

# THE LUCKY LAWRENCE



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Illustrations  
by  
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## CHAPTER I

The Lawrence family, although in the best sense of the word pioneers, had not come to the Golden West by means of covered wagons. They had left their Boston moorings, like the genteel folk of means and leisure that they were, in the year of our Lord 1840, and had sailed elegantly for Rio, for Buenos Aires, and around the Horn. They had loitered in Valparaiso and in Lima for some weeks, taking things easily, in a leisurely day, and had in due time come up the stormy coast of California, and had dropped anchor in the opalescent harbor of peaceful Yerba Buena.

For San Francisco had been still familiarly known as Yerba Buena, then, and the blue waters of the bay had lapped the strand at Montgomery street. The globe trotters, magnificent Philip Lawrence and his frail, Indian-shawled, pretty wife, had remained on the ship for a few days, for the settlement on shore promised small comfort for tourists.

Early in their second week, however, they had been obliged to seek lodging ashore. This was for two reasons, one important, one ridiculous. The important reason was that an heir to the Lawrence was about to be born. The absurd reason was that some preposterous person had discovered gold, or had pretended to, at a place called Sutter Creek, and that everyone in Yerba Buena had promptly lost his senses.

Philip and Abigail Lawrence naturally did not lose their senses. They were rich anyway; they were above this undignified scramble for lucre. Philip had an income of three thousand a year, and Abigail's father owned five sailing vessels, including this very Abby Baldwin in which they had made their wonderful honeymoon trip.

But the sailors, and indeed the officials of the Abby Baldwin, had felt differently. They were not above acquiring fortunes, and they had instantly deserted the ship and made for the gold region. The rumor of gold, spreading like prairie fire between breakfast and the noon dinner, had found the ship emptied by sunset. Philip and



He Had Rowed Them and Their Carpet Bags Ashore.

Abigail had signaled a Chinese crab catcher, and in his little shallop with stained brown sails he had rowed them and their carpet bags ashore.

They had gone to "the Frenchwoman's," a quaint-looking adobe house on a hill, with an upper balcony and shutters. There were no windows, but there were tents of mosquito netting over the bed, and the bare floors were clean. Downstairs was merely a level of dim arcades, earthen-floored and smelling of spilled wine, where men lounged on benches, and where the Frenchwoman herself tended the bar. But the upstairs room had been comfortable enough and Abigail had eaten a shore meal of fish stew, dumplings, fresh soft black figs, sour bread, and thin wine, with some appetite.

This would do for the present, she had said. But one could not live quite like a savage, after all, and immediately after breakfast tomorrow Philip must find a really nice place, and a horse. If not, then they would have to go back to the ship.

So much for Philip's benefit. But when he had gone out after supper Abigail had felt very low-spirited indeed. They had been eleven months getting so far, and the baby was due in a few weeks' time. Perhaps it would be weeks before they could get a crew on the Abby Baldwin. Philip had returned flushed, distressed, and annoyed from his search the next morning; he had returned flushed, distressed, and increasingly annoyed from the searches of the following days. The Frenchwoman's was not only the

best, it appeared to be the only possible place for Abigail to stay, and to contemplate a confinement there, with the noise and drinking and the smell of wine below stairs, and with nobody but whiskered old Madame Bouvier to attend her, was madness. Desperate, Philip had rented a spanking team and a loose-wheeled buggy and had begun to drive about the adjoining country looking for a sifter.

For it had become obvious now that the crew was not going to return to the Abby Baldwin. The ship swung rotting at her anchor, in a dismal company of other deserted vessels, and the sun beat down upon their empty decks week in and week out, while the hides, coffee, and rope packed beneath slowly decayed.

Abigail had covered passionate pages with the story of their adventures, and had put the letters into the canvas flap of her trunk, under the pasted picture of the little girl with the rope of roses. Some day they would get home again, Philip, she, and the baby, and what a story they would have to tell!

Meanwhile, fifty miles southeast of foggy Yerba Buena, they had found refuge on a rancho. It was managed by a widow, one Senora Castellazo, who lived farther south in another hacienda, and was willing to rent this one to the strangers. It had contained no furnishings whatsoever when the Lawrence had moved in.

But many trips to the Abby Baldwin had pretty well transformed the dismal place. Philip, breathlessly grateful that somehow, with the aid of a Mormon doctor from Benicua and the care of two stolid, wall-eyed Mexican women, Abigail had actually brought forth a first-born daughter, had made no complaints. He had had carted down wagon loads of chairs, carpets, china, bed linen, books—all the personal possessions of himself and his bride.

A bride! Poor Abigail had laughed forlornly on the first anniversary of her wedding day. It had found her weak and weary, stretched on a mattress on the floor of one of the cool rooms, with a burning August day hammering away at the spread level acres of the rancho outside. Beside her had been Annie Sarah.

They had brought her in hot dusty grapes, and hot dusty figs, and warm wine, and finally goat's milk, to solace her in her ordeal. Except for that, neither Mexican woman had volunteered anything. They had watched the frightened, doubtful, breathless struggle apathetically, until their oily brown hands had actually grasped Annie Sarah. After that they had seemed capable enough.

Anyway, it had been gotten over, somehow, and Abigail had been free to cry a little, thinking of her room at home in an orderly, shaded Massachusetts village, with Ma's lavender-scented linen on the smooth bