

expression, "at my foolishness in saying you reminded me of the pirate. I meant nothing."

"I know you're incapable of meaning anything but good to anybody, Miss Nott, perhaps to me more than I deserve," said Renshaw, with a sudden burst of feeling. "I wish — I wish — you would do *me* a favor. *You* asked me one just now." He had taken her hand. It seemed so like a mere illustration of his earnestness, that she did not withdraw it. "Your father tells you everything. If he has any offer to dispose of the ship, will you write to me at once before anything is concluded?" He winced a little — the sentence of Sleight, "What's the figure you and she have settled upon?" flashed across his mind. He scarcely noticed that Rosey had withdrawn her hand coldly.

"Perhaps you had better speak to father, as it is *his* business. Besides, I shall not be here. I shall be at the Ranch."

"But you said you did n't want to go?"

"I've changed my mind," said Rosey, listlessly. "I shall go to-night."

She rose as if to indicate that the interview was ended. With an overpowering instinct that his whole future happiness depended upon his next act, he made a step towards her, with eager outstretched hands. But she slightly lifted her own with a warning gesture, "I hear father coming — you will have a chance to talk *business* with him," she said, and vanished into her state-room.

## VI.

The heavy tread of Abner Nott echoed in the passage. Confused and embarrassed, Renshaw remained standing at the door that had closed upon Rosey as her father

entered the cabin. Providence, which always fostered Mr. Nott's characteristic misconceptions, left that perspicacious parent but one interpretation of the situation. Rosey had evidently just informed Mr. Renshaw that she loved another!

"I was just saying good-by to Miss Nott," said Renshaw, hastily regaining his composure with an effort. "I am going to Sacramento to-night, and will not return. I" —

"In course, in course," interrupted Nott, soothingly; "that's wot you say now, and that's wot you allow to do. That's wot they allus do."

"I mean," said Renshaw, reddening at what he conceived to be an allusion to the absconding propensities of Nott's previous tenants, — "I mean that you shall keep the advance to cover any loss you might suffer through my giving up the rooms."

"Certingly," said Nott, laying his hand with a large sympathy on Renshaw's shoulder; "but we'll drop that just now. We won't swap hosses in the middle of the river. We'll square up accounts in your room," he added, raising his voice that Rosey might overhear him, after a preliminary wink at the young man. "Yes, sir, we'll just square up and settle in there. Come along, Mr. Renshaw." Pushing him with paternal gentleness from the cabin, with his hand still upon his shoulder, he followed him into the passage. Half annoyed at his familiarity, yet not altogether displeased by this illustration of Rosey's belief of his preference, Renshaw wonderingly accompanied him. Nott closed the door, and pushing the young man into a chair, deliberately seated himself at the table opposite. "It's jist as well that Rosey reckons that you and me is settlin' our accounts," he began, cunningly, "and mebbe it's just ez well ez she should reckon you're goin' away."



"But I *am* going," interrupted Renshaw, impatiently. "I leave to-night."

"Surely, surely," said Nott, gently, "that's wot you kalkilate to do; that's just nat'ral in a young feller. That's about what I reckon I'd hev done to her mother if anythin' like this hed ever cropped up, which it did n't. Not but what Almiry Jane had young fellers enough round her, but, 'cept ole Judge Peter, ez was lamed in the War of 1812, there ain't no similarity ez I kin see," he added, musingly.

"I am afraid I can't see any similarity either, Mr. Nott," said Renshaw, struggling between a dawning sense of some impending absurdity and his growing passion for Rosey. "For Heaven's sake, speak out if you've got anything to say."

Mr. Nott leaned forward and placed his large hand on the young man's shoulder. "That's it. That's what I sed to myself when I seed how things were pintin'. 'Speak out,' sez I, 'Abner! Speak out if you've got anything to say. You kin trust this yer Mr. Renshaw. He ain't the kind of man to creep into the bosom of a man's ship for pupposes of his own. He ain't a man that would hunt round until he discovered a poor man's treasure, and then try to rob'" —

"Stop!" said Renshaw, with a set face and darkening eyes. "*What* treasure? *what* man are you speaking of?"

