean, William.”

“Had I followed your wisdom, we would be much better off today,” Mr. Darrell stated. Mr. Darrell was a family man, concerned about his past decisions. He had managed to provide his family with a place to live, but he believed that this was not an actual home. “No use in crying over spilt milk, eh?” he said, trying to lighten the conversation.

“If by ‘milk’ it is meant all or any earthly good whatever, it is the spilt milk that we should **lament**. There is no reason to cry for the milk that has not been wasted, the good that is not lost. So let us cry for the spilt milk by all means, husband,” Mrs. Darrell continued, “if by doing so we learn how to avoid spilling anymore.”

“I understand, Mary, but I fear that my streak of foolishness has only brought fatality upon us.

lament: to express grief or sorrow

Please, forgive my past wickedness.”

“You have acted wrongly at times, but you are not wicked!”

“I firmly believed that, with my fine stock, my good bank account, and broad government lands, I was going to give you and our children a nice home . . . But see how we are now.”

“Together, that’s how we are,” said Mrs. Darrell.

“Poor, that’s where we are! All I earned is the name of **squatter**. A name which I hate because you despise it,” he exclaimed.

“We are not poor. Also, I do not despise the name of squatter. I disapprove of acts done by men because they are squatters, or to become squatters. They have caused much trouble to people who never harmed them.”

“Well, the poor squatters have suffered as much distress as they have caused. Don’t forget that,” replied Mr. Darrell.

“True,” said Mrs. Darrell, “but I am afraid I will never understand the necessity of being a squatter in this country of plentiful acres, which

squatter: a person who unlawfully occupies an uninhabited building or unused land

a most generous government gives away for the asking.”

“See? In the end we are not squatters. We are settlers.”

“Whenever you take up government land, yes, you are settlers. But when you claim land that belongs to anyone else, then, I am sorry to tell you, you are a squatter.”

Mr. Darrell set his teeth tightly. Mrs. Darrell went on as if she had not observed her husband’s flash of irritation.

“So, before you locate any homestead claim in Southern California, first inform yourself whether anyone has a previous claim. Do not go on a **Mexican grant** unless you buy the land from the owner.”

“And how am I to know who is the owner of a **ranch** that has been rejected, for instance?”

“If the rancho is still in **litigation**, don’t buy land in it. Or, if you do, buy the title from the

Mexican grant: a land grant from the Spanish and Mexican governments to Mexican citizens

ranch: a large grazing farm where horses and cattle are raised

litigation: the process of taking legal action

original **grantee** on fair conditions and clear understanding.”

“I don’t know if that can be done in the Alamar rancho.”

“Is that the one you will be seeing?”

“Yes, and I know it has been rejected.”

“Be careful, don’t forget about . . .”

“Believe me, wife, I will not forget Napa and Sonoma valleys.” Mr. Darrell was referring to the time when he and his family had to abandon their home in one place. They lost the earnings of years and years of hard work.

“That is precisely what I ask. We cannot afford to throw away another twenty years of our life. If you go into a Mexican grant again, I will not follow you there willingly. Promise me that you will do things well and not believe what those men have been telling you about the Alamar rancho having been rejected. Make sure of it yourself. John Gasbang never speaks the truth, and years have not made him more reliable. You know that.”

“I see through all that. But I also see that San

grantee: the recipient of a land grant

Diego is sure to have a railroad direct to the eastern states and lands will increase in value immediately. So, I better get a good lot of land in the Alamar grant as soon as I arrive."

"Are you sure it is finally rejected?"

"I saw the book where the fact is recorded."

It was time, Mr. Darrell knew. It was time to provide what his family deserved—a home.

CHAPTER 2

THE DON'S VIEW OF THE TREATY OF GUADALUPE HIDALGO

Don Mariano Alamar's immediate family was composed of his wife, **Doña** Josefa, and six children—two sons and four daughters. They were famous for their love of the land and their kindness to those welcomed in their home. They had a reputation for hosting the best gatherings. Tonight was no exception; they had friends, music, and laughter. It was a glorious time for everyone. Or almost everyone.

Don Mariano was walking up and down the front **piazza**. His meditations were far from agreeable. Sounds of dancing came from the parlor, but he paid no attention. He was so absorbed that he did not hear **Doña** Josefa coming out.

"What is the matter?" she asked. "Something has happened; I can see it. Tell me."

don: a Spanish title of respect to a man, prefixed to first names

doña: the feminine form of *don*

piazza: a plaza or square

"Nothing, dear wife. Nothing new."

"Let me guess, more squatters?" she asked.

"Yes, more. The worst of it all is that among them is William Darrell—the same man who gave so much trouble to the Spanish people in Napa and Sonoma by locating claims there. He and six or seven other men are coming. There will be more rifles for my cattle."

"I thought that Darrell was no longer a squatter. People say he is rich and living in Alameda."

"Yes. He is quite well off, but Gasbang and Miller and Mathews went and told him that my rancho had been rejected and that it is near enough to town to become more valuable as soon as we have a railroad."

Silently, Doña Josefa went to hold her husband's arm and took a turn with him down the piazza.

"What does your lawyer say about protection?" she asked.

"In the matter of our land, we have to wait for the attorney general in Washington to decide."

"You know, Lizzie was telling Elvira that her uncle Lawrence is a friend of several influential people in Washington. George could get him to

help us with this **title**.”

“George? He is to marry my daughter; I can’t ask him a favor.”

“What is that I hear about not asking a favor from me?” said George Mechlin, coming out with Elvira on his arm.

“Oh, my dear boy. I don’t wish to bother you with my disagreeable business.”

George and the rest of his family were dear to the Alamars. Even though George lived in New York, working for his uncle Lawrence, he found in California what he did not know he was looking for—peace of nature and a wonderful woman.

“Why not? My father spoke to me about a **dismissal** of an **appeal**, and I made a note of it. Listen: *Get uncle to write to the attorney general about dismissing the appeal taken by the squatters against Don Mariano’s title, which was approved.* Is that the correct idea?”

“You would only need the number of the case, but I don’t want to be a bother.”

title: a deed; a legal document showing ownership of land

dismissal: rejection of a legal proceeding, or a claim or charge made therein

appeal: asking a court to reconsider another court’s decision

“Please, consider it done.”

“It is not that easy. I want the appeal dismissed, of course, but if the attorney general does not see fit to do so, he can remand back the case for a new trial, and that is killing. For while we are waiting to have my title settled, the settlers—and I don’t mean to make puns—are killing my cattle by the hundred.”

“Surely there must be laws to protect property in California?” George asked.

“Yes, but in our case, they seem intended to help the lawbreakers rather than to protect the law-abiding,” Don Mariano replied. “According to them, any man can come to my land, plant ten acres of grain without any fence, and then catch my cattle, which, seeing the green grass without a fence, will go to eat it.”

“I can’t believe this.”

“Then,” continued Don Mariano, “he puts my cattle in a corral and makes me pay damages and so much per head for keeping them and costs of legal proceedings and many other false expenses. For such little fields of grain, I am obliged to pay thousands of dollars. Now, if the grain fields are

large enough to bring more money by keeping the cattle away, then the settler shoots the cattle at any time without **hesitation**—careful that no one sees him, of course. If no one can swear that they saw him actually kill the cattle, no jury can convict him. So, I must pay damages and expenses of litigation or my cattle get killed almost every day.” Don Mariano said all this without a **respite**.

“I thought that the rights of the Spanish people were protected by our **treaty** with Mexico,” George said.

“Mexico did not pay attention to the welfare of the children she left to their fate in the hands of a nation which had no sympathies for us,” Doña Josefa intervened.

“When I first read the text of the **Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo**,” said Don Mariano, “I felt bitter against my people—against Mexico, the mother country, which abandoned us with so slight a provision for protection. But, upon mature

hesitation: pausing before saying or doing something

respite: pause or rest

treaty: an agreement between countries

Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo: the agreement that ended the war between Mexico and the United States in 1848

reflection, I have been able to see that Mexico did as much as could have been reasonably expected at the time.”

“I am sorry and ashamed to say, I never knew much about the treaty with Mexico and never imagined we had acted so badly.” George felt for them.

Lizzie was looking for Don Mariano and used her privilege as a future daughter-in-law to insist that he should be her partner in the **lancers**, which would be a far pleasanter occupation than thinking about squatters.

Mercedes sat at the piano, Don Mariano followed Lizzie to their place in the dance, and the other couples took their positions. The kindly spirit of Don Mariano soon yielded to the genial influences surrounding him. He would not bring his trouble here. He happily danced with his children. He insisted that Mr. James Mechlin, George’s father, should dance, too, and he graciously yielded and led Elvira.

lancers: a traditional dance for eight or sixteen couples, originating from a nineteenth-century quadrille

James Mechlin had come to San Diego four years ago, so thin and sick he was not expected to last another winter. He tried the climate of Florida after several years in Italy and France, but he felt no better. Only to please his family, he came to California, and his health improved so rapidly that he bought a country place here.

Mr. Mechlin devoted himself to building a wonderful home for his wife and two daughters—a place full of trees and flowers, which was the **compensation** to his family for **exiling** themselves from New York. Eventually, Caroline and Lizzie Mechlin made the acquaintance of the Alamar family, and soon it ripened into friendship, to be made closer by the intended marriage of Gabriel, Don Mariano's eldest son, to Lizzie. Shortly after, George, Mr. Mechlin's only son, came on a visit, and when he returned to New York, he was engaged to Elvira, daughter of Señor Alamar.

"Tonight we celebrate that we are to be part of the most delightful family," Mr. Mechlin said, raising his glass.

compensation: something given as a repayment for loss, injury, or suffering

exiling: expelling or barring someone from their homeland

“Come on, George,” Don Mariano said. “Your turn to dance with Elvira.”

George smiled and, as he walked up to them, he promised himself that, upon his return east, he would go to Washington to see about the dismissal of the appeal.

CHAPTER 3

PREEMPTING UNDER THE LAW

“**A**ll aboard for San Diego!” shouted a voice from a wagon as it rumbled past Darrell, who walked with a **satchel** in his hand, lost in thought. He looked up and saw that the wagon carried ten or twelve men sitting on trunks and packages and **carpet-bags**. Mathews and Gasbang had told him that there were settlers already residing at the Alamar rancho and that they, too, were going down to take up claims. Darrell looked at his future neighbors with mixed feelings.

Although he hadn't seen either of them in years, Darrell soon recognized Gasbang's vulgar face, with its gray beard clipped but never shaved. Mathews's **visage** was equally noticeable for its ugliness. His face was long and shaved, his nose was pinched, peaked, and red. He looked mean

satchel: a small bag; knapsack

carpet-bags: travel bags

visage: countenance; appearance; one's face

and **discontented**. Their presence made Darrell uneasy. The wagon had arrived and gone away, and the men walked aboard the boat as Darrell, swinging his satchel, stood on the **wharf** as if not quite resolved to go. He felt no sympathy for any of those men, and he was sure these were not the sort of people his wife would like to have for neighbors.

A shout from Gasbang made Darrell look up quickly and walk towards the **gangplank**, thinking he could return immediately if things didn't suit him. "Come, Darrell, your luggage is all aboard," Gasbang said, coming to meet him. He grabbed Darrell's satchel, a gesture that felt both friendly and controlling. "Come on, or you'll be left."

Darrell followed him, disgusted at this bad-mannered **officiousness**. "I got a seat for you."

"No, that is all right," said Darrell, with a shiver of discomfort. He wanted to be left alone.

The bustle and hurry of getting off was over

discontented: experiencing discontent; unhappy

wharf: a landing built as a place for ships to dock on a shore or river bank

gangplank: a ramp for getting on or off a boat

officiousness: being offensively intrusive or interfering in offering advice and services

at last, and the **steamer** was furrowing her way through the spacious bay of San Francisco towards the Golden Gate. Groups of passengers stood here and there, admiring the beautiful harbor and its surrounding country. Over the undulating line of diminishing hills, Darrell pictured the face of his beloved Mary. This was the first time he had ever left her for more than two days since they were married. He knew his absence could last several months. He would first bring Clarence—his oldest son—and then, when a comfortable home was prepared, Mary and the rest of the family.

It was a bright morning of January, 1872, when they arrived at San Diego city.

“Here we are,” said Gasbang. “How do you like our little city, Mr. Darrell?”

“Very pleasant,” said Darrell, trying to be kind.

“Pleasant! I should say it is. The best drained city in the world, sir, when we put in sewers, I say, sir.”

“And when we get the railroad . . .” added Mathews with a mouth full of tobacco, spitting on the deck.

steamer: a ship powered by steam

"Exactly, we'll soon have that. News from Washington is very encouraging. Tom Scott will visit us this summer," Gasbang said.

"I like a town with plenty of trees," said Darrell, thinking that his wife would be pleased, being so fond of nature.

"Most of them are eucalyptus and pepper trees, the best in the world. You never hear of any malarial fevers in San Diego, sir. We have it all here: perfect climate, sea breezes, and mountain air," said Gasbang.

Darrell was about to tell them to stop calling him "sir" when the loud report of a cannon close by made him jump.

"That is our visiting card to the people of San Diego, to announce our coming," said the captain, laughingly.

"I was not expecting such a military salute," Darrell said.

"The San Diego people are very military. At least, I should say the settlers on Señor Alamar's rancho are, as I hear they practice rifle shooting there all the time," the captain said, looking at Mathews and Gasbang.

“That is a shot at us,” Gasbang answered, laughing.

“But it is a blank **cartridge**, meant not to hurt,” the captain replied.

“The rifle practice is in dark nights,” said a young man, who had been listening to what was said by the others.

“Or in the daytime, if the cattle deserve it,” Mathews said.

“It is the **mischievous brutes** I would like to shoot, not the good, useful cattle.” So saying, the young man—a Spaniard, Darrell thought—walked away.

“That is **impudence** for you,” Gasbang exclaimed.

“Those **greasers** ain’t half crushed yet. We have to tame them like they do their mustangs, or shoot them, as we shoot their cattle,” said Mathews.

“No such violent means are necessary. All we

cartridge: the package consisting of the bullet, primer, and casing containing gunpowder; a round of ammunition

mischievous brutes: people causing mischief or problems

impudence: rudeness

greasers: an insulting term for Mexican, Spanish, and/or Native American laborers

have to do is take their lands and finish their cattle,” said Hughes, looking at Darrell for approval. But he did not get it.

Darrell may not have cared for the Spanish population of California, but he did not approve of shooting cattle. “Why must cattle be shot? Can’t they be kept off, away from your crops, without shooting them?” he asked.

“Not always. At first—that is, for the first three years after we located our claims,” Gasbang said, “we had to shoot them all the time. Now the don has mostly either sold them or sent them to the mountains.”

“I suppose fencing would be too expensive.”

“It would be **ruinous**,” Mathews said.

“Mr. Mechlin is the only one who has attempted to put up any fences,” said Romeo.

“That old hypocrite,” Mathews said.

Then Hughes, noticing Darrell’s confusion, added, “His daughter Lizzie is going to marry Gabriel Alamar. So of course, Mr. Mechlin has to be on friendly terms.”

“That ain’t the reason. He fenced a hundred _____ acres the first year so that he’s not at all troubled

ruinous: disastrous or destructive

by the don's cattle," said Romeo.

The men continued a conversation that seemed more like gossip to Darrell. They were talking about this young man Gabriel marrying Lizzie and how the families were, or pretended to be, friendly and how Mathews wanted this Mr. Mechlin away. Too much to understand at once.

In a few hours, Darrell was driving by Don Mariano Alamar's house—a one-story mansion on a low hill with a broad piazza in front. At the foot of the hill, there was an orchard and some grain fields enclosed with good fences. Darrell ran



his practiced eye over the valley from the highest point on the hill, seeking the best unoccupied lands to make his selection.

"I think I'll locate here," he said, "if no one else has already filed a claim to this land."

"I have no objection," said Hughes.

"Nor I, neither," said Gasbang.

Looking at them all, Darrell said, "I want you all to **bear witness** that I found no stakes or notices of anybody, is that clear?" They all nodded. "I don't want to jump anybody's claim. I want a fair deal. I will locate two claims here—one in my own name and one for my oldest son, Clarence," finished Darrell.

"You'll take 320 acres?" asked Hughes.

"Yes, 320 acres, according to law."

"This is what I call business," said Gasbang, "and all *inside of the law*."

Darrell felt satisfied. Next day he would have the claim properly filed, and, in due time, a **surveyor** would measure. All would be done "according to

bear witness: to confirm

surveyor: a person who measures the size of an area of land for legal purposes

law,” and, in this easy way, more land was taken from its legitimate owner.

Doña Josefa and her daughters had witnessed Mr. Darrell’s performance from the half-closed shutters of their bedroom windows and anticipated serious trouble. Don Mariano and his two sons, Gabriel and Victoriano, had also silently witnessed Mr. Darrell’s **appropriation**. It was all lawful, yes, and yet a troubling matter, for it was their land, after all.

“I wish we were squatters,” Victoriano remarked.

“There have been cases where honest men have, in good faith, taken lands as squatters and, after all, had to give them up. So, let’s not blame the squatters,” said Don Mariano. “In the end, they are like ourselves—victims of a wrong legislation and weak moral principles.”

appropriation: the act of taking something belonging to someone else as one’s own

CHAPTER 4

EFFORTS TO RIGHT THE WRONG

Darrell wrote home saying that he needed Clarence, his older son, to come down as soon as possible. “Then we will begin building our house.”

Back home, upon reading his letter out loud to his mother, Clarence said, “I had better buy the lumber for the house up here and send it down, then . . .”

“Does he say anything about the condition of the title?” Mrs. Darrell interrupted.

“Not a word. I suppose the land is vacant,” Clarence replied.

Mrs. Darrell shook her head as if in doubt, and then, holding her son’s hand, said, “Before there is any house built, I need you to oversee everything. Promise this to me, Clarence: you will **inquire** whether the land has been rejected and free. Find out there is no litigation for it, you hear me? Now, if there is a litigation, you will pay for it to the owner.”

inquire: to ask; to find out

“Very well, mother. I will,” Clarence said.

Mrs. Darrell smiled. She was proud of her son and his stance. Mr. Darrell could be a bit stubborn, but not her Clarence. She had raised him to be fair and kind.

While waiting for Clarence’s arrival, Mr. Darrell had lost no time, and soon he had several men engaged in different jobs at his place.

When the building of that small house began, Don Mariano, accompanied by his two sons, rode up to the place where Mr. Darrell was then overseeing his workmen.

“Good morning, Mr. Darrell,” said Don Mariano.

“Good morning,” Darrell answered without looking at him.

“Can I speak a few words with you?”

“Certainly.”

“I see you have taken up some land here,” Don Mariano said, riding around and pointing to the grounds. “You may think it is government land, but you are misinformed. This land belongs to me.”

“To you?” said Mr. Darrell, now giving his full

attention to Don Mariano. “Why was it reported as rejected, then? I saw it in the law report.”

“Yes, I know. For some mistake or other, the entry was made placing my title in the list of those rejected, but I assure you, it is a mistake. My title is now before the attorney general in Washington because, when it was approved, the settlers made an appeal.”

Mr. Darrell could not believe it. He could lose what he had just **acquired**.

Don Mariano continued, “If the attorney general **sustains** the appeal, I suppose he will **remand** the case for a new trial, but I have reasons to believe that he will dismiss it and the decision of the district court will be in my favor.”

“Well, we will see about that,” Darrell said.

“I thought it best to warn you, as you are building on my land.”

“Yours if the court acts in your favor.”

“All I wish to do is to prevent you from spending

acquired: gained

sustains: agrees with or rules in favor of

remand: to send a case back to a lower court for further consideration

money and then getting into litigation with me, Mr. Darrell.”

Darrell thought of his wife and her **earnest** requests before answering. “If the courts say that this land rightfully belongs to you, I will pay you for your land or **vacate**.”

“You would get me into litigation, and I really wish to avoid that.”

“No, Don Mariano. I shall not get you into any lawsuit with me. I shall buy your land or leave. You have my word.”

The two men shook hands and then said goodbye. It was settled.

earnest: showing sincere and intense conviction

vacate: to move out of a dwelling, either by choice or by eviction

CHAPTER 5

THE DON IN HIS BROAD ACRES

Having concluded his business with Darrell, Don Mariano decided to call all the settlers in his rancho and make a fair proposition that would save his remaining cattle from getting killed or captured. His friend Mr. Mechlin volunteered to talk to some of the settlers to arrange the meeting, and some days later all the settlers convened on the broad piazza of John Gasbang's house because it was the most central point in the rancho. Gasbang was entertaining with some broad anecdotes, which brought forth peals of laughter, when at last, Señor Alamar, accompanied by Mr. Mechlin, arrived on a buggy with his two sons, Gabriel and Victoriano, following on horseback.

"Good afternoon, gentlemen," said Don Mariano, lifting his hat and bowing. His sons and Mr. Mechlin did the same. Clarence Darrell, who had recently arrived from San Francisco and had helped Mr. Mechlin convince some of the more **recalcitrant** squatters to attend, rose, and so did

the other young men with him, returning their salutation. The elder Darrell, Pittikin, and Hughes followed this example; the rest kept their hats on and looked indifferent to it all. "I will try to be brief," the don said.

"Just let us out in time to bring the **milch cows** home, before night comes on," said old Miller dryly.

"Exactly, we want to look after our cows, too," said the don, laughing.

All saw the fine irony of the rejoinder and laughed heartily. Miller felt a retort there, knowing well that, with the exception of Mathews and Gasbang, he had killed and corralled more of the don's cattle than any other settler.

"Speaking about cows," said Don Mariano, still smiling, "you know that I have lost many; it is natural that I wish to save those I have left. I have one or two propositions to make to you. The reason why you have taken up land here is because you want homes. You want to make money. Isn't that the reason? Money, money!" he said, moving invisible bills in his fingers.

recalcitrant: unwilling to cooperate; difficult to deal with

milch cows: cows kept for milking; dairy cows

"That's it exactly," said many voices, and all laughed.

"Well, if I may, I would like to show you how to make more money than you can by your present methods while, at the same time, I also save my cattle. That little point, you know, I must keep in view." All laughed again.

"To fence your fields is too expensive. I believe this is what most of you say, is it not?"

"We could have raised better crops if your cattle hadn't damaged them," said Mathews.

"I beg to differ, but, supposing that you are right, do you think you could be sure of good crops if you killed all my stock, or if I took them all away to the mountains? No, most assuredly. I want to be honest; I feel it is a mistake to try to make San Diego a grain-producing county. This land is, has been, and will be always one of the best counties for cattle-raising on this coast and the very best for fruit-raising. Why, then, not devote your time, your labor, and your money to raising vineyards, fruits, and cattle, instead of trusting to uncertain rains to give you grain?"

"It takes a long time to get fruit trees to bearing.

What are we to do for a living in the meantime?" asked Miller.

"Begin raising cattle; that will support you," the don replied.

"There is no **capital**," Gasbang said firmly.

"You don't require any more capital. I can let each of you have a number of cows to begin with and give you four or five years to pay me. I shall charge you no interest."

"What do you expect in return? Our homesteads?" asked Hughes.

"No, sir, you will retain your homesteads."

"And will you stop contesting our claims?" asked Mathews.

"I will, and I will give each one a **quit-claim deed**."

"Let me understand this. You will not fight our claims if we don't plant grain on our land?" asked Gasbang.

"You can plant grain, if you like, but to do so you must fence your land. Since fencing is expensive, I

capital: money for investment

quit-claim deed: a legal document giving up one's rights to an area of land

suggest you fence orchards and vineyards.”

“I knew there was to be something behind all that display of generosity,” muttered Mathews.

Don Mariano quietly answered, “All I want to do is to save the cattle I have left. I am willing to quit-claim to you the land you have taken and give you cattle to begin the stock business. All I ask you in return is to put a fence around whatever land you wish to cultivate. Plant vineyards, olives, figs, oranges, make wines and oil, export olives and dried and canned fruits.”

The men started exchanging opinions. The don continued, “An orchard of forty acres or a vineyard of twenty will pay better after three years’ growth than 160 acres of wheat or barley in good seasons. You can easily fence twenty or forty or sixty acres for a vineyard or orchard, but not so easily fence a field of 160, and the grain crop would be uncertain, depending on the rains, but not so the trees, for you can irrigate them, and after the trees are rooted that is not required.”

“Where is the water to irrigate?” asked Miller.

“If we all join forces to put up dams across the most convenient of these ravines, we will have

splendid reservoirs. I will defray half the expense if you get together and stand the other half. Think of this: those ten acres of growing grain must be protected, and the cattle—which don't know the 'no fence' law—go and eat the green grass. Then they are 'corralled' or killed. If we continue as we are, in a few years you will see a county impoverished."

"I think it would be much more foolish to trust to a few cows to make out a living while trees grow than to the seasons to give us grain crops," said Miller.

"No, sir. Cattle are sure to increase. I am sorry to say this, but you have been seven years a settler on this rancho. In these seven years you have raised two good crops, three poor or only **middling**, and in two years, no crops at all."

"So, how many cows will you let us have?" asked Hager.

"I will divide with you. Next week I shall have my rodeo. We will count them. I shall take half; the other half you divide."

"That is more than fair," Darrell said.

middling: moderate or average in size, amount, or rank

"I don't want any cattle. I ain't no *vaquero* to go **lassoing** cattle," said Mathews.

"Then raise fruit trees and vineyards," said Darrell.

"Yes, and starve meantime," Mathews replied.

"You will not starve. As I said, you can make butter and cheese enough to help to pay expenses. Hear me out. With the produce of your dairies, at first, and afterward with your fruits, you will do far better than with grain crops and not work as hard. You must not forget, either, that every year you can sell a number of cattle, besides keeping as many milch cows as you need."

"Well, perhaps you understand 'vaquering;' but we don't," said Hancock. All laughed.

"Well, gentlemen, you know my views; perhaps you prefer to discuss them among yourselves." Before leaving, Don Mariano shook hands with Clarence. Followed by his sons and Mr. Mechlin, Don Mariano took his leave.

vaquero: a Spanish word for cowboy; someone who works with cattle

lassoing: catching with a long rope with a sliding loop on one end, generally used in ranching for cattle and horses

After they left, Gasbang turned to Clarence and said, “I suppose you, too, think the ‘no fence’ law **iniquitous**, as you appear to favor the **aristocracy**.”

“It is worse than that; it is stupid. Now it kills the cattle, afterwards it will kill the county,” Clarence answered. “If, as the don very properly says, this is a grazing county, no legislation can change it. So it would be wiser to make laws to suit the county and not expect that the county will change its character to suit absurd laws,” Clarence replied.

iniquitous: grossly unfair and morally wrong

aristocracy: the highest class in certain societies, especially those holding hereditary titles or offices

CHAPTER 6

NAUGHTY DOG MILORD AN IMPORTANT FACTOR

Three large wagons were hauling the lumber for Mr. Darrell's house, already in construction. Victoriano, Don Mariano's son, was riding across the valley and had to stop to let the heavily loaded wagons pass. This gave Clarence time to overtake him.

"Good morning, Don Victoriano."

"Call me Victoriano. I see you are going to build a large house?" he said.

"Yes. We are a large family and require a good deal of room. Listen, can I ask you a favor?" He hesitated, as if embarrassed to ask.

"Do tell me," asked Victoriano.

"First let me get this off my chest. You see, I don't like taking people's lands, and I would like to pay Señor Alamar for our location."

"I am sure my father would be happy about that."

"There is something else. I do not wish my father to know this."

“Why is that, if I may ask?”

“Because he would take my action as a **reproach**, and I don’t wish to be disrespectful.”

“I think my father will be willing to sell the land and even keep the secret. Come on, let us go up to see him.”

Clarence and Victoriano rode together all the way to the house.

“Please, sit down. I’ll bring my father out here,” said Victoriano. As he did so, a tinkling of little bells and rushing of feet came around. Then a laughing voice, sweet and pleasing, saying, “Stop, Milord! You bad dog! Milord! Milord!”

A little white dog darted out. Then, a girl. She turned her foot and **staggered** forward, and, before she realized she was in anyone’s presence, she felt two strong arms holding her.

“Oh!” she exclaimed as a sharp, hot pain darted through her ankle. She looked up to see who had held her, and then it happened—their eyes met and that is all it took. She was **bewildered** and,

reproach: an expression of disapproval or disappointment

staggered: walked or moved unsteadily, as if about to fall

bewildered: baffled, confused, mystified, at a loss, not thinking clearly, or uncertain



without daring to meet his eyes again, stammered an apology first, then a complaint.

"You are hurt," said Clarence.

"I only turned my foot a little," she answered.

"Don't walk. Let me carry you to a chair."

She had no time to think, for he walked to the farther end of the piazza and carefully placed her in a roomy armchair. Then, bending a knee before her, he said, "Forgive my lifting you without your permission." His voice was soft, pleading. She ventured to look at his eyes again. Who could this strong young man be, so bold and yet so gentle?

"Do you know my father?"

"I met him a few days ago at that meeting with the squatters."

"Were you at the meeting?" said she.

"Yes," he said. What would she think of him, believing him a squatter? Clarence felt that he could fall in love with her. Yes, in love. Love at first sight, surely.

Voices were heard approaching through the hall. He stood up and walked towards the door. Señor Alamar came forward and shook hands with him.

"I am glad that Mercedes came to converse

with you," said Victoriano.

"I did not come to converse. I came by accident," she hastened to reply. "I was trying to catch Milord when I stumbled and would have fallen, had not this gentleman prevented it."

"I fear the lady's foot is hurt," said Clarence.

"Is it?" exclaimed Don Mariano, going towards Mercedes. "Does it pain you, baby?"

"Yes, papa, a little."

"Come on, *chiquita*. I'll carry you to your room," said Don Mariano. She put her arms around his neck and whispered, "Papa, who is this young man?"

"Mr. Darrell, meet my daughter, Mercedes, our baby." He **dandled** her a little in his arms.

"Mr. Darrell, I am afraid that I shall always seem ridiculous to you."

"Call me Clarence. And no, not at all."

It was Clarence's turn to blush now, but he smiled good-naturedly.

When Don Mariano came back, Clarence made

chiquita: little one

dandled: moved up and down on a knee or in the arms in affectionate play, usually said of a child

no delay in stating the object of his visit. He said, "First, I want to inform you that since our meeting I have had several talks with the settlers, and I am convinced that they will not accept your offer. They will not listen to reason."

"I am very sorry. There is no alternative for me but to sell all my cattle and, in the meantime, herd them to the mountains."

"That will be ruinous, father. They will all become wild and run away," said Victoriano.

"I am afraid they will. But there is no other way to save any at all."

"I think this 'no fence' law is scandalous," said Clarence warmly. "It is like setting irresponsible **trespassers** loose upon a peaceable people and then rewarding their outrage. I am disgusted with the whole business. That is why I am here — because the only thing that will make matters a little tolerable to me will be to pay for the land we have located."

"Ah, your father wishes to pay?"

"No. He believes that Congress has the right

trespassers: people entering someone's land or property without permission

to declare all California open to **preemption** and all American citizens free to choose any land not already **patented**, and he believes your title has been rejected. But as my faith in our law-givers is not so blind, my belief is that Congress had no more right to pass any law which could give an excuse to trespass upon your property than to pass a law inviting people to your table. So, I hope you will help me to avoid this shame by permitting me to pay for our land whatever price you think just."

"Very well," said Don Mariano, pleased with Clarence's stance. "You can pay whatever you wish, or we can make an agreement that I will sell to you when I get my patent."

"I would prefer to pay you now, with the understanding that my father or anyone else is not to know I have made this purchase. I mean, not for the present."

"Would your father object to it?"

"Perhaps not. And yet he might see in it as a

preemption: a settler's right to buy public land at a federally set price

patented: legally titled with proof of ownership

disclaimer on my part. He is a settler—a ‘squatter,’ you know—and consequently very sensitive about (what they call) ‘rights of settlers under the law’.”

If Don Mariano wondered how the young man could afford to buy the land without his father’s support, he said nothing. The truth was that Clarence had been a lucky investor. Mrs. Darrell’s Aunt Newton had **bequeathed** him two thousand dollars, put away at interest, when he was only five years old. By the time he was an adult, the resulting sum was considerable, and his San Francisco broker, Hubert Haverly, had helped him turn it into a fortune through investments in mining stocks, notwithstanding his father’s low opinion of such business. Even after paying Don Mariano for his land, Clarence was still worth a quarter million dollars.

This fact remained unknown to the elder Mr. Darrell also. When the new house was finished, Mr. Darrell walked around and looked at everything, with Clarence behind him. “Son, I think you have been too extravagant in buying such expensive

disclaimer: a statement that denies someone else’s claim

bequeathed: left him two thousand dollars in her will when she died

carpets and fine furniture. How big is the bill for all this **grandeur**?"

"I don't know yet the price of every item, but don't be alarmed; it will all be paid with our volunteer crop."

His father nodded and continued his inspection of the house, not too happy.

It was now time for Clarence to go to Alameda to bring down the family. Everything was ready for the journey when Clarence arrived at his Alameda home. He and Victoriano talked about it walking towards the Alamar house from the Darrells', discussing the probable time of his return. Clarence was now a regular caller at the Alamar and the Mechlin houses. In both places the welcome was sincere. Victoriano's appreciation for Clarence was obvious and reciprocated. Both found great pleasure in each other's company and saw each other every day.

"Clarence has come to say goodbye," said Victoriano, walking into the parlor.

"Why! Where is he going?" said Mercedes.

grandeur: splendor, luxury, magnificence

“Don’t be alarmed; he is only going to bring his mother and sisters down,” added Victoriano.

There was a great something in Clarence’s mind that he wished to say to Mercedes before leaving, but he had neither courage nor opportunity to say it.

CHAPTER 7

FROM ALAMEDA TO SAN DIEGO

The day of the double wedding which was to tie together, with a double loop, the Alamar and Mechlin families, was set for the 24th of May, 1873. On that day, Gabriel and George would lead to the altar their respective sisters, Lizzie and Elvira.

Don Mariano wished to celebrate it in the same old-fashioned way in which his own wedding had been **solemnized**—with three days of good eating and drinking and dancing. But Gabriel proposed that, instead, they take the steamer to Mazatlán, Guaymas, and La Paz to visit all of those places on a wedding tour. And so they did. The steamer running between San Francisco and the Mexican ports on the Gulf of California stopped at San Diego to take the newly married couples on board.

A few days had passed since the brides and grooms had left. Doña Josefa was sewing with her

solemnized: made official, through ceremony or legal act

daughters on their favorite front **veranda**.

"I am glad we three are alone, for there is something of which I wish to speak with you two when no one of the family is with us," said Doña Josefa to Carlota and Rosario.

"What is it, mamma?" Carlota asked. "Anything unpleasant?"

"Well, no. Yes. Have you noticed Mercedes's manner lately? She seems absorbed, silent, thoughtful, sad. She says she is not sick, but I am not sure. So, I have been thinking that she had better go with Elvira to New York for a while. The change will do her good."

"And yet it may not," said Carlota. "Absence might be worse for her."

"And for her feelings for . . . you know," added Rosario. "I am afraid that sending her away might do more harm than good. I fear that Mercedes is too deeply interested already."

"Have you spoken to papa about it, mother?" Carlota asked.

"I mentioned it only once, and he asked, *Has*

veranda: a porch

he opened his heart to her? I told him I hoped he had not been so **audacious**. He laughed. *I tell you, wife, if all that is necessary for Clarence to propose be courage, neither you nor I can stop him, for the boy is no coward. The question is if our Mercedes feels the same.*" Carlota and Rosario exchanged looks as Doña Josefa continued, "Then, your father said, *Clarence is a most excellent young fellow. He is bright, energetic, and honorable. If they feel true love, they have a right to it.*"

"But he is a squatter!" Carlota said. "I am shocked at papa's opinions. Mamma, send Mercita away." Nothing was said to Mercedes about her journey, but she was not allowed to see Clarence alone. Elvira was delighted at the **prospect** of having her favorite sister with her in New York. The pain of leaving her home and family would be lessened in her company.

A day or two after, however, when the news was broken to her, Mercedes went to her room, locked her door, and threw herself on the bed, burying her face in her pillow to stifle her sobs. She had been trained to obedience, and her battles with the

audacious: willing to take surprisingly bold risks

prospect: something that may come to pass; an expectation

spirit always took place after she carefully locked her bedroom door. “They may send me away to the other end of the world, but they shall not part us, for you will still fill my heart.”

She was not quite seventeen, but her grief at parting from Clarence was wild and all-absorbing.

The dock was over-crowded. The steamer was about to leave. The last load of baggage had been quickly shipped. Clarence had not been able to say a word to Mercedes. Pale and desperate, he had gone on board just to ask her one question, but everyone was there. To make matters worse, a boy came clanging a most **discordant** bell, saying that those who were not sailing on the steamer must go ashore. The troop of friends marched down the gangplank to turn round and look many more tender adieus.

Don Mariano had observed Clarence’s deathly **pallor** and how faithfully it was reflected on Mercedes’s face. He saw the unhappy young man standing aloof from the crowd on the extreme edge of the dock. He went to him and, laying his

discordant: out of harmony or incongruous

pallor: a pale appearance

hand gently on his shoulder, said, "That position is dangerous," and pulled him gently away. "You are very pale. What is it?"

"I cannot . . ." Clarence started, but then shook his head as if trying to suppress his emotions. "You see, she . . . she is sent away, and I did not even have the pleasure of talking to her about . . ."

"About what, dear Clarence?"

"I love her, Don Mariano!"

"Why have you not spoken to me of this before?" asked Don Mariano.

"I thought of doing so a thousand times but did not dare. I did not fear unkindness from you, but from Doña Josefa and the young ladies."

"That was an additional reason for speaking to me. Cheer up, for, as they say, *faint heart never won fair lady*."

"If you tell me that you do not reject me, I'll jump aboard and follow her."

"I do not reject you. Follow her if you wish and try your luck. I want to see you both happy."

Clarence could not believe these words. He looked toward the boat. The gangplank had been removed. Clarence looked up and met Mercedes's

eyes. He clasped Don Mariano's hand, saying hurriedly, "So, I have your permission to go? Please say yes."

"Faint heart never won fair lady," Don Mariano repeated.

The steamer's wheels began to move. The captain was already on the bridge over the steering wheel and had given the order to let go the **hawsers**. Clarence felt himself pulled by the arm. He turned impatiently and met Everett, who handed him two telegrams, saying, "I have looked for you everywhere. These telegrams followed each other quickly."

"Yes, I know," Clarence said. "Retty, tell them at home I got telegrams calling me to San Francisco."

"But you haven't read them," urged Everett.

"But I know what they are." Then he said to the captain: "Captain, one moment. I must go north. Please take me."

"Step back, Mr. Darrell, the rope might part," said he, but, noticing Clarence's resolve, he motioned to the first officer. The steamer stood still for an

hawsers: cables or heavy ropes used to tow or moor a ship

instant. "Now, Mr. Darrell, are you coming or not?"

Clarence nodded, gave the captain his hand, and, planting his foot firmly on the dock, sprang onto the deck wiry as a cat.

Clarence waved goodbye. Don Mariano and



Gabriel lifted their hats, Victoriano and Everett twirled theirs in the air hurrahing. The ladies waved their handkerchiefs. In a few minutes the steamer made up for lost time and was heading for Ballast Point, leaving San Diego's shore to be merged into the blue hills of Mexico.

Elvira's beautiful eyes were filled with tears as she kept her gaze riveted upon that fast-receding wharf. George stood a few feet apart, knowing that the two sisters would prefer to be by themselves. He, too, felt moved. He would have preferred to remain at Alamar. They would come next year, he thought, and perhaps remain in California permanently. With this thought in his mind, he came to Elvira's side and said, "Don't cry, sweetest. I will bring you back next year, and we will make our home near our parents. No matter if I make less money; we will have more happiness."

The travelers started their voyage happily. Clarence rightly guessed that Mercedes would suppose he had followed her to declare his love and that this belief would redouble her shyness. So, to put her at her ease, he was very kind and attentive but never betrayed by word or look his heart's

devotion. His manner was exactly all that she could wish—the behavior of a devoted brother—and, in consequence, she began to be less shy. He spoke of having received three telegrams, calling him north; this surely was a good reason for his unexpected journey.

They visited Los Angeles, went ashore at Port Harford and Santa Barbara, and, as George was naturally devoted to his bride, there seemed no alternative for Mercedes but to accept Clarence's escort and lean on his arm when necessary.

There was a great deal of freight to be landed at Santa Barbara. The passengers going to San Francisco were already on board. Still, the steamer **tarried**. Some lady friends of Elvira's, who were going north, had come aboard and, as they had much to say, took her away to their staterooms.

"Wait for me, I'll return in half an hour," said she to George, but he thought he knew how ladies measure time when engaged in talking, so

tarried: delayed

he slowly rose and went to play **cribbage** with the captain.

“If you wish to go too, Mr. Darrell, please do so,” said Mercedes, when George left.

“Not at all. Actually, I wonder if you would permit me to remain with you until your sister returns.” Mercedes did not say a word.

“Have I offended you in any way?” Clarence asked.

“No. What makes you ask that?”

“Because you must know it would be cruel punishment to send me off.”

“Oh, no, I just didn’t wish to be selfish and keep you from going.”

“How could I wish to go anywhere and leave you? I would not go to heaven, if to do so I would have to renounce you.”

“Please do not talk like that, someone might hear you.”

“Our only witness is that lovely moon, and she will not betray.”

“No matter, please do not speak like that.”

cribbage: a card game

“Like what? I love you, Mercedes. I have never yet said it in words, but you know it.”

“Clarence!”

“What I wish to know is whether I have been so blind as not to see your dislike, and whether it was your own choice to go, or you were compelled to do so by your mother?”

“Please don’t blame mamma.”

“I do not blame her in the least. She has a perfect right to object to me. Can I ask, however, whether you *also* object to me?”

“I have nothing against you. I like you very much, as a friend,” she said, trembling, painfully agitated.

Clarence laughed, then added, “I have been told that young ladies say that when they mean to let down easily a poor devil whom they pity. Thanks, Miss Mercedes, for liking me as a *friend*. Perhaps I am a **presumptuous** fool to love you, but I cannot help it.” He stood up and looked down at the dark ocean in silence.

She looked up to his face; she seemed so sad

presumptuous: failing to observe the limits of what is permitted or appropriate

that he forgot his own misery. He seated himself very near her and took both of her hands. Surely there was something troubling her.

“I have pained you, when I would give my heart’s blood to make you happy. Oh! Mercedes. You know that I have loved you from the first moment I saw you. Tell me, will you cruelly **repel** me?”

She remained silent, as if afraid to meet his gaze, but she did not withdraw her hands.

“Mercedes, say that you reject me only to obey your mother, and I will not despair, for I know that your father does not object to me; on the contrary, he **sanctions** my love. He would accept me as his son-in-law.”

“What!?”

“Yes. He gave me permission to follow you and ask you to be my wife. ‘Go and try your luck,’ he told me.”

“Darling papa, he is so kind. Do not blame my poor mamma,” Mercedes continued. “She thinks you did something wrong, but she does not dislike you.”

repel: to turn away, reject

sanctions: approves or consents to

“I did something wrong? When?”

“That I couldn’t tell you, for I do not know, and perhaps I am wrong to have said so much. She might be mistaken, but she is kindness itself.”

“I would like to know what is the wrong act that has brought upon me her **censure**. I think my record as an honest man can well bear **scrutiny**. Can it be that I have made money in mining **stocks**?”

“Oh, no. She does not know that, and, if she did, she would not think it wrong, for she knows nothing about stocks.”

“Then I vow I have not the remotest idea of what it is.”

“Think no more about it now, and, when you return, you ask papa. He will soon find out the mistake and **vindicate** you.”

The rash young man seized her little hands and covered them with kisses.

“Oh! Mr. Darrell! Don’t do that. Please let us

censure: severe disapproval

scrutiny: critical observation or examination

stocks: the proprietorship element in a corporation, usually divided into shares and represented by transferable certificates

vindicate: to clear of blame or suspicion

go now to call Elvira. She thinks George is with me," she said, rising.

"I will behave myself, I promise. Won't you reward my self-restraint by answering one question?"

"What is the question?" said she, sitting down again a little farther off.

"If I can prove that I have never done anything dishonorable, and your mother ceases to object to my marrying you, will you then consent to be my wife?"

The question gave Mercedes exquisite pleasure, for she loved him with all her heart. The word 'wife' sounded so sweetly coming from his lips, but she had promised her mother "not to encourage him." So she must not. It would be dishonorable to break her word.

"I wish you could understand my position."

"Your position?"

"Yes. I cannot say anything to you, except to be patient. Yes, let us both be patient."

"I'll try," said he, "but I do not understand why you refuse me one word of encouragement."

"Oh! That is just the word I cannot give,"

Mercedes said. She was looking at the immense sea, as if trying to discover in that vast expanse some consoling words that a good, obedient daughter might speak on such an occasion.

CHAPTER 8

GEORGE IS A GENTLEMAN

In vain did Mercedes scan the broad horizon of the Pacific in search of something to say that would be soothing to Clarence's feelings, very proper for her to utter, and very acceptable to her mamma's sentiments had she been there to hear it. That vast sea was dark and mute.

"Well, well, and where is George?" said Elvira, looking around.

"He went to the captain's room to play cribbage," said Mercedes.

"Good **chaperone** he is! As my married experience is yet fresh and limited, I don't know whether it would be proper to go and see whether George is enjoying himself."

"Let Mr. Darrell take a look first," suggested Mercedes. When Clarence had left, Elvira said, "He looks pale; have you made him unhappy?"

"I have not made him happy, and I am miserable,

chaperone: an older person who accompanies younger people to ensure that they behave properly

but you know mamma's feelings," said she.

"I am not sure that mamma does him justice," Elvira observed.

"And to think that papa himself told him to follow me."

"Is that so? Oh, there is George now."

"I will go freshen up. I don't want them to see that I cried."

"Where is Clarence?" asked Elvira.

"He went to get us drinks. I must say, Elvira, I appreciate young Clarence very much. What is your mother's objection to him?"

"His family, I believe, or rather his father."

"Well, old Darrell has raised Clarence very gentlemanly."

"And papa knows that. He told Clarence to follow Mercedes and propose to her."

"He did? It is a pity your mother doesn't feel as kindly."

"Mercedes loves Clarence, but, in obedience to mamma's wishes, she will not even give him any encouragement."

"Then we must! Only let us make sure that she loves him."

"Oh, she does. Her eyes filled with sad tears because she cannot accept his love."

Clarence came, followed by a waiter bringing champagne and ice. He looked disappointed at not finding Mercedes.

"I'll go and fetch my sister," Elvira said.

When the two men were alone, George said, "I am going straight to the point, Clarence. Mercedes made some very foolish promise to her mother; you know these young women have been taught strict obedience. So, even if her heart was to break into little pieces, she would not disobey her mother."

"But is it alone her mother's wishes? In obeying her mother, does she not follow her own inclination?"

George laughed, saying, "Why do you think Doña Josefa wished to send her away? Only for the hope that she might get over her love for you."

"Oh, how she must hate me then," said Clarence sadly. "I know she thinks I have done something wrong, but I have no idea what it is."

"I think it was a mistake not to tell her, and Mercedes, that you bought the land you and your family occupy now. Doña Josefa cannot

understand how any law of Congress can authorize a man to take the property of another against his will and without paying for it."

"Do you know why I asked Don Mariano not to mention that I had paid him?"

"Yes, Gabriel told me."

"It's just . . . my father is so sensitive about squatter rights."

"I suppose you will have to tell him soon—I mean, when the attorney general dismisses the appeal."

"Well, ladies and gentlemen," said Elvira, returning. "Would you believe it? She was actually getting ready for the night. So I told her that, if she didn't come, we would take the champagne to her room, and this so frightened her that she began to dress herself immediately."

"Go and tell her we have good news for her," suggested George.

"Here she comes," Elvira said. Mercedes slowly approached them. "Come, sweet baby, these gentlemen say they have some nice news for you."

"News that the wine is good, I suppose," she said.

“No, it isn’t the wine,” George said, rising for Mercedes to take his place. “Sit down here and you shall hear all about it.”

“What is it?” Mercedes asked.

“Darrell, you fill the glasses now while I tell these señoritas what sort of a black sheep Doña Josefa thinks you are.” Clarence did so while George continued. “Your mother believes the Darrells are squatters and resents him for that. However, Clarence bought their land from Don Mariano and paid for it even before they built their house.”

“Oh! I am so glad to hear that!” Elvira exclaimed with a sigh of relief. “But why didn’t papa tell it to mamma?”

“It is my fault,” Clarence said. “My father holds opinions about squatter rights that I don’t share, and, to avoid painful discussions with him, I requested Señor Alamar not to say that I paid for the land.”

“You see, little sister?” said George.

“Doña Josefa’s objection to me is perfectly proper and correct,” Clarence acknowledged. “I would not let a daughter of mine marry a squatter. I shall request Don Mariano to put me

right in her **estimation**."

"Do you hear that? Let us drown in champagne!" said George.

Clarence turned to Mercedes and asked, "Can you forgive my stupidity? See what a world of anxious thoughts we would have avoided by explaining to Doña Josefa everything."

"Yes, it was unfortunate. But you will return soon and ask papa to tell her all, will you not?"

"Indeed, I will, by the next steamer, and I will have better heart to await your return. Will you let me send you a ring, if your mother allows me?"

"Couldn't you bring it yourself?"

"Oh, Mercedes, my beloved! How happy you make me!"

After the ladies went to bed, George and Clarence stayed longer. Young Darrell was interested to hear all the details about the appeal and the legal situation of Don Alamar; after all, this could also clarify things about his own land. Clarence poured more wine in their glasses, and, after drinking a first sip, George said, "I didn't

estimation: esteem or favorable regard

believe the stories about Washington being such a **corrupt place**. But now, I don't know. See, Clarence, I went there, as Don Mariano's attorney, about that dismissal of the squatters' appeal and was treated like a gentleman, even by the solicitor general, but he was later **outrageously** unjust to us. He said, *The United States have no case against Señor Alamar; his title is perfectly good. It is very singular that this case has not been dismissed before by my predecessor.* So, I told the solicitor general to have it dismissed this morning. And I believed him."

"I would have done the same. But then, what happened?" asked Clarence.

"Next morning, I went to ask him if the dismissal was entered. He sent word he was engaged and to call again. Next day, I went to the clerk of the Supreme Court and, giving him the number of the case, asked if it had been dismissed. He said no."

"Why?"

"I did not understand it either. I telegraphed

corrupt place: a dishonest place, i.e., where people exchange money for improper favors

outrageously: in a shockingly bad or excessive degree

predecessor: the person who held the position before

my Uncle Lawrence to come, and, as soon as he arrived, we went to see the president about it. I laid the whole case before him. I told him how the squatters were destroying Don Mariano's cattle and the rest of the situation." George took a minute; it was as if he needed air to be able to continue. "I explained to him that land is not considered private property until the title to it is confirmed and patented, and that, because the proceedings might consume years—almost a lifetime—the result was that the Californians of Spanish descent, who were the landowners when we took California, **were virtually despoiled of their lands, their cattle and horses.**"

"Was he surprised to hear this?"

"Of course! He even said, *Well, that must be very hard on those landowners.* I explained to him that they were being impoverished, and that in a few years the majority would be totally ruined. He was genuinely interested in helping. He went to the attorney general's office and, when he returned, he said, *Well, gentlemen, the solicitor says he found that the*

were virtually despoiled of their lands, their cattle and horses: had their lands, cattle, and horses taken away

attorney general had not looked into the record carefully, and so he did not think the case should be dismissed."

"What?" Clarence was outraged.

"Instead of doing what he was asked to do, the solicitor general took it upon himself to reverse the decision of the attorney general. At ten o'clock next morning I was at the attorney general's office. As soon as I was alone with him, I said, *Sir, without meaning any disrespect, I would like to inquire what is the meaning of the document I had the honor to receive from you yesterday.*"

"What did he do?"

"He colored up and, still smiling, answered, *Did you not understand it? I thought I wrote in very plain English.* So, I went, *The English was plain enough, but I failed to catch your idea. Remember I was present when the attorney general told you that he had examined the transcript carefully and, not finding that the government has any case at all, ordered you to dismiss it.* The solicitor bowed, but did not speak, so I continued: *The attorney general did not request you or authorize you to review his opinion. He merely said you were to dismiss the appeal and have the clerk of the court enter in the record the order of dismissal that same morning.* Then

I asked him, *Who is the head of the department—the attorney general or the solicitor?* He said, *The attorney general.*”

“It was his superior who gave the order to make the dismissal. How could he not comply?”

“He said he was not a clerk and insisted that I did not know how far it was to his **discretion** to execute the order that day or not. *I am not of a lower rank; I have as much authority*, were his words.”

“All of a sudden, the department has two heads?”

“It was said that the case was to rest until the attorney general returns. I took my leave then, having seen that he understood I saw through the **despicable impertinence** of his conduct. Next winter, as soon as the Supreme Court convenes, the matter will be settled.”

“And will the squatters have to go then?” Clarence asked.

“Not immediately. The rancho will be surveyed

discretion: the ability to make intelligent decisions especially in everyday matters

despicable: deserving hatred and contempt

impertinence: lack of respect; rudeness

first, and then the patent issued after the survey is approved by the surveyor general," George replied.

"The squatters will be more murderous when they learn that their appeal is dismissed," Clarence said.

"I shall telegraph Don Mariano when the appeal is dismissed so we can prepare the ground the best way we can," said George.

It was near midnight when the men parted ways and went to sleep.

CHAPTER 9

AT SAN FRANCISCO

The names of Mr. George Mechlin and party, from San Diego, were duly entered in the hotel register in San Francisco.

"We will be ready for dinner at six," said George.

"I shall be ready by then," Clarence said, and he went to his broker's office. He had business to resolve before spending the following days with Mercedes.

"Just in time," said Hubert Haverly, coming forward to meet him. "As soon as the steamer was signaled at the gate, I sent to look for our Arizona men. They are now waiting for you."

"First, give me details on the matter and tell me, too, how poor or how rich I am before I make any bargain to purchase mines."

"I'll call you rich. I bought the farm and how much do you think I paid for it?"

"Hundred and forty thousand?"

"Ninety thousand only!"

“What? Didn’t he ask a hundred and fifty thousand?”

“Yes, but you see, the poor fellow lost heavily in stocks that day, and, as the bank was going to **foreclose** on the farm for a loan, he thought the best thing he could do was to sell out quick. So, he left it to me to make the best bargain I can. The farm is yours. Congratulations.”

“Thanks,” Clarence said, squeezing Hubert’s hand. “And now tell me about the balance on hand and the Arizona mines.”

“Well, you have about one hundred thousand dollars. If you sell all your stocks, you could have two hundred thousand,” Hubert replied.

“What about the Arizona mines?”

“Their suggestion is that you pay them five hundred dollars down if you accept their proposal. Then you are to send an expert to examine the mines. If, on his report, you decide to buy them at once, you can have them for ten thousand dollars. If you prefer to have them to prospect further before buying, then you can

foreclose: to take possession of a mortgaged property as a result of the borrower’s failure to make payments

have six months to prospect; but then you must pay two thousand down, and at the end of the six months you must pay fifty thousand dollars if you want both mines, or twenty thousand if you only take one."

Haverly called in the three men. They were rather rough-looking, but all had good faces. After exchanging salutations with them, Clarence asked, "Have you had any **assays** made?"

"Yes, sir," said the oldest of the three, handing him three slips of paper. "Here are three certificates from assays recommended to us as the best in San Francisco."

"What! One hundred silver and 150 gold? And 200, and 350? But that is enormous for surface rock."

The miners laughed. The oldest said, "And the ledge is so wide that it almost takes the half of the hill. We took two claims and put our prospect shaft in the middle."

"Did you make your locations in good legal form?"

assays: tests of a metal or ore to determine its ingredients and quality

“Yes, sir, we have our papers.”

“I will find an expert between now and tomorrow midday. I will consult with him and see how soon he can go to look at your mines. Meantime, I’ll have some of the rock analyzed.”

When they had left the room, Clarence asked Hubert where his brother Fred was.

“The expert, you mean? He arrived yesterday.”

“Excellent. Tell him to come to my hotel.”

The party from San Diego made an impression among the guests of the hotel when they entered the dining room. Everybody turned to look and acknowledged that they had never seen more graceful people than those two couples.

Several young gentlemen were looking at the ladies from their table. One of them especially looked at Mercedes very **persistently**. After dinner, a waiter handed Clarence a card with *Fred Haverly* written on it.

“Say to the gentleman I shall be down immediately,” Clarence said to the servant; and then to George, “This is the expert I told you

persistently: repeatedly, continuously

about. It is lucky for me to find him in town to help me in my Arizona business."

"I'll go down with you," George said. "One of the clerks promised to get me a box at the opera. Do you think you will have finished in half an hour?"

"Yes."

George was talking with the clerk about the seats at the opera when he felt a hand laid softly on his shoulder. It was his friend, Charles Gunther from New York, and the four gentlemen who had dined at the next table. After shaking hands and congratulating him on being a married man, Gunther presented to George his four friends and his brother Robert. Then he said, "I heard you wanted a box at the opera and that there are ladies with you. Permit me to offer you our box; we can take seats anywhere else."

"But there are no seats I can offer you in exchange," was George's reply.

"I can get good seats for gentlemen," the clerk suggested.

There was nothing else to do but accept, order a carriage for eight o'clock, and then go upstairs to tell

the ladies that they were to get ready for the opera.

“The opera! Why didn’t you tell us before?” was Elvira’s exclamation.

George explained how he obtained their box by casually meeting Gunther, adding, “He introduced me to his brother Robert and those four admirers of yours, Mercedes, who dined at the next table. They are all of the same party. The young fellow of the little saffron whiskers, who stared at you so persistently, is Mr. Selden, also from New York; he and Robert Gunther have been in Europe several years. His father is a millionaire, and he is the only son. So he considers himself a good catch.”

“Who cares?” stated Mercedes.

The theatre was filled to its **utmost** when our four San Dieguinos arrived and occupied their **proscenium box**, which was very roomy and elegantly furnished. Elvira’s seat faced the stage, and Mercedes’s faced the audience.

When the curtain fell on the first act, they all looked at the house; immediately in front, in the

utmost: greatest; fullest

proscenium box: a group of theater seats close to the stage

first row of orchestra chairs, were Mr. Gunther and the party of New Yorkers looking up at their box. Mercedes blushed when she met the steady gaze of Mr. Selden; his face reproduced the blush. Clarence's face also flushed and then turned pale. A cold feeling of fear seized him.

George exchanged bows with the New Yorkers. They spoke among themselves, and, soon after, all arose and left their seats. A few minutes later, Mr. Gunther was at the box, followed by his brother and the four others. George introduced everyone. All took seats, there being room enough for a dozen people in the **spacious** box.

George and Clarence had left their seats to receive the guests, so Mr. Selden slipped by and sat next to Mercedes.

"What do you think of the opera?" asked Mr. Selden.

"I am enjoying the novelty but feel unprepared to judge," said Mercedes, smiling.

"Ah! You never saw the opera before tonight?"

"Not the French opera. I saw Italian opera

spacious: having plenty of space; roomy

five years ago."

When the bell rang for the curtain to rise for the second act, they all arose to go.

"Will not you remain? There is room," George said.

"If I am not going to crowd you, I shall accept your kind invitation and hide here," said Robert Gunther, taking a chair.

"Bob is always such a good boy that I like to follow his example; so, with your kind permission, Mr. Darrell, I shall stay here," said Mr. Selden, refusing to give his seat back to Clarence.

Mercedes moved her chair to make room for Clarence on her left and told Mr. Selden to push his chair farther to the front, on her right.

"You look unhappy; have I done anything to displease you?" whispered Mercedes.

"No, never!" he quickly answered. Then he added: "It is just that, well, it is too painful to think that I will see you only one more day. Then we must part, and *others* will be with you."

CHAPTER 10

JOURNEYING OVERLAND

Our travelers took an early breakfast on Tuesday morning, and, by seven o'clock, they left the hotel. The moment of parting had come. "Write to us soon, won't you?" George said.

"Yes, don't fail to write the long letter you promised after you have your talk with papa and mamma," Elvira said.

"I shall see Don Mariano the first minute I can do so," Clarence assured them.

It was a bitter farewell. Mercedes was very pale and her hands trembled climbing aboard the eastbound train for New York. They were scarcely out of the station when George exclaimed, "I declare, Mercedes, you must have fascinated those two fellows, for they are here, too!"

"Who, George?" Elvira asked.

"Selden and Bob Gunther."

"Please, George, get a **compartment** where

compartment: a separate section of a train car where passengers can sit apart from others

we can be by ourselves," implored Mercedes.

George made his way quickly as the jolting and swinging permitted. At the farther end of the fourth car, he spied a porter talking with two foreign-looking gentlemen, who were none other than Gunther and Selden. Their backs were turned toward him, so he had time to approach them unobserved, near enough to hear Selden say, "But, my good fellah, we were told positively that travelers going east must get on the train here."

"And so they do," George said, laying his hand on Selden's shoulder.

"By Jove! We've got 'em!" exclaimed Gunther.

While George gave a hand to each, he told the porter he wanted a compartment, if such was to be had.

"There are none disengaged, sir, except some of those little ones at the end of the car. You can have a section if you like," the porter replied.

"We have one which we will be most happy to place at your service," Gunther said.

That evening, when Elvira came to tell Mercedes to get ready for dinner, she declined, saying that she was not a bit hungry. The day

passed, the night came, and she did not gladden the hearts of their traveling companions. Next day, the same—she had her breakfast in her room.

Mr. Selden began to feel **piqued** and Mr. Gunther nervous. They and Elvira were playing a three-handed game of casino; George was elsewhere, talking to an **acquaintance** he had met on the train. Then, the sliding-door of the compartment moved, and Mercedes stood beside Mr. Selden, smiling in her most bewitching way. The blood mounted to Mr. Selden's temples, and those of Mr. Gunther assumed the same hue.

Elvira alone kept her composure and said, "Why, baby! I am so glad you feel better. Come, take a hand, for these gentlemen will cut your sister's throat, or she theirs. We are having a fierce battle."

"I'll have you for a partner, Miss Mercedes," said Mr. Gunther.

"That being the case, I am ready," she said, sitting by her sister.

piqued: annoyed, usually mildly and temporarily, especially by an offense to one's pride or honor

acquaintance: a person one knows but is not especially close to

From that time, the five travelers were constantly together, and the days passed delightfully for all during the entire journey—especially so for Gunther and Selden. They had no occasion to complain of Mercedes for staying away. She most amiably took part in all their games and other amusements, their walks while waiting at stations, their conversations during the hours of traveling. She had found that both young gentlemen were a most excellent protection against one another, as neither one was ever willing to go leaving her alone with the other.

CHAPTER 11

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Once more, Clarence was crossing San Francisco Bay on to the Golden Gate and the broad Pacific. The surrounding scenery recalled Mercedes's image so vividly to his mind that it made his heart long to see her. When the steamer arrived near enough to the wharf, Clarence's heart leaped with pleasure, for he saw the well-known, tall form of Don Mariano sitting in his buggy, leaning back, looking at the approaching steamer. A minute after, he saw Victoriano and Everett standing ready to receive him.

"Well, Mr. Runaway, welcome back!" Victoriano said, clasping Clarence's hand.

"We will have to lasso you to keep you home," Everett added.

"Exactly!" Clarence said, laughing.

Clarence proposed that Victoriano should drive with Everett and he go with Don Mariano. He told the don what George had said and how firmly and sincerely Mercedes wished to abide by her mother's wishes. Don Mariano listened very

attentively, then said, "I had intended suggesting to you the same thing. Gabriel has spoken to me about the matter several times, insisting that all the ladies of our family ought to know that you paid for your land. Since we cannot **divest** them of the resentment they have towards squatters, we should let them know the truth. Do you still wish to keep the matter from your father?"

"Yes, but only for a short time. I suppose we will have to define our position as soon as the appeal is dismissed. Before that comes, I shall explain all to him."

"Very well, I shall tell my wife that, for the present, the matter must not be mentioned outside the family."

"Thank you," Clarence said. "It is very painful to me to find my father adhering to his old conviction. He believes your land was rejected and that the rejection will be sustained."

"Yes, my land was reported rejected, but it was by some mistake of the clerks. In the meantime, squatters have been coming, and they

divest: to rid oneself of something

now have carried their appeal to the United States Supreme Court against me."

"I know," Clarence said.

"And you must know, too," Don Mariano continued, "that I don't find it in my heart to blame those people for taking my land as much as I blame the legislators who turned them loose upon me. And I do not blame your father, for he has not killed my cattle as the others have."

"He couldn't—he wouldn't—do that."

"But there is a law to protect him if he did."

"You were too generous in making the offer you made to the settlers at the meeting with them last year."

"It was rather generous, but not as much so as you perhaps think. I was looking out for myself."

"Now that you mention looking out, I would like your views of something I am considering. Mr. George Mechlin and myself have been forming a plan that will make things rather better for the future, and we trust you will approve it."

"Oh, do tell me. What is this plan?"

"To establish a bank in San Diego, with Mr. George Mechlin for president and Gabriel for

cashier. The only drawback is, of course, the delay there might be in constructing the Texas Pacific Railroad. As yet, however, we are hopeful, and the prospect seems good."

"I wish Tom Scott would build his road without congressional aid. The success of your banking project must, of course, depend upon the amount of population in San Diego."

"Undoubtedly. If there is no railroad, there will be no population. But Mr. Mechlin and myself are ready with our money."

"You must be **prudent**."

"I am. I have more than two hundred thousand that I can put in this bank without troubling my government bonds or my farm." Clarence then explained to Don Mariano his financial affairs.

Don Mariano smiled as he said, "I had no idea you were so well-off."

"I expect to make a fortune out of my Arizona mines," he said.

"Take care. Do not put any of your government bonds in them."

prudent: careful; thoughtful

"Indeed, I shall not. The interest on those bonds gives me nearly thirty-five thousand dollars per year, and this income is for—" Here Clarence blushed and was silent.

"To take care of your wife," Don Mariano said.

"Yes, sir—for that alone. Do you think Doña Josefa will object to me after you explain my position?"

