



A Little Girl in Old San Francisco
THE "LITTLE GIRL" SERIES

A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD NEW YORK
 HANNAH ANN; A SEQUEL
 A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD BOSTON
 A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD PHILADELPHIA
 A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD WASHINGTON
 A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD NEW ORLEANS
 A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD DETROIT
 A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD ST. LOUIS
 A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD CHICAGO
 A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD SAN FRANCISCO
 A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD QUEBEC

A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD SAN FRANCISCO
 BY AMANDA M. DOUGLAS



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To MARTHA REDINGTON

To you who have enjoyed the charms and wonders of the newer city, the old and remarkable may have a charm. Half a century is not much in which to rear the Queen City of the Western Coast.

With a friend's regard, The Author.

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CHAPTER I FROM MAINE TO CALIFORNIA

It was a long journey for a little girl, so long indeed that the old life had almost faded from her mind, and seemed like something done in another existence. When she was younger still she had once surprised her mother by saying, "Mother, where did I live before I came here?" The pale, care-worn woman had glanced at her in vague surprise and answered rather fretfully, "Why, nowhere, child."

"Oh, but I remember things," said the little girl with a confident air, looking out of eyes that seemed to take an added shade from her present emotions.

"Nonsense! You can't remember things that never happened. That's imagining them, and it isn't true. If you told them they would be falsehoods. There, go out and get me a basket of chips."

She was afraid of telling falsehoods, most of those rigid people called them by their plain name, "lies," and whipped their children. So the little girl kept them to herself; she was a very good and upright child as a general thing and knew very little about her tricky father. But she went on imagining. Especially when she studied geography, which she was extravagantly fond of, yet she could never quite decide which country she had lived in.

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Through those months of journeying in the big vessel over strange waters, for she had been born in an inland hamlet with a great woods of hemlock, spruce, and fir behind the little cottage, and two or three small creeks wandering about, she had many strange thoughts. Though at first she was quite ill, but Uncle Jason was the best nurse in the world, and presently she began to run about and get acquainted. There were only a few women passengers. One middle-aged, with a son sixteen, who was working his way; a few wives emigrating with their husbands, three women friends who were in the hope of finding an easier life and perhaps husbands, though they hardly admitted that to each other.

She often sat in Uncle Jason's lap, hugged up to his breast. Of course, her mother had been his sister, they had settled upon that, and he did not contradict. She was lulled by the motion of the vessel and often fell asleep, but in her waking moments these were the memories that were growing more vague and getting tangled up with various things.

Her father had taught school at South Berwick the winter she could recall most readily, and came home on Saturday morning, spending most of the time at the store. Woodville was only a sort of hamlet, though it had a church, a school, and a general store. Sometimes he would go back on Sunday, but oftener early Monday morning. Then late in the summer he was home for a while, and went away after

talks with her mother that did not always seem pleasant. He took very little notice of her, in her secret heart she felt afraid of him, though he was seldom really cross to
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her. And then he went away and did not appear again until the winter, when there seemed a great deal of talking and business, and he brought a boxful of clothes for them, and seemed in excellent spirits. He was in business in Boston, and would move them all there at once, if grandmother would consent, but she was old, and had had a stroke, and could not get about without a cane. The old house was hers and she would finish out her days there. Of course, then, her mother could not go. She had a new, warm woollen frock and a cloak that was the envy of the other children, and absolute city shoes that she could only wear on Sunday, and, of course, were presently outgrown.

She studied up everything she could concerning Boston, but her mother would not talk about it. In the summer, grandmother had another stroke and then was bedridden. It was a poor little village, and everybody had hard work to live, summers were especially busy, and winters were long and hard. Grandmother was fretful, and wandered a little in her mind. Now and then a neighbor came in to spell Mrs. Westbury, and there was always some mysterious talking that her mother did not care for her to hear. Grandmother lived more than a year and was a helpless burden at the last. After she had gone the poor mother sank down, overwhelmed with trouble. David Westbury had persuaded the old lady to sign over the house for a business venture he was to make in Boston that would put him on the road to fortune. And now it was found that he had decamped, that there had been no business but speculating, and she no longer had a home for herself and her child.

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They were very poor. People bore straits bravely in those days and suffered in silence. The poor mother grew paler and thinner and had a hard cough. In the spring they would be homeless. By spring she would be—and what would happen to the child! A little bound-out girl, perhaps.

Laverne was not taken into these sorrowful confidences. She did not go to school, her mother needed to be waited upon. One bright afternoon she went out to skate on the creek. The school children joined her, and it was almost dark when they started for home. The little girl's heart upbraided her, but she had carried in the last armful of wood, and had not told her mother. What would they do to-morrow! She went in hesitatingly. Oh, how good and warm the room felt and two candles were burning. A man sat beside the stove with a sort of frank, bright, yet weather-beaten face, a mop of chestnut-colored hair, a beard growing up to his very mouth, but with the brightest blue eyes she had ever seen, merry blue eyes, too, that looked as if there was just a twinkle back of the lashes.

