

Helen Hunt Jackson

When Helen Jackson (1830–1885) published her novel *Ramona* in 1884, she wanted to draw attention to the suffering and exploitation of California’s Indians at the hands of rapacious white settlers. Jackson, a native of Amherst, Massachusetts, and a close friend of Emily Dickinson, had become interested in the American West following her marriage to a Colorado banker. *Ramona*—which is where the literary culture of Los Angeles really begins—did indeed make a tremendous impact, but not as a political tract: it was Jackson’s nostalgic evocation of the Spanish mission era, a supposedly halcyon time marked by unspoiled nature and a social order characterized by beneficent dons and noble, hardworking Indians, that caught the public’s attention. For many decades, the novel’s afterlife extended into place names, tourist souvenirs, advertising campaigns, and a celebrated annual pageant in the town of Hemet. In “Echoes in the City of the Angels,” first published in *The Century* in 1883 and later reprinted in *Glimpses of California and the Missions* (1902), Jackson devotes her considerable literary gifts to a similarly soft-focused account of the surviving traces of the original Los Angeles, which were beginning to fade into the past even as she wrote: turning history into an elegant pastoral fable, she makes the present into something like the aftermath of a dream.

from

ECHOES IN THE CITY OF THE ANGELS

The tale of the founding of the city of Los Angeles is a tale for verse rather than for prose. It reads like a page out of some new “Earthly Paradise,” and would fit well into song such as William Morris has sung.

It is only a hundred years old, however, and that is not time enough for such song to simmer. It will come later, with the perfume of century-long summers added to its flavor. Summers century-long? One might say a stronger thing than that of them, seeing that their blossoming never stops, year in nor year out, and will endure as long as the visible frame of the earth.

The twelve devout Spanish soldiers who founded the city named it at their leisure with a long name, musical as a chime of bells. It answered well enough, no doubt, for the first fifty years of the city’s

life, during which not a municipal record of any sort or kind was written,—“Nuestra Señora Reina de los Angeles,” “Our Lady the Queen of the Angels;” and her portrait made a goodly companion flag, unfurled always by the side of the flag of Spain.

There is a legend, that sounds older than it is, of the ceremonies with which the soldiers took possession of their new home. They were no longer young. They had fought for Spain in many parts of the Old World, and followed her uncertain fortunes to the New. Ten years some of them had been faithfully serving Church and king in sight of these fair lands, for which they hankered, and with reason.

In those days the soft, rolling, treeless hills and valleys, between which the Los Angeles River now takes its shilly-shallying course seaward, were forest slopes and meadows, with lakes great and small. This abundance of trees, with shining waters playing among them, added to the limitless bloom of the plains and the splendor of the snow-topped mountains, must have made the whole region indeed a paradise.

Navarro, Villavicencia, Rodriguez, Quintero, Moreno, Lara, Banegas, Rosas, and Canero, these were their names: happy soldiers all, honored of their king, and discharged with so royal a gift of lands thus fair.

Looking out across the Los Angeles hills and meadows to-day, one easily lives over again the joy they must have felt. Twenty-three young children there were in the band, poor little waifs of camp and march. What a “braw flitting” was it for them, away from the drum-beat forever into the shelter of their own sunny home! The legend says not a word of the mothers, except that there were eleven of them, and in the procession they walked with their children behind the men. Doubtless they rejoiced the most.

The Fathers from the San Gabriel Mission were there, with many Indian neophytes, and Don Felipe, the military governor, with his showy guard of soldiers.

The priests and neophytes chanted. The Cross was set up, the flag of Spain and the banner of Our Lady the Queen of the Angels unfurled, and the new town marked out around a square, a little to the north of the present plaza of Los Angeles.

If communities, as well as individuals, are happy when history finds nothing to record of them, the city of the Queen of the Angels

must have been a happy spot during the first fifty years of its life; for not a written record of the period remains, not even a record of grants of land. The kind of grant that these worthy Spanish soldiers and their sons contented themselves with, however, hardly deserved recording,—in fact, was not a grant at all, since its continuance depended entirely on the care a man took of his house and the improvement he put on his land. If he left his house unoccupied or let it fall out of repair, if he left a field uncultivated for two years, any neighbor who saw fit might denounce him, and by so doing acquire a right to the property. This sounds incredible, but all the historical accounts of the time agree on the point. They say:—

“The granting authorities could, and were by law required, upon a proper showing of the abandonment, to grant the property to the informant, who then acquired the same and no better rights than those possessed by his predecessor.”