"Why Rosey and Mr. Ferrers," returned Nott, simply.

Renshaw sank into his seat again. But the expression of relief which here passed swiftly over his face gave way to one of uneasy interest as Nott went on.

"P'raps it's a little high-falutin' talkin' of Rosey ez a treasure. But, considerin', Mr. Renshaw, ez she's the only prop'ty I've kept by me for seventeen years ez hez paid interest and increased in valoo, it ain't sayin' too

much to call her so. And ez Ferrers knows this, he oughter been content with gougin' me in that horse-hair spec, without goin' for Rosey. P'raps yer surprised at hearing me speak o' my own flesh and blood ez if I was talkin' hoss-trade, but you and me is bus'ness men, Mr. Renshaw, and we discusses ez such. We ain't goin' to slosh round and slop over in po'try and sentiment," continued Nott, with a tremulous voice, and a hand that slightly shook on Renshaw's shoulder. "We ain't goin' to git up and sing, 'Thou 'st larned to love another thou 'st broken every vow we've parted from each other and my bozom's lonely now oh is it well to sever such hearts as ourn forever kin I forget thee never farewell farewell farewell.' Ye never happen'd to hear Jim Baker sing that at the moosic hall on Dupont Street, Mr. Renshaw," continued Mr. Nott, enthusiastically, when he had recovered from that complete absence of punctuation which alone suggested verse to his intellect. "He sorter struck water down here," indicating his heart, "every time."

"But what has Miss Nott to do with M. de Ferrières?" asked Renshaw, with a faint smile.

Mr. Nott regarded him with dumb, round, astonished eyes. "Hez n't she told yer?"

"Certainly not."

"And she did n't let on anythin' about him?" he continued, feebly.

"She said she'd like to know where" — He stopped, with the reflection that he was betraying her confidences.

A dim foreboding of some new form of deceit, to which even the man before him was a consenting party, almost paralyzed Nott's faculties. "Then she did n't tell yer that she and Ferrers was sparkin' and keepin' kimpany together; that she and him was engaged, and was kalkilatin' to run away to furrin parts; that she cottoned to him more than to the ship or her father?"



"She certainly did not, and I should n't believe it," said Renshaw, quickly.

Nott smiled. He was amused; he astutely recognized the usual trustfulness of love and youth. There was clearly no deceit here! Renshaw's attentive eyes saw the smile, and his brow darkened.

"I like to hear yer say that, Mr. Renshaw," said Nott, "and it's no more than Rosey deserves, ez it's suthing onnat'ral and spell-like that's come over her through Ferrers. It ain't my Rosey. But it's Gospel truth, whether she's bewitched or not; whether it's them damn fool stories she reads — and it's like ez not he's just the kind o' snipe to write 'em hisself, and sorter advertise hisself, don't yer see — she's allus stuck up for him. They've had clandestine interviews, and when I taxed him with it he ez much ez allowed it was so, and reckoned he must leave, so ez he could run her off, you know — kinder stampede her with 'honor.' Them's his very words."

"But that is all past; he is gone, and Miss Nott does not even know where he is!" said Renshaw, with a laugh, which, however, concealed a vague uneasiness.

Mr. Nott rose and opened the door carefully. When he had satisfied himself that no one was listening, he came back and said in a whisper, "That's a lie. Not ez Rosey means to lie, but it's a trick he's put upon that poor child. That man, Mr. Renshaw, hez been hangin' round the Pontiac ever since. I've seed him twice with my own eyes pass the cabin windys. More than that, I've heard strange noises at night, and seen strange faces in the alley over yer. And only jist now ez I kem in I ketched sight of a furrin-lookin' Chinee nigger slinking round the back door of what useter be Ferrers' loft."

"Did he look like a sailor?" asked Renshaw quickly, with a return of his former suspicion.

"Not more than I do," said Nott, glancing complacently at his pea-jacket. "He had rings on his yeers like a wench."

Mr. Renshaw started. But seeing Nott's eyes fixed on him, he said lightly, "But what have these strange faces and this strange man — probably only a Lascar sailor out of a job — to do with Ferrières?"

"Friends o' his — feller furrin citizens — spies on Rosey, don't you see? But they can't play the old man, Mr. Renshaw. I've told Rosey she must make a visit to the old Ranch. Once I've got her thar safe, I reckon I kin manage Mr. Ferrers and any number of Chinee niggers he kin bring along."

Renshaw remained for a few moments lost in thought. Then rising suddenly, he grasped Mr. Nott's hand with a frank smile but determined eyes. "I have n't got the hang of this, Mr. Nott — the whole thing gets me! I only know that I've changed my mind. I'm *not* going to Sacramento. I shall stay *here*, old man, until I see you safe through the business, or my name's not Dick Renshaw. There's my hand on it! Don't say a word. Maybe it is no more than I ought to do — perhaps not half enough. Only remember, not a word of this to your daughter. She must believe that I leave to-night. And the sooner you get her out of this cursed ship the better."

"Deacon Flint's girls are goin' up in to-night's boat. I'll send Rosey with them," said Nott, with a cunning twinkle. Renshaw nodded. Nott seized his hand with a wink of unutterable significance.

Left to himself, Renshaw tried to review more calmly the circumstances in these strange revelations that had impelled him to change his resolution so suddenly. That the ship was under the surveillance of unknown parties, and that the description of them tallied with his own



knowledge of a certain Lascar sailor, who was one of Sleight's informants — seemed to be more than probable. That this seemed to point to Sleight's disloyalty to himself while he was acting as his agent, or a double treachery on the part of Sleight's informants, was in either case a reason and an excuse for his own interference. But the connection of the absurd Frenchman with the case, which at first seemed a characteristic imbecility of his landlord, bewildered him the more he thought of it. Rejecting any hypothesis of the girl's affection for the antiquated figure whose sanity was a question of public criticism, he was forced to the equally alarming theory that Ferrières was cognizant of the treasure, and that his attentions to Rosey were to gain possession of it by marrying her. Might she not be dazzled by a picture of this wealth? Was it not possible that she was already in part possession of the secret, and her strange attraction to the ship, and what he had deemed her innocent craving for information concerning it, a consequence? Why had he not thought of this before? Perhaps she had detected his purpose from the first, and had deliberately checkmated him. The thought did not increase his complacency as Nott softly returned:

"It's all right," he began with a certain satisfaction in this rare opportunity for Machiavellian diplomacy, "it's all fixed now. Rosey tumbled to it at once, partiklerly when I said you was bound to go. 'But wot makes Mr. Renshaw go, father,' sez she; 'wot makes everybody run away from the ship?' sez she, rather peart-like and sassy for her. 'Mr. Renshaw hez contractin' business,' sez I; 'got a big thing up in Sacramento that'll make his fortun',' sez I — for I was n't goin' to give yer away, don't ye see? 'He had some business to talk to you about the ship,' sez she, lookin' at me under the corner of her pocket-handkerchief. 'Lots o' business,' sez I.

'Then I reckon he don't care to hev me write to him,' sez she. 'Not a bit,' sez I; 'he wouldn't answer ye if ye did. Ye'll never hear from that chap agin.'"

"But what the devil" — interrupted the young man impetuously.

"Keep yer hair on!" remonstrated the old man with dark intelligence. "Ef you'd seen the way she flounced into her state-room! — she, Rosey, ez allus moves ez softly ez a spirit — you'd hev wished I'd hev unloaded a little more. No sir, gals is gals in some things all the time."

Renshaw rose and paced the room rapidly. "Perhaps I'd better speak to her again before she goes," he said, impulsively.

"P'raps you'd better not," replied the imperturbable Nott.