"This is my little girl, Laverne," said her mother. "We have always called her Verne, seeing there were three of the same name. And this is"—the mother's tone had a curious tremble in it, as if she caught her breath—"this is Uncle Jason."

The first glance made them friends. They both smiled. She was like her mother in the young days, and had the same dimple in her cheek, and the one in her chin where the children used to hold a buttercup. She put out both hands. They had been so lonely, so

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poor, and she was glad all over with a strange feeling, just as if they had come to better times.

What a supper they had! She was very hungry. She had been quite used to eating bread and molasses, or a little moist brown sugar. And here was a great chunk of butter on the edge of her plate, and the room was fragrant with the smell of broiled ham.

If she had known anything about fairies she would have believed in enchantment at once. And there was part of a splendid cake, and orange jam, and she could hardly make it real. No neighbor had known all their straits, and the little girl had borne them as bravely as her mother. Then, so many people had pinches in the winter, for crops were often poor.

She helped her mother with the dishes and then she sat down on a stool beside Uncle Jason. Presently, her head sank on his knee and she went fast asleep. She never heard a word of what her mother and Uncle Jason were saying.

At nine o'clock he carried her into the bedroom and laid her on the bed, and she never woke up while her mother undressed her. He went over to the store where he had bargained for a room. The storekeeper, Mr. Lane, had been as much surprised to see Mr. Chadsey as Mrs. Westbury. He had been born in the old town and his romance had blossomed and blighted here.

"Now, I tell you," Seth Lane said to his wife, when the store was shut and they were preparing for bed, "if that scalawag Westbury was dead there'd be a weddin' in this town straight away. My, how Chadsey was cut up over hearin' his mean villainy an' gettin'

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hold of the house! I never b'lieved the old woman knew what she was about. And Chadsey's come back in the nick o' time, for I don't b'lieve she'll go through March." Jason Chadsey planned for their comfort, and went to Boston the next day, but could find no trace of David Westbury, dead or alive.

As for the little girl, when she woke up in the morning she thought she had had the loveliest dream that could ever haunt one. But when she saw the bountiful breakfast she was amazed to the last degree.

"Was Uncle Jason really here?" she asked timidly. She was quite sure her mother had been crying.

"Yes, dear. He has gone to Boston and will be back in a few days. Oh, Laverne, I hope you will learn to love him. Some day, when you are older, you will understand why he came back, and he will be your best friend when"—when I am gone, she was about to say, but checked herself, and substituted "all your life. When I was a little girl he was a kind and generous big boy. Then he went to sea, and was back only a few times. For years I had heard nothing from him—he has been round the world, everywhere. And he has a big, tender heart——"

"Oh, I am sure I shall be glad to love him. Why, you seem to go right to his heart;" and the child's face glowed with enthusiasm.

"Yes, yes." She began to cough and sat down suddenly, putting her handkerchief to her mouth.

"The salt, quick, Verne," she gasped.

She lay on the old wooden settee and stuffed her mouth full of salt.

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"Oh, what can I do?" cried the child, in mild alarm.

"Run for Aunt Cynthy Beers. Tell her to come quick."

The neighbor, who was the village nurse, came back with the child. Then she was despatched for the doctor. He shook his head gravely.

"Doctor, you must keep me alive a little while longer," she pleaded.

"Oh, you are good for some time yet, only you must not make the slightest exertion.

Cynthy, how long can you stay?"

"Ten days or so. Then I have to go over on the Creek," she answered laconically.

"That will do." Then he gave sundry charges to Miss Beers, and left the remedies she was to use, but that lady knew what was meant.

Mrs. Westbury beckoned the nurse to her when he had gone.

"Don't tell Laverne," she said. "Don't say anything about——"

"That's cruel. Why, she ought to know and be prepared."

"No, no; I will not have a word said. I cannot explain, no one can. And if she took it hard, don't you see, it would drive me wild and shorten my days. I'm all worn out.

And she will be provided for."

Everybody was kind and solicitous, sending in cooked food, offering to sit up at night, but Miss Beers was equal to all demands. The sick woman really did improve.

Laverne hovered about her mother, read to her out of her geography and Peter Parley's history, as well as the sweetest hymns out of the hymn book.

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Jimmy Cox came over and did the chores, provided the wood, took Verne out on his sled, and the days passed along. Jason Chadsey returned. Miss Beers had to go her way, and a neighbor came in to do what was needed. One day, before the minister and the Squire, she gave her child to Jason Chadsey, who promised to care for her and educate her, and keep her from all harm.

"You both know that I loved her mother and would gladly have married her in the old days, but untoward fate intervened. I could find no trace of the child's father. She has no near relatives to care for her, so I shall be father to her, and Heaven may judge me at the last."

He was holding the child on his knee that evening, "You are to be my little girl always," he said, with tender solemnity. "You shall be made happy as a little bird.

And if you will only love me——"

"Oh, I shall, I do. And will you stay here? Mother will be so glad. She was longing so to have you come back. You will never go away again?"

"Never from you, my little girl;" and he kissed the child's trust into perfect belief.

There were two more alarms, then the frail life went out peacefully. The child was stunned. It had seemed right for grandmother to leave a world that she was forgetting about, but Laverne could not understand all the mystery. Her mother had always been quiet and reserved, it was the fashion in those days, and the child could not miss the things she had never had. And neither could she ever have understood her sorrow over the great mistake in giving her such a

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father. But Heaven had helped her to make amends, for the child was the embodiment of her own youth. It was all she had and she gave it to the man who had loved her sincerely, glad and thankful that she was not to be left to the uncertain charity of the world.

The frightened child clung very closely to him. The worn furniture and bedding were distributed among the neighbors, a few keepsakes collected, a few good-bys said, and good wishes given, and they went first to Boston and then to New York. Then they were to go to the wonderful land of gold and sunshine, California. They found it on the map. And there was the long, long sail, and the little girl was going far away from the only sorrow of her life, that was so strangely mingled with the only dear love. For while the other had been hedged about with the severe training of the times, afraid of sinfulness in indulging in what was called carnal affections, even in loving a child, now she had the utmost tenderness lavished upon her. She had no one but him, and that was a continual joy and kept his heart at high tide. She was all his.

Later she was to know about the young love between them, and how when her mother was just fifteen he had shipped for three years aboard a merchantman. They had sailed about the Eastern seas, bought and sold, and at last started for home, to be wrecked, and nearly all had perished. Of the few saved there were no tidings of Jason Chadsey. Laverne waited and hoped and came to her twentieth birthday. David Westbury was considered a smart young man. He had been a clerk in a store, he had worked on a newspaper,

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and taught school, and could turn his hand to a good many things. He had a smooth tongue, too, and a certain polish in his manner above the country youths.

Grandmother espoused his cause at once. Jason Chadsey was dead, lovers were not so plentiful in these small places, where the enterprising young men went away. It was hard to stand out against one's own mother, and all the years to come to be taunted as an old maid. And so Laverne married David Westbury, and when her little girl was a month old he came back not altogether penniless, but it was too late. He had roamed about the world a good deal. He had made money, and spent it freely, lost some of it, helped friends in distress. Now, he was going out to that wonderful land that had been the dream of the Spaniard, and another nation had brought the dream true. He would visit the little old village once more, and see how it had fared with his early love and his old friends, and then say good-bye forever. And knowing she was near to death, Laverne Westbury told him her sad story, and he read between the broken sentences that he had been her early love, her only love. So they whiled the time away, the man's dreams growing more vivid, the child's fading. They passed strange countries, there were seas of peerless blue, seas of emerald green, then strange colors commingled. There were cloudless skies and broad sheets of sunshine that seemed to envelop the whole world in a blaze; there were nights of such glowing stars as one seldom sees on land, there were gray days with sullen winds, and storms that sent a thrill to the stoutest hearts, when the vessel groaned and creaked and the

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women cried in terror. But Laverne only crept closer in Uncle Jason's arms and felt safe.

They stopped here and there at a port, places they hunted up on the map, cities that seemed marvels to the little girl, shores with waving blooming forests and almost steaming fragrance. Strange birds, strange many-hued fish, darting hither and thither, seaweed that in the sunshine looked like masses of bloom, or living things swimming about. Curious people, too, speaking languages no little girl could understand, then leaving the warmth, and shivering with blasts of cold air, wonderful islands and capes jutting out—some bleak and bare and rocky, others shining in verdure and waving smiles of welcome, it seemed; going safely round the Horn with half their journey done and finding more wonders, great mountain ranges, shores thickly studded with islands, natives swimming about like fishes, queer, half ruinous old Spanish towns, and when they stopped at a port, such a clatter of tongues, such a screaming of voices, such a confusion, one was glad to get out of it to lovely, enchanting peace once more.

Warmer grew the air with a languorous, permeating fragrance. Moonlight silvering the water that leaped softly up and down as if playing hide and seek with the next wave. All the boundless space lighted with it, going round the world, swelling, decreasing, a golden crescent, then a pale gibbous thing and afterward darkness when the ship crept softly along.

If one came in near the shore it was like the blast of a furnace. Then, passing the equator with the queer ceremony among the sailors, and looking across at the
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little neck of land joining the two countries, past Central America, which the little girl insisted made three Americas. She had listened to the tales of the early explorers and their cruel lust for gold until she had shuddered.

"Uncle Jason, are you going for gold in California, and will the people murder whole nations and rob them? I would rather not have the gold."

"No, my little girl; and the country that has the gold belongs to us. But it has many other delightful things as well. It is not like bleak Maine."

"What a strange journey it has been, and oh, how beautiful most of the time. I do not believe I shall ever be afraid of storms again."

"You have made a most excellent sailor. It will seem queer to be on land again. You will keep your sea legs for some time to come."

"Sea legs?" She laughed inquiringly.

"The faculty one acquires of walking with the roll of the ship. Sailors always do it on land. And you will see that you have an inclination to go from side to side as if the street was hardly wide enough;" and he looked at her out of humorous eyes.

He had a way of nearly shutting one eye, which gave an absolutely funny expression to his face. He had buffeted so many storms and narrow escapes that he looked fully ten years beyond his age, which was but thirty-five. He had a tall, vigorous frame, with a little stoop in the shoulders and a way of sitting down all in a heap. The little girl told him he made a cave for her to sit in. Every day she loved him more dearly, and to him she was the one thing that brightened his

way and gave him new aims. He had been going to California simply to see a strange and new land. He had not been won by the wonderful tales of gold, he had cared very little for wealth. But now he would make a fortune for her and have it so safely invested that she should not come to want if she lived to be old. He could never forget the afternoon he had come to Laverne Westbury's home, that she had been warned to leave in the spring, and found her almost on the verge of starvation, too proud to keep asking charity, worn out and disheartened, with only the county house looming before her. Little Verne should never know this, never suffer as her mother had done.

And this was one reason he led her thoughts away from the old life. She was too young to know that he had loved her mother, she took the relationship for granted. And even on the long voyage there had been so much to entertain her. The only child on board, and a winsome one at that, she had been a universal favorite; and Jason Chadsey hardly less so. The trio, as the three single women had been dubbed, though the married ones often said "the old maids," after a little, established very friendly relations with Mr. Chadsey. Miss Holmes was past thirty, and had worn herself almost out teaching school. A sea voyage had been prescribed to avoid consumption, that scourge of the eastern towns. She had gained in health and strength, and certainly in looks. When she found the little girl and her uncle poring over their old map, she brought out some of her school books, to Laverne's great delight. Among them was the story of the Argonauts

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that caught the young imagination, and even Dick Folsom became interested in the various explorers who had dreamed of gold and of the straight route to China. Miss Gaines had been a dressmaker until a troublesome pain in her side warned her to seek a different occupation, and Miss Alwood had kept house, done nursing, and they had planned to make better fortunes in the new country, where there were fewer women. Mrs. Dawson was going out to meet her husband, who had been among the "Forty-miners," and now kept a sort of lodging ranch, that with her help could be transformed into a regular hotel, much in demand at that time.

And so they had made quite a little colony on shipboard. Slowly they came up the Pacific Coast, past the long peninsula of Southern California, and there, fairly in sight, was the Golden Gate.

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CHAPTER II OLD SAN FRANCISCO

Was it any wonder the old explorers missed the narrow outlet from the great bay when the hills from the farther shore cast a great gloomy shadow, and dreary rocks flanked the shore, inhabited by cormorants and auks and gulls, screaming out their discordant music? What if the tide did run out sweeping like a torrent—were they going to breast the danger back of it? Was the great rocky point worth their consideration? In the islands off the shore seals and sea lions had it all their own way and basked and frolicked in the sunshine.

It had changed then, in the early fifties, but half a century has almost forgotten the bareness of it then. And yet it was magnificent in the October sunset as the old ship made its way, puffing from the strains of its long journey. They had nearly all huddled on deck to view their land of promise. There are few enthusiastic emigrants

now, everything is viewed with commercial eyes. Afar to the westward stretched the magnificent ocean, a sheet of billowy ranges tipped with molten gold, changing to a hundred iridescent tints and throwing up the gold again in prodigal fashion, sweeping it over to foreign seas. And, on the other hand, the mile-wide gap, the gateway to the wonderful land, tranquil enough now, with frowning rocks like

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the cave of Scylla on the one hand, that was to be transformed into a wonderful city. They are piloted through to the great magnificent bay that seems endless at the first glance of its seventy miles. Northward long lines of rolling hills, purple and blue and black, with glints of the setting sun fighting the shadows like some strange old gods with their fire-tipped arrows. At the south it fades into misty dreamland. Red Rock stands up defiant. And so they look at their new country and then at each other. There is shipping at the rude wharves, and they find a place to anchor, but it is too late to look for a home and so they make themselves content. But if they thought they were coming to great space, and semi-loneliness they were mistaken and confused by the noise and tumult, the crowds, the bustle of business, the people of all countries it seemed.

"Why, I had no idea," the women said to one another. "The place must be overcrowded."

What chance was there then for women who had come to seek their fortunes?

They soon found that San Francisco was the stopping place of nearly every nation, and yet there was room for more, and work for those willing to do it.

Mr. Dawson came down to meet his wife the next morning, and was made acquainted with the little party that had become such friends in their long journey.

"We can take some of you in if you will accept the accommodations," he said cordially. "They might be worse," with a shrug of the shoulders. "Luckily, I escaped being burnt out. Will you come and take a view of our town?"

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What an odd place it was, built on the hills like Rome. On the ocean side great frowning rocks that suggested fortresses. At the extreme end, the highest of hills, the city began, and it spread out over little valleys and other hills, sloping to the busy, beautiful bay. And it seemed right in the heart of it lay devastation, débris and ashes. Hundreds of men were clearing, laying foundations again, rearing new structures. "It was an awful fire," explained their guide. "We had thought fireproof bricks and iron-bound structures would at least stay the devastating hand of destruction, and even that proved useless. But for the loss one might have enjoyed the magnificent spectacle of the immense fiery field. The fierce roar of the flames, the shouts and shrieks of the flying people, the glowing crackling mass sending spires up to the very sky, it seemed, was something we shall never forget. It was said to have been visible a hundred miles away."

The ruins were startling even now. Then the party turned, crossed Market Street and came into Spear Street. Here there was a rambling frame building that had been added to several times, two stories for the most part, but a long ell of only one story. The main end bore the name of "Dawson House." It was not a hotel, and had no bar, that usual accompaniment. Round in the next street, Mr. Dawson had a clubhouse that supplied this want, and all games of chance, but this place was of the better sort.

The Farnsworths had gone to friends only a few squares from the wharf. Mr. Dawson made friends at once with young Folsom and offered him a position.

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"I'm in for the gold fields," he declared with boyish eagerness.

"You'd better consider a day or two," suggested his mother.

"And I'll take the mother, too, if she is as good a housekeeper as she looks to be," Mr. Dawson subjoined laughingly. "If I don't, young fellow, some man will snap your mother up before you'll have a chance to see the color of his eyes."

"Well, here are four husbandless women," she retorted gayly. "He could have a choice."

They were ushered into a spacious room with a painted floor and nondescript furnishing. In one corner was a large desk at which sat a clerk. This opened into a dining room, in which the long table was seldom without a guest. Several were seated there now. On the other side were two smaller rooms tolerably well furnished, one a sleeping chamber.

"You'll find we're suffering from the want of woman's hands and woman's wit. I could hardly believe my wife had consented to come. You see those who are worth anything are soon offered homes of their own, and the others——" He made a peculiar little gesture, that elicited a shrewd smile from Jason Chadsey.

It was comforting to find a place of refuge so soon, they all thought. On the second floor were lodging rooms for the better class. The ell was fitted up with rows of bunks, and there was seldom a vacancy by midnight.

Laverne kept tight hold of Uncle Jason's hand, and

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when Mr. Dawson smiled over to her, half hid her face on Uncle Jason's ample frame.

"Are we all going to live here?" she asked in a low tone.

"For a little while, I think. We would not want to go away alone. And there must be some one to keep the house when I get one."

"But you know that I helped mother, oh, for a long while. Sometimes I chopped up the wood. And in the autumn I dug the potatoes and husked the corn, but we had to kill the poor hens, after all," and she sighed. "I swept up the house, too. Oh, I can do a great many things."

He took the slim little hand in his and tried to smile over her eagerness, but his heart ached as he thought of her mother, and the hardships he could not save.

"Will it be winter soon?" she inquired.

"Not a Maine winter, my child. I believe there is no real winter."

"Everything looks queer and dried up, yet it isn't cold. And what a great city, it is almost as large as New York."

He laughed at that, then he was grave a moment. "It may be as great, some day. The Pacific will be a big rival to the Atlantic."

"To think we are clear over here! Why don't they build a railroad—just so?" and she made a mark with her small finger.

"No doubt that will come also."

They made arrangements about staying for the present. It seemed queer to the child that the friend she had known so long should be Mr. Dawson's wife. Already

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she was giving some orders and telling what she wanted done, and did not seem a bit afraid of the portly man who could speak so sharply to the Chinese servants. Laverne thought them very odd. She had only seen pictures of them before. They walked so softly in their pointed slippers, and looked a little like women in their loose blue shirts with hanging sleeves. The long queue twisted around their heads, and their slanting eyes seemed weird enough.

She saw many other queer people in their walk back to the boat. Uncle Jason thought it too long, but she pleaded so to go. There were other curious dark-eyed and dark-skinned men, small and bright Japanese she came to know, and tall Spaniards in picturesque attire with handsome sashes about their waists; Indians, too, and a group of squaws girt about with blankets, two carrying their babies on their backs, and these made her think of the Maine clear across the continent, for you occasionally saw them there.