This was a premium indeed on staying at home and minding one's business,—a premium which amounted to coercion. One would think that there must have been left from those days teeming records of alienated estates, shifted tenures, and angry feuds between neighbor and neighbor. But no evidence remains of such strifes. Life was too simple, and the people were too ignorant.

Their houses were little more than hovels, built of mud, eight feet high, with flat roofs made of reeds and asphaltum. Their fields, with slight cultivation, produced all they needed; and if anything lacked, the rich vineyards, wheat-fields, and orchards of the San Gabriel Mission lay only twelve miles away. These vineyards, orchards, and granaries, so near at hand, must have been sore temptation to idleness. Each head of a family had been presented, by the paternal Spanish king, with “two oxen, two mules, two mares, two sheep, two goats, two cows, one calf, an ass, and one hoe.” For these they were to pay in such small installments as they were able to spare out of their pay and rations, which were still continued by the generous king.

In a climate in which flowers blossom winter and summer alike, man may bask in sun all the year round if he chooses. Why, then, should those happy Spanish soldiers work? Even the king had thought it unnecessary, it seems, to give them any implements of

labor except "one hoe." What could a family do, in the way of work, with "one hoe"? Evidently they did not work,—neither they, nor their sons, nor their sons' sons after them; for, half a century later, they were still living a life of almost incredible ignorance, redeemed only by its simplicity and childlike adherence to the old religious observances.

With the beginning of the prosperity of the City of the Angels, came the end of its primeval peace. Spanish viceroys, Mexican alcaldes and governors, United States commanders, naval and military, followed on each other's heels, with or without frays, ruling Californian through a succession of tumultuous years. Greedy traders from all parts of the world added their rivalries and interventions to the civil and military disputation. In the general anarchy and confusion, the peaceful and peace-loving Catholic Fathers were robbed of their lands, their converts were scattered, their industries broken up. Nowhere were these uncomfortable years more uncomfortable than in Los Angeles. Revolts, occupations, surrenders, retakings, and resurrenders kept the little town in perpetual ferment. Disorders were the order of the day and of the night, in small matters as well as in great.

The Californian fought as impetuously for his old way of dancing as for his political allegiance. There are comical traditions of the men's determination never to wear long trousers to dances; nor to permit dances to be held in houses or halls, it having been the practice always to give them in outdoor booths or bowers, with lattice-work walls of sycamore poles lashed together by thongs of rawhide.

Outside these booths the men sat on their horses looking in at the dancing, which was chiefly done by the women. An old man standing in the centre of the enclosure directed the dances. Stopping in front of the girl whom he wished to have join the set, he clapped his hands. She then rose and took her place on the floor; if she could not dance, or wished to decline, she made a low bow and resumed her seat.

To look in on all this was great sport. Sometimes, unable to resist the spell, a man would fling himself off his horse, dash into the enclosure, seize a girl by the waist, whirl around with her through

one dance, then out again and into the saddle, where he sat, proudly aware of his vantage. The decorations of masculine attire at this time were such as to make riding a fine show. Around the crown of the broad-brimmed sombrero was twisted a coil of gold or silver cord; over the shoulders was flung, with ostentatious carelessness, a short cloak of velvet or brocade; the waistcoats were embroidered in gold, silver, or gay colors; so also were the knee-breeches, leggings, and stockings. Long silken garters, with ornamented tassels at the ends, were wound round and round to hold the stockings in place. Even the cumbrous wooden stirrups were carved in elaborate designs. No wonder that men accustomed to such braveries as these saw ignominy in the plain American trousers.

They seem to have been a variety of Centaur, these early Californian men. They were seldom off their horses except to eat and sleep. They mounted, with jingling silver spur and glittering bridle, for the shortest distances, even to cross a plaza. They paid long visits on horseback, without dismounting. Clattering up to the window or door-sill, halting, throwing one knee over the crupper, the reins lying loose, they sat at ease, far more at ease than in a house. Only at church, where the separation was inevitable, would they be parted from their horses. They turned the near neighborhood of a church on Sunday into a sort of picket-ground, or horse-trainers' yard, full of horse-posts and horses; and the scene was far more like a horse-fair than like an occasion of holy observance. There seems to have been a curious mixture of reverence and irreverence in their natures. They confessed sins and underwent penances with the simplicity of children; but when, in 1821, the Church issued an edict against that "escandalosisima" dance, the waltz, declaring that whoever dared to dance it should be excommunicated, the merry sinners waltzed on only the harder and faster, and laughed in their priests' faces. And when the advocates of decorum, good order, and indoor dancing gave their first ball in a public hall in Los Angeles, the same merry outdoor party broke every window and door in the building, and put a stop to the festivity. They persisted in taking this same summary vengeance on occasion after occasion, until, finally, any person wishing to give a ball in his own house was forced to surround the house by a cordon of police to protect it.

