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LL the splendid effects, it seems, are saved for nature's own performances, — sunset glow, long thunder of the surf, loud thunder of the hills, the poppy fires of spring, a white star like a torch to usher in a crescent moon; but men's great occasions go shabbily, out of tune, with frayed settings, cheapened by the hand that pushes them off the board. Events that the passions of a whole life lead up to come in with a swarm of small, stinging cares like gnats; compensations are doled out by halfpence.

For sixteen years the interests of the Comandante found nothing to fix upon, his affections no point of departure. The ichor of kindness curdled even in his dreams. It made him a martinet in discipline, and a friend merely of his friend's buttons. The habit of perfect behavior

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put him through the motions of taking an interest in men, but there was plainly no heart in it; naturally this got him misunderstood. He was thought too cold to have cared greatly about his wife, but it was, in fact, the caring that had left him frozen. The renewed hope of his child had come upon him suddenly, and reached a marvelous growth. It was not that he wished more strongly to find her since she was the heiress of Ramirez, but when she was only Ysabel's child the hate of Ysabel had seemed to balk him in his search. For himself he had not the heart for going on with it, but Ysabel would have wished the girl to come into the inheritance. Therefore as he wished to please his wife, still personal and dear, the reasons which before had warded him off now led on. He had really believed his daughter dead all these years. It occurred to him now that this wanted proving at several points, — an excuse for hope. Then came the discovery of the certificate in the almsbox, and hope flared into conviction. She lived, bone of his bone, commingling of his flesh and that of the dearly loved. Ah, Christ! but he had done

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something; her hate had not been proof against that,—made her body bud and bear fruit; struck a soul out of her soul as a spark is struck out of cold steel. His very thought at this point was choked and incoherent. He was in the exalted mood of a man hearing first that there is hope of issue of his love. He had thoughts, if Delgado's mission came to nothing, of resigning his command to make a pilgrimage through the inhabited coast of California until he should find her. And while he quivered with expectancy, Jacinta came in upon him in a manner least to be expected, with the advent of more than ordinary official pother and distraction.

It happened in this way: on the night that Valentin Delgado and his party lay at Mission Nuestra Señora de la Soledad, a band of twenty mounted Indians had descended from the hills, crossing the river above the Mission, and run off twice as many head of cattle from the Mission fields. It was surmised that the men must have been Urbano's following, rag-tag of all the tribes, their leader himself a renegade from Santa Clara, and late harboring in the tule lands about the San

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Joaquin River. Small losses of cattle had been laid on his shoulders before, but on this occasion it appeared that he must have had an accomplice within the Mission. The theft was not discovered until after the hour of morning service, as late as nine o'clock, to be exact, which gave the marauders a good ten hours' advantage. It was true of the Franciscans that they not only preached peace and good will to the native Californians, but practiced it. Their conquest of five hundred miles of coast was accomplished almost without bloodshed, and maintained without soldiering, unless you gave that name to the corporal and two or three privates stationed at each community of five to fifteen hundred Indians. Six soldiers was a very large number to be employed at any Mission, and Soledad, lying nearest to Monterey and the Presidio, had only two. Immediately on the discovery, the corporal and his man, a deserting sailor who had enlisted to escape being forced to sea, with two trusted neophytes, set about tracking the plunderers, and a rider was sent to Monterey to the Comandante. This was a case in which the Padres could confidently expect military aid, for

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if the Indians began to plunder the Missions unpunished they would not be kept long from the towns. The courier started at once, and half an hour later, a little delayed by the flutter at Soledad, Delgado and his party set out, riding leisurely and making a comfortable camp at noon.

Delgado was not so talkative as yesterday, considering how he would present the girl to Castro to put himself in the best light. It stuck in his mind that the month when the girl strayed about Monterey with Escobar, in boy's clothing, covered more than mere freakishness. Padre Tomás thought otherwise, — but the Padre also believed in miracles and holy water for bears. Privately he thought the fat priest a credulous fool. Don Valentin wished to marry the girl if it proved feasible; but though he could contemplate a marriage for advantage without love and not be singular in his time, he was too much sopped in the chivalric notion of his type to admit a wedding without honor. He held the girl's marriage with Escobar a knot to untangle, or a reasonable excuse for drawing back if she should prove in his estimation damaged goods.

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The young man was not so sure if it came to a wedding it would be altogether without love. He had kindled a fire under his imagination with her romantic story, the glamour of her wealth and her promise of beauty. Lastly, he marveled to find her manners not so much unfit for her station as might have been expected. Something she had caught from Escobar, electrified by the fineness that made him adorable. But beyond that, the Indian woman, remembering whence the girl had sprung, had denied her own instincts to bring up the child in the image of the dominant race. By great pains and tremendous labors of an elementary mind Castro's daughter had been nurtured in an exquisite personality, — labors beyond her own power to divine, — so that afterward, when she had come to the prime of her charm and bodily beauty, she was pointed out and accustomed to believe herself fit for her exalted station chiefly by the prerogative of birth.

