The Story of Pablo, the Innkeeper.

The night had fallen when we drove into the courtyard of the inn, tired, hot and dusty, but a well-cooked dinner and a bottle of wine soon made me forget my fatigue. I found that Pablo, the innkeeper, spoke English, and as we sat smoking beneath a grape arbor behind the inn, he gave me a description of the town and its surroundings. "By the way," I said, as the conversation lagged, "do you happen to know anything about the old man and his strange daughter who came up from Los Angeles with me?" "Si, si, senor," he replied, "its a long and sad story, but, if the senor will have the patience to listen, I will tell all I know about it.

About fifteen years ago, there came one evening into Santa Barbara a young man who claimed to be from old Castile. He was well received and, being out of money, found employment as foreman of the Rancho de Los Guanos, owned by wealthy Don Romero, the old man of the stage coach. Mercedes, his daughter, was at that time about nineteen years of age and as beautiful a girl as could be found in all California. It soon became known that Juan Guieterez, the young foreman, was deeply in love with Mercedes, and before the end of that spring their engagement was announced.

"One fine evening in May I was coming down the Mission Canon and had stopped for a moment beneath the great sycamore which rises like a sentinel outside the garden walls of the Mission. As I stood there, I heard a voice in the holy garden, which I recognized to be that of a young priest by the name of Fernandez; these were the words which came to my ear on that calm night in May. 'Father in Heaven above, who knoweth that I am a God-fearing and holy man, listen to my prayer and tell me why I, one of your most humble and obedient servants, am prevented from doing a deed of mercy which would save a girl from marrying a scoundrel, aye, the girl whom I love with madness even though a priest, yet must listen to the confessions of her lover and not speak a word of warning to her. My God, why art thou so unjust? Hast thou, in all thy power, no mercy? Answer and ease my pain or by—oh! forgiveness, dear Lord, what have I said, help me, dear Father.' This impassioned prayer ended in a sob, a gate clanged, the footsteps died away in the distance and all that could be heard was the rustling of the treetops and the far-away bark of a coyote.

"It flashed across me at once that Fernandez referred to Guieterez and Mercedes, and I sat for the moment dumbfounded. At first I thought of repeating what I had overheard to Don Romero, but, on further reflection, decided not to do so; he would laugh at my seemingly-wild story and, after all, Fernandez might possibly be mistaken.

"A month passed and at last came the night of the wedding. The Mission Church was filled to overflowing, and soon from the choir loft came stirring strains of the wedding march. The ceremony was half through when, of a sudden, there were heard these words; 'In the name of God, the Father Almighty, stop!' and from the desk where he had been sitting stepped Fernandez, his face pale and his dark-brown eyes shining brightly. Not a sound could be heard, no one hardly dared breathe. Then, with a voice full of feeling, Fernandez spoke: 'Know ye, my children, that if God had not given me strength to speak, a murderer would have been married to this beautiful girl, a crime as great as the one I am about to commit, for I now betray to you the confession of Pedro Guieterez, made to me on the twelfth of April last. On the night of the great mountain fire last Autumn, this man murdered Manuel Pasqualez, the old Indian who lived in the Santa Ynez Valley, and stole from him all the money he had stored away. You all remember how a starving half-breed was arrested and hanged for the crime and that Guieterez was one of his most ardent prosecutors. And now that I have broken the Law of Confessions, I care not if you torture me to death, for I have done my duty to God; in the name of Jesus Christ, the Father Almighty, Amen.' He folded his arms and with a firm step walked back to his desk. Then followed a scene of great commotion; Mercedes had fainted and fallen on the stone steps of the altar and a tiny stream of blood trickled from her forehead over her maiden white gown. Fernandez saw this and started towards her, but was held back by two priests and led away to the cloisters. Guieterez broke down completely and gave himself up to the constable without a sign of resistance.

"The people departed one by one and soon I was