friends I was informed that William Nelson had just arrived in San Antonio from California. Nelson and I had been fellow soldiers in the same company in the United States Army some years previously and I wanted to see him, but I put off looking him up until the following Monday. To my disappointment I found that he had already departed on the stage, accompanied by a wife, bound for Indianola, there to take steamer for New Orleans. That same day I met the sheriff and was surprised to find that he was looking for Nelson. Asking what he wanted Nelson for, the sheriff showed me a letter from Los Angeles, written by one who professed to have nursed Nelson during his long illness from the gunshot wound, saying that Nelson had confessed a murder to him. Nelson had called him to his bedside, said the writer, and confided to him that he believed he could get well immediately if he confessed a great crime he had once committed. He then confessed the murder of McMullen in San Antonio, saying that after a dispute with McMullen over money matters he had stolen into the latter's room and cut his head off with a bowie knife.

"Strange to say, the letter writer stated, Nelson showed improvement from the time of his confession and in two or three months was walking the streets a well man. The letter writer then explained that the matter now lay on his own conscience and knowing that Nelson intended visiting San Antonio, where he apparently dared to go now that his mind was free, he, the letter writer, felt that he ought to report the confession to the Texas authorities, though he did not know whether the confession was just the vagary of a sick man or whether there really had been committed a murder in San Antonio on a victim named McMullen.

"I told the sheriff what I had learned of Nelson's departure for New Orleans, but apparently no serious effort

was made to apprehend him at this late day and he returned safely to California."

I was of course very much interested in Woodward's story and on returning to Los Angeles I questioned Nelson for the details of his marvelous recovery, without telling him of what Woodward had confided to me. Nelson's explanation was this: That during his long confinement he had experienced many spiritual manifestations and had been led to study the teachings of the spiritualists. That a spirit had finally told him that there was a gun wad in his wound that the doctors had overlooked, told him just where it was lodged and said that he must have it removed in order to get well. He had called in a doctor, who refused to believe it or to probe. "Then," said he, "I got a piece of wire, bent a hook on the end of it and knowing exactly where the wad was situated I drove the wire into the old wound and pulled out the wad. Whereupon I got well."

Now, Nelson's statement could not have been true because he had been on his bed for three years and that gun wad could hardly have persisted in there for that length of time without disintegrating, nor could the man have survived the probing of an old wound in such a crude manner. The only theory that I can accept is that he did kill McMullen, that in his low condition following his own wounding the crime preyed upon his mind to the extent that it kept him from getting well, that the fact of mind over matter was proven in his case in that his confession so relieved his mind that he was able to build up a faith in his recovery that actually resulted in a cure.

There is a character mentioned in my first book of reminiscences that deserves further notice. This is Roy Bean, he who kept the Headquarters Saloon at San Gabriél Mission in the early '50's and who in later years became famous as the

Justice of the Peace of Langtry, Texas, known as "The Law West of the Pecos." Roy came from a highly respectable family; had one brother, Josh, who was a captain in the army and another, Sam, who was a freighter and trader in the Santa Fé and Chihuahua trade.

When Roy was sixteen or seventeen his brother Sam took him to Chihuahua and put him in his store as clerk. A Mexican desperado came into the store and attempted to terrorize the place. Roy ordered him out. With drawn knife the desperado advanced on the American youth, who kept warning him to stand back. The Mexican kept coming on, leering and wielding his knife, until within three or four feet of the boy. Then that boy put a bullet square between the bully's eyes.

A Mexican mob gathered, bent on lynching Roy Bean. His brother and a few other Americans in the place rallied to his defense until they were able to slip him out of town. He was taken to Jesús María, a large mining town in the northeast corner of Sonora, but the news followed him there and a second attempt was made on his life by a mob. Again Americans rallied to his support and a conflict ensued with the final result that the Americans in Jesús María were driven out. Their stores were sacked and they barely escaped with their lives. They finally found refuge in California after a terrible journey.

