

to the warehouse door, where he jumped down and gave a rattling knock, evidently in a state of high indignation. The animal he had ridden was no other than Juanita herself, who could not easily be mistaken, from her colour. She had been sold to him for a swingeing sum, and he had subsequently found out she was going stone-blind. He showed the *venta*, or bill of sale, not signed in Mr. Oswald's own name, but the seller had soon been traced. The consequence was that the ranchero demanded his money back on the spot. Mr. Malloch happened to be in the office at the time, and Mr. Macansh paid the Spaniard, while poor Juanita was led round as quietly as possible to her former quarters.

The same afternoon there was a rumour that young Malloch had been seen in a Sacramento steamer, bound for the diggings with a party; as to the mare, circumstances so turned out that I could not attend to her further, and it was the last I saw of her. A vessel in harbour had been brought round that very day, with English coal in her hold for our firm; she had to lie out from wharf, and a trustworthy hand was required aboard while clearing cargo: also to keep the ship during night. The duty was assigned to me, and I thus not only saved the expense of board in town, but had the promise of a little extra pay for the night business. Several days were quite taken up with the charge; I saw nothing of what went on at head-quarters, and had not the least idea of any difference in the state of things there. But before my services in the ship were at an end, an event took place which brought the firm to the verge of ruin, whilst it wholly dissolved my connexion with them. One night our warehouses caught fire, half of them being burnt to cinders (including poor Juanita's shed), and the remainder being greatly damaged. Next day a meeting of creditors had to be called, and a satisfactory arrangement was not long of being come to. In my own case, however, it turned out very much the reverse. I did not wish to trouble old Mr. Macansh, who left immediately at the close, and took to his bed for some days, having over-exerted himself to save the goods during the fire. After waiting for Mr. Malloch, he did not seem to know almost anything about me, or if a balance was really due in my case, and said he could do nothing whatever in it till Mr. Macansh was there; but I could call again. As for my continuing in the employment, he said they were going to restrict themselves exclusively to the home trade, and would not want any young hands.

Fortunately there was one resource to fall back upon in San Francisco at that time, namely ship-keeping. Among no less than three hundred sea-going vessels in harbour without crews, at every stage of clearing out or getting ready again, not to speak of steamers, coasting craft, and ships at anchor outside, it may easily be conceived that suitable hands to take charge were at a premium. My age was no objection in ordinary cases with Americans, as I had learnt something on the voyage round Cape Horn, besides the experience I had gained in the firm. I was, besides, well grown, and able to give a character if required. In this line, in fact, I got along very well, from one engagement to another, for the most part for short periods, and without much responsibility. Sometimes I had a preferable job ashore, but at other times could carry on both if needful, as during the day I was generally my own master. On the whole I liked the occupation; the pay got to be worth considering, in addition to which there was often extra employment to be had among the cargo. Then the lodging was free, the board often partly so, and the washing handy to do for oneself, which was no trifling advantage. There were always neighbours of some sort round about, occasionally worth getting acquainted with; in every case, too, I had a boat at my own command, so that I could go into town when necessary, or try a little fishing in the bay; or even take a short trip once a week, during the safe hours of the day, round Yerba Buena island or further, to have a shot at the seals and ground-squirrels. On the latter account, not from any real danger in the circumstances, I bought a first-rate English rifle, which of course I did not carry otherwise; never having gone into the general habit of wearing a revolver, which would scarcely have looked suitable, and if any one had inclined to meddle with me ashore, could only have made matters worse.

I had begun keeping a barque in harbour, the *Quincey Adams*, the fourth or fifth I had taken charge of, when I almost thought I should be driven out of her by rats. The only spot where I could manage for a time was in the fore-hold, which had been full of sugar, and consequently swarmed with cockroaches; a rat seldom daring to show face there so long as the cockroaches could fly, or if he did, better sport could not have been wished than to see them after him, with his feet sticky. However, as soon as the sugar was clear, the chill of the nights began to settle the cockroaches, and wherever I berthed myself, there was no sleeping for the rats. It was no use shooting at them; in