Jacinta's thoughts on this day of riding toward Monterey did not run so far back as the time of her foster mother, hardly so far forward as the home of her father; beginning, in fact,

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with a day when a herd boy under an oak saw a glorious youth come out of the wood, driving Mariano's sheep. She understood how it was that Castro should be her father; she had seen him about the Presidio, and vaguely prefigured his relation to her; but her experience hardly afforded the stuff for imagination. She gathered from the corporal's wife that the rise in her fortunes must give her new value in her husband's eyes; but as she had never felt servility in the first estate she had no elation in this. Whatever her husband's disposition toward her, her passion was still too virginal to form a wish. In her first dream of their life together he should have been a priest rapt from the world, and she should serve him and lie at his door. Inasmuch as the circumstance of her birth jostled this dream, she found it vexatious and confusing, and she lacked material for shaping a new one. Chiefly she burned with the thought that as Escobar had said he would go to Monterey she would meet him there. The air was charged with the sense of his presence. She made scant answers to Don Valentin's curtailed compliments, each being

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busy with thought; and the corporal's wife, having all the conversation to herself, made the most of it. So they rode until they heard the sound of the sea and dogs barking in the streets of Monterey.

Plain folk had not yet lost the zest of life in Alta California. Nearly all the town was out in the plaza, helping to make ready the detachment for Soledad with the joyous volubility and deft-handedness of the Latin race. Castro was settling a hornet's nest of small matters in his room with the balcony overlooking the sea.

In the midst of it, while he leaned his head upon his hand for weariness, there came a great knocking at the outer door, and a quarrel of voices, — his orderly's and another lofty and contained. He heard the babble fall off to a note of amazement and gratulation and the feet of his household running toward the door. The Comandante turned expectantly to meet fresh news from Soledad, and felt a warning precede it down the passage; a warmth and glow that settled at his heart, a presage of satisfaction. The bustle halted a moment outside his door, which, before

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he had done wondering why the noise should be mixed with the sweep of women's skirts, was flung open by Delgado. The caballeros of that time loved flourishes; Don Valentin led the girl forward by her finger-tips, and swept up to the Comandante with a great bow.

"Your daughter, señor." Then he fell back in an attitude to note the effect.

Castro saw only a slim figure, straight and illy dressed, and his own chilled spirit looking at him out of the eyes, mouth, and brow of Ysabel, his wife. He grew rigid; his hand fluttered and strayed toward a drawer where certain papers lay with some cherished trifles of his wife's.

"Jacinta — Jacinta," he said whisperingly, for now he had the name by heart; and then, as the resemblance smote home to him, "Ysabel, Ysabel."

"Ah," cried Delgado delightedly, "you see a likeness?"

Castro got up drunkenly and went across to her; his breath was short and labored; all his motions dragged as with a weight. The girl stood still and cold; drooping now with fatigue,

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her arms hung down straight at her sides. The Comandante took her by the shoulders and constrained her toward him. The room was close and warm; blue flies buzzed at the pane. Dust of travel, saddle weariness, the smell of provender and horse blankets being doled out in the quarters below, obsessed the sense of them all. The hour fell flat and dry. Castro began to work his lips, gray and trembling, but seemed not to understand that he brought out no words. Suddenly, jarring the stillness, rang out the trumpet call to evening drill, which Castro was used to have in charge. Military precision, the use of old habit, held and stood the Comandante in the stead of tears. They saw the motions of his face, and understood them for the excuses which he believed he had delivered. The man sank into the Comandante as a sword is dropped into a sheath. He turned stiffly and went out.

So the first hour which Jacinta passed in her father's house was spent sitting on a bench in the bare little room, with Señora Romero surprised into stillness, and Delgado walking up and down beside her.

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The necessity of providing his daughter and her company a meal and beds steadied Castro, and carried him through an hour or two until he could hear Delgado's story. Jacinta admitted every point as far as it touched her knowledge, and recognized the packet as the one she had brought up from Peter Lebecque. But Castro needed no other warrant than her looks. Communication between them was still dry and unfruitful. He kissed her forehead only for good-night, and she endured it.

The detachment, twelve men and an officer, got off for Soledad by sunrise, which for that time was unusual dispatch. The Presidio returned to its level round, and news of Castro's daughter began to spread about the town. But the two came no nearer each other. Jacinta was always at a window looking out, hungering amid the strangeness for a sight of Escobar; restless, starting at small sounds, close upon the verge of tears, not recognizing her own state. Castro would be always edging in her direction, not enduring to have her out of his sight, and wondering at the dryness of his own heart. Toward the middle of the

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afternoon he found her on the balcony with the rebozo off her neck for coolness, and he saw the cord that held the medal about her slender throat.

"What is this, daughter?" he said, with his hand upon her shoulder, yearning toward the proper intimacy of their relation and not daring much.

"I have always worn it," she said. "Juana told me it belonged to my baptism. I have never had it off."