The old vessel seemed almost like home to her. They gathered up their luggage and that belonging to the ladies and ordered it sent to the Dawson House. Then they went up on Telegraph Hill, and half the world seemed spread out before them. The sun was shining in well-nigh blinding brilliancy. There was the narrow passageway that hardly looked its real width, there was the northern peninsula, Mount Tamalpais, Belvidere, Sausalito, and all the places she was to come to know so well. And there over the bay were the low spurs of the Coast Range, at whose feet were to spring up towns and cities. The bay looked to her

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like a smaller ocean. But boats were plying back and forth. And they could see the other hills about, and the town spreading here and there outside of the burned district.

Suddenly she said she was very tired, and her steps lagged a little. Uncle Jason would have been glad to carry her, he had occasionally carried greater burdens in times of peril, but that would be hardly admissible, they were going downhill too, which was easier. She had not seen all the strange people yet, for they met a group of Portuguese sailors with big hoop earrings, who were gesticulating fiercely, and some Russians with high caps and black, bushy beards. She was glad she had studied so much geography on shipboard, and she began to feel quite wise about different countries.

When she reached their present home she begged that she might go to bed. She did not want to eat even a tempting bit of cake. Mrs. Dawson took her into her room and put a pillow on the lounge, and while the others talked and planned she slept soundly.

"What a pretty child she is," Mr. Dawson said. "You will have to watch her closely that no one steals her."

"Oh!" Uncle Jason said thoughtfully. But in this wild, bustling life few would want to be burdened with a child not belonging to them.

When Laverne woke there was a queer, rushing, rustling sound, and it was dark like twilight. Where was she? What was happening? Then she sprang up and remembered. The ladies were talking in the

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next room. Oh, it rained and the wind seemed blowing a gale.

"Oh, what a nice sleep you have had!" exclaimed Mrs. Dawson. "And now you must be hungry, though we shall have dinner in a very short time. You look rested," and she smiled cheerfully.

"Yes, I am. I don't know what made me so tired." She had not climbed a hill in a long while.

"We didn't have any hills to climb on shipboard, and in all these months we did get out of practice," said Miss Holmes. "I was tired as well. And now the rainy season has begun, and Mr. Dawson has been saying that in a week or two the country will look like spring."

"And won't there be any winter? Though I don't like winter very much," she added naïvely. "Only the sledding and skating."

"I shouldn't care to live in Maine," and Miss Gaines gave a little shiver. "All my life I have longed for a warm winter climate. And if this doesn't suit, I shall go further south."

"You women without husbands are very independent," laughed Mrs. Dawson.

"You certainly can go where you like if you have money enough to take you there," was the reply. "Verne, come sit here and tell me if you like San Francisco as well as the ship and the voyage."

"It's queer and such lots of queer people, and how they can understand each other I can't see, for they all seem to talk different. I'd rather not live on a ship all my life."

"Then do not marry a sea captain. But your uncle

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may take a fancy to go to China or Japan. It is not so far from here. Grace, have you written any letters this afternoon?"

"No," replied Miss Alwood. "I think my friends will not be immediately alarmed."

"And this little girl has left no relatives behind, I heard her uncle say. Haven't you any cousins?"

"My mother had no brothers or sisters." Then she remembered how little she had ever heard about her father.

Mrs. Dawson brushed her hair and they were summoned to dinner. They had the upper end of the table. Two other women came in with their husbands. There were some Spaniards among the men, and a few very dark, peculiar-looking people. There was a great deal of talking in tongues unknown to the little girl, but some of the voices had a soft, musical sound.

The little girl was really hungry and enjoyed her dinner. Afterward most of the party played cards. The other lodgers were of the commoner sort, had a dining room to themselves, and generally sallied out in the evening. Fights were not infrequent and the harmless phases of games degenerated into gambling.

Miss Holmes had not mastered the art even on the long voyage. She took Laverne under her wing now.

"You and I will have to learn Spanish," she said. "Once Spain owned all this country."

"And will we have to learn all the other talk? I know some Indian words, there were two old Indian women in our town, and in the summer some of the tribes would come down. But Chinese—that funny

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reading that comes on tea chests——" and a knot gathered in her forehead.

"We will not take Chinese the first. I have a friend who went out as a missionary and who can talk it fluently. But all down along the coast it is settled by Spaniards, and they were in South America, you know, and it seems as if half the people here were talking it. Then it is a stately and beautiful language. You know you learned some French on shipboard."

"And there are so many things to learn. There were so few in our little place. They spun and knit and sewed, and you made bed quilts in case you were married. Mother had two she had never used, and a great counterpane grandmother had knit."

"Yes. It is a pity they couldn't have been saved for you. I have a chest of heirlooms stored in the house of a cousin at Dorchester, and some Revolutionary relics. My grandfather fought in the war. And I have left them all behind."