The City of the Angels is a prosperous city now. It has business thoroughfares, blocks of fine stone buildings, hotels, shops, banks, and is growing daily. Its outlying regions are a great circuit of gardens, orchards, vineyards, and corn-fields, and its suburbs are fast filling up with houses of a showy though cheap architecture. But it has not yet shaken off its past. A certain indefinable, delicious aroma from the old, ignorant, picturesque times lingers still, not only in byways and corners, but in the very centres of its newest activities.

Mexican women, their heads wrapped in black shawls, and their bright eyes peering out between the close-gathered folds, glide about everywhere; the soft Spanish speech is continually heard; long-robed priests hurry to and fro; and at each dawn ancient, jangling bells from the Church of the Lady of the Angels ring out the night and in the day. Venders of strange commodities drive in stranger vehicles up and down the streets; antiquated carts piled high with oranges, their golden opulence contrasting weirdly with the shabbiness of their surroundings and the evident poverty of their owner; close following on the gold of one of these, one has sometimes the luck to see another cart, still more antiquated and rickety, piled high with something—he cannot imagine what—terra-cotta red in grotesque shapes; it is fuel,—the same sort which Villavicencia, Quintero, and the rest probably burned, when they burned any, a hundred years ago. It is the roots and root-shoots of manzanita and other shrubs. The colors are superb,—terra-cotta reds, shading up to flesh pink, and down to dark mahogany; but the forms are grotesque beyond comparison: twists, querls, contortions, a boxful of them is an uncomfortable presence in one's room, and putting them on the fire is like cremating the vertebræ and double teeth of colossal monsters of the Pterodactyl period.

The present plaza of the city is near the original plaza marked out at the time of the first settlement; the low adobe house of one of the early governors stands yet on its east side, and is still a habitable building.

The plaza is a dusty and dismal little place, with a parsimonious fountain in the centre, surrounded by spokes of thin turf, and walled at its outer circumference by a row of tall Monterey cypresses, shorn and clipped into the shape of huge croquettes or bradawls standing broad end down. At all hours of the day idle boys

and still idler men are to be seen basking on the fountain's stone rim, or lying, face down, heels in air, in the triangles of shade made by the cypress croquettes. There is in Los Angeles much of this ancient and ingenious style of shearing and compressing foliage into unnatural and distorted shapes. It comes, no doubt, of lingering reverence for the traditions of what was thought beautiful in Spain centuries ago; and it gives to the town a certain quaint and foreign look, in admirable keeping with its irregular levels, zigzag, toppling precipices, and houses in tiers one above another.

One comes sometimes abruptly on a picture which seems bewilderingly un-American, of a precipice wall covered with bird-cage cottages, the little, paling-walled yard of one jutting out in a line with the chimney-tops of the next one below, and so on down to the street at the base of the hill. Wooden staircases and bits of terrace link and loop the odd little perches together; bright green pepper-trees, sometimes tall enough to shade two or three tiers of roofs, give a graceful plumed draping at the sides, and some of the steep fronts are covered with bloom, in solid curtains, of geranium, sweet alyssum, heliotrope, and ivy. These terraced eyries are not the homes of the rich: the houses are lilliputian in size, and of cheap quality; but they do more for the picturesqueness of the city than all the large, fine, and costly houses put together.

Moreover, they are the only houses that command the situation, possess distance and a horizon. From some of these little ten-by-twelve flower-beds of homes is a stretch of view which makes each hour of the day a succession of changing splendors,—the snowy peaks of San Bernardino and San Jacinto in the east and south; to the west, vast open country, billowy green with vineyard and orchard; beyond this, in clear weather, shining glints and threads of ocean, and again beyond, in the farthest outing, hill-crowned islands, misty blue against the sky. No one knows Los Angeles who does not climb to these sunny out-lying heights, and roam and linger on them many a day. Nor, even thus lingering, will any one ever know more of Los Angeles than its lovely outward semblances and mysterious suggestions, unless he have the good fortune to win past the barrier of proud, sensitive, tender reserve, behind which is hid the life of the few remaining survivors of the old Spanish and Mexican *régime*.

Once past this, he gets glimpses of the same stintless hospitality and immeasurable courtesy which gave to the old Franciscan establishments a world-wide fame, and to the society whose tone and customs they created an atmosphere of simple-hearted joyousness and generosity never known by any other communities on the American continent.

In houses whose doors seldom open to English-speaking people, there are rooms full of relics of that fast-vanishing past,—strongholds also of a religious faith, almost as obsolete, in its sort and degree, as are the garments of the aged creatures who are peacefully resting their last days on its support.

In one of these houses, in a poverty-stricken but gayly decorated little bedroom, hangs a small oil-painting, a portrait of Saint Francis de Paula. It was brought from Mexico, fifty-five years ago, by the woman who still owns it, and has knelt before it and prayed to it every day of the fifty-five years. Below it is a small altar covered with flowers, candlesticks, vases, and innumerable knick-knacks. A long string under the picture is hung full of tiny gold and silver votive offerings from persons who have been miraculously cured in answer to prayers made to the saint. Legs, arms, hands, eyes, hearts, heads, babies, dogs, horses,—no organ, no creature, that could suffer, is unrepresented. The old woman has at her tongue's end the tale of each one of these miracles. She is herself a sad cripple; her feet swollen by inflammation, which for many years has given her incessant torture and made it impossible for her to walk, except with tottering steps, from room to room, by help of a staff. This, she says, is the only thing her saint has not cured. It is her "cross," her "mortification of the flesh," "to take her to heaven." "He knows best." As she speaks, her eyes perpetually seek the picture, resting on it with a look of ineffable adoration. She has seen tears roll down its cheeks more than once, she says; and it often smiles on her when they are alone. When strangers enter the room, she can always tell, by its expression, whether the saint is or is not pleased with them, and whether their prayers will be granted. She was good enough to remark that he was very glad to see us; she was sure of it by the smile in his eye. He had wrought many beautiful miracles for her. Nothing was too trivial for his sympathy and help. Once when she had broken a vase in which she had been in the habit of keeping

flowers on the altar, she took the pieces in her hands, and standing before him, said: "You know you will miss this vase. I always put your flowers in it, and I am too poor to buy another. Now, do mend this for me. I have nobody but you to help me." And the vase grew together again whole while she was speaking. In the same way he mended for her a high glass flower-case which stood on the altar.

Thus she jabbered away breathlessly in Spanish, almost too fast to be followed. Sitting in a high chair, her poor distorted feet propped on a cushion, a black silk handkerchief wound like a turban around her head, a plaid ribosa across her shoulders, contrasting sharply with her shabby wine-colored gown, her hands clasped around a yellow staff, on which she leaned as she bent forward in her eager speaking, she made a study for an artist.

She was very beautiful in her youth, she said; her cheeks so red that people thought they were painted, and she was so strong that she was never tired; and when, in the first year of her widowhood, a stranger came to her "with a letter of recommendation" to be her second husband, and before she had time to speak had fallen on his knees at her feet, she seized him by the throat, and toppling him backward, pinned him against the wall till he was black in the face. And her sister came running up in terror, imploring her not to kill him. But all that strength is gone now, she says sadly; her memory also. Each day, as soon as she has finished her prayers, she has to put away her rosary in a special place, or else she forgets that the prayers have been said. Many priests have desired to possess her precious miracle-working saint; but never till she dies will it leave her bedroom. Not a week passes without some one's arriving to implore its aid. Sometimes the deeply distressed come on their knees all the way from the gate before the house, up the steps, through the hall, and into her bedroom. Such occasions as these are to her full of solemn joy, and no doubt, also, of a secret exultation whose kinship to pride she does not suspect.

In another unpretending little adobe house, not far from this Saint Francis shrine, lives the granddaughter of Moreno, one of the twelve Spanish soldiers who founded the city. She speaks no word of English; and her soft black eyes are timid, though she is the widow of a general, and in the stormy days of the City of the Angels passed through many a crisis of peril and adventure. Her house is