Castro drew it out and held it in his palm, warm from her bosom. Then he knew it for Ysabel's, and thrilled to it as to living touch of her. He kissed it, murmuring to it broken words of endearment, and laid his head upon the railing before him, kneeling on the floor, and cried. The girl was in a mood to be touched by his grief; sick with longing, strange, tired with new habits, she began to gasp; tears filled her eyes, brimmed over and ran abroad on her cheeks as not having learned the way; filled and brimmed over as the pool of a rain-fed spring. Her father heard the drip of her tears on the floor, reached out and

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drew her in ; kneeling they sobbed together. Jacinta's tears were purely hysterical, but Castro mistook them ; they mingled with his and washed the wounds of her mother's hate.

The Comandante began to be inordinately fond of his daughter, touched the earth only at the points that served her. He ransacked the shops, and obtained extraordinary trading privileges for a Yankee vessel on the mere intimation that it carried women's fardels for barter. Señora Romero was sent home with a handsome present, and the wife of one of Castro's lieutenants established Jacinta's dueña and adviser. Old Marta of the Mission Carmelo was brought over to be her personal attendant ; it was the only preference the girl made in her new situation.

No one but the Indian woman and Delgado knew of the wedding at San Antonio, and their mouths were effectively stopped by self-interest, for this was the one thing at which Castro's gorge rose. Jacinta had told him very simply how it came about, — the capture, bondage, and delivery, Isidro's discovery of her sex, the young man's high airs, and the virgin marriage, — all

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except the one important item that she loved him. A certain crisp manner of speaking and a boyish straightforwardness where one would look for blushes and tremors carried no information. The Comandante had the sense to see that if this story of boy's dress and Mascado ever got abroad, the marriage would prove the best cure for the girl's blown fame. He could appreciate Escobar's chivalry so far, but he stuck at the desertion. Was she good enough for bell and book, and not good enough for bed and board — the daughter of a Ramirez ! — By the mass ! Here he would fall to conning the insinuations of Don Valentin, to whom he was as extraordinarily grateful as he was fond of his child. Certainly there was reason enough for this unconsummated marriage to be set aside if reason ever was ; and Delgado was the better match. Saavedra, when he returned from the north, would have something to contribute. Castro had dispatched letters asking to be relieved from his command, to accompany his daughter to Mexico in the settlement of the estate, and nothing need be arranged until that time.

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As for Jacinta, she took all her new life alike, as the caged animal takes the cage and the hand that feeds it. She was very still, especially through the day, when she was under her father's hand. This was the manner of their life together: they would have chocolate in the patio of a morning; then, while her father left her for his official labors, she would go about the house with Marta, making great concern of the house-keeping, of which she knew very little. Castro would be running in and out all day to make excuse to see her. After the siesta she would sit for an hour or two with the lieutenant's wife, learning the mysteries of the toilet and needle-work, of which she knew nothing at all. At the evening meal the Comandante sat long over his wine, sometimes in the patio, sometimes in the little balcony overlooking the sea. Then Don Valentin would come in and make conversation suited to ladies' company. He would bring his guitar and sing tender and passionate airs to which the girl was glad to listen. It was so she learned the phraseology of love. But when the house was shut and all lights out in the town, a

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wood mood came upon her. She could not sleep within walls at any time, but had her cot brought out to the patio under a vine; there she would lie, and the Indian woman crouch by her head; or at times she would pace the length of her cage with inconceivably light tread, and always they would talk. Now they would say how it would be in the forest at that hour, and what would be doing at certain dark pools where the wood creatures came to drink, or what roots or berries were best at that season, and the virtues of certain herbs. Other times the girl would despoil herself of tenderness and babble of Isidro and the joy of their riding, riding in the pleasant weather; now it would be the slow open heath of Pastería with the shepherd fires and flooding moon; now a sudden small bluster of rain that sent them to shelter under a thicket where there was a smell of moist earth, and all the grass was wet; then the stony slopes of wild lilac that slapped the horses' flanks, and the sea fog drifting in. At times she fell sick with longing, lying dry-eyed and dumb; then it would be Marta who showed her straightly how a man's

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love is taken and kept, and how a woman must give wholly without seeming to give all. Also it was ordained that as a man grew weary of kissing there would be young mouths at the breast to draw out that pain, so that if women had the worst of it in loving they had afterward the best.

"A lover is a great lord," she said, "but a son is a greater. Wait, most beautiful, till you have borne a son." The poor girl owned to herself there was little chance of that, and, in fact, she hardly asked so much. But the time wore on, and Escobar did not come. Then her pride began to be awake. She saw her father deeply fretted by Escobar's lateness, which he took for scorn. At last he ventured to speak to her of it, and once opened between them it was like fire out of cover. He perceived her hurt, which was really the wound of latent womanliness at being so lightly set aside, for she knew nothing of family pride and little of caste. It was enough for Don Jesús that she suffered at all, and he fumed accordingly.

All Jacinta's pride was not to be found wanting in anything befitting the wife of an Escobar.

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If resentment was proper to her station, she must make a show of it at whatever cost. So she took arms against her love to make herself more worthy of her lover. In this she followed Castro's lead. It is fair to say that of Don Valentin's courting she apprehended not a whit. When her father hinted at the possibility of a dissolution of the marriage she assented, believing in her heart that so Escobar wished. Affairs, being in this posture, remained without alteration until at the end of ten days they had word from the detachment following the cattle thieves in the hills eastward from Soledad.