Among those pillaged and driven out was William B. T. Sanford, who became a prominent merchant in Los Angeles and was a member of the old Ranger company during the bandit reign of terror. He lost his life in the explosion of the tug *Ida Hancock* in San Pedro Bay.[1] Frank Carroll was another. He became a saloon keeper out at the Mission in competition with Roy Bean's "Headquarters."

On arriving in California from Sonora Roy Bean first

stayed in San Diego. He was quite a dashing figure of a young buck and was soon prancing around the old town appareled in all the gay trappings of a Californian caballero, on a spirited steed with silver-mounted saddle and bridle, and became the beau ideal of the aristocratic señoritas of California's original white man's settlement.

One day he had a famous adventure that came very nearly ending much too seriously. There was a gay, rollicking son of Gaul in San Diego who prided himself on his horsemanship and his ability to shoot from the saddle with a revolver. He bantered Roy for a match, shooting at a target from horseback at full charge. Roy promptly accepted the challenge, on the condition that each should be the target for the other. This was probably just a counter-banter on the part of Roy, but the Frenchman accepted the condition and the two heroes prepared for the desperate encounter.

It was common practice for Californians and Mexicans to fight duels for the fun of it with lances or with the swords they usually carried on their saddles beneath one thigh; but a revolver duel on horseback was a new sport and when the news got out that such an encounter was to take place in the principal street of Old Town there was great excitement near and far.

Harathzy was sheriff of San Diego County at the time—the well-known Count Harathzy who later became the great vineyardist and winemaker of Sonoma and also served as superintendent of the U. S. Mint at San Francisco. In connection with the mention of the Count it may not be amiss to recall here that when Harathzy was called upon to settle his account with the government at the end of his term in the mint, he was forty thousand dollars short. He claimed the deficiency was due to a defect in the chimney flues of the mint which carried off the smoke from the molten gold; in

other words that the shortage went up the flue in smoke. There was a great deal of public amusement at the superintendent's explanation at the time and it was then the expression originated that a thing has "gone up in smoke" or "gone up the flue." However, scientific tests proved the mint superintendent's contention true, he was exonerated, the flues reconstructed and the drain on the mint stopped.

To return to San Diego: Sheriff Harathzy pretended to regard the approaching duel between Roy Bean and the French gallant as a sort of joke and took no steps to prevent it. Indeed, it would have been quite an impolitic act to call it off because news of the impending show brought rancheros swarming to town, the rancheros patronized the stores and cantinas and there ensued lively prosperity, for the moment at least.

Seconds were appointed and the sheriff did exercise his authority by insisting that the firing be so arranged as not to endanger—at least, not much—the innocent bystanders. If either of the combatants shot an onlooker the law would step in with a penalty; and on this basis the fight took place.

The two heroes maneuvered their spirited horses, each jockeying for a position that would enable him to fire in the direction of the open plain where the crowd was not permitted to gather. I am indebted for a particular description of this combat to the Hon. Guadalupe Estudillo, an honored resident of Los Angeles at the present time and formerly Treasurer of the State of California.* He was living in San Diego then and says it was surely a most exciting affair. Each one strove desperately to get to windward of the other, as a sailor would say, because the one to

* The fine old adobe home that is shown to visitors in Old Town, San Diego, as "Ramona's Marriage Place," was built by the Estudillo family about 1820.

leeward could not fire without shooting toward the crowd.

Finally Roy plugged the Frenchman, and as the latter reeled in the saddle Roy plugged his horse to boot. Down went rider and mount in a heap in the middle of the street and young America was proclaimed winner. The señoritas cheered him as boldly as they dared from the sidelines and for the moment he was the hero triumphant.

The Frenchman was not killed, only sorely wounded; but now that the show was over and could no longer be construed as a valuable attraction the sheriff decided to vindicate the law and threw Roy into jail. Count Harathzy had just built a new jail, not of adobe but of a new mixture called concrete which was a seven day wonder to the natives, and he was proud of it. It was fine to have a hero to incarcerate in there because it certainly made the new edifice a center of attraction. The señoritas no longer hung back in maidenly modesty to cheer only faintly for their idol, but they stormed the jail with baskets and shawls filled with flowers, cold chicken, tamales, enchiladas, dulces, wines and cigars and crowded for position at the gratings to hand their gifts through to their Adonis. Those warm-hearted little California beauties just went wild over the handsome fellow; for, as a matter of fact, Roy Bean was as handsome as an Adonis. His complexion was as fair and rosy as a girl's. Hair black and silky, figure above medium height and perfect. In manners a Chesterfieldian gallant.

No jail could hold a hero whom so many beautiful women were passionately determined should be freed. Not even Count Harathzy's new concrete jail, the first in Southern California. Concealed among the fragrant petals of the bouquets, or maybe imbedded in the succulent hearts of tamales, were tools of escape. Roy cut his way through that miraculous concrete in less than no time. True gallant that

he was he afterward denied that the ladies supplied him with contraband and claimed that no tools were needed to burrow through that public contract job. However, some one had seen to it that his horse stood all caparisoned behind the jail, with holster and pistol swung at the pommel, and the young gentleman cut stick for Los Angeles.

In 1857 or '58 Roy went to Piños Altos, New Mexico, and thenceforth was lost to California although his fame was destined to shine forth in years to come more brilliantly even than it had among his admiring circle at the "Headquarters" in San Gabriél or among his sportive cronies in the Pueblo de los Angeles.

At the outbreak of hostilities between the North and the South, when the Texans invaded New Mexico and were so roughly handled by General Canby, Roy Bean assisted in organizing a company of Confederate sympathizers that called themselves the Free Rovers. Others called them the Forty Thieves. After the failure of the Texan campaign in New Mexico the Forty Thieves disbanded and Roy engaged in running cotton into Mexico and bringing out supplies to San Antonio for the Confederate army. He was well paid, apparently, and made a lot of money that way. When I was in the service at San Antonio in '65 Roy was there with his wagon train. He was still freighting to Mexico, in business for himself.

When the Southern Pacific Railroad was built from El Paso to San Antonio a certain station near the Río Grande, which is the border line between the United States and Mexico, was named Langtry. It is just west of the Río Pecos. Roy Bean opened a saloon there and called it "The Jersey Lily." This saloon and its keeper made the station of Langtry, Texas, almost as famous as the Jersey Lily herself, the beautiful Lily Langtry. It was here that the dash-

ing youth of yesteryear became Justice of the Peace, an office which he has held continuously down to the time I am now writing, with one brief exception. One time as an election approached some boosters for another settlement that had sprung up down nearer the river put up a rival candidate to Roy. The latter feeling so sure that his re-election was automatically assured, gave little attention to the rival claimant, with the surprising result that the upstart was actually elected and the judicial seat moved down to the river bank.

"But I am the only man that could ever make anything out of the office," said Justice Bean to me when he was laughing about that political slipup, "and in a little while the Río Grande judge came up to propose to me that I buy him out. He brought his commission along with him, his docket and all his papers, and dickered with me. He was sick of the job. So I gave him a demijohn of whiskey, two bear skins and a pet coon for the right, title, honor and emoluments of the office. I've run the thing ever since without opposition."

Roy's court is held in the bar-room of "The Jersey Lily" saloon. The bar, or counter, is the judicial bench, and whiskey barrels set up on end in front of it constitute the legal bar. The opposing lawyers, if there are any, use the heads of the barrels as desks. From this courtroom in the desert have issued decisions that have carried the fame of Justice Bean the world 'round. Judge Bean and Coroner Bean, for he also occupied the latter distinguished office.

While the railroad was under construction beyond Langtry a section boss killed a Chinese laborer. He was arrested and brought before Judge Bean. The boss was a popular man in that section and valuable to the railroad authorities so the latter exerted strong pressure on the court to get him