Irritated as he was, Renshaw could not avoid the reflection that the old man was right. What, indeed, could he say to her with his present imperfect knowledge? How could she write to him if that knowledge was correct?

"Ef," said Nott, kindly, with a laying on of large benedictory and paternal hands, "ef ye're willin' to see Rosey agin, without *speakin'* to her, I reckon I ken fix it for yer. I'm goin' to take her down to the boat in half an hour. Ef yer should happen — mind, ef yer should *happen* to be down there, seein' some friends off and sorter promenadin' up and down the wharf like them high-toned chaps on Montgomery Street — ye might ketch her eye unconscious like. Or, ye might do this!" He rose after a moment's cogitation and with a face of profound mystery opened the door and beckoned Renshaw to follow him. Leading the way cautiously, he brought the young man into an open unpartitioned recess beside her state-room. It seemed to be used as a store-room, and Renshaw's eye



was caught by a trunk the size and shape of the one that had provided Rosey with the materials of her masquerade. Pointing to it, Mr. Nott said in a grave whisper: "This yer trunk is the companion trunk to Rosey's. *She's* got the things them opery women wears; this yer contains the *he* things, the duds and fixins o' the men o' the same stripe." Throwing it open he continued: "Now, Mr. Renshaw, gals is gals; it's nat'ral they should be took by fancy dress and store clothes on young chaps as on theirselves. That man Ferrers hez got the dead wood on all of ye in this sort of thing, and hez been playing, so to speak, a lone hand all along. And ef thar's anythin' in thar," he added, lifting part of a theatrical wardrobe, "that you think you'd fancy — anythin' you'd like to put on when ye promenade the wharf down yonder — it's yours. Don't ye be bashful, but help yourself."

It was fully a minute before Renshaw fairly grasped the old man's meaning. But when he did — when the suggested spectacle of himself arrayed *à la* Ferrières, gravely promenading the wharf as a last gorgeous appeal to the affections of Rosey, rose before his fancy, he gave way to a fit of genuine laughter. The nervous tension of the past few hours relaxed; he laughed until the tears came into his eyes; he was still laughing when the door of the cabin suddenly opened and Rosey appeared cold and distant on the threshold.

"I — beg your pardon," stammered Renshaw hastily. "I did n't mean — to disturb you — I" —

Without looking at him Rosey turned to her father. "I am ready," she said coldly, and closed the door again.

A glance of artful intelligence came into Nott's eyes, which had remained blankly staring at Renshaw's apparently causeless hilarity. Turning to him he winked solemnly. "That keerless kind o' hoss-laff jist fetched her," he whispered, and vanished before his chagrined companion could reply.

When Mr. Nott and his daughter departed, Renshaw was not in the ship, neither did he make a spectacular appearance on the wharf as Mr. Nott had fondly expected, nor did he turn up again until after nine o'clock, when he found the old man in the cabin awaiting his return with some agitation. "A minit ago," he said, mysteriously closing the door behind Renshaw, "I heard a voice in the passage, and goin' out, who should I see agin but that darned furrin nigger ez I told yer 'bout, kinder hidin' in the dark, his eyes shinin' like a catamount. I was jist reachin' for my weppins when he riz up with a grin and handed me this yer letter. I told him I reckoned you'd gone to Sacramento, but he said he wez sure you was in your room, and to prove it I went thar. But when I kem back the d—d skunk had vamosed — got frightened I reckon — and was n't nowhar to be seen."

Renshaw took the letter hastily. It contained only a line in Sleight's hand. "If you change your mind, the bearer may be of service to you."

He turned abruptly to Nott. "You say it was the same Lascar you saw before?"

"It was."

"Then all I can say is, he is no agent of De Ferrières'," said Renshaw, turning away with a disappointed air. Mr. Nott would have asked another question, but with an abrupt "Good-night" the young man entered his room, locked the door, and threw himself on his bed to reflect without interruption.

