

KEEPING THE "CORNUCOPIA: "

A PASSAGE OF CALIFORNIAN ADVENTURE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE GREEN HAND."

I M MEDIATELY on landing at San Francisco, early in the spring of 1851, when yet a boy, I entered the office of a most respectable leading firm in the city, Macansh and Malloch. They were chiefly connected with the European trade. Mr. Macansh had been long in the country, before the gold discoveries were made; and the character he bore in the State may be judged by the fact that he acted as British Consul. He was, besides, much respected by the Spanish merchants and others, though not perhaps so much so by the Americans. The junior partner, Mr. Malloch, on the other hand, was considered to have made more way among the latter; indeed in the opinion of most States people he was decidedly "smart," and would rise to a high position. He always called himself Scotch, but he had come hither from New Zealand.

His wife and son were living in town with him at the Parker House, then the leading hotel on the Plaza. The belief was that Mrs. Malloch had Maori blood in her veins by one side or other, and that she had formerly been on the stage. Whether this was so or not, she was acknowledged to look a perfect lady. She led the style in dress, and held her own in every way at the Parker, although the greater part of the real ladies in San Francisco at that time boarded in the hotel, and the rest would most likely have done the same had there been room.

The son, Mr. Oswald, who took a part in the office-work of the firm, was also a remarkably fine-looking young man, about twenty at most; with rather a deep complexion, no doubt, but little more so than various young Southerners about town. He was an only child, I believe, and Mrs. Malloch certainly looked proud of him. His father, at the same time, though not a man to let his feelings get the better of him, took the young fellow's attendance on business very easily. The truth was, Mr. Oswald rarely failed to turn up at some time of the day, perhaps a little "seedy," but still able to do the chief part of the counting-house work, in particular the foreign correspondence. He wrote a beautiful hand, and knew something of languages, Spanish more especially. The worst that could be said against him was that he kept rather too much company in the young rowdy quarter; still there was no good reason to find fault so far as the firm was concerned.

The premises of Macansh and Malloch consisted of a large wooden-frame house and

tarpaulin shed, which were packed choke-full of goods, to say nothing of the heaps which were outside. In regard to convenience for a junior clerk's duties, I could not have had it if ever so inclined. Even young Mr. Malloch had to settle himself away upon the top of a clearing made for the purpose, under a skylight, with the books to himself, and his ice-jug with a straw in it, handy to the sample-cases of various liquors consigned to us. This was a quarter he had tolerably well to himself; indeed he was somewhat jealous of being disturbed over his figures, and certainly the last thing to my taste would have been to meddle with Mr. Oswald. He had a sort of eye I always felt inclined to be cautious of. It was yellow, like a dog's, and when he observed me at all, which he did not often appear to do, it somehow made me feel like a dog as well.

There was one thing which before long obtained me some degree of notice on the young man's part. He had a beautiful little Spanish mare of his own, of the *pinta* or piebald sort, which is valued among the Spaniards; and if there was anything alive in particular that he had a fondness for, it was Juanita. Room or none, she had to be kept at hand on the premises, mostly getting put up in a close corner of the store-shed, with neither light nor aught else suitable. The goods and the filly were none the better for being together, and she had a fair variety to choose from; while as to foddering her, if it was neglected, she could generally manage to help herself in the dark; plaited Leghorn straw, grass hats from Manilla, or fine India mattings—it was quite the same to her, and, considering what fools some of the consigners must have been, it could signify little to them. They sent the things on commission, whether wanted or not, and often enough to lie on our hands. In regard to exercise, Juanita had too much of it at times, but it was chiefly after sundown; at other times she had none. I had been well accustomed to a pony myself, and being brought up with the run of farmers' horses besides, I took some trouble in attending to the poor beast, which young Mr. Malloch soon began to take as a matter of course. He not only soon came to expect it in the coolest possible style, but seemed to intend making me answerable if anything went wrong with the mare.

Meanwhile, I did not at all dislike the warehouse business. One of my duties was