"As her only objection is that she thinks you are squatters, she will not hold objections after she knows that you are not."

"I hope you will let me know soon what answer she gives to you. By the way, I have some little packages that Mrs. Mechlin sends. I can bring them this evening; the ladies might wish to see the contents."

"They will. I'll tell them you are coming."

"Thank you, sir."

As they drove up to the Darrell house, Alice was at the door with Mr. Darrell, who had come out to greet his son. He was also rather cordial to Don Mariano and asked him to come in and take lunch. This kind invitation was politely

declined, whereupon Victoriano, pretending to feel slighted because he was not invited, tossed his head at Clarence and Everett and marched majestically towards his father's carriage, but Everett insisted upon his remaining to luncheon. Victoriano was happy, knowing his seat would be near the beautiful Alice Darrell.

In the evening, Clarence proceeded to deliver the packages sent by Elvira to her mother and sisters. With beating heart, he timidly ascended the steps of the front veranda of the Alamar house, for he did not feel entirely certain that Doña Josefa's objections would be withdrawn. He was not kept in suspense about the matter, as she came to meet him. She extended her hand in a most gracious way, and he found in her the elegance and beauty of her daughters.

"I am so glad to welcome you, Mr. Darrell," she said. "I wish to speak with you. Sit down. Let me begin by apologizing for the very wrong opinion I have had of you. It gives me great pleasure to know I was mistaken."

"I am the one who should apologize," he hastened to reply. "I ought to have asked Don

Mariano to explain my position to you before."

"I understand how you felt, not wishing to seem disrespectful to your father and yet not agreeing with him."

"It has been the source of very painful feelings to me to see my father so misled, but I have found very great comfort in the fact that my mother agrees with me. She told me she would never come down if I did not pay for the land."

"Yes; Mariano told me this, and I beg of you to convey to her my regrets at having been in error about this matter. Will you do so, please?"

"Certainly, madam; with great pleasure."

"Mercedes was very unhappy. It pained my heart like a knife to send her away, but I hoped it would be for the best."

"And so it was. You did right."

"Yes, but it did not enter into my calculations that you were to jump on board the steamer," she said, laughing. Clarence's face and ears became crimson.

"I hope you have forgiven me for it," he stammered.

"I suppose I must," she said, still laughing.

"My fate is in your hands."

“What shall I say?” It was now Doña Josefa’s turn to blush.

“Say yes.”

“Yes,” she said, with a kind look in her beautiful eyes.

The days now passed pleasantly and peacefully enough at the Alamar rancho. Don Mariano knew that he would have to go through many disagreeable scenes with the squatters when the appeal should be dismissed, but, as the law would be on his side *finally*, he confidently hoped to see the end of his troubles, intending to allow the squatters to keep their homes, provided only that they would fence their crops and pay their own taxes.

Clarence agreed to wait until the fall to take the engagement ring to Mercedes. This would be the most judicious plan, as he would thus take the necessary time to have the mines prospected and to decide about their purchase before going to New York. For now, he worked in the garden, fenced and prepared ground for planting grapevines and fruit trees. He read and wrote love letters and passed nearly all of his evenings at the Alamar

house, holding Milord, who always came to be held by him as soon as he arrived.

The telegram from Fred Haverly came in due time—a few words only, but how exhilarating they were to Clarence, making his pulse beat high. It read thus: *Prospect splendid. Far better than described. Have written today. Hurrah!*

In the meantime, the settlers had harvested their crops of hay and grain and were hauling them to town. Don Mariano, as a matter of course, had paid dearly for these same crops with the sacrifice of his fine cows, besides very heavy taxes. He had sent half of his cattle away to the sierra and those left had been as carefully guarded as possible, but still the dumb brutes would be attracted by the green grain and would obey the law of nature in utter disregard of the no-fence law.

Thus, every night the **fusillade** of the law-abiding settlers would be heard as they, to protect their “rights under the law,” shot the don’s cattle all over the rancho. In vain did he or his sons and servants ride out to find who fired. Day after day,

fusillade: a series of gunshots

the *vaqueros* would come in and report the number of cattle found shot, dead, or wounded that morning, and Gabriel would make a note of the number. At the end of the month, he would add these figures, and the don had the sad satisfaction of knowing how many of his cattle were killed under the law.

"It is a shame to take his land, have him pay taxes, and then kill his cattle also," said Mrs. Darrell. "Those heartless people keep me awake sometimes with their cattle-shooting. I think the don and his family are too kind to bear all these daily outrages so patiently."

"I thought you had given it up as a bad job to be the don's champion, Mrs. Darrell," said her husband.

"If only my sympathy wasn't so useless."

"The don will soon have the power to drive all these men out of his rancho," Clarence said.

"Do you include me with *these men*?" asked Darrell.

"No, father. I suppose you have not forgotten you promised Don Mariano to pay for the land you located when the title should be approved."

"I will keep to what I said, but I am not going to have my words construed to suit everybody," Darrell said.

"How is the don to have power to drive off the settlers, Clary? Tell us," Webster inquired.

"Don't you tell him, Clary. He'll go and tell it to the squatters," Willie interposed.

"Ain't you a squatter yourself?" asked Mr. Darrell.

"No, I'm not. Am I, mamma?" asked Willie.

"If I thought anyone in this family were to deserve such a name I would not have come down to this place," Mrs. Darrell replied.

"What is a squatter, anyhow, mamma?" Clementine inquired.

"A squatter is a person who locates a land claim on land that belongs to some other person," Mrs. Darrell explained.

"On land that other persons say belongs to them, but which land, as no one knows to whom it belongs, is free to be occupied by any American citizen," Mr. Darrell added with emphasis.

"There you are again, mixing the willful squatter with the honest settler, who preempts his

land legitimately," Mrs. Darrell said.

"Then a squatter is a land thief?" Clementine inquired.

"No, because the squatter might not intend to steal. He might mistakenly take land that belongs to somebody else. The intention is what makes the action a theft or not," Mrs. Darrell explained, and no one dared to say anything else.

CHAPTER 12

AT NEWPORT

Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Mechlin were impressed with their nephew's wife and her sister. The two young beauties captivated them at once, and life at Long Branch in the Mechlin cottage was equally very delightful to Elvira and Mercedes. When they had been there about two weeks, Robert Gunther appeared on the scene, and, next day, Arthur Selden followed, as they were old friends of the Mechlins.

"In a day or two we are going to Newport, young gentlemen," said Mrs. Mechlin. "You had better join our party, and we'll all go together."

"I shall be most happy. My mother and sister will be at Newport next week," said Gunther.

"It will suit me, also, as I promised my mother and sisters I should be at Newport in two weeks. They are in Saratoga now, under father's care. He likes Saratoga," Mr. Selden said.

If their stay at Long Branch had seemed so delightful to Elvira and Mercedes, their pleasures

increased at Newport. The Mechlin villa, shaded by tall elms and poplars and surrounded by shrubbery and flowers, with a beautiful lawn and fountains in front, facing the ocean, was certainly a charming house. Then the drives, croquet playing, boat sailing, and promenades were also much enjoyed by our two little Californians. In the evenings, music and dancing would add variety to their pleasures until such life seemed to them too charming to be real.

"And is this life repeated every summer, year after year?" asked Mercedes to Bob Gunther.

"Do you like this life?"

"Very much."

She did not look at Gunther; her attention was all given to the beautiful carriages driving by. Controlling his voice, he said, "You can have this life if you like—live in New York or Paris, should you desire it."

"Impossible. I have no fairy godmother. Where is everybody?" said she, looking about the grounds for Elvira and Miss Gunther. "Ah! There they are."

"Do I frighten you, or am I tiresome?" said he.

“Neither, but young ladies who—who are . . . I mean, any young lady, should not have such *tête-à-têtes* with fascinating young gentlemen.”

“Young ladies who are . . . what?”

“Who are **judicious**.”

“Were you not going to say ‘who are engaged’?”

“If I had, I might not have said the truth, strictly.”

“Oh, in Heaven’s name, tell me the truth, woman! Are you engaged?”

“Gunther, I like you very much. Don’t talk to me like this.”

He looked so distressed that Mercedes felt sorry for him. She would have comforted him if she could. They walked in silence a few steps.

Then a galloping of horses was heard. It was Arthur Selden with his sister, who passed on their way back just as Mercedes and Gunther had sat down to rest. Arthur’s sister had noticed how her brother flushed and how livid he became a minute after and faithfully reported the fact to her vigilant mother as soon as she got home.

That evening, Arthur did not come down to

tête-à-têtes: private conversations between two people

judicious: having good judgment or sound thinking

dinner until half-past eight o'clock. He was afraid he would be questioned regarding the young lady with Robert Gunther. As soon as he took his seat at the table, his mother asked, "Who was the lady with Robert on the beach?"

"She is George Mechlin's sister-in-law, Mercedes," Arthur replied.

"Ah! That is the beauty everyone is raving about," said Miss Selden.

"I never saw any woman so beautiful in all my life," he stated with resolution.

CHAPTER 13

IN NEW YORK

In December 1873, Clarence arrived at the **metropolis**. He could repress his impatience to see Mercedes, and yet he couldn't help first going to **Tiffany's** and purchasing the finest diamond ring before going to Mr. Mechlin's house.

George and his uncle had just come from their office when Clarence arrived, and the three walked into the library. After conversing a while, Mr. Mechlin invited Clarence to stay for dinner, saying, "I feel as if you were not quite a stranger to us, having heard George speak of you so often. I am sure the ladies will be happy to see you." Clarence hesitated, but George insisted, and he remained. Then the two friends sat down to chat while the ladies came down. In a few minutes Clarence had given a summary of all the news home.

"And what about mining news?" George asked.

"Splendid," was the reply, and Clarence

metropolis: a large, important city

Tiffany's: an expensive jewelry store in New York City

quickly told him how rich his mines had turned out, and how he had already sold six hundred thousand dollars' worth of ore and had an offer of one million dollars for the mines, but the Haverly brothers advised him not to sell.

Meanwhile, Mr. Mechlin went into his wife's room and said, "That fellow is splendid, wife."

"Who?"

"That young Darrell, from California. He is downstairs, talking with George in the library. I asked him to stay for dinner with us."

"He might be splendid, but never superior to Bob Gunther!" said Mrs. Mechlin.

"You wait until you meet him," said Mr. Mechlin.

Elvira entered, first and Clarence rose to meet her.

"I must salute you in the Spanish fashion," she said, embracing him.

"Where is Mercedes?" asked George.

She was at the door and looked so lovely Clarence looked at her in silence, not even taking a step to meet her.

"Mr. Darrell, a pleasure," she said. She

extended her hand with perfect **composure**.

Clarence would have remained there looking at her without saying anything. As Mr. and Mrs. Mechlin came in, all proceeded to the dining room.

Mrs. Mechlin was a little cold at first, but soon became **affable**. She engaged Clarence in conversation, asking him about fruit-raising in California and about his wonderfully rich mines. Elvira perceived that her aunt desired to know all about Clarence's family and history. George had cautioned never to mention that old Darrell had taken land on the rancho. "My aunt will not understand," George said. So Elvira spoke highly of Mrs. Darrell. Before dinner was over, Mercedes had the pleasure of seeing that Mr. and Mrs. Mechlin were quite impressed with him.

Clarence had not spoken a word yet to Mercedes. He followed her with his eyes and watched for an opportunity of speaking to her after the meal without being overheard. At last, he was able to catch her in the hall. She was nervous.

"Tell me more about home, now that we are

composure: calmness of mind or temperament

affable: friendly

alone,” said she.

“I have the ring you asked me to bring in person. Here it is. Let me put it on the dear little finger myself.”

So saying, he put the ring on and covered the hand with kisses. Mercedes’s face was **suffused** with blushes, and she did not dare look at the ring.

“I have been longing for this moment of bliss, Mercedes. Look at me, my sweet wife!”

“What a foolish boy,” she said.

“Now you must set the day of our marriage.”

“You must ask mamma and papa.”

“I will; we can marry as soon as we arrive. I think it would be nice for your family and mine to meet us at San Francisco.”

She looked down reflectingly. She uttered an exclamation of surprise.

“I had not seen this diamond. Is it not too magnificent for an engagement ring?”

“Nothing is too magnificent for you.”

“It is very beautiful.”

“I am glad you like it. Now, if you do not find

it of good taste, let us go to Tiffany's. But don't remove the ring. I am superstitious about that."

Mercedes laughed, saying, "I will not touch it."

When Clarence rejoined the others, it was time to talk about the trip to Washington. George wanted his uncle and aunt to go with him.

"I have no fears that the solicitor general will give us any trouble," said Mr. Mechlin. "I think his action in the Alamar case was a feeler only for some ulterior purpose, which he has abandoned. But if I could see how I might help Scott with his Texas Pacific Railroad, I should be most happy to go and try, for his sake, for the sake of the Southern people, and for the sake of you people at San Diego. But I don't see what I can do now."

"Several persons have told me that a certain railroad man is **bribing** congressmen right and left to defeat the Texas Pacific Railroad, and I believe it."

"*Bribery* is an ugly word," Mr. Mechlin replied.

bribing: paying someone to break the law or to influence them to use their position unjustly

“If that is the way railroad men are going to work, it will be difficult for an honest man to compete. However, I might be able to help Scott in some way. I guess we might go for a week or two. Lizzie, what do you think?”

“Nothing would make me happier,” Mrs. Mechlin said.

And thus, on January 9th, our Californians were on their way to Washington.

CHAPTER 14

AT THE CAPITOL

George Mechlin sat with his uncle in the **gallery** of the House of Representatives. They were listening to a debate. The attention of George, however, was divided between the debate and some papers he held in his hands, which a member of Congress had given him. They included a proposed bill to launch an investigation into a long list of frauds supposedly perpetrated by Mr. Leland Stanford and other executives of the Central Pacific Railroad Company. The document proved that these gentlemen gave false statements of the cost of constructing the Central Pacific Railroad and cheated the stockholders by issuing to themselves the stock and appropriating other subsidies that should have been distributed **pro rata** among all the stockholders. The entire statement was a shameful exposure of disgraceful acts.

gallery: the uppermost seating area of a theater, concert hall, or auditorium; much like a balcony

pro rata: in proportion to some factor that can be exactly calculated

“The thing is too preposterous,” George said to his uncle.

“So it seems to me. We should go to the Capitol again. I have only seen senators. I want to speak to some of the representatives.” In his **endeavors** to aid Tom Scott, Mr. Lawrence Mechlin had come across startling facts regarding the manipulation of railroad bills, especially in the congressional committees. Still, he found it hard to believe that bribery would be so openly used. He was a man of strict **probity**, slow to think any man dishonorable. George, brought up in the same school, also felt a reluctance to believe that the Congress of these United States could be packed, bundled, and labeled by a few of its **treacherous** members, who would sell themselves for money in spite of their honest colleagues.

George’s business with the attorney general, on the other hand, had been more satisfactory.

The appeal was at last dismissed, and the

endeavors: attempts

probity: integrity, especially of the quality of having strong moral principles; decency and honesty

treacherous: engaging in betrayal or deception

joyful news had been telegraphed to Don Mariano. There was now no dispute about the validity of his title. The government itself had said that the land belonged to him. George wrote to Don Mariano not to engage any surveyor to survey his rancho, as there would be an appropriation made for lands to be surveyed by the government.

The Mechlin party traveled back to New York by train. George and Clarence sat at one end of



the car silently, looking at the Capitol. The woods were beginning to intercept its view at times, and the dome would disappear and reappear again and again above the surrounding country. Mr. Mechlin joined them, and they sat all in silence for a few minutes until Mr. Mechlin said, "You are both watching the receding Capitol. I was doing the same. I wonder whether your thoughts were like mine in looking at that proud edifice?"

"I think my thoughts were about the same subject as yours, uncle," said George. "What were your thoughts, Darrell? Tell us."

"I was thinking of your father and of Don Mariano. Under that white shining dome their fate would be decided perhaps, as they both have embarked so hopefully in the boat of the Texas Pacific Railroad."

Mr. Lawrence Mechlin then said, "We certainly were thinking nearly alike, Mr. Darrell, with this difference, maybe—that I don't feel as hopeful as I did a few weeks ago. I am very fearful that the sad condition of the impoverished South is not going to have the weight that it deserves in the minds of this Congress."

"Their hearts are in their pockets, uncle, and I am afraid that, after all our reluctance to believe that our congressmen can be improperly influenced, we will have to submit, with shame and sorrow, and accept the fact that bribery has been at work successfully. The chief of the lobby is king."

"Let us not accept it yet. I have my fears and my doubts, but I still hope that our Congress has many honest men."

"You can hope, but it will be in vain," George said. "The money of the Central Pacific Railroad will be too much for Colonel Scott."

"Don't be so **desponding**, boy."

"I can't have any hope in this Congress. But still, for the sake of my father, who has trusted so much in the Texas Pacific, I am glad you will do all you can to help Colonel Scott, uncle."

"I will use my best efforts to help the Texas Pacific, as I firmly believe every honest man in these United States ought to do, even when not directly interested."

desponding: despairing, disheartened, pessimistic

CHAPTER 15

PERPLEXITIES AT ALAMAR

Mr. Darrell senior did not receive the news of the appeal being dismissed as Mrs. Darrell and Clarence had hoped. He was evidently out of humor with the executive branch of the government, and he discussed the matter in an animated **soliloquy**. “Congress ought to have **confiscated** all their lands and only allowed them 160 acres each. The idea that they, the conquered, should be better off than us, the Americans! They should have been put on an equality with other settlers. Why should these inferior people be more considered than the Americans?” he said.

“Inferior? What are you talking about?” said Mrs. Darrell. “William, you have gone back to your old unfortunate ideas, which brought so many troubles to us in Napa and Sonoma. Forget those troubles, or you will bring them back again.”

soliloquy: monologue; speaking to oneself with no regard to who may be listening

confiscated: seized; appropriated

"No, but I always will maintain that the Spanish Californians should not have a right to any more land than Americans."

"The government does not give them any more land; all they ask and expect is that the government may not take what they had. And every time you disregard this truth, we have suffered. This time it might lead to worse suffering. Clarence might be very miserable and, if he is, so will I."

"Why should Clarence be miserable?"

"Because he is in love with Miss Mercedes, and, if you are the enemy of her family, she might not marry him."

"Marry him? Does Clarence think she will marry him—a squatter?" He laughed **derisively**.

"Clarence is no squatter."

"He is the son of a squatter."

"But if you keep your word, and this land is paid for, you will not be a squatter."

"I suppose Clarence followed the girl to New York believing she'll marry him. Nonsense."

"If he did follow her, he would also be

following his father's example."

Mr. Darrell said nothing else; he knew she was right. He made an orderly march toward the stable, and Mrs. Darrell busied herself with her garden, where Alice presently joined her.

"Mamma, I overheard you with papa; don't let him quarrel with the don."

"I will try."

"Well, if papa will insist upon wanting to be a squatter, and favor squatters, he will find that not one of his family approves it. We all feel very badly to see papa so wrong, and the worst of it is how it all might affect Clarence. I do hope he will marry Mercedes."

If sweet Alice had said all she held in her dear heart, she would have revealed other anxieties besides those she felt on Clarence's account. The thought that Victoriano, too, might be **estranged** from her made her heart heavy with **forebodings**. Gentle and loving though she was, she could not help feeling exasperated to foresee how miserable

estranged: no longer close or affectionate with someone;
alienated

forebodings: fearful apprehensions; dread

she and Clarence, and Mercedes and Victoriano, might all be on account of this quarrel.

Even though the government, by the dismissal of the appeal, acknowledged that Don Mariano's title was good, the settlers had not left the premises or purchased their homesteads. Their disgraceful destruction of animals was renewed with obvious **virulence**. Every night the firing of rifles and shotguns was heard all over the rancho.

Don Mariano saw this devastation as a malicious revenge, which he could not **avert**, so he began to collect his stock to take them all to the mountains. About that time, he received the letter in which Clarence proposed to buy all of his cattle, advising him to restock the rancho afterwards. He liked the proposition and immediately gave orders to drive all the cattle to his sister's rancho to wait until Clarence returned.

Don Mariano and his two sons would ride out every day to oversee the collecting of the cattle and send them off to his sister's rancho in the valley, where the **rendezvous** had been established.

virulence: extreme bitterness or malevolence

avert: to turn away or aside

Victoriano named this the *Rodeo triste*, insisting that the cattle knew it was a sad rodeo, being different from the happy and **boisterous** gatherings of past years, when the boys of the surrounding ranchos all assembled at Alamar to separate their cattle and have a grand time branding the calves.

“*Rodeo triste*, just like ourselves, tossed from one cruelty to another still worse,” Tano said.

Thus six weeks passed. The **remittitur** from the Supreme Court to the United States District Court at San Francisco came. This caused a ripple of excitement among the settlers. Then a bigger one, a perfect tidal wave, was expected with the **surveyors** that would come to make the examination of the rancho; and when this should be finished, then the grandest and last effort must be made by the settlers to prevent the approval of it. Thus, at least, they would have more litigation, and, while the case was in the courts, they would

rendezvous: a meeting at an agreed time and place, typically between two people

boisterous: marked by exuberance and high spirits

remittitur: a legal order to correct a verdict without a new trial

surveyors: people who map out and measure land, especially for establishing property claims and drawing borders

still be on the rancho raising crops and paying no taxes and no rent, as they knew perfectly well that the don would never sue them for rents and profits.

Everett had gone to town for the mail that day; letters from Clarence were expected. The settlers knew it and, curious about this correspondence, decided to visit their neighbor, Darrell.

"What happened?" Mr. Darrell asked.

"Isn't it weird that the don is hurrying off his cattle, now that he's won his suit? Doesn't that look as if he don't put much trust in his victory?"

"I am sure he trusts his victory, but he knows that more stock has been shot. He wants to save a few head," said Romeo.

"Roper told me," said Hughes, ignoring what Romeo said, "that, if the settlers wish it, this case might be kept in the courts for fifty years."

"After the land is surveyed?" Darrell asked.

"Yes."

"We begin our new war by objecting to the survey," Miller stated.

"That is what Roper says," Hughes replied.

"And, meantime, attack the enemy," Gasbang added.

“Attorney General Williams had promised George Mechlin’s uncle, six months ago, to dismiss the appeal as soon as the Supreme Court should be in session, and, though it cuts us all to pieces, I must say he kept his word like a man. That’s all,” said Everett.

“Yes, it was that infernal, overdressed puppy George Mechlin who did the **mischief**. I’ll be even with him yet for it,” old Mathews growled.

“Why shouldn’t George Mechlin help his father-in-law?” asked Romeo.

“Keep quiet, Romeo,” old Hancock said.

“If George Mechlin hadn’t helped, the thing would have been done in some other way. It had to come,” Darrell said.

“These Californians are too ignorant to know how to defend their rights and too lazy to try, unless some American prompts them,” Mathews replied.

“They employed a lawyer,” Old Miller observed.

“What are you going to do, Mr. Darrell?” asked Hughes.

mischief: misbehavior or troublemaking

“Nothing. You heard me promise that I would pay him for the land, if it was decided that the title was his.”

“You said when the title is settled,” Gasbang said.

“The title is settled as far as the government is concerned,” Darrell answered.

“You ain’t going to desert our cause, are you?” Hughes asked. “You’ll be our friend to the last, won’t you?”

“Such is my intention. We will see better after the survey is made. Meantime, as the don isn’t bothering anyone with orders to vacate, the best thing to do is to keep quiet.”

The settlers went home, all more or less persuaded that, after all, peace was the best.

CHAPTER 16

HOME AGAIN

On the 25th day of May, 1874, Elvira and Mercedes found themselves under their father's roof in the Alamar rancho. Surrounded by their beloved family and the Holmans, they were both relating their adventures from their eastern visit.

Mr. Holman was there, too. The gathering was a good pretext to question George about Texas Pacific matters. After all, he had invested all his money in San Diego, placing implicit faith in the idea that the building of the Texas Pacific was a measure of national importance so obvious that Congress would never deny its assistance. These had been the reasons, he alleged, for plunging into **real estate speculations**, followed by his friends Don Mariano and Mr. James Mechlin.

These three gentlemen were listening to what George had learned in Washington regarding the unlucky railroad, while the ladies were equally

real estate speculations: buying and selling land as an investment

entertained listening to Elvira and Mercedes on the other side of the same veranda.

“What has become of the handsome Clarence? Why is he not here?” Corina inquired.

Elvira informed her that, on their arrival at San Francisco, Clarence found it necessary to visit his farm and go to Arizona on business but would return about the first of July.

“We heard his mine is in bonanza,” Amelia said.

Victoriano and Everett sat near the ladies. Gabriel joined them and was interested in their conversation.

“How are all the ladies of your family?” Amelia asked of Everett.

“They are all well,” Everett replied.

“I hope all will come,” Elvira said.

“What? Mr. Darrell senior also?” Corina asked.

“Why not?” Mercedes answered.

“We were speaking of the ladies, but, if Mr. Darrell should call, we will be happy to receive him with sincere **cordiality**,” Elvira added.

cordiality: kindness, politeness

“All of which would be thrown away upon the stiffest neck in San Diego County,” Victoriano observed. Everett laughed.

“Tano! What makes you talk like that?” Mercedes exclaimed, reddening with evident annoyance.

“Because his ‘butt-headedness’ is like that of a vicious old mule,” Victoriano explained.

“If Mr. Darrell has said or done anything to vex you, the best thing is not to go to his house, but it is not very courteous to speak as you have in the presence of his son,” Doña Josefa said.

“I forgive him,” Everett said.

“Not go to his house!” Tano exclaimed. “That is exactly what the old pirate wants. It would be nuts for the old Turk if I stayed away. I won’t stay away. I’ll go when he is at the colony with his pets.”

“What is the colony?” Mercedes asked.

“That is the new name for the large room next to the dining room. Alice calls it the ‘squatterry’ because father always receives the settlers there, but mother changed the name to ‘colony’ to make

vex: to anger or annoy

it less offensive, and because the talk there is always about locating, or surveying, or fencing land,” Everett explained.

“Whether he be at the colony or not, you should not go if he does not wish you to visit his house,” Doña Josefa said to Tano.

“But we all wish it, my mother and every one of her children. Father doesn’t say anything about Tano’s coming or not, but he is cross to all of us and don’t have the politeness to be more **amiable** in Tano’s presence,” Everett replied.

“I think Mrs. Darrell ought to put her foot down and have it out with the old man,” Tano asserted.

“We will see what he will do when Clarence comes,” Everett said.

Everett thought, as all the family did, that Clarence, being the favorite child of the old man, would influence his father and **dispel** his bad humor. But, if the family had known what was boiling in the **cauldron** of their father’s mind,

amiable: friendly

dispel: to drive away or cause to vanish

cauldron: a large metal pot used for cooking; a large kettle

they would have perceived that neither Clarence's influence nor yet the more powerful one wielded by Mrs. Darrell would be effective.

The fact was that no one of his family understood William Darrell. It can hardly be said that he understood himself, for he sincerely believed that he had renounced his squatting **propensities** and honestly promised his wife that he would not take up land claimed by anyone else. But no sooner was he surrounded by men who, though his inferiors, talked loudly in assertion of their rights under the law, and no sooner had he thousands of broad acres before his eyes, than the mischievous squatter crawled back. He had been slumbering only and unconsciously dreaming of the advantages that the law really gave to settlers.

Mrs. Darrell had been the only will that dared stand before it, but she knew better than making direct assaults upon the strong **citadel**; she knew all tactics would fail. She withdrew all her ideas and waited for Clarence to return.

What exasperated Darrell the most was a

propensities: natural inclinations or preferences

citadel: a fortress

lurking self-reproach he could not silence—the promise he made to Don Mariano to pay for his land when the title was settled. At the same time, he had promised to stand by the settlers. He stood in his own mind self-accused, unhappy, and **unrepentant**, upholding a lost cause.

He avoided the company of his family. After meals, he would fill his pipe and march himself off to the farther end of his grain fields. He would puff his smoke in high dudgeon, like an overturned locomotive that had run off its track. He dreaded Clarence's return.

And there he was now, Clarence. He just came from Arizona, kissing all the ladies of the family and hugging all the males, not omitting the old man.

"Clary is so much in love, father, that he comes courting you, too," Everett said, laughing.

"I suppose so," Darrell answered.

Mrs. Darrell's eyes met those of Clarence, and he read in them a volume of what was troubling

lurking: lying in wait in a place of concealment

self-reproach: remorse; self-blame

unrepentant: not feeling or exhibiting shame or remorse

his father's mind. He longed to have a talk with his mother, but he knew he had to wait. Once at the table, all sorts of questions were showered upon Clarence about New York, about Washington, about San Francisco, and about Arizona, all of which he answered.

"And are the Mechlins very grand?" Jane asked.

"I heard there was even an excursion to West Point to celebrate Mercedes's birthday," Alice observed.

"Yes, the Mechlins are rich, to judge by their style of living. Their social position is certainly very high," Clarence replied.

"You had a delightful time, brother?" Everett said.

"Yes, indeed."

"We, too, have had lots of fun, with old Mathews **on the rampage** like an old hen who lost her only chicken," said Willie.

"Willie!" Mrs. Darrell said, but, as Clarence and Everett laughed, and his father did not seem

on the rampage: out of control

particularly displeased, Willie added, "And the old man gets so mad that he perspires, and smoke comes out of his back, as if his clothes were on fire."

"That will do," Mrs. Darrell said.

"Old Mathews is in worse humor since the don began to send his cattle away," Webster said.

"Why so?" Clarence asked.

"Because they made nice targets for his rifle," Everett replied.

"He threatens to shoot George Mechlin," Webster added.

"Why?" Clarence asked.

"Because he got the appeal dismissed," answered Webster.

"Gasbang says that he and Roper will send the don to poverty," Everett said.

"Not while I live," Clarence replied. "Not while I live."

CHAPTER 17

THE BREWERS OF MISCHIEF

E ight weeks went by — the most delightful time that Clarence and Mercedes had ever lived. The first of September had dawned, and on the 16th they would be married. With the first rays of the day, Clarence arose and went to the west window of his chamber, which looked towards the Alamar House. He began to dress himself, deliberating whether he should or not go to town that day and telegraph Hubert to do as he thought best about selling another cargo of ores or say to wait for him — that he would be at San Francisco on the 20th. Once dressed, he sat by the west window and tried to read, but Mercedes was in his mind. He put down the book and began to walk, trying to think about that other business of selling the ore to the Austrian house of which Hubert had been writing to him.

The best thing would be to go to town and ask Hubert if the matter could wait until the 20th. But, should Hubert be coming, or should it be necessary to wait for telegrams, he might not

be back until the following day in the evening. He would go immediately after breakfast to tell Mercedes that he could not see her that evening.

Mercedes and Doña Josefa were on the front piazza when he arrived. Gabriel was talking to George in quite an unusual and upset manner. Clarence came up the piazza steps, and George began to tell him that some of the last lot of cattle, which had been sent off to the mountains, had got away and returned to the rancho, and that morning a couple of cows of a very choice breed were found shot and dying. No one knew who fired at the poor dumb animals, but evidence clearly pointed to old Mathews. Clarence was very angry. He reflected in silence for a few moments, then said to Gabriel, "If Don Mariano sold all his cattle and horses to me, they would have a better chance of being spared."

"That's a good idea," George said.

"We are going to drive off the last lot today," Gabriel said. "Father and Tano are down in the valley. I'll tell him what you say. I think we will return by tomorrow night, and he can draw up the deed then."

"Tell him that I consider the cattle mine now and will let our friends, the settlers, know it, so that they can have the satisfaction of killing *my* cattle."

"Do you really mean it?" Doña Josefa asked.

"Certainly," Clarence replied.

Clarence and George followed Gabriel to bid him goodbye. Clarence told him then, "I wrote to Hubert about finding you a place at a bank, and he replied that he will get it, Gabriel. Would you like to try it now, considering there will be no cattle at the rancho? I am going to write and telegraph to Hubert today, as he might be down in tomorrow's steamer, so that I can tell him when you might go up."

"I think we better wait. Once you get married, you will go to your house in San Francisco; we can start then," George suggested.

"Yes, I think that will be the best time," Gabriel said. "Although I can't wait to tell Lizzie that she and Mercedes will be close."

"I know, I feel the same," Clarence said.

"At times I feel discouraged: what if the Texas Pacific is to be defeated permanently? That would

be too outrageous. Let us be cautious and hope that, by next year, our banking plan will be carried out," George said.

Clarence and George shook hands with Gabriel, who quickly jumped on his horse and was off at a **gallop**, followed by his *vaquero*.

Clarence returned to the porch, sat with Mercedes, who was now alone, and said, "Do you realize this is the first day of September?"

"Of course," she replied.

"Do you realize that in two more weeks, we will be together forever?"

"Hush, Clarence!" she said, putting her hand over his lips. He kissed her palm, saying, "I have a piece of information that is going to make your heart glad. What will you give for it?"

"What is it? Tell me."

"It is about Gabriel and Lizzie. Gabriel will get a place at a San Francisco bank to learn the banking business, and they will live with us."

"Oh! Clarence, how can I ever thank you?"

"Haven't you promised to marry me and thus

make me the happiest man? That is enough for thanks."

Mercedes blushed.

"I am going now. I am going to be away a long time; won't you give me one single kiss to say goodbye?"

"Must you go? Why don't you write your letters or telegrams and send them from here?"

"Because I may have to answer some **dispatches** immediately. Now, one sweet kiss for good luck. P-l-e-a-s-e don't refuse it."

"Mamma doesn't approve of such things, and I don't either. You are not my husband yet," she pleaded, but in vain, for he had put his arm around her and was holding her close to his heart.

"I am almost your husband yet. I shall be in two weeks. So, you see how cruel it is to be so distant."

"Do you call this distant, holding me so close?"

He looked into her eyes, kissed her forehead and cheeks, then he kissed the heavily fringed eyelids. Then he put his lips to hers and held them

there in a long kiss of the purest, truest love.

He would have been willing to hold her close for hours, but she disengaged herself from his **embrace** with gentle firmness. Such warm hugging she intuitively felt must be **improper**, even on the eve of marriage. No lady could allow them without surrendering her dignity. That was the effect of Doña Josefa's **doctrines**, which she had carefully trained into the minds of her daughters.

"Well, I hope that at last you have kissed me enough," said Mercedes rather resentfully.

"Never enough, but I hope sufficiently to give me good luck," answered the happy Clarence.

"Oh, Clarence, that reminds me of my horrible dream of last night. I dreamed that papa went to look for you in the midst of a snowstorm and never came back. You returned, but he never did."

"You must not believe in dreams, dearest."

"I do not, but this seemed **prophetic** to me."

embrace: a hug

improper: not in accord with modesty or good taste

doctrines: teachings; beliefs

prophetic: suggestive of future events

“Prophetic of a snowstorm in San Diego?”

“The snow was symbolic of **bereavement**, perhaps.”

She rested her head on his shoulder and seemed lost in thought, and he held the little hand. She raised her eyes to his, saying, “I wish you could wait until tomorrow. That dream made me superstitious.”

Clarence drove home to speak to his father. The old man was sitting on the porch, smoking his pipe, alone. Seeing his son, he walked down to meet him. Clarence was glad that he seemed in a better humor.

“Father, I need a favor.”

“You alarm me. You never ask for favors,” he said.

“This is a business favor. I need you to talk to the settlers, especially those who have been most ready to shoot the don’s cattle, and tell them I have bought all his stock, and all will be driven to the Colorado River as soon as cold weather sets in. I don’t think many of the settlers like me any better

bereavement: sorrow or mourning at the loss of someone or something

than they like the don, but if they think they might displease you by killing your son's cattle they might spare the poor animals."

"I'll do it. I expect Mathews and Miller now. But have you really and truly bought the stock? Or is it only to . . ."

"I have made a solid purchase. Five hundred head are already at the mine, and, as soon as the weather is better, the others will follow."

"What is he to do with his land? Doesn't he believe he'll get rid of us, the squatters?"

"Oh yes, but he figures thus: if the Texas Pacific is built, it will pay better to sell his land in farming lots; if not, he can restock it when he gets rid of his troublesome neighbors."

"He has more sense than I gave him credit for. I guess you put him up to that **dodge**."

"No, he thought it himself."

"All right. I'll speak to the settlers, but I cannot promise that they will do what I ask."

"I understand." And then he was off on his horse.

dodge: a trick or maneuver

Darrell was waiting for Mathews, so, after thinking of what Clarence had said, he decided that it would be better to have a talk with Hancock and Pittikin, who were about the most reliable of all the settlers. When Webster had brought the saddled horse to the front steps, Darrell saw Mathews, Gasbang, Miller, and Hughes coming in a two-seated wagon, and all seemed to be talking very excitedly.

"Tie the horse there. I'll wait for those men," said Darrell, sitting down again.

Webster did as he was told and then walked straight upstairs to his mother's room. "Mother, if I were you, I would go and sit there by the windows while those bad men are talking to father," Webster said.

"Web might be right. Go. You might be in time to unmask some lie against Clary," Everett suggested.

"Those men already have too much influence over father, and we have done nothing," Alice said.

Mrs. Darrell was silent. Then, looking at her children, she said, "That would not justify my listening."

Everett shrugged his shoulders, saying, "Come on, brother." Both boys left the room. Everett said, "Web, get a horse saddled for me. I am going to listen from Jane's room; one of her windows is right over those men. If what I hear makes it necessary for me to see Clarence, I shall go to town."

As Webster was coming downstairs, he saw John Gasbang going out at the other end of the parlor, pushing a large armchair out upon the porch. He heard them laughing at some of Gasbang's coarse, vulgar jokes, and then all sat down. After some **desultory** talk, Mathews, evidently anxious to begin, said, "I am afraid that somebody has been fooling you, or, if not, you yourself have been fooling and laughing at us."

"We don't believe it at all," Hughes explained, seeing Darrell's brow darken.

"I don't understand you," said Darrell.

"Did you pay for this land?" Mathews asked.

"No. I told the don I *would* pay when the title is settled; that's all. You all heard that."

“But you never paid him?”

“Not a red cent. But see here, what do you mean by coming here to **catechize** me? Speak out like a man; what is it all about?” old Darrell said.

“We were told that there is record that you paid \$6,400 to the don for 640 acres of land,” Miller explained.

“When did I do that?” Darrell asked.

“On the 13th day of February, 1872,” Gasbang replied.

“Who saw the record?”

“I saw the entry made by the **notary**.”

“Well, the notary lies. I did not buy any land.”

“Perhaps the don had the entry made,” Hughes suggested.

“Then the don lied, and I’ll tell him so,” Darrell retorted.

“What about your son? Are you sure that Clarence did not buy the land **unbeknown** to you?” Mathews asked.

catechize: to ask questions of; to interrogate

notary: a person who prepares official documents such as contracts and deeds

unbeknown: not known

"Do you mean to say that my own son would put me in such a ridiculous position? No, I think it is more likely that, as Hughes says, the don had the false entry made. Anyway, who in the devil has been building theories on my affairs? I'd like to see the fellow who does that," thundered Darrell.

"It was my lawyer who casually discovered that entry in the notary's books and told me of it. He meant no harm," Gasbang explained. "He thinks that Mr. Clarence, being in love with the don's daughter, probably bought the land and dated back the deed of sale," Gasbang said.

Darrell stood silent, but shook his head.

"You see, the don could have had no object in putting on record that he had received \$6,400, unless he did so," said Miller.

"So you think he received the money?" Darrell asked.

"No doubt of it," the others answered.

"There he goes now," said Hughes, and all could see the don riding towards home, accompanied by his two sons. Behind them, the *vaqueros* were driving a lot of cattle towards the corral at the back of the house.

Seeing the cattle, Darrell said, "By the way, these cattle now belong to Clarence. The don will drive them to the Colorado River. So, if any stray cows come up to your places, corral them and send me word. I ask this as a favor to me, not to Clarence."

"Certainly!!" said Hughes, Miller, and Gasbang.

"As we all wish to know more about that land sale, we will come back this evening to hear what the don says," expressed Hughes.

"Very well. I am going to ask all he knows about it. You really think Clarence paid the money?" asked Darrell.

"Of course he did, to get the girl," laughed Gasbang. "It was all a put-up job, and they kept the secret well, so we never smelled the rat. But I don't care so long as you, Mr. Darrell, wasn't in it." And then they drove off.

Darrell clenched his fists as he heard the laughter from the wagon. He walked to the stable and took a heavy whip. The old man trembled with suppressed anger, so much that he could not

fasten on his **spurs**, and this only increased the more his senseless rage.

Everett was scarcely less angry or less pale. He was waiting for his father to start in order to follow him. Webster came upstairs and said to him, "Retty, father means mischief. He has the black snake whip and trembles with rage as if he had the **ague**."

The old gentleman at last succeeded in fastening his spurs and getting on his horse. He trotted off to meet the don. Everett and Webster went downstairs. Webster saddled two horses; he was not going to let Everett go alone when he might need help.

"Mamma, look! Father is meeting the don!" exclaimed Alice. Mrs. Darrell went to the window and watched.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Darrell," said Don Mariano. "We are Clarence's *vaqueros* now, as you can see."

Don Mariano could see that Darrell was upset and waited for him to speak first. The enraged man

spurs: the sharp metal pieces attached to the heels of cowboy boots used to kick the horse to make it go faster

ague: an intermittent fever

gasped, then, with a harsh tone, he said, "What is all this trickery about my having paid you \$6,400 for land? That is a lie."

"It is. You never paid me a cent, nor the other settlers."

"Did Clarence pay you for the land?"

"Look, Mr. Darrell, matters between Clarence and myself are not to be mentioned, unless he authorizes me to."

"So it is true; you have some private business together."

Don Mariano bowed but did not speak. Darrell came closer and, shaking at him the fist in which he held the whip, said, "You ought to be ashamed for bargaining with my son. You have acted most dishonorably, **inveigling** Clarence into bargains **unknown** to me, inducing him with bribes."

"What were those bribes?" Don Mariano asked.

"Your daughter's pretty looks!"

"That is too low," the don said, turning his horse. Darrell stood in the way.

inveigling: persuading with deception or flattery

“Too low, you say? Look at you, sneaking off like a coward and not giving me any satisfaction.”

“I am ready to give you any satisfaction, but claim it like a gentleman. I am no Roper or Gasbang to have a fist-fight in the dirt with you,” the don replied.

“Why didn’t you think of your dignity when you paraded your daughter before my son! Can’t I make you fight?” He lifted his whip and struck a severe blow at the don. Instantly, Victoriano and Everett dashed their horses in between, and the blow fell right upon their backs.

Don Mariano smiled at Darrell’s clumsy horsemanship. The don rode slowly away. Darrell followed and again lifted his whip to strike, but he felt as if he had been struck by lightning. He looked down to his chest surprised. The coil of a **lasso** held him in an iron grip, and he could not move. He saw that the other end of the lasso was neatly wound around the **pommel** of Gabriel’s saddle.

lasso: a rope with a loop used by cowboys

pommel: a rounded knob on the front of a saddle



“Go home and bring me my pistols, Webster. I’ll fix this brood of greasers,” said Darrell, half choked with rage and the tight embrace of the lasso.

Everett winked at him, and Webster understood that he should go but bring no pistols.

Darrell could not do anything but hold to the pommel of his saddle, his arms **pinioned** to his body. Gabriel, fearing to let go the lasso—which, if loosened, might entangle the horse and thus pull the old man off—followed, maintaining the lasso at an even, gentle tension, carefully keeping at the same distance.

Darrell began to sway, as if losing his balance. His horse began to topple to one side. Quick as a flash, Victoriano **darted** forward and, grasping the **bridle** with one hand, caught with the other Darrell’s body, which lost balance and was falling like a log.

“I’ll take that lasso off, Mr. Darrell,” said Victoriano.

pinioned: tied or held

darted: moved suddenly or rapidly

bridle: leather straps put on a horse’s head to lead or guide the horse

“You’ll pay for it!” was Darrell’s reply.

“Watch your language; if you want to fight we can do so whenever you wish, with any weapons except the tongue,” Gabriel answered.

“I suppose you think a lasso is a very **genteel** weapon. It is good enough for coward greasers,” said the **irate** Darrell.

“I threw my lasso to keep you from my father. He was unarmed, and you made a brutal attack upon him,” said Victoriano, loosening the lasso off Mr. Darrell’s arms.