But if he was in no mood to stand Nott's fatuous conjectures, he was less inclined to be satisfied with his own. Had he been again carried away through his impulses evoked by the caprices of a pretty coquette and the absurd theories of her half imbecile father? Had he broken faith with Sleight and remained in the ship for nothing, and would not his change of resolution appear to be the result



of Sleight's note? But why had the Lascar been haunting the ship before? In the midst of these conjectures he fell asleep.

## VII.

Between three and four in the morning the clouds broke over the Pontiac, and the moon, riding high, picked out in black and silver the long hulk that lay cradled between the iron shells and warehouses and the wooden frames and tenelements on either side. The galley and covered gangway presented a mass of undefined shadow, against which the white deck shone brightly, stretching to the forecastle and bows, where the tiny glass roof of the photographer glistened like a gem in the Pontiac's crest. So peaceful and motionless she lay that she might have been some petrification of a past age now first exhumed and laid bare to the cold light of the stars.

Nevertheless, this calm security was presently invaded by a sense of stealthy life and motion. What had seemed a fixed shadow suddenly detached itself from the deck and began to slip stanchion by stanchion along the bulwarks toward the companion-way. At the cabin-door it halted and crouched motionless. Then rising, it glided forward with the same staccato movement until opposite the slight elevation of the forehatch. Suddenly it darted to the hatch, unfastened and lifted it with a swift, familiar dexterity, and disappeared in the opening. But as the moon shone upon its vanishing face, it revealed the whitening eyes and teeth of the Lascar seaman.

Dropping to the lower deck lightly, he felt his way through the dark passage between the partitions, evidently less familiar to him, halting before each door to listen.

Returning forward he reached the second hatchway that had attracted Rosey's attention, and noiselessly unclosed its fastenings. A penetrating smell of bilge arose from the opening. Drawing a small bull's-eye lantern from his breast he lit it, and unhesitatingly let himself down to the further depth. The moving flash of his light revealed the recesses of the upper hold, the abyss of the well amidships, and glanced from the shining backs of moving zigzags of rats that seemed to outline the shadowy beams and transoms. Disregarding those curious spectators of his movements, he turned his attention eagerly to the inner casings of the hold, that seemed in one spot to have been strengthened by fresh timbers. Attacking this stealthily with the aid of some tools hidden in his oil-skin clothing, in the light of the lantern he bore a fanciful resemblance to the predatory animals around him. The low continuous sound of rasping and gnawing of timber which followed heightened the resemblance. At the end of a few minutes he had succeeded in removing enough of the outer planking to show that the entire filling of the casing between the stanchions was composed of small boxes. Dragging out one of them with feverish eagerness to the light, the Lascar forced it open. In the rays of the bull's-eye, a wedged mass of discolored coins showed with a lurid glow. The story of the Pontiac was true — the treasure was there!

But Mr. Sleight had overlooked the logical effect of this discovery on the natural villainy of his tool. In the very moment of his triumphant execution of his patron's suggestions the idea of keeping the treasure to himself flashed upon his mind. *He* had discovered it — why should he give it up to anybody? *He* had run all the risks; if he were detected at that moment, who would believe that his purpose there at midnight was only to satisfy some one else that the treasure was still intact? No. The circum-



stances were propitious; he would get the treasure out of the ship at once, drop it over her side, hastily conceal it in the nearest lot adjacent, and take it away at his convenience. Who would be the wiser for it?

But it was necessary to reconnoiter first. He knew that the loft overhead was empty. He knew that it communicated with the alley, for he had tried the door that morning. He would convey the treasure there and drop it into the alley. The boxes were heavy. Each one would require a separate journey to the ship's side, but he would at least secure something if he were interrupted. He stripped the casing, and gathered the boxes together in a pile.

Ah, yes, it was funny too that he—the Lascar hound—the d—d nigger—should get what bigger and bullier men than he had died for! The mate's blood was on those boxes, if the salt water had not washed it out. It was a hell of a fight when they dragged the captain—Oh, what was that? Was it the splash of a rat in the bilge, or what?