full of curious relics, which she shows with a gentle, half-amused courtesy. It is not easy for her to believe that any American can feel real reverence for the symbols, tokens, and relics of the life and customs which his people destroyed. In her mind Americans remain to-day as completely foreigners as they were when her husband girded on his sword and went out to fight them, forty years ago. Many of her relics have been rescued at one time or another from plunderers of the missions. She has an old bronze kettle which once held holy water at San Fernando; an incense cup and spoon, and massive silver candlesticks; cartridge-boxes of leather, with Spain's ancient seal stamped on them; a huge copper caldron and scales from San Gabriel; a bunch of keys of hammered iron, locks, scissors, reaping-hooks, shovels, carding-brushes for wool and for flax: all made by the Indian workmen in the missions. There was also one old lock, in which the key was rusted fast and immovable, which seemed to me fuller of suggestion than anything else there of the sealed and ended past to which it had belonged; and a curious little iron cannon, in shape like an ale-mug, about eight inches high, with a hole in the side and in the top, to be used by setting it on the ground and laying a trail of powder to the opening in the side. This gave the Indians great delight. It was fired at the times of church festivals, and in seasons of drought to bring rain. Another curious instrument of racket was the *matrarcá*, a strip of board with two small swinging iron handles so set in it that in swinging back and forth they hit iron plates. In the time of Lent when all ringing of bells was forbidden, these were rattled to call the Indians to church. The noise one of them can make when vigorously shaken is astonishing. In crumpled bundles, their stiffened meshes opening out reluctantly, were two curious rush-woven nets which had been used by Indian women fifty years ago in carrying burdens. Similar nets, made of twine, are used by them still. Fastened to a leather strap or band passing around the forehead, they hang down behind far below the waist, and when filled out to their utmost holding capacity are so heavy that the poor creatures bend nearly double beneath them. But the women stand as uncomplainingly as camels while weight after weight is piled in; then slipping the band over their heads, they adjust the huge burden and set off at a trot. "This is the squaw's horse," said an Indian woman in the San Jacinto valley one day, tapping her forehead and

laughing good-naturedly, when the shopkeeper remonstrated with her husband, who was heaping article after article, and finally a large sack of flour, on her shoulders; "squaw's horse very strong."

In the western suburbs of Los Angeles is a low adobe house, built after the ancient style, on three sides of a square, surrounded by orchards, vineyards, and orange groves, and looking out on an old-fashioned garden, in which southernwood, rue, lavender, mint, marigolds, and gillyflowers hold their own bravely, growing in straight and angular beds among the newer splendors of verbenas, roses, carnations, and geraniums. On two sides of the house runs a broad porch, where stand rows of geraniums and chrysanthemums growing in odd-shaped earthen pots. Here may often be seen a beautiful young Mexican woman, flitting about among the plants, or sporting with a superb Saint Bernard dog. Her clear olive skin, soft brown eyes, delicate sensitive nostrils, and broad smiling mouth, are all of the Spanish madonna type; and when her low brow is bound, as is often her wont, by turban folds of soft brown or green gauze, her face becomes a picture indeed. She is the young wife of a gray-headed Mexican señor, of whom—by his own most gracious permission—I shall speak by his familiar name, Don Antonio. Whoever has the fortune to pass as a friend across the threshold of this house finds himself transported, as by a miracle, into the life of a half-century ago. The rooms are ornamented with fans, shells, feather and wax flowers, pictures, saints' images, old laces, and stuffs, in the quaint gay Mexican fashion. On the day when I first saw them, they were brilliant with bloom. In every one of the deep window-seats stood a cone of bright flowers, its base made by large white datura blossoms, their creamy whorls all turned outward, making a superb decoration. I went for but a few moments' call. I stayed three hours, and left carrying with me bewildering treasures of pictures of the olden time.

Don Antonio speaks little English; but the señora knows just enough of the language to make her use of it delicious, as she translates for her husband. It is an entrancing sight to watch his dark weather-beaten face, full of lightning changes as he pours out torrents of his nervous, eloquent Spanish speech; watching his wife

intently, hearkening to each word she uses, sometimes interrupting her urgently with, "No, no; that is not it,"—for he well understands the tongue he cannot or will not use for himself. He is sixty-five years of age, but he is young: the best waltzer in Los Angeles to-day; his eye keen, his blood fiery quick; his memory like a burning-glass bringing into sharp light and focus a half-century as if it were a yesterday. Full of sentiment, of an intense and poetic nature, he looks back to the lost empire of his race and people on the California shores with a sorrow far too proud for any antagonisms or complaints. He recognizes the inexorableness of the laws under whose workings his nation is slowly, surely giving place to one more representative of the age. Intellectually he is in sympathy with progress, with reform, with civilization at its utmost; he would not have had them stayed or changed, because his people could not keep up and were not ready. But his heart is none the less saddened and lonely.

This is probably the position and point of view of most cultivated Mexican men of his age. The suffering involved in it is inevitable. It is part of the great, unreckoned price which must always be paid for the gain the world gets when the young and strong supersede the old and weak.

A sunny little southeast corner room in Don Antonio's house is full of the relics of the time when he and his father were foremost representatives of ideas and progress in the City of the Angels, and taught the first school that was kept in the place. This was nearly a half-century ago. On the walls of the room still hang maps and charts which they used; and carefully preserved, with the tender reverence of which only poetic natures are capable, are still to be seen there the old atlases, primers, catechisms, grammars, reading-books, which meant toil and trouble to the merry, ignorant children of the merry and ignorant people of that time.

The leathern covers of the books are thin and frayed by long handling; the edges of the leaves worn down as if mice had gnawed them: tattered, loose, hanging by yellow threads, they look far older than they are, and bear vivid record of the days when books were so rare and precious that each book did doubled and redoubled duty, passing from hand to hand and house to house. It was on the old Lancaster system that Los Angeles set out in educating its children; and here are still preserved the formal and elaborate instructions

for teachers and schools on that plan; also volumes of Spain's laws for military judges in 1781, and a quaint old volume called "Secrets of Agriculture, Fields and Pastures," written by a Catholic Father in 1617, reprinted in 1781, and held of great value in its day as a sure guide to success with crops. Accompanying it was a chart, a perpetual circle, by which might be foretold with certainty what years would be barren and what ones fruitful.

Almanacs, histories, arithmetics, dating back to 1750, drawing-books, multiplication tables, music, and bundles of records of the branding of cattle at the San Gabriel Mission, are among the curiosities of this room. The music of the first quadrilles ever danced in Mexico is here: a ragged pamphlet, which, no doubt, went gleeful rounds in the City of the Angels for many a year. It is a merry music, simple in melody, but with an especial quality of light-heartedness, suiting the people who danced to it.

There are also in the little room many relics of a more substantial sort than tattered papers and books: a branding-iron and a pair of handcuffs from the San Gabriel Mission; curiously decorated clubs and sticks used by the Indians in their games; boxes of silver rings and balls made for decorations of bridles and on leggings and knee-breeches. The place of honor in the room is given, as well it might be, to a small cannon, the first cannon brought into California. It was made in 1717, and was brought by Father Junipero Serra to San Diego in 1769. Afterward it was given to the San Gabriel Mission, but it still bears its old name, "San Diego." It is an odd little arm, only about two feet long, and requiring but six ounces of powder. Its swivel is made with a rest to set firm in the ground. It has taken many long journeys on the backs of mules, having been in great requisition in the early mission days for the firing of salutes at festivals and feasts.

Don Antonio was but a lad when his father's family removed from the city of Mexico to California. They came in one of the many unfortunate colonies sent out by the Mexican Government during the first years of the secularization period, having had a toilsome and suffering two months, going in wagons from Mexico to San Blas, then a tedious and uncomfortable voyage of several weeks from San Blas to Monterey, where they arrived only to find themselves deceived and disappointed in every particular, and surrounded by

hostilities, plots, and dangers on all sides. So great was the antagonism to them that it was at times difficult for a colonist to obtain food from a Californian. They were arrested on false pretences, thrown into prison, shipped off like convicts from place to place, with no one to protect them or plead their cause. Revolution succeeded upon revolution, and it was a most unhappy period for all refined and cultivated persons who had joined the colony enterprises. Young men of education and breeding were glad to earn their daily bread by any menial labor that offered. Don Antonio and several of his young friends, who had all studied medicine together, spent the greater part of a year in making shingles. The one hope and aim of most of them was to earn money enough to get back to Mexico. Don Antonio, however, seems to have had more versatility and capacity than his friends, for he never lost courage; and it was owing to him that at last his whole family gathered in Los Angeles and established a home there. This was in 1836. There were then only about eight hundred people in the pueblo, and the customs, superstitions, and ignorances of the earliest days still held sway. The missions were still rich and powerful, though the confusions and conflicts of their ruin had begun. At this time the young Antonio, being quick at accounts and naturally ingenious at all sorts of mechanical crafts, found profit as well as pleasure in journeying from mission to mission, sometimes spending two or three months in one place, keeping books, or repairing silver and gold ornaments. The blowpipe which he made for himself at that time his wife exhibits now with affectionate pride; and there are few things she enjoys better than translating to an eager listener his graphic stories of the incidents and adventures of that portion of his life.