Victoriano dismounted and endeavored to loosen the tight noose, but it was so firmly drawn that he could not move it. Everett came to his assistance, but he, too, failed. Gabriel examined the noose carefully. He shook his head, saying, “Come on, Mr. Darrell, Retty and I will let you down nicely.”

“Lean on me, father,” said Everett, but, as he held up his arms towards his father, he became convulsed with laughter. Victoriano tried to suppress his desire to laugh, but his risibility was beyond control, too.

genteel: polite, refined, or respectable

irate: extremely angry

"Mr. Darrell, lean on me slowly," Gabriel said, putting up his hands for Darrell. Down like a fallen tree came the old fighter.

"Can you get on your horse now?" Gabriel asked.

"Yes, I think I can," he said. A shadow passed over his face. Webster was coming back, leading his horse. His mother was walking with him. Mrs. Darrell saluted the Alamares, and they lifted their hats in response.

"What is the matter, William? Did you fall?"

"No. Why did you come out here for?"

"I feared you were hurt, but, since it is only foolish anger that ails you, I need not waste my sympathy," she said in her sweet voice.

"Mrs. Darrell, all this trouble came unexpectedly to us. We don't know what caused it. I just had to prevent anybody from striking my father," Gabriel said.

"I do not blame you. Express my regrets to your father, please," she said.

"Let us hope that the cause of all this misunderstanding may be explained," Gabriel replied.

When Darrell saw that friendly demonstration, he turned his back upon all, and, muttering that he was “to be made the scapegoat of all,” walked home.

CHAPTER 18

MRS. DARRELL'S VIEW OF OUR LAND LAWS

Of all the horrible tortures that the human mind is capable of to torment itself, none was greater to William Darrell than the consciousness of being ridiculed and laughed at. He had seen Victoriano and his own Everett. Surely if his own son laughed so heartily, everybody else would do the same.

When he returned home, Clementine had said, "Papa, what made you sit on your horse so stiff? Why did you want to keep that rope? You looked so funny." She laughed.

"Get out of my way," fumed Darrell and went to the colony, banging the door.

When Tisha came to tell him that supper was on the table, he said, "I don't want any supper."

The settlers arrived at the colony earlier than usual. Everett joined the meeting. Darrell gave his son a withering look. He soon told them the don had refused to make any explanation because

he promised Clarence to say nothing. "When Clarence returns, he will clear the mystery," he added.

The settlers discussed the don's motives to make a false entry. When the argument was heard all over the house, Mrs. Darrell walked in. Darrell sat up and all the others stood on their feet. "Be seated, gentlemen, I have but a few words to say."

Slowly all dropped into their seats and every face was turned towards her. No one thought of offering her a chair. When all had sat down, she said, "All those of you who think that Don Mariano Alamar induced my son Clarence to purchase land from him are mistaken; and all those who think Don Mariano made a false entry of a land sale do him an injustice. The land was bought and paid for at my request."

All the men looked at each other unable to believe it.

"I told my son Clarence that if he did not pay for the land his father located, I would never come here. Moreover, I told him not to mention having paid because his father would think we were interfering in his business."

Mr. Darrell was about to say something, but his wife held her hand to prevent him from doing so.

"I do not mean to criticize anybody's actions or opinions, but I say: those laws which authorize you to locate homesteads upon lands claimed as Mexican grants are wrong. Good and moral citizens should not be guided by them. Settlers should wait until the titles are finally approved or rejected. Look back and see all the miseries that so many innocent families have suffered by locating in good faith their humble homes upon lands that they were forced to abandon."

No one dared to say anything.

"I hope you see now that I am the one to blame for the purchase of the land which has given so much offense. Good night."

At any other time, Darrell would have been proud of his wife, but he was too angry. He felt angrier at the longing to take to his heart that darling so resolute and yet so gentle. This longing, when his pride clamored that she was wrong and should be reproved, was an additional torture to him. He remained silent.

"I suppose that this settles our hash," Gasbang

said, laughing. Hughes and Miller laughed, too. The rest were impressed with Mrs. Darrell's words.

"I wish she had told me this before," Darrell said.

"Why didn't she?" Gasbang asked.

"Because women are bound to do mischief," Mathews replied.

"She stated her reasons very clearly," Romeo said.

"How did she know that the don's title would not be rejected?" Mathews inquired.

"Her good sense told her," Romeo answered.

"I wasn't talking to you," Mathews retorted, making all laugh, and even Darrell smiled, but he looked very pale, and Everett began to feel anxious at seeing his **pallor**.

"I heard that the surveyor will be on the ground by the first of October," Miller said.

"All right; that will give us plenty of time," Gasbang observed.

If Darrell had obeyed the impulse of his heart

when he went upstairs to his bedchamber, he would have taken his wife in his arms and made his peace with her, for he knew her to be true and always acting from the best motives. But there was that streak of anger within which impelled him not to do so.

"I am sorry that I kept that matter from you. Believe me, my husband, I did so out of a desire to avoid discussions. You seemed so happy here that I hated to bring up for argument any disagreeable subject. It was a mistake, and I regret it."

"Yes, wise women generally put their foot in it," said he, turning his back on her.

"Can you forgive me?" Old Darrell did not say anything. "Come to bed; let's rest. We can talk about this in the morning."

"I'll sleep in this chair."

"Then I shall go into Clarence's room and sleep there. It would keep me awake to know that you were sitting up."

"Do as you please."

"Do you refuse to go to bed because you are too angry with me?"

He said nothing but looked pale. She waited;

he never said a word.

“I am dismissed, I suppose. If you feel sick, knock at Clarence’s door. Good night.”

Mr. Darrell was nearly choking with smothered rage and pain. He refused her sweet company because he feared that his wife might see the bruises on his arms and the heavy welt around his body, made by the coil of the lasso. He felt very sore, but he would rather die than let anyone see this.

Towards morning, he walked to the window and looked into the valley, then his gaze wandered towards the Alamar house. All the windows had the shutters closed and no light was seen from them excepting one. He did not know what room that was or who occupied it, but unconsciously he watched the light through the lace curtains. He smiled, hoping that the don might be as miserable as he was, unable to sleep.

CHAPTER 19

DARRELL ASTONISHES HIMSELF

But the don was sleeping. Awake and walking in her solitary vigil was Mercedes. She had been embroidering a *mouchoir* case for Clarence that unfortunate afternoon of Darrell's performance, when she heard loud talking in the piazza. At first, she paid no attention to it and went on with her work, hoping that Clarence would return early. The talking becoming louder, and, more voices being heard, she felt alarmed, imagining that Clarence's horses had run away and he had been hurt. She went out to inquire.

The entire Alamar family, as well as Mrs. Mechlin, George, and Lizzie, were in the veranda. All had seen Darrell's attempt and subsequent steeplechase. Now Gabriel and Victoriano had returned and related what happened in the hollow. Victoriano was overcome with laughter, so hearty and uncontrollable that it became contagious.

mouchoir: a French term for handkerchief

Even Gabriel and Mr. Mechlin, who were less disposed to indulge in hilarity, laughed a little.

Mercedes did not even smile. She did not understand a word of what was said. Gradually she began to comprehend, and she stood there just listening.

“Cheer up, baby girl. When Clarence comes, he will undeceive the old man, and all will be right,” said Don Mariano, putting his arms around her and drawing her close.

“I fear his anger will not lessen as long as the bruises of the lasso remain painful,” Gabriel said.

“Did you draw the lasso very tight?” Don Mariano asked.

“Not intentionally. He did by stooping forward as his horse galloped.”

“Let us hope that Clarence and Mrs. Darrell will pacify the old man. The thing now is to give him time to cool off his anger,” George replied.

Mercedes went to her room **inconsolable**, her lovely face bathed in tears. She did not go to bed; she hoped that Clarence might possibly have

inconsolable: not able to be comforted

finished his business in town and hurried back. She watched for the faintest sound all night.

In the morning, Madame Halier came to see her and went to report to Doña Josefa the state of Mercedes. She was anxious, crying. Don Mariano came in at once and took his daughter in his arms.

"Papa, you said you were going today. Please don't go," she begged.

"Why not, my baby? I shall go only to check on the safety of the cattle. I shall return before dark," he said.

"Papa, please don't go. I want you to be here when Clarence returns. Let the cattle be. You may never see Clarence again in this world if you go." And she put her pale cheek against her father's and sobbed.

"What an idea! Why shouldn't I see Clarence again if I ride one or two miles? My baby darling, you are too nervous. Do not exaggerate what Darrell might do."

"But, papa, can I marry him after what his father said to you, and when he tried to strike you? Can I marry him after that, papa?"

"Why not, baby? What he said is an infamous

lie. That Darrell chooses to **indulge** in mean thoughts and **atrocious** language is not a reason why you and Clarence should be made wretched for life. Clarence is a gentleman, and I shall not permit that you two be separated by anything that Darrell may do or say.”

The don comforted his favorite child. He kissed her and, soon after, he and Gabriel went on their way. Mercedes turned to her bedside to pray. This time, however, her praying turned into **convulsive** sobs that became more uncontrollable as she poured out her great sorrow. Madame Halier called Doña Josefa, who hurried to Mercedes’s room. Gently the mother lifted her child and pressed her to her heart.

“Mercedes, have courage. Your father and Clarence will talk this matter over and determine what is best to do.”

“You will not tell Clarence to go away?”

“Certainly not. But there must be some

indulge: to yield to a temptation or desire

atrocious: offensive or heinous

convulsive: resembling a convulsion; sudden, frantic, or spasmodic

other arrangement about the wedding. It can be postponed, perhaps. Darrell might wish the engagement broken off."

"Did Mr. Darrell say that?" Mercedes asked.

"He said horrible things, but you better hear no more."

"That is awful!" she exclaimed, clasping her hands in **eloquent protestation**.

"I think the best thing for you to do is to go to bed. Tomorrow your father will see Clarence," said her mother as she kissed her.

When Mercedes was again alone, she tried to think it was her duty to postpone the wedding. Would Clarence be willing to wait?

Clarence was traveling at the rate of twelve miles per hour. He had been obliged to delay because Hubert had telegraphed that, if he waited two hours, he would give him a definite answer about Gabriel's business. The answer came: Gabriel could go at any time or wait until the first of October to take his place at the bank. Clarence was delighted to have this good news, with the

eloquent protestation: a strong, expressive protest

addition that Fred said that the mines developed richer ores every day. He had an offer of two million dollars for his mines—but both Hubert and Fred advised him not to sell.

With these cheerful thoughts, he was getting into his **phaeton** when the notary came close to him and said in a low voice, “Look here, it may be nothing, but those two fellows who are so tricky and slippery and always up to something have been twice to look in my books at the entry of the land conveyance that Señor Alamar made to you. They might mean mischief, though I don’t see how.”

“Of whom are you speaking?” Clarence asked.

“Of Roper and Gasbang. Why should they wish to know about that conveyance?”

“I don’t know, but I am sure it is for no good. When did they look at the entry?”

“A few days ago. I was not at home. My wife was at my office when Roper asked permission to see the date of a conveyance that he had made. I found it suspicious when she told me.”

phaeton: a horse-drawn carriage

Clarence thanked the notary and drove home as fast as the uneven road permitted. It was time to disclose to his father the truth about that land transaction.

The family were at supper when he drove up to the door. On hearing the wheels, Everett left the table and hastened to meet him.

In a few words, Everett condensed the unfortunate occurrences of the previous day, ending his hurried statement by saying that the entire family hoped that Clarence's influence might calm their father's irritation.

"I am sure that if mother has failed, I shall have no effect at all," Clarence said. "I am glad he did not strike the don."

"So am I, though I have a big bump from the strike, and I suppose Tano has one, too."

Clarence and Everett walked carrying some small parcels that he had brought home, one of those being a beautiful pipe and a lot of fine tobacco for his father. Placing them on the hall table, he said to Everett, "I suppose father would rather throw this tobacco into my eyes than smoke it."

Everett laughed and was still laughing when both went into the dining room.

Clarence said good evening to all. Darrell never lifted his eyes and paid no attention to his son.

"What made you laugh just now, Retty?" Willie asked.

"Something Clary said," answered Everett.

"It must have been about your father," said Darrell. No one said anything. Then he added, "We had circus performances, son. I performed in the tight rope with Don Gabriel," he said.

"Oh, father!" Clarence answered. The entire family were almost choking with suppressed laughter.

"Why don't you all laugh?" he asked fiercely.

"They fear to offend you," Mrs. Darrell replied.

"Since when such consideration, I say? Well, sir," he said, addressing Clarence again, "I have at last learned that you have been making **clandestine** bargains with your future father-in-law, placing me in a most ridiculous position."

"I am sorry. My intention was most kind,"

Clarence answered.

"You only thought that, as I was a fool, you would be my sense-bearer and act for me—you, the man of brains."

"No, sir. All I thought was that, as you seem to love my mother, you would prefer to give her the kind of home that she desires. I thought that you would approve my having obeyed her wishes."

"If you were so sure of my approval, why didn't you tell me the whole thing before?"

"Because I pledged not to do so."

"And for all this nonsense I have been made a laughingstock, a ridiculous, trusting fool—an ass!"

"No one thinks that but yourself," Mrs. Darrell said.

"Well, sir, since yourself and your mother have bought this land, and since I am an unclaimed squatter, I suppose I better leave this place and go back to Alameda, if that is still possible."

"Well, you can have it rent-free," Clarence replied.

"How is that?"

"I bought the place."

"You have managed to coop me up," said

Mr. Darrell.

“Don’t say that, please. The place was for sale.”

“I didn’t know you were so rich,” he answered, sneeringly.

Clarence made no reply.

“Well, you have cornered me completely, but, as I don’t want to live on the generosity of my rich son, I must get out of this place. All I want before I leave is to give your greaser father-in-law a sound thrashing and another to that puppy, Gabriel.”

“What has Don Mariano done to you? If Gabriel threw his lasso on you, it was to protect his father.”

“What has the old greaser done? Together you have ridiculed me. That is what the matter is.”

“You don’t believe me?” Mrs. Darrell said.

“Don’t you take so much credit and **throw yourself into the breach** like a heroine. If the don hadn’t had that pretty daughter, Clarence would not have been so obedient.”

Clarence rose to his feet, but sat down again

throw yourself into the breach: literally, to throw yourself into a gap in the defense of an enemy; figuratively, to sacrifice yourself

and, controlling himself, said as calmly as possible, "I had never seen one — not one — of Don Mariano's daughters when I went to offer to pay for this land."

"Do you mean that you wouldn't have done so if your mother hadn't wished it?"

"No, sir, not that. I would. I felt great sympathy with the don. I was convinced then that the land belonged to him, and nobody had a right to take it without paying."

"Aha! I knew we would come to that. I was a thieving squatter, of course, and that is what you said to your father-in-law, who, to reward you, brought you to the bosom of his family."

"I never thought you capable of . . ."

"Of what? Insulting those greasers?"

"They are gentlemen, no matter how much you may wish to **besmear** them with low **epithets**."

"Gentlemen that won't fight."

"They told you they would fight like gentlemen."

"Why didn't they do it when I told the old dog

besmear: to insult or speak disparagingly about

epithets: abusive or contemptuous terms

that the bait to catch you was his daughter?"

"Did you say that?" asked Clarence.

"I did, in clear language."

"In dirty, low, nasty language, and it is you who are the coward to insult me under the shelter of your paternal privileges," said Clarence, rising. "You have been provoking me until I can bear it no longer. I suppose you wish to drive me from your house. Be it so. I leave now."

"That suits me. You are too greasy for both of us to live under the same roof," said Darrell.

"Goodbye and God bless you," said Clarence, leaving the room. Alice ran to Clarence and, throwing her arms around his neck, said, "Hug me, my brother."

Clarence pressed his sister to his heart. He felt her arms relaxing, her head fell back, and she closed her eyes. Lovingly, he then lifted her and, placing her upon a lounge, said, "Alice has fainted, mother. My sweet sister, how dearly I love her God only knows."

His face was bathed in tears. Everett and the rest of the brothers and sisters came to help Alice up. Then, without lifting his eyes or saying another

word, Clarence walked out into the darkness.

It seemed to him as if an unseen voice was warning him of a dire misfortune he could not perceive nor prevent. What could it be? Was Mercedes to be taken from him? Would her family object to him on account of his father's **ruffianly** behavior? These thoughts flashed through his mind, filling him with sickening dismay and inexpressible disgust. Where could he go for a shelter that night? Clarence was out of the gate before he fully realized that he was driven away from the paternal roof.

"Everett, you did not tell me that my father had insulted Mercedes. I would not have gone inside the house," Clarence said with a sigh.

"It was so horrible that I couldn't. Forgive me, dear Clary. Are you going to Don Mariano's?"

"Yes. I will ask Tano to give me a place to sleep; that is, if Doña Josefa is not too disgusted."

"I am sure they have nothing but kindness for you."

"I hope so, but, should they wish to break

ruffianly: unprincipled, deceitful, or brutal

the engagement, I will not stay. I'll drive to town tonight and take the boat for San Francisco."

"Don't do that. Wait until you talk to the don."

"I feel so ashamed. What can I say to Mercedes? If I don't get to see Don Mariano, you must tell him that I will write from San Francisco."

Victoriano heard the phaeton's wheels and came out to meet his dear friend Clarence.

"I am so glad to see you back," said he.

"I wish I hadn't left, considering all that happened."

"It has been awful. Did Retty tell you everything?"

"Yes."

"Come, my dear friend," Victoriano said. "Father will soon be here. Mercedes, Madame Halier, and myself are the only ones at home. The rest are at the Mechlins," Then, as if beginning to realize the situation, he said, "What will you do?"

"I will stay if Mercedes does not send me away. But if she does, I shall go first to San Francisco, and thence God only knows where," was Clarence's reply.

"She won't send you away. If you only knew

how much she has cried."

Clarence stood silent with one foot upon the first step. He turned to Victoriano and said, "I cannot blame her if she considers my father's words unpardonable."

"Courage, dear Clary," Victoriano added. "Just remember, *Faint heart never won fair lady.*"

The quote brought such sweet recollections to poor Clarence that he staggered as he went up the steps. But then, he managed to stand firmly and say to Everett, "I suppose we must part now, dear brother."

"Cheer up, boys," said Victoriano. "You must come tomorrow, Retty. When father comes, he and Clary will plot some plan. Now, come on. I'll let Mercedes know that you are here."

Clarence went into the parlor to await Mercedes. When she came, she offered her hand to him in silence. He kissed it and led her to a sofa, sitting down by her side. She was the first to speak.

"Clarence, must we part?"

"My darling, frankly, I can give up my life but not my love. Anything but that. Not that."

"What must I do when your father has said such frightful things?"

Clarence was silent, still holding her hands. His face flushed as he replied, "My father has driven me off. I am exiled now."

"I am glad of that," she said, but then, a little embarrassed, she stated, "Forgive me; I don't mean I am glad he drove you away. He has cut you off, and yet, he cannot do that. How can he?"

"He did so. That proves he can, doesn't it?"

"Clarence, no matter what he does, he is still your father."

"Yes, but he is not the father he used to be. There are different kinds of fathers. Some are kind and good, others are most unnatural and cruel."

"Was he cruel to you before?"

"Never. He has been always most kind and indulgent to all his children."

"Then, Clarence, all his life of kindness and devotion must not be forgotten."

"Are you going to plead for him?"

"All I say is that if Mr. Darrell is so angry at my papa and myself, we had better postpone our

wedding until . . .”

Clarence sprang to his feet and began pacing the room.

“Clarence, hear me. It will only be for a little while.”

“Mercedes, be honest: has my father’s conduct made me lose **caste** in your estimation?”

“Never!” said Mercedes.

“Will you be my wife after all the ruffianly words my father has said?”

“Certainly.”

“Then marry me now, immediately.”

“Oh, Clarence, I can’t. Not yet. We have to ask papa and mamma.”

“Will they consent?”

“Papa, perhaps, but I fear mamma will not approve of such a **hasty** marriage.”

“I am unreasonable, of course. After what my father did. Impossible. I must go then.”

“Clarence, no, how can you?”

“I must. I have lost it all.” He pressed her in a long, tender embrace.

caste: standing, status

hasty: excessively quick or urgent

“Clarence, please stay until papa comes. Do not go. Oh, this is like my dream, remember?”

“I must, or I will lose the steamer. Farewell, my sweet love.” He kissed her. Then, without daring to look back, he hurried out to his phaeton.

When the last sound of his footsteps died away, a feeling of desolation rushed upon Mercedes. It seemed to her as if a life of lonely misery was suddenly revealed. To lose Clarence was to lose happiness. Shocked and terrified at her loneliness, she rushed out and ran, calling him. She ran out of the gate and turned to the right into a narrow path that also led to the main road, going across the hill, thus cutting off more than half the distance.

She called his name, again and again, running in the narrow path as fast as her strength allowed. She heard the sound of the phaeton’s wheels as they grated on the pebbles of the brook, and then all was silent again. “Oh, my darling is gone,” said she, and the ground swelled and moved under her feet. She fainted with no one near her but her faithful Milord, who had followed her and now nestled by her side.

CHAPTER 20

HASTY DECISIONS REPENTED LEISURELY

When Doña Josefa and Victoriano were returning from Mrs. Mechlin's, they saw a phaeton driving away.

"Who is going in that carriage?" she asked Madame Halier.

"Monsieur Clarence."

"He was going to stay here. Something must have happened," said Victoriano.

"There is something else, madame. We cannot find Mercita. She is not in the house." Halier seemed much alarmed.

"Did they leave together?"

"No, she left after he did."

Madame Halier and Doña Josefa started looking for Mercedes but in vain. George now came up and joined in the search for the missing girl.

As Victoriano crossed the brook and ascended the hill beyond it, Don Mariano and Gabriel

came up into the courtyard. Doña Josefa and the madame met them at the door and explained all that had occurred. Then they all went out by the front gate again. Don Mariano and Gabriel saw George follow the path to the right and disappear. They followed him.

George had heard the barking of a dog in the distance and at first paid no attention to it, but then he recognized Milord. He followed the path and came nearer to the barking, and, soon after, Milord met him with demonstrations of satisfaction.

George knew how to find Mercedes with Milord as the guide. In a few minutes he saw something white on the ground, and he recognized Mercedes lying motionless. George took her in his arms, calling out that he had found her.

"For God's sake! Has she no life?" Don Mariano exclaimed.

"She has fainted only. Don't be alarmed. I guess the parting with Clarence has shook her, but she is alive," George said.

"But why did he leave?" Don Mariano asked.

"That is as much a mystery to me as to you," George replied.

Two hours elapsed before Mercedes returned to consciousness. Then, after looking about the room for some minutes, an expression of pain came over her face, and, looking at her father, she asked for Clarence.

"Victoriano has gone to call him," Don Mariano replied, hoping that this little fiction would come true.

"I am so glad," she said and, with a sigh, closed her eyes.

Victoriano followed at full gallop. But when he rode up to the wharf, the steamer was leaving. He could see its lights moving swiftly away and hear the revolving of the wheels like a cruel monster swimming off.

Victoriano was still looking at the steamer when the freight agent came to say that Mr. Darrell had left orders at the stable to keep the two horses and phaeton until Don Victoriano sent for them. Victoriano read the note. It ran thus:

Dear Tano:

Forgive me for not waiting to bid you goodbye. I feared to miss the boat; and, since Mercedes desired to postpone the wedding, I thought it was best for me to be away, under present circumstances.

Tell Don Mariano and Don Gabriel I will write to them as soon as I reach San Francisco, perhaps before. Could you check if my sister Alice is all right? She became ill after all that happened at home.

Goodbye, dear Tano, again. God bless you.

*Always your true friend,
Clarence*

Victoriano had a feeling of never more seeing Clarence.

Don Mariano and Doña Josefa sat by Mercedes's bedside. Her heavy slumber began to alarm them. Then, she shook her head and whispered:

"I am waiting for Clarence. He is coming. I see

him. I am waiting."

The look of dismay that Doña Josefa exchanged with her husband revealed terrible anxiety and dread.

"We must wait for Victoriano; let's hope Clarence comes with him," Don Mariano whispered.

Mercedes heard him and said, scarcely audibly, "He is here. He loves me."

It was near daylight when Victoriano arrived. Seeing the phaeton with only one occupant, Don Mariano knew the sad truth. Victoriano gave him Clarence's letter, which he read with the keenest regret, feeling that if he had stayed at home, as his daughter had begged him, Clarence would not have felt compelled to go. The experiences of the last two days taught him how much mischief might happen in a short space of time.

When he returned to Mercedes's room, he found that she was sleeping again, but she was restless. A high fever had set in. Her cheeks were like red roses, and her pulse beat with telegraphic velocity.

"Mercedes is awake but so entirely out of her head that she does not know any one of us. We

must send for a physician," said Don Mariano.

"I will go at once," Victoriano said.

"You have been up all night. Gabriel will go."

A few minutes later, Everett was at the gate. "I ventured to come up," he said. "Alice is sick. She has a fever and is very delirious. I am going for a doctor, but, as she has been calling for Clarence, mother sent me."

Don Mariano and Victoriano turned several shades paler than they were before and told Everett what had happened. Still the reason *why* Clarence left was a mystery to them.

Everett was **disconcerted** and pained. "I must hurry for a doctor," he said with trembling lips, "and when Clarence arrives in San Francisco he will find a telegram awaiting him there."

"He will find two," said Don Mariano.

"He can never stay away if he knows that Miss Mercedes and Alice are sick," Everett said.

Clarence had passed the night on deck, walking about in the moonlight with no company but his thoughts. He felt ill and weary, but wakeful, and

disconcerted: unsettled or confused

could not bear to lie down to rest. His thoughts would go back over and over again to the last scene at the Alamar house and every word that Mercedes had said.

On arriving at Wilmington, he heard the puffing of the little tugboat coming to ferry the passengers to Los Angeles. He went along. At Los Angeles, a surprise awaited Clarence. He was sauntering past a hotel when he heard the well-known voice of Fred Haverly calling him.

"You are the very man I came to see. I am now expecting at any moment a dispatch from Hubert in answer to my inquiry for your whereabouts," Fred said, conducting Clarence to his room, where they could talk business without being interrupted.

"I wish you could go with me, see the ores yourself. Wait, you are not looking well. What is the matter? May I inquire?"

Clarence soon told Fred all that had happened at home and how he was exiled and did not care where he went. Fred had never seen Clarence take anything so much to heart and be so cast down.

"I'll tell you what we had better do today. Let's eat something and then get some rest. Tomorrow

you will decide what to do.”

“But tomorrow there will be no steamer to take me to San Francisco.”

“Then wait for the next. The matters you have under consideration are too important to decide hastily.”

“That is true. I wish someone had reminded me of that fact last evening.”

Clarence could not eat. All food was distasteful to him. He managed to get some sleep. This, however, did not refresh him. He devoted that next day to writing letters to his mother, Alice, and Everett, to George, Gabriel, and Victoriano; his longest letters were to Mercedes and Don Mariano.

Fred convinced him to go to see his bonanza and talk with the men who wished to buy the mines. So, the following day, Clarence and Fred took the stage for Yuma, then Clarence and Fred lost no time in going up the river to their mines. But Clarence started feeling sick.

He was stricken down with **typhoid** fever before they reached their camp.

typhoid: a bacterial infection that spreads through contaminated water and food

CHAPTER 21

A SNOW STORM

Miss Mathews went to the Darrells' and said she wished to speak to Mr. Darrell. On being told that he had gone to the fields, she left word that she would appreciate if Mr. Darrell called on her that evening as she needed to tell him something very urgent.

Darrell went to Mathews's home. On his way, he saw the south side of Mr. Mechlin's garden. Wishing not to be seen, he left the path and walked close to the fence, hidden by a row of olive trees. He heard a man's voice, walking up and down the piazza. It was George Mechlin carrying his newly born baby boy in his arms, kissing him at every few words. Darrell was pleased to see the scene. It reminded him of his young days when he held his own first boy like that. He felt a **pang** shoot through his heart as he thought that, if it had not been for his wicked folly, Clarence

pang: a sudden sharp pain or painful emotion

might be the one holding a child. With downcast eyes, he continued his walk towards Mathews's house.

He found Miss Mathews in tears. She told him it was her duty to prevent a mischief she feared her brother would do.

"What mischief do you mean?" Darrell asked.

"He is mad about the appeal being dismissed, and he blames Mr. George Mechlin and says he ought to be shot dead."

"He will do nothing of the sort," Darrell said.

"That's what I thought, but I wish you'd talk to him."

A thundering sound crossed the air.

"What was that?" asked Darrell.

"That is William's rifle," she said.

Darrell went to the door to listen for another shot, but nothing. "The rifle is not in the house," whispered Miss Mathews. "I am sure that was the shot we heard. I know the ring of it."

"I'll go and see. Perhaps I'll find out who fired it," Darrell said, walking towards the front door. As both stepped outside, the first object that met

their eyes was Billy's rifle, reclining against the window. It was warm from firing.

George Mechlin's wound was not mortal, but he needed medical attention. It would be a long and painful **convalescence**, with the danger of leaving him wounded for life. The horror of becoming a cripple was far more terrible than death. It was impossible to return to his duties at their bank in New York, so, to cheer Elvira, he said that he could attend to a bank in San Diego.

"I will not walk much; I can be a very majestic president and give directions from my armchair. All we need is the success of the Texas Pacific, and my uncle writes that Tom Scott is very confident and working hard."

"But will he succeed?" Elvira asked.

"He has powerful enemies, but his cause is good."

George was right. For nearly ten long years, the people of San Diego lived in the hope of that much-needed and well-deserved congressional aid

convalescence: time spent recovering from an illness or medical treatment; recuperation

to the Texas Pacific. Of all of San Diego's sanguine inhabitants, none surpassed in hopefulness the three friends who had invested so heavily in real estate: Mr. Mechlin, Señor Alamar, and Mr. Holman. They exhorted all to keep up courage and trust in Tom Scott.

Most of the cattle sent to Clarence's mines had returned to the rancho from the mountains, and now it was necessary to collect them and send them back. Don Mariano, accompanied by Victoriano, would go to the Colorado River and get the cattle to the mines.

The evening before joining his father and the rest with the cattle, Victoriano visited Alice and talked to her about his feelings. For three long months her illness had kept her a close prisoner in her bedroom, and she had not seen Tano. Mercedes's convalescence was very slow, too. Her **despondency** at Clarence's absence affected her recovery, the wounding of George had impressed her painfully, and now she was worried about her father having to go away.

despondency: a state of low spirits caused by loss of hope or courage

The *mayordomo* and about twenty *vaqueros* were nearly at the foot of the mountains with twenty-five hundred head of cattle when Don Mariano and Victoriano finally overtook them. It was late; the cattle had been resting before their journey to the Colorado River was resumed. The weather had been intensely cold for the last two days.

"I fear it is going to rain. We must try to reach the desert and leave the storm behind us," said Don Mariano. Campfires were lighted, from which arose blue columns of smoke.

About midnight Don Mariano awoke, startled with a sense of having been summoned to arise. He sat up and looked around but saw nothing. The darkness of the sky had changed from inky black to a leaden hue, and the clouds hung down among the tall trees like curtains of ashy gray. The fires were out, and yet he did not feel too cold. He brushed off the white dust and found that snowflakes had invaded even their retreat under the shelter of oak trees.

"Come on, boys," he yelled, "let us build fires,

mayordomo: a Spanish term for the manager of an hacienda, ranch, or estate

fires under every tree.”

In a short time, several fires were started under oak trees that had widely spreading branches or under pines that clustered together. Don Mariano and the *mayordomo* agreed that it would be best to drive the cattle back for a few miles and wait until the snow had melted. He was going back to the tree where he had slept when he was told that Victoriano wished to see him.

“Still in bed?” said he. “This won’t do. Up with you, boy.”

“Come to me, father,” said Victoriano.

“What is the matter, boy?”

“I have lost all feeling and have no control of my limbs from the waist down.” There was nothing to be done but to wait for daylight to take Victoriano home. In the meantime, a fire was made near his bed. His limbs were wrapped in warm blankets; he drank a large cup of warm coffee and lay down. Don Mariano and his two brothers mounted their horses but remained near Victoriano’s bed to keep him from being trampled by cattle.

About four o’clock the *vaqueros* had a recess.

Don Mariano got Victoriano ready to start on their **forlorn** ride homeward. It was no easy task to put him in the saddle, but, once there, he said he was all right. The snow had not ceased falling for one moment, and, if the *mayordomo* had not been so good a guide, they might not have found their way out, for every trail was completely **obliterated**, and no landmarks could be seen.

Don Mariano, aided by a pocket compass, got the bearings correctly. The entire band of cattle were driven back, so they began their retreating march together, preceded by Victoriano, with his limbs wrapped up in pieces of blanket.

About nightfall, the snow was succeeded by rain and by a violent wind, which seemed as if it would blow them away with their horses. Having left the *mayordomo* and all but one *vaquero* with the cattle, Don Mariano had with him only this one **mozo** to wait on them and his two brothers to assist him in the care of Tano.

For six weeks after the storm, Don Mariano

forlorn: pitifully sad and abandoned or lonely

obliterated: destroyed utterly; wiped out

mozo: a Spanish term for a young male servant

was confined to his bed with a severe attack of pneumonia followed by a lung fever. In the latter part of January, he started recovering. Not so Victoriano; his strange malady kept him prisoner. He had to sit by the window in an armchair. He spent time looking at the window he knew was in Alice's room. Everett came daily to sit with him, to read, play chess or cards. He also helped him take a few steps.

Little by little, Tano began to walk. But the cattle were lost.

CHAPTER 22

THE SINS OF OUR LEGISLATORS!

The loss of the cattle made it more imperative for Don Mariano to look closely into the prospects of a railroad for San Diego, so he and Messrs. James Mechlin and Holman went to San Francisco and inquired for Governor Stanford. The servant told them the governor was very busy, but, if the gentlemen could wait, he would see them as soon as possible.

The gentlemen waited, but they would have spared themselves that trouble had they learned what Mr. Huntington* was doing with his associates in Washington to “convince” congressmen to do as he wished—to defeat the Texas Pacific—sending an ex-senator to state falsely that the Texas Pacific would injure the South. All this, however, was only known later, when Mr. Huntington’s letters were made public. At that time, the three friends, thinking it impossible that the rights of Southern California would be so disregarded, did not see any absurdity in interviewing the governor.

* Collis P. Huntington was a lobbyist for the Central Pacific and the Southern Pacific Railroads in the late 1800s.

While they waited, they heard several matters freely mentioned. One of these was the way of avoiding the payment of taxes and how to fight the cases in the courts. Their talk suggested a very sad train of thoughts to Don Mariano, as he heard that the railroad people did not mean to pay taxes and would resist the law. He thought how those millionaires would pay no taxes and defy the law openly and fight to the bitter end, whilst he was not only obliged to pay taxes upon a too-highly-appraised property but must also pay taxes for the land occupied by the squatters.

"If these railroad men will only let us have the Texas Pacific, all will be right, but, if not, then the work of ruining me begun by the squatters will be finished by the millionaires," said Don Mariano sadly, adding, "Our legislators then will complete their work. Our legislators began my ruin; our legislators will end it."

"I think you ought not hesitate to use the money that Clarence paid for your cattle. If they ran away, it was not your fault," Mr. Mechlin said.

"No, not my fault, but my misfortune, which I

have no right to put on Clarence's shoulders. I did not deliver the cattle; I don't take the pay. I have to mortgage my land, and I can't avoid it," Don Mariano replied.

After waiting in the reception room for nearly two hours, Don Mariano and his two friends were at last ushered into the presence of ex-Governor Stanford, who arose and, bowing from behind his desk, said, "Be seated, gentlemen. What can I do for you?"

Don Mariano laughed outright. The situation struck him as being eminently ridiculous. Here was this man, who held pitilessly their destiny in his hands. He, through his associate, Huntington, was lavishing money in Washington to kill the Texas Pacific, and now he was asking them what he could do? Sad and cruel irony.

"This is like laughing at a funeral," said Don Mariano, apologetically. "Please pardon me. What made me laugh was that I felt like answering you by saying, *Governor, you can do for us all we ask.* But . . . but . . ."

"Say it out. But what?" said the governor, smiling.

"But you will do nothing for us," finished Mr. Holman.

"For San Diego," added Mr. Mechlin, afraid that it might seem as if they came to ask a personal favor.

"Ah! It is of San Diego that you wish to speak to me? I fear I can do nothing for you," the governor said.

Mr. Mechlin and Don Mariano looked at Mr. Holman, as it was agreed he would be spokesman, but Mr. Holman's heart was leaping with indignation, so that, for a minute, he could not speak.

"I suppose the San Diego people wish me to build them a railroad, isn't that it?" said the man, slowly arranging some papers on his desk.

"Or to let someone else build it," said Mr. Holman.

The governor colored slightly in evident irritation.

"Tom Scott, for instance," said he. "Take my advice, gentlemen, and don't you pin your faith on Tom Scott. He'll build no Texas Pacific, I assure you."

"Then why don't you build it?" asked Mr. Mechlin.

"Because it won't pay."

"We have plenty of natural resources that, if developed, would make plenty of business for two railroads," Mr. Holman said.

"Only the San Diego people say so."

"That is the talk of San Francisco people, governor, because they want all the railroads to come to their city and nowhere else," said Don Mariano.

"We have less rainfall in Southern California, and we get better crops than in the northern counties in dry years," said Mr. Holman.

"Perhaps, but with such magnificent wheat in our northern valleys, it isn't to be supposed that we can give any attention to San Diego."

"If our county does not take the lead at wheat-growing, it certainly can take it at fruit-growing."

"We are not engaged in the fruit-growing business. We build railroads to transport freight and passengers. We do not care what or who makes the freights we carry."

"Then, governor, that is why we came to talk

with you. Is it absolutely determined by you that San Diego is not to have a railroad?" asked Mr. Holman.

"For the present, San Diego will not have a railroad," said he.

"Just say it. How long?"

"That is a hard question. San Diego cannot hope to be a western terminus of a transcontinental railway," Mr. Stanford bowed.

"And yet," Mr. Holman continued, "by right, San Diego is the terminal point of a transcontinental railway, and San Diego ought to be the shipping point for all that immense country comprising Arizona, Southern California, and Northern Mexico. We are more than five hundred miles nearer to those places than San Francisco, thus you will be making people travel six hundred miles more than is necessary to get to a shipping point on the Pacific."

"You forget that in business everyone is for himself. If it is to our interest to prevent the construction of the Texas Pacific, do you suppose we will stop to consider that we might inconvenience the San Diego people?"

"It is not a matter of inconvenience. It is ruin; it is poverty, suffering, distress, perhaps despair and death," said Mr. Mechlin. "Governor, the government helped you to build your roads. Why don't you let it help ours?"

"Who told you that the government helped us to build the Southern Pacific?"

"It does not matter now. We have made you waste your time talking to us, governor," said Mr. Holman. "Can we not hope that you will reconsider this matter and examine more carefully the advantages of making San Diego the direct outlet for all that country that needs a railroad so much? If you do not build it, and prevent Scott from building it, sooner or later someone else will, for it stands to reason that such a magnificent enterprise will not be left neglected after other less advantageous routes are tried. You will regret having spurned this golden chance."

"Think of the blessings you will bring to so many hearts who are now sadly discouraged and will be desolate if our hopes are frustrated," Mr. Mechlin said.

"Corporations have no souls, gentlemen," Mr.

Stanford answered.

Mr. Mechlin arose and turned towards the door. Mr. Holman followed his example. Señor Alamar looked sadly at the floor, saying, "Well, governor, I am sorry we have failed in bringing you to our way of thinking. Time will show who is mistaken."

After the meeting with the governor, not a word was spoken until the three saddened friends reached Don Mariano's parlors at the hotel. They were yet discussing this painful topic of their pilgrimage when Mr. Mechlin observed that Don Mariano was looking very pale and asked if he felt ill.

"Yes," Don Mariano replied. "I feel very cold, as if I had stepped in ice."

"You must change your clothes at once," said Mr. Mechlin.

Mr. Holman also became alarmed at seeing the bluish pallor of his face. "This is a congestive chill," said he, hurrying off to call the doctor, who resided at the hotel.

Prompt and efficient medical attendance saved Don Mariano's life, but he was too ill to leave his

bed at the hotel for several days. His two friends remained with him. They wrote home saying that business matters detained them. Gabriel and Lizzie were in constant attendance, and thus the sick man was kept in a cheerful frame of mind. Still, he was anxious to return home.

The doctor was reluctant, but eventually he allowed him to do so, hoping the climate of Southern California would be beneficial. But he confessed to Gabriel, "Not only is the condition of your father's lungs very precarious, but also that of his heart."

CHAPTER 23

LIFE IS A FREE GIFT

About two weeks elapsed since his return from San Francisco and Don Mariano still held to the belief that a railroad to San Diego would surely be built at some future day. However, he had ceased hoping to see that day.

He would willingly have waited for a rise in real estate before selling any of his city property, but he saw it was ruinous for him to pay taxes for town property and for squatters; it was too much. So he concluded that it would be best to lose a great many lots, permitting them to be sold for taxes, hoping to redeem them on the following year if Tom Scott was more successful with the Texas Pacific. Mr. Mechlin and Mr. Holman did the same, and many other unlucky ones followed their discouraging examples. City lots were sold by the hundreds.

Don Mariano saw his city property sacrificed before his eyes at public sale, just as he had seen his cattle buried under the snow. He submitted in both cases to the inevitable without a murmur,

but this time the blow seemed heavier. Being in bad health and discouraged, his misfortunes were more depressing.

He went for a walk. Victoriano, who was now able to be about but still mistrusted his legs, came with him.

"Father, why don't you use some of that money Clarence sent you? I am sure he would approve your doing so and feel glad that you did it," said Victoriano.

"If I had delivered the cattle to Fred Haverly, then I would have a right to take from Clarence's money. But, having delivered no cattle, I take no money."

"Clarence stated to his father that the cattle in the Alamar rancho with your brand were all his and would be driven as soon as the weather permitted. Mr. Darrell thinks that the cattle lost belonged to Clarence and not to you."

"Mr. Darrell is wrong, then. I cannot expect to be paid for cattle I did not deliver."

"But he says you had sold them already. If they were lost on the way it was neither your fault nor your loss."

"No, but it was my misfortune, not Clarence's," Don Mariano said, and Victoriano thought it was best not to annoy him by insisting in opposition.

When they returned home, they found that Doña Josefa had received a telegram from Gabriel, saying that he, Lizzie, and the baby would spend Christmas and New Year's Day at the rancho. This was glad news, indeed.

But the reason that Gabriel had for coming was a powerful one. He had one day casually met the doctor who attended his father, and, after inquiring whether Don Mariano was better, the doctor added, "I tell you frankly, Don Gabriel, your father may yet live many years, but he is in danger, too, of dying very suddenly. He does not take care of himself, so he might task his heart with heavier work than it can perform. The case is serious, I assure you." This brought Gabriel home.

The Alamar house looked once more as it had in the days of old, before squatters invaded the place; it was full of people, and music and laughter resounded under the hospitable roof. Mercedes sat silent and, though she smiled, she looked sad. The

don and Mr. Mechlin, too, were not as cheerful as they used to be.

Christmas was celebrated. The young people decorated the house with green boughs and had a huge Christmas tree. Everett, Alice, Rosario, and Victoriano were the committee on decorations; Carlota, Caroline, Lucy, and Webster were the committee on refreshments. While their laughter came ringing out through the parlor windows, Don Mariano and Mr. Mechlin slowly walked up and down the back veranda in earnest conversation.

"Yes, I have lived my allotted term," Mr. Mechlin said, as if to reiterate some previous assertion, "my life is now a burden on those who love me. If I were not living, George could take his wife, his mother, and his sister to reside in New York, but, because I cannot live in that climate, all those dear ones remain in this exile."

"But why should you call it exile? They don't think it is, and, even if it were, my friend, one has no right to cut life off at will," said Don Mariano.

"Why not? Life is a gift, and often a very onerous one. Why keep it, when to reject it would be preferable?"

"The grief and horror of knowing that you took your own life would be a million times worse than the supposed exile you imagine."

"Perhaps. But I have lost all my money, and I am too old to make another fortune, dear friend."

Don Mariano excused himself to Mr. Mechlin, saying he felt bad and thought that he ought to be in bed. Gabriel walked him to his room.

At about eleven o'clock he sat up in bed and looked around as if wishing to speak. Gabriel and Mercedes were sitting by his bed and promptly asked if he wished for anything.

"Call your mother, my son. Call Elvira and Tano. Call Carlota and Rosario and George. Call all, all, quickly! I fear, my beloved son. I fear my time is up! Bring all my girls; I must bless them all!"

All came. Mercedes had her arms around him. He looked at her lovingly.

"My baby, kiss me. Tell Clarence I bless him with my last breath." His voice began to fail him, but his eyes seemed glowing with an intensity that was startling. He sat up again, looking at each one of the anxious faces around his bed. "God bless

you all, my beloved ones," he said hoarsely.

"Papa, darling, can't we do something to help you?" asked Mercedes.

"Do you feel pain, father?" Gabriel asked.

He looked again to see whether every one of his family was there. He forgot no one; he seemed anxious to see them all for the last time. He extended his arms to his wife, who came to him. "Pray for me," he whispered, leaning on Gabriel, who held him, closed his eyes, and sighed. A few aspirations followed that last sigh, and all was over—his noble soul had passed away.

A few days later, Mr. Mechlin arose from the breakfast table and said he was going hunting.

"Don't go far, James; you are too weak," said Mrs. Mechlin.

"Don't worry," he replied, going towards his room.

"I think papa has taken to heart the death of Don Mariano more than anyone sees," said Caroline.

"He has hardly slept or eaten enough to sustain life since that awful night," Mrs. Mechlin said.

A gunshot was heard in Mr. Mechlin's room, all jumped to their feet. Gabriel was the first to run and got to the room in advance of the others. He found Mr. Mechlin shot through the heart.

"Oh, God! Was it accidental?" Mrs. Mechlin exclaimed, clasping her husband to heart. The dying man smiled, whispering, "Do not mourn for me. It is best so; I shall be happier." He looked lovingly at the anxious faces surrounding him and closed his eyes forever.

CHAPTER 24

THE HARDSHIPS OF THE FAMILIES

Peter Roper decided to claim the Mechlin house at Alamar while the family was in San Francisco. Peter did not like to divide the spoils, but, as **accomplices** were necessary, he asked Gasbang into the plot. It was agreed that they would work the farm in partnership, dividing profits equally, and a contract in writing to this effect was signed by them. This was only ten days after Mr. Mechlin's death.

The deputy sheriff told Mrs. Mechlin that her furniture left at her country house had been taken out by order of Peter Roper and put on the road about two miles from the house. As Mrs. Mechlin was too ill to see anyone, excepting the members of her family, the sheriff made his statement to Lawrence, Mr. Mechlin's brother, and Gabriel, who had just arrived. The proceedings seemed so atrocious that at first no one could understand the sheriff.

accomplices: people who help someone commit a crime

“Do you mean to say that Peter Roper claims to own our house?” asked Gabriel.

“Yes,” the sheriff replied.

“But why? How is he the owner of our house?” asked Mr. Lawrence Mechlin.

“Because he and Gasbang bought it from Hogsden, who located a claim there after you left.”

The trick was **infamous**. There was nothing to do but to bring a suit to get rid of them. In the meantime, they would hold possession, perhaps for years. That was what they wanted—to get the property into litigation.

Gabriel presented the matter to a lawyer who corroborated that there was no other course to pursue but to file a complaint in ejectment to dispossess the thieves.

“Is there no quicker way?” Gabriel asked.

“No, sir,” the lawyer answered.

Mr. Mechlin intended that the property be a homestead for his wife, so the suit was brought in her name. She filed a petition for a homestead before the probate court, asking that

infamous: well known for some bad quality or deed

Gabriel Alamar be appointed administrator of her husband's estate.

All this would, of course, involve **tedious** legal proceedings. The attorney employed in the case advised George to have a deed executed by Doña Josefa conveying the property to Mrs. Mechlin as it had been agreed to be done before the death of their husbands. Doña Josefa cheerfully remembered that Don Mariano had said to her, "If I should die before I get my land patented, the first thing you must do is to transfer the title of his place to Mr. Mechlin."

The shock caused by his father's death when Don Mariano's was yet so recent acted most injuriously upon George's health. It made him feverish, inflaming his wound again, as the bullet had never been extracted. Mr. Lawrence Mechlin said that George needed skillful medical attendance without delay and wanted his own doctor to take care of him. So he and Gabriel arranged all business and other matters in order that George went east.

Elvira had to leave her beloved mother in her

tedious: dull and tiresome

sad bereavement to go with her husband. Gabriel would attend to the lawsuits. Lizzie had to see her perform the painful duty of accompanying the remains of a beloved husband. In sorrow and silent tears, the Alamar family returned to their country house the day after the Mechlins left.

Mrs. Mechlin's suit against the "innocent purchasers," Peter and John, was decided in favor of them by Judge Gryllus Lawlack. The judge knew, as well as anyone else, that the allegations of these men were falsehoods strung together for the purpose of robbery.

The lawsuits forced upon the Mechlins obliged Gabriel to delay returning to the San Francisco bank, so he lost his job. He began looking for employment. He tried everything. He found something copying and translating English or Spanish, but this did not give him permanent employment. Between one job and another, Lizzie's jewelry had to be sold for their expenses. They gave up their nice little cottage and took two small rooms at the house of a widow. Their living was simple indeed, but their landlady was kind and the house very respectable.

Months went by.

George and Elvira wrote to them, telling them they were in Germany, as Mr. Mechlin's physician advised George to try some German baths. George's health began to improve. This was cheerful news, and Lizzie felt great **reluctance** in writing to George how unsuccessful Gabriel had been, fearing that misfortunes made them physically ill.

The winter of 1876 now set in, and Gabriel thought he must make up his mind to find some manual labor and perhaps get permanent occupation. But he had no training. His scant earnings started to be insufficient to support wife and babies.

About this time, he got a letter from Victoriano, telling him how his legs had failed him again, giving out in the midst of his plowing. Everett had come to help him plow up a fifty-acre piece of land where he had intended to put in wheat, but, before he had plowed two acres, his legs seemed to disappear from under him.

"And here I am," Tano added, "a perfect

gentleman from my knees up, but a ridiculous turkey from my knees down. Perfectly useless. Not all is bad; several of the cattle lost in the mountains have come and keep coming, and Everett puts our brand on and gets mamma cash flow. Today he gave her three hundred dollars, and he says more cattle are on the way.”

Gabriel was glad that his mother and sisters had this little pittance at least, but he was much alarmed and anxious about Victoriano and hastened to tell Lizzie he thought they ought to go home.

“I am truly sorry for poor Tano. George needs to know our circumstances.”

“No, don’t write him just yet. If Tano is sick, I certainly should be there. As soon as I make money enough to pay the board bill and have enough left to pay our fare to San Diego, we’ll go home.”

“Forgive me, my darling,” said Lizzie. “I have already written to George. I told him I was going to persuade you to go home.” Seeing that Gabriel also blushed, Lizzie added, “I am sorry if I offended you.”

“You have not offended me. I blushed because I, too, have been keeping a secret from you,

thinking you might not approve of it.”

“What is it?”

“I have been learning a trade as a **mason**. I have been taking lessons and earning two dollars per day.”

“Oh, Gabriel!” said Lizzie.

“I think I understand a good deal about it already.”

“I don’t like this idea. Give it up. I think I’d rather see you plowing.”

“I will work until we get enough money to go home. Tano needs us.”

Lizzie said nothing more. She wrote to Doña Josefa, saying that, if she could spare fifty dollars, to please send that sum to enable them to come home.

George and family arrived in Paris on their return from Germany. They would only spend a week or ten days in that city and then sail for New York.

The day before they were to start, a card was sent to Elvira from the office of the hotel. Elvira

mason: a builder and worker in stone

took it very indifferently and read the name, but the words she read seemed to be **cabalistic**, for she started, turned red, and then went pale.

She handed the card to George, who read aloud, "Clarence Darrell."

"Ask the gentleman to please come up," said George.

The two friends met and clasped each other in a tight embrace. When Elvira came in, she threw her arms around his neck and sobbed. Clarence brought back to her the happy days at Alamar, when Mr. Mechlin and Don Mariano lived so in each other's company.

They were anxious to learn where Clarence had been these three years. Elvira showered him with questions. Clarence began his narrative by saying how he came to miss all the letters written to him.

"When I was delirious and at the point of death, Fred hid the letters. I was so depressed with the conviction that I was not fit to marry Miss Mercedes, and Fred wanted to spare me more pain.

cabalistic: arcane, mysterious, or secretive

Even when I asked if anyone had written, he said no. I considered it a natural result of my father's conduct. I went to Mexico. Then to South America, from there to England, all the time feeling like an **outcast**. It was almost accidentally that I came to Paris. Haverly found me here and explained that he kept those first letters, to protect me, but when the letters kept coming, he decided they needed to be with me. Twenty-six letters from you, from Mercedes, from my family. So, when I heard you were here and what had happened after I left . . ."

Clarence arose and paced the floor in great agitation when they told him that never again would he see his noble friend Don Mariano.

The Mechlins, accompanied by Clarence, left Paris. Before leaving, Clarence telegraphed Mercedes:

*I have just received your letters written in 1873.
I leave for New York tomorrow with the Mechlins,
thence for California.
—Clarence Darrell*

outcast: a person who has been rejected by society or a social group

Mercedes read the few words many times over before she could realize that they were from Clarence. When she did so, she was seized with a violent trembling and then completely overcome by emotion. She would see him again, but where was now her darling papa, who was so fond of Clarence?

Mercedes sent the dispatch for Mrs. Darrell. The Darrells were truly overjoyed. The old man did not say a word. He went to his lonely room, locked the door, and there, as usual since he lived the life of a half-divorced man, battled with his spirit. This time, however, he allowed tears to flow as he blessed his absent boy and thanked God that he was coming.

A few days later, Lizzie received Doña Josefa's letter, enclosing seventy dollars.

"Now we have money enough to pay our board bill. Darling, leave that work as a mason," Lizzie begged.

"I will, but I must give notice of a day or two, at least."

When Gabriel arrived at his place of employment, he was put to work at another place in the building. He would have to carry bricks and

mortar up a ladder to quite a high wall. He had carried many loads and was beginning to tremble with fatigue, when, going up carrying a hod full of bricks, the ladder slipped to one side a little.

In his effort to steady it, Gabriel moved it too much, and it fell to one side, taking him to the ground. As he fell, the bricks fell upon him. He was insensible for some time. When he regained consciousness, he was being carried to a wagon for the city hospital.

Lizzie, notified of the accident, ran to the place. She sat beside Gabriel in the wagon and placed his head in her lap. Gabriel smiled, but he could scarcely speak a word. The jolting of the wagon gave him much pain, and Lizzie asked the driver to go very slow.

They came to a street-crossing, and several wagons were standing still, waiting for a line of carriages to pass first.

"Oh, why do we wait? He is suffering so much!" Lizzie exclaimed.

"We are waiting for the carriages to pass, ma'am. They are carrying people to a reception on Nob Hill," said the driver.

On the other side of the street, also waiting in a carriage, sat George and Clarence. They just arrived and were on their way to see Lizzie and Gabriel. They saw that a man lay in a wagon and a woman by his side holding his head in her lap, bending over him anxiously. Clarence asked what was going on.

"A hod-carrier, sir. It seems he fell and hurt himself. He'll die before he gets to the hospital," said the driver, indifferently.

Lizzie raised her head to ask the driver to take some other street, and they saw her. Both ran to her immediately.

"Lizzie, sister, why are you here?" George asked.

"Oh, George! Gabriel fell!" she replied, sobbing. "Clarence—I can't believe my eyes! We are taking him to the city hospital, but because those carriages must pass first my darling may die here!"

"Let me go for a physician immediately," said Clarence.

"Meet us at the hospital," George said, shocked to find Gabriel in a situation that revealed a

poverty he never imagined.

On arriving at the hospital, he was carried to the best room with the best care.

At about eight o'clock, Gabriel was resting, and Lizzie took that opportunity to go to see her babies. The kind landlady had taken care of them and promised to do so the following days. Lizzie returned to her husband's bedside, and there, accompanied by George and Clarence, spent the night.

About daylight, with great reluctance, she was prevailed upon to lie down on a lounge at the foot of Gabriel's bed, and, as the patient seemed to be resting quietly, George and Clarence went into the next room to eat something.

"I can't believe Gabriel became so poor that he had to carry heavy loads of bricks," George said at last.

Clarence, being as much moved, took some time to reply.

"If I had not gone away, I might—yes, could—have prevented so much suffering! Oh! The fool—the idiot—that I was to go," said Clarence. "I will never forgive myself nor my bankers. They

should never have let Gabriel go, for it was at my request that they employed him. Oh! How I wish we could have established a bank here as we planned.”

CHAPTER 25

REUNITED AT LAST

Gabriel was still very frail for several days, and Clarence did not have the heart to leave him. He wrote to Mercedes saying that Gabriel had fallen from a ladder, and, not knowing how serious it might be, he and George had decided to remain with Lizzie.

In the meantime, Clarence got his house ready, and, as soon as Gabriel could be moved without danger, they took up their residence there. Lizzie thanked God that her surroundings were again those of a lady.

"George," she told her brother, "I have an idea."

"What is it, dear sister?" asked George.

"If you and I write to Mercedes telling her that we need her, then she and Clarence can marry right away, and they can finally start their life together. We owe it to Clarence; he has been so devoted to our family."

"It is a splendid idea, little sister. I'll write to Mercita and to Doña Josefa at once."

Clarence could find no words to express to George his joy and gratitude. He flushed and paled by turns, and finally sat down in silence while George went into the details of the matter.

“But will she consent?” Clarence exclaimed at last.

“Of course she will!”

Clarence wrote, too, imploring Mercedes to forgive the stupidity that took him away and beseeching her to yield to his prayer and be his wife after so many years of suffering. Mercedes kissed the letter and, before responding, she referred the subject to her mother. Doña Josefa cried a good deal; the memory of her husband made such subjects most painful to her.

Mercedes would see Clarence within five days and be his wife, when she thought she might never see him on this earth again! Thus ran Mercedes’s reflections when she had gone to her room to open a wardrobe that had been locked for three years. That wardrobe held the **trousseau** sent by Mrs. Lawrence Mechlin in ’74 and the jewelry that

trousseau: the clothes and linens a bride collects or that are given to her for her wedding and married life

Clarence had given her in New York. Mercedes thought of those days, and the image of her father arose before her. She sat by the window to think of him with loving tenderness and regret.

Madame Halier was to pack in trunks all of Mercedes's things, leaving out only her bridal attire and her traveling dress. Everything was ready.

A dispatch came from George saying that Clarence was on his way to get Mercedes and that Gabriel was a little better.

This wedding was **imperative**, so Mrs. Darrell went to see the priest about going to the rancho to perform the marriage ceremony there. He would have preferred that it was celebrated in the church, but, considering that Victoriano could not leave his bed and Doña Josefa was still in very deep mourning, he consented. There would be no guests except the Holmans and Darrells. There would be no bridesmaids either.

Everett went to town the night before the arrival of the steamer to bring Clarence, and they

imperative: of vital importance; crucial

came from town so quickly and noiselessly that no one knew when they arrived at the rancho.

The ladies were all in Mercedes's room discussing the wedding and other matters when it occurred to her to go out to the veranda. It was a surprise when she saw Everett coming through the gate and there—right there—was Clarence.

In an instant he was by her side, pressing her to his heart and covering her face with kisses. Surely this was no ghost. His beating heart spoke of the lover full of life and hope, trembling with the realization of years of longing to hold her thus close—very close in his loving, chaste embrace.

"Mercedes, my own, my sweet wife," he said.

There was now one duty that Clarence shrank from performing, but which he submitted to quietly, and that was meeting his father.

Darrell came to the Alamar house for the first time in his life, and, as he said he would like to be alone when he met Clarence, Rosario conducted him to the office. It had been used by her father for business and was where he wrote his letters—a place the family scarcely ever entered.

Clarence was shocked to see how aged his

father was. His hair was almost white. The sight of it wiped from Clarence's heart all trace of resentment, and his love for his father seemed to rush back to him with pain but with great force.

"Oh, father!" exclaimed Clarence, seeing his open arms.

"My boy, my best beloved," said the old man, holding his son close.

"Father, why are you so gray?" Clarence asked.

"Because I did you a great wrong. I murdered the don, and he was the best man I ever saw." Darrell lost his self-control and wept. Clarence wept with him, for he felt deeply Don Mariano's death.

"You did not murder him; don't think that," he said.

"Yes, I did. My wickedness helped the wickedness of others to kill him. And it brought infinite misery upon this innocent family. But a merciful God brought you back, and I know you will devote your life to repair as much as it is possible the wrong your father did. You will be a good husband."

Then, he took a step apart and, looking at

his son, he added, "For my sake, also, I beg you to be a devoted son to the widowed lady whom I have injured so frightfully. A wrong legislation authorized us squatters—sent us to the land of these innocent, helpless people to rob them. A wrong legislation killed the Texas Pacific, and such legislation is the main cause of the don's death. But I, too, helped the wrongdoers."

"Don't blame yourself so much," Clarence remonstrated gently. "George and Lizzie told me that all the family believe that the disappointment at the failure of the Texas Pacific was what killed Don Mariano. It did the same with Mr. Mechlin. Those who defeated the Texas Pacific are to blame for the death of these two most excellent men, but not yourself."

"If I had not driven you away, you could have prevented so many misfortunes. So now be kind to that lady, as if you were her own child."

"I will, father."

The ceremony took place as soon as the priest arrived. Victoriano was brought to the parlor in an armchair and managed to stand up, held by Everett and Webster. Doña Josefa wept all the

time and so did her daughters, but everybody understood that memories of the sad past, but no fears for the future, caused those tears to flow.

The parting with her mother and sisters was painful to Mercedes. Clarence put his arms around her waist and said, "Don't be disheartened. Doña Josefa and all the family can come to San Francisco to live. I think we can persuade George to bring his family also to reside there."

"Do you think George might come?" Mercedes asked.

"I do, and he can then carry out our plan of establishing a bank. San Diego is dead now, and will remain so for many years, but San Francisco is a good business field. So we can all locate ourselves there, and Gabriel and Tano go into business easily."

"Business without capital? See where my poor Gabriel is now," Doña Josefa answered, sadly.

"That is true, but if you sell your rancho, they will have plenty of capital."

"But who will buy mortgaged land, full of squatters, and without a patent?"

"I will."

"Well, if my children agree, I shall sell; this place is too full of sad memories. Oh, Clarence! You are too generous to us."

"Don't forget I am a money-making Yankee. I shall double the price. So, you see, I am not generous. I am trying to make money out of you." They all laughed.

When Clarence and Mercedes arrived at their home, they found that George and Lizzie had propped up Gabriel with pillows, and he was sitting up to receive his sister. From that day he began to improve slowly but perceptibly.

The letters from home spoke of Victoriano's marked improvement, but still his malady was not cured, so Clarence proposed that Doña Josefa, the two girls, and Tano should come up immediately. The change would perhaps do Victoriano good.

That same evening, Mercedes wrote to her mother, begging her to come and see whether she liked San Francisco for a home and telling her that she and Clarence were going to Europe on a visit in the fall and she wanted to leave her mamma and sisters and brothers all together. She also told her mother that George and Gabriel liked the

plan of selling the rancho to Clarence very much and wanted to talk to her and Tano about it. Thus Doña Josefa was **enticed** and persuaded to leave the home of her joys and sorrows, where she had lived for thirty years.

Doña Josefa, Carlota, and Rosario, therefore, escorted by Victoriano, found themselves on a bright morning in the Southern Pacific Railroad cars on their way from Los Angeles to San Francisco. There were only about a dozen persons besides themselves on the entire train.

"I wonder why they put on so many cars. One would carry all the passengers," said Rosario.

"They must lose money running empty cars," Tano observed.

"I am glad of it. They were so anxious to leave San Diego out in the cold; I hope they will lose money with this road," said Carlota.

"Don't wish that; it is unkind," said Doña Josefa.

"Why not? Didn't they kill our road, the Texas Pacific, to build this road?" said Tano exultingly.

enticed: lured; attracted by arousing desire or hope

On that same night, as Doña Josefa looked from her bedroom window upon the lighted city, she noticed that a large mansion nearby was very brightly illuminated. Mercedes told her that one of the railroad kings who had killed the Texas Pacific lived there and was giving a silver wedding party to the elite of San Francisco. Doña Josefa wondered what might have been if those railroad men had not blighted San Diego's prosperity. Her husband and Mr. Mechlin would be alive, and her sons would not have been driven to poverty and distress.

"God of justice, is this right? That so many should be sacrificed because a few men wanted more millions? We have suffered so much. And to what end? For what? Ah! The same answer again, because a few heartless men want more millions," said she, with her face bathed in tears.

After some time in San Francisco, Doña Josefa frankly spoke to the ladies who had called on her about the cause of her husband's death. She did so in answer to their inquiries. She, on two or three occasions, mentioned how painful it had been to sit by the window looking at that house of

rejoicing, while thinking that, if those rich men had had more sense of justice and less greed of money, her husband could have been spared to her.

“Don’t say that, my dear lady, for you will give great offense,” said an old friend.

“Why should I give offense? It is the truth,” Doña Josefa replied.

“That may be, but you cannot speak against such rich people; San Francisco society will turn against you.”

“Then it is a crime to speak of the wrongs we have suffered, but it is not a crime to commit those wrongs.”

“I don’t know. I am not a moralist. But this I do know, that if you accuse those rich men of having done wrong, the society people will give you the cold shoulder.”

“Oh, very well, let it be so. Let the guilty rejoice and go unpunished, and the innocent suffer ruin and desolation. I slander no one, but shall speak the truth.”

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TEXT ILLUSTRATIONS BY

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The Squatter and the Don, a novel describing events in nineteenth-century California, was first published in San Francisco in 1885. The author, María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, originally published the book under the pseudonym C. Loyal, likely recognizing that a book written by a woman—not to mention a Mexican-American woman—would not receive any attention. María Amparo Ruiz de Burton is considered the first Mexican-American woman author to write a novel in English that is a critique of her times.

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