A superstitious terror had begun to seize him at the thought of blood. The stifling hold seemed again filled with struggling figures he had known, the air thick with cries and blasphemies that he had forgotten. He rose to his feet, and running quickly to the hatchway, leaped to the deck above. All was quiet. The door leading to the empty loft yielded to his touch. He entered, and, gliding through, unbarred and opened the door that gave upon the alley. The cold air and moonlight flowed in silently; the way of escape was clear. Bah! He would go back for the treasure.

He had reached the passage when the door he had just opened was suddenly darkened. Turning rapidly, he was conscious of a gaunt figure, grotesque, silent, and erect, looming on the threshold between him and the sky. Hid-

den in the shadow, he made a stealthy step towards it, with an iron wrench in his uplifted hand. But the next moment his eyes dilated with superstitious horror; the iron fell from his hand, and with a scream, like a frightened animal, he turned and fled into the passage. In the first access of his blind terror he tried to reach the deck above through the forehatch, but was stopped by the sound of a heavy tread overhead. The immediate fear of detection now overcame his superstition; he would have even faced the apparition again to escape through the loft; but, before he could return there, other footsteps approached rapidly from the end of the passage he would have to traverse. There was but one chance of escape left now—the forehold he had just quitted. He might hide there until the alarm was over. He glided back to the hatch, lifted it, and closed it softly over his head as the upper hatch was simultaneously raised, and the small round eyes of Abner Nott peered down upon it. The other footsteps proved to be Renshaw's, but, attracted by the open door of the loft, he turned aside and entered. As soon as he disappeared Mr. Nott cautiously dropped through the opening to the deck below, and, going to the other hatch through which the Lascar had vanished, deliberately refastened it. In a few moments Renshaw returned with a light, and found the old man sitting on the hatch.

"The loft-door was open," said Renshaw. "There's little doubt whoever was here escaped that way."

"Surely," said Nott. There was a peculiar look of Machiavellian sagacity in his face which irritated Renshaw.

"Then you're sure it was Ferrières you saw pass by your window before you called me?" he asked.

Nott nodded his head with an expression of infinite profundity.



"But you say he was going *from* the ship. Then it could not have been he who made the noise we heard down here."

"Mebbee no, and mebbée yes," returned Nott, cautiously.

"But if he was already concealed inside the ship, as that open door, which you say you barred from the inside, would indicate, what the devil did he want with this?" said Renshaw, producing the monkey-wrench he had picked up.

Mr. Nott examined the tool carefully, and shook his head with momentous significance. Nevertheless, his eyes wandered to the hatch on which he was seated.

"Did you find anything disturbed *there*?" said Renshaw, following the direction of his eye. "Was that hatch fastened as it is now?"

"It was," said Nott, calmly. "But ye would n't mind fetchin' me a hammer and some o' them big nails from the locker, would yer, while I hang round here just so ez to make sure against another attack."

Renshaw complied with his request; but as Nott proceeded to gravely nail down the fastenings of the hatch, he turned impatiently away to complete his examination of the ship. The doors of the other lofts and their fastenings appeared secure and undisturbed. Yet it was undeniable that a felonious entrance had been made, but by whom or for what purpose, still remained uncertain. Even now, Renshaw found it difficult to accept Nott's theory that De Ferrières was the aggressor and Rosey the object, nor could he justify his own suspicion that the Lascar had obtained a surreptitious entrance under Sleight's directions. With a feeling that if Rosey had been present he would have confessed all, and demanded from her an equal confidence, he began to hate his feeble, purposeless, and inefficient alliance with her father, who

believed but dared not tax his daughter with complicity in this outrage. What could be done with a man whose only idea of action at such a moment was to nail up an undisturbed entrance in his invaded house! He was so preoccupied with these thoughts that when Nott rejoined him in the cabin he scarcely heeded his presence, and was entirely oblivious of the furtive looks which the old man from time to time cast upon his face.

"I reckon ye would n't mind," broke in Nott, suddenly, "ef I asked a favor of ye, Mr. Renshaw. Mebbée ye'll allow it's askin' too much in the matter of expense; mebbée ye'll allow it's askin' too much in the matter o' time. But *I* kalkilate to pay all the expense, and if you'd let me know what yer vally yer time at, I reckon I could stand that. What I'd be askin' is this. Would ye mind takin' a letter from me to Rosey, and bringin' back an answer?"

Renshaw stared speechlessly at this absurd realization of his wish of a moment before. "I don't think I understand you," he stammered.

"P'r'aps not," returned Nott, with great gravity. "But that's not so much matter to you ez your time and expenses."

"I meant I should be glad to go if I can be of any service to you," said Renshaw, hastily.

"You kin ketch the seven-o'clock boat this morning, and you'll reach San Rafael at ten" —

"But I thought Miss Rosey went to Petaluma," interrupted Renshaw quickly.

Nott regarded him with an expression of patronizing superiority. "That's what we ladled out to the public gin'rally, and to Ferrers and his gang in partickler. We *said* Petalumey, but if you go to Madroño Cottage, San Rafael, you'll find Rosey thar."

If Mr. Renshaw required anything more to convince



him of the necessity of coming to some understanding with Rosey at once it would have been this last evidence of her father's utterly dark and supremely inscrutable designs. He assented quickly, and Nott handed him a note.

"Ye'll be partickler to give this inter her own hands, and wait for an answer," said Nott gravely.

Resisting the proposition to enter then and there into an elaborate calculation of the value of his time and the expenses of the trip, Renshaw found himself at seven o'clock on the San Rafael boat. Brief as was the journey it gave him time to reflect upon his coming interview with Rosey. He had resolved to begin by confessing all; the attempt of last night had released him from any sense of duty to Sleight. Besides, he did not doubt that Nott's letter contained some reference to this affair only known to Nott's dark and tortuous intelligence.

### VIII.

Madroño Cottage lay at the entrance of a little *cañada* already green with the early winter rains, and nestled in a thicket of the harlequin painted trees that gave it a name. The young man was a little relieved to find that Rosey had gone to the post-office a mile away, and that he would probably overtake her or meet her returning — alone. The road — little more than a trail — wound along the crest of the hill looking across the *cañada* to the long, dark, heavily-wooded flank of Mount Tamalpais that rose from the valley a dozen miles away. A cessation of the warm rain, a rift in the sky, and the rare spectacle of cloud scenery, combined with a certain sense of freedom, restored that light-hearted gayety that became him most. At a sudden turn of the road he caught sight

of Rosey's figure coming towards him, and quickened his step with the impulsiveness of a boy. But she suddenly disappeared, and when he again saw her she was on the other side of the trail apparently picking the leaves of a manzanita. She had already seen him.

Somehow the frankness of his greeting was checked. She looked up at him with cheeks that retained enough of their color to suggest why she had hesitated, and said, "You here, Mr. Renshaw? I thought you were in Sacramento."

"And I thought *you* were in Petaluma," he retorted gayly. "I have a letter from your father. The fact is, one of those gentlemen who has been haunting the ship actually made an entry last night. Who he was, and what he came for, nobody knows. Perhaps your father gives you his suspicions." He could not help looking at her narrowly as he handed her the note. Except that her pretty eyebrows were slightly raised in curiosity she seemed undisturbed as she opened the letter. Presently she raised her eyes to his.

"Is this all father gave you?"

"All."

"You're sure you have n't dropped anything?"

"Nothing. I have given you all he gave me."

"And that is all it is." She exhibited the missive, a perfectly blank sheet of paper folded like a note!

Renshaw felt the angry blood glow in his cheeks. "This is unpardonable! I assure you, Miss Nott, there must be some mistake. He himself has probably forgotten the inclosure," he continued, yet with an inward conviction that the act was perfectly premeditated on the part of the old man.

The young girl held out her hand frankly. "Don't think any more of it, Mr. Renshaw. Father is forgetful at times. But tell me about last night."