While he was at the San Antonio Mission, a strange thing happened. It is a good illustration of the stintless hospitality of those old missions, that staying there at that time were a notorious gambler and a celebrated juggler who had come out in the colony from Mexico. The juggler threatened to turn the gambler into a crow; the gambler, after watching his tricks for a short time, became frightened, and asked young Antonio, in serious good faith, if he did not believe the juggler had made a league with the devil. A few nights afterward, at midnight, a terrible noise was heard in the gambler's room. He was found in convulsions, foaming at the mouth, and

crying, "Oh, Father! Father! I have got the devil inside of me! Take him away!" The priest dragged him into the chapel, showered him with holy water, and exorcised the devil, first making the gambler promise to leave off his gambling forever. All the rest of the night the rescued sinner spent in the chapel, praying and weeping. In the morning he announced his intention of becoming a priest, and began his studies at once. These he faithfully pursued for a year, leading all the while a life of great devotion. At the end of that time preparations were made for his ordination at San José. The day was set, the hour came: he was in the sacristy, had put on the sacred vestments, and was just going toward the church door, when he fell to the floor, dead. Soon after this the juggler was banished from the country, trouble and disaster having everywhere followed on his presence.

On the first breaking out of hostilities between California and the United States, Don Antonio took command of a company of Los Angeles volunteers to repel the intruders. By this time he had attained a prominent position in the affairs of the pueblo; had been alcalde and, under Governor Michelorena, inspector of public works. It was like the fighting of children, — the impetuous attempts that heterogeneous little bands of Californians here and there made to hold their country. They were plucky from first to last; for they were everywhere at a disadvantage, and fought on, quite in the dark as to what Mexico meant to do about them, — whether she might not any morning deliver them over to the enemy. Of all Don Antonio's graphic narratives of the olden time, none is more interesting than those which describe his adventures during the days of this contest. On one of the first approaches made by the Americans to Los Angeles, he went out with his little haphazard company of men and boys to meet them. He had but one cannon, a small one, tied by ropes on a cart axle. He had but one small keg of powder which was good for anything; all the rest was bad, would merely go off "pouf, pouf," the señora said, and the ball would pop down near the mouth of the cannon. With this bad powder he fired his first shots. The Americans laughed; this is child's play, they said, and pushed on closer. Then came a good shot, with the good powder, tearing into their ranks and knocking them right and left; another, and another. "Then the Americans began to think, these are no pouf balls; and

when a few more were killed, they ran away and left their flag behind them. And if they had only known it, the Californians had only one more charge left of the good powder, and the next minute it would have been the Californians that would have had to run away themselves," merrily laughed the señora, as she told the tale.

This captured flag, with important papers, was intrusted to Don Antonio to carry to the Mexican headquarters at Sonora. He set off with an escort of soldiers, his horse decked with silver trappings; his sword, pistols, all of the finest: a proud beginning of a journey destined to end in a different fashion. It was in winter time; cold rains were falling. By night he was drenched to the skin, and stopped at a friendly Indian's tent to change his clothes. Hardly had he got them off when the sound of horses' hoofs was heard. The Indian flung himself down, put his ear to the ground, and exclaimed, "Americanos! Americanos!" Almost in the same second they were at the tent's door. As they halted, Don Antonio, clad only in his drawers and stockings, crawled out at the back of the tent, and creeping on all fours reached a tree, up which he climbed, and sat safe hidden in the darkness among its branches listening, while his pursuers cross-questioned the Indian, and at last rode away with his horse. Luckily, he had carried into the tent the precious papers and the captured flag: these he intrusted to an Indian to take to Sonora, it being evidently of no use for him to try to cross the country thus closely pursued by his enemies.

All night he lay hidden; the next day he walked twelve miles across the mountains to an Indian village where he hoped to get a horse. It was dark when he reached it. Cautiously he opened the door of the hut of one whom he knew well. The Indian was preparing poisoned arrows; fixing one on the string and aiming at the door, he called out angrily, "Who is there?"—"It is I, Antonio."—"Don't make a sound," whispered the Indian, throwing down his arrow, springing to the door, coming out, and closing it softly. He then proceeded to tell him that the Americans had offered a reward for his head, and that some of the Indians in the rancheria were ready to betray or kill him. While they were yet talking, again came the sound of the Americans' horses' hoofs galloping in the distance. This time there seemed no escape. Suddenly Don Antonio, throwing himself on his stomach, wriggled into a cactus patch near by.

Only one who has seen California cactus thickets can realize the desperateness of this act. But it succeeded. The Indian threw over the cactus plants an old blanket and some refuse stalks and reeds; and there once more, within hearing of all his baffled pursuers said, the hunted man lay, safe, thanks to Indian friendship. The crafty Indian assented to all the Americans proposed, said that Don Antonio would be sure to be caught in a few days, advised them to search in a certain rancheria which he described, a few miles off, and in an opposite direction from the way in which he intended to guide Don Antonio. As soon as the Americans had gone, he bound up Antonio's feet in strips of rawhide, gave him a blanket and an old tattered hat, the best his stores afforded, and then led him by a long and difficult trail to a spot high up in the mountains where the old women of the band were gathering acorns. By the time they reached this place, blood was trickling from Antonio's feet and legs, and he was well-nigh fainting with fatigue and excitement. Tears rolled down the old women's cheeks when they saw him. Some of them had been servants in his father's house, and loved him. One brought gruel; another bathed his feet; others ran in search of healing leaves of different sorts. Bruising these in a stone mortar, they rubbed him from head to foot with the wet fibre. All his pain and weariness vanished as by magic. His wounds healed, and in a day he was ready to set off for home. There was but one pony in the old women's camp. This was old, vicious, blind of one eye, and with one ear cropped short; but it looked to Don Antonio far more beautiful than the gay steed on which he had ridden away from Los Angeles three days before. There was one pair of ragged shoes of enormous size among the old women's possessions. These were strapped on his feet by leathern thongs, and a bit of old sheepskin was tied around the pony's body. Thus accoutred and mounted, shivering in his drawers under his single blanket, the captain and flag-bearer turned his face homeward. At the first friend's house he reached he stopped and begged for food. Some dried meat was given to him, and a stool on the porch offered to him. It was the house of a dear friend, and the friend's sister was his sweetheart. As he sat there eating his meat, the women eyed him curiously. One said to the other, "How much he looks like Antonio!" At last the sweetheart, coming nearer, asked him if he were "any relation of Don Antonio." "No," he said. Just at

that moment his friend rode up, gave one glance at the pitiful beggar sitting on his porch, shouted his name, dashed toward him, and seized him in his arms. Then was a great laughing and half-weeping, for it had been rumored that he had been taken prisoner by the Americans.

From this friend he received a welcome gift of a pair of trousers, many inches too short for his legs. At the next house his friend was as much too tall, and his second pair of gift trousers had to be rolled up in thick folds around his ankles.

Finally he reached Los Angeles in safety. Halting in a grove outside the town, he waited till twilight before entering. Having disguised himself in the rags which he had worn from the Indian village, he rode boldly up to the porch of his father's house, and in an impudent tone called for brandy. The terrified women began to scream; but his youngest sister, fixing one piercing glance on his face, laughed out gladly, and cried, "You can't fool me; you are Antonio."

Sitting in the little corner room, looking out through the open door on the gay garden and breathing its spring air, gay even in midwinter, and as spicy then as the gardens of other lands are in June, I spent many an afternoon listening to such tales as this. Sunset always came long before its time, it seemed, on these days.

Occasionally, at the last moment, Don Antonio would take up his guitar, and, in a voice still sympathetic and full of melody, sing an old Spanish love-song, brought to his mind by thus living over the events of his youth. Never, however, in his most ardent youth, could his eyes have gazed on his fairest sweetheart's face with a look of greater devotion than that with which they now rest on the noble, expressive countenance of his wife, as he sings the ancient and tender strains. Of one of them I once won from her, amid laughs and blushes, a few words of translation:—

"Let us hear the sweet echo
Of your sweet voice that charms me.
The one that truly loves you,
He says he wishes to love;
That the one who with ardent love adores you,
Will sacrifice himself for you.

Do not deprive me,
Owner of me,
Of that sweet echo
Of your sweet voice that charms me."

Near the western end of Don Antonio's porch is an orange-tree, on which were hanging at this time twenty-five hundred oranges, ripe and golden among the glossy leaves. Under this tree my carriage always waited for me. The señora never allowed me to depart without bringing to me, in the carriage, farewell gifts of flowers and fruit: clusters of grapes, dried and fresh; great boughs full of oranges, more than I could lift. As I drove away thus, my lap filled with bloom and golden fruit, canopies of golden fruit over my head, I said to myself often: "Fables are prophecies. The Hesperides have come true."