Miss Holmes gave a little sighing laugh. She could not tell whether she was glad or sorry that she had taken this long journey to a strange land.

"What did Spain want of America?" queried the little girl.

"Oh, don't you remember how they came to Mexico for the gold. There was Pizarro and Cortez——"

"And poor Montezuma in South America. Are there any real gold mines here?"

"Not just in the town."

"Then no one will come and fight us and take the gold away," she said with a sigh of relief.

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Uncle Jason gave a dry smile. There was fighting enough, he had found already.

"Would you care for the gold?" The child raised soft, inquiring eyes.

"Why, yes; I should like to have a share of it. But I do not think I shall go and work in the mines."

"Did they fight very much at the fort. And who did they drive away?" she asked in a rather awe-stricken voice.

"Oh, my child, they did not fight at all. The country belonged to us. The gold was free for any one willing to mine. We shall see the men coming in with their bags of gold dust and nuggets, and though they may talk fiercely and quarrel, they need not disturb us," and Miss Holmes smiled reassuringly.

"Uncle Jason will not go," she said confidently, after quite a pause. Then she glanced over to him and smiled, and was answered in return.

He lost that trick and the next and Mrs. Dawson won his money. It did well enough to play for fun on shipboard, the captain had strictly forbidden gambling, but here one would not dream of such a thing. The stakes were not high, however.

He was thinking of his little girl and whether he had done wisely to bring her here.

He had planned this journey before he knew whether the little girl was dead or alive; at any rate he had supposed she would be in the keeping of her own father. And the pitiful story of the woman he had loved, and would have slaved for had she been his, had roused all the chivalrous feelings of his nature. And that she should give him the child who had her smile and her soft, appealing

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voice, and the pretty eagerness that had cropped out now and then, though it was the fashion to repress it, seemed so wonderful and so sacred to him, and occupied so

much of his thoughts that he never dreamed of altering his plans, or whether they would be best for her. Everything was so different, such a hurly-burly, that he wondered if a little girl could be brought up clean and wholesome and happy. A touch of uncertainty was creeping through every nerve. A man's life was so different. And there must be some one to guard her since he had to make the fortune for her. Would Miss Holmes do? They had become great friends. Then Miss Holmes had the Eastern refinement and uprightness.

He had not counted on sharing her with any one, his ideas had been vague and impractical and he would have to remodel them.

"Upon my word, I never knew you to play so poorly," laughed Mrs. Dawson teasingly; "I believe you are half asleep."

"I think that must be it. I am a landlubber to-night, so I beg you to excuse me," and he rose.

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CHAPTER III MAKING A NEW HOME

It rained three days, not quite like sullen Eastern storms, but in gusts and showers. At times the wind drove it along like a trampling army, then the fog came up and you could hardly see anything but the vaguest outlines. The rainy season had set in.

"Will it rain all the time?" asked Laverne. "And I have no rubbers."

"That is a sad oversight. I don't believe you will find any small ones here," answered Mrs. Dawson. "But I have interviewed some of the old residents, and they say it only rains by spells, but that the spells are rather frequent. I suppose we shall get used to it."

It was mid-forenoon. Laverne had asked questions about everything she could imagine, and heard many wonderful stories. The convent tales interested her deeply. They had found an old volume of the early days, and she had rejoiced in the legend of Father Francis, who had been left out of the list of missions that were to be named after the Saints.

"And no St. Francis!" cried the good missionary, surprised at such neglect. "Is not our own dear Father Francis to have a mission assigned to him?"

The visitador replied loftily, "If St. Francis wishes

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a mission let him show you a good port and it shall bear his name."

They had been discouraged at the rough shores and rocky heights. But they went on and suddenly the gateway opened before them, and the bay came in view. So they entered it, and while they were waiting for the storeship, they cut down timber and began to make a settlement on a fertile plain surrounded by vine-clad hills. When the storeship arrived with cattle, provisions, and some more emigrants, they built some plain houses, and the mission, and on the day of St. Francis it was blessed and consecrated with a Mass, and for music they had a continual discharge of firearms, while the smoke answered for incense. Then they set about converting the natives who were poor, wandering clans with no religion, but a great fear of sorcerers, and were very easily managed. And now the Mission de los Dolores was but a crumbling ruin, while the good St. Francis lives in the noble name of bay and city.

Then there was the pathetic story of Doña Conceptione, daughter of the Commandant of Presidio. A Russian official visited it, and fell deeply in love with the

beautiful girl. But he not only had to return with business matters, but had to lay before the Czar his earnest wish to espouse his sweetheart. Doña Concepcion waited at first in great joy and hope, but no word and no lover came. When her father tried to win her from her love by various devices, she would not be comforted with them. Many a time she looked longingly over the ocean, straining her eyes to see the vague outline of his ship that never came, and so her

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sweet youth passed, her beauty began to fade, but she would not give up her faith. He was dead, or he would have come. He could not prove false. She went into a convent and prayed for his soul's rest. Long afterward she heard he had been killed on his way home, and her sad heart was comforted by the thought that she had never doubted his love.

And then another beautiful girl, whose lover had gone to battle with a fierce tribe of Indians who had attacked one of the lower missions. His horse had found its way back unharmed, and some one who had seen him fall brought back his bloody scarf and his jewelled dagger, picked up from the ground, but the Indians had mutilated his body horribly and cast it away in fragments. When Doña Eustacia recovered from her long illness she would take the veil in spite of her mother's protests, for there was another lover the elder had preferred. And so two years passed away when a poor, dishevelled, footsore man came back, who had not been killed but wounded and taken prisoner, and at last managed to escape. And when the Señor Roldan learned Eustacia's sorrowful mistake he begged that she be released from her vows, and proffered his estate to the mission for her. But the Padre was obdurate and would not listen. Did some bird carry messages to her? There was no need to pray for his soul, and his faithful love was too sweet to give up. So the little bird comforted her, and though she knew she was perilling her soul's salvation she slipped out of the convent one night, and her lover lifted her on his horse and they went away in the storm and the darkness, whither no one ever knew, but the Padre took

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his estate, and they were both laid under the ban of the Church.

"But did it really hurt them?" queried the young listener.

"I should like to think they were very happy," declared Miss Holmes, closing the book, "and we will end it that way."

"Do see!" cried Laverne, running to the window. "Why, it is yellow and purple, and rolling up——"

"The fog is lifting. And the sun is coming out," was the reply.

"The cobwebs being swept from the sky," laughed the child. "But there is no old woman with a broom."

Yes, there was the sun out in all its glory, driving the fog into the ocean, tearing it into tatters, and suddenly everything was glorified. The evergreens had been washed free from dust and were in their metallic tints, other foliage that had seemed brown a few days ago, glowed and shimmered in the crystal-clear air. The change was marvellous. The newcomers glanced at each other in surprise, with no words to express their exhilaration.

"And now we can go out!" cried Laverne. "I want to climb a hill."

Uncle Jason laughed. "Come and see," he replied.

Alas! Rivulets were running down the slopes and the wind was appalling. Some of the streets were simply seas meandering along.

"Never mind, to-morrow it will be nice and you will see it dry up by magic."

Laverne went back to the book of legends and stories.

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The others had been considering plans. Mrs. Folsom had accepted Mr. Dawson's proposal and was installed as housekeeper to his wife's great satisfaction.

"It would be folly for a young fellow like you to go out to the mines," Mr. Dawson said to Richard. "There's gold enough to last ten years or I'll miss my guess. It's no place for a boy. And there is plenty to do right here. I'll take you as a clerk."

"We certainly have fallen in a clover bed," exclaimed his mother; "I don't know how to thank you."

"I guess I need you as much as you need me. And if the boy keeps honest and upright and doesn't take to gambling his fortune is made."

"But I shall go to the gold fields in the end," Dick said to his mother. She was satisfied to have it put off a while.

The rain had not kept Jason Chadsey in the house. He had gone on several inspecting tours. There was work to be had everywhere. Building up the burned district, draying around the bay in every conceivable branch. Every week dozens of men threw up a job and started for the gold fields. Three or four shipping houses almost fought for him when they learned he was a Maine man, and had been half over the world, was indeed full of shrewd knowledge that had been discriminated by a wide experience, and neither drank nor gambled, the besetting sins of those early days. Then there was the home. Miss Alwood had found a position. The other two had been friends for years. A needlewoman would readily gain employment, and no doubt teachers would be in demand.

Jason Chadsey ruminated over the matter. Women

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had hardly begun to make homes for themselves in that chaotic region. What if he made a home for them both and Miss Holmes took care of Laverne? The child was very fond of her.

He went about the matter in a straightforward fashion. Miss Holmes accepted at once. She had begun to wonder a little at her temerity in seeking her fortune in this new land. In the older cities it was different. And she had a motherly heart for Laverne. Indeed, if Jason Chadsey had offered her marriage she would have accepted it readily, though it would have been based on respect and friendship.

"You will be head of the interior," he said, in a rather humorous tone. "We may find some one to do the rough part. And if Miss Gaines would like to make her home with you we shall be a cheerful and comfortable family, I fancy."

It was not so easy to find a domicile ready made. Too many of the houses, even among those offered for sale, were flimsy things and held at exorbitant prices. But he struck one presently. The man's wife had died and he wanted to go to the mines, but did not really care to sell. He would rent furniture and all for six months.

The Dawsons were sorry to have them leave. To be sure, their places could be filled easily enough, but they had all been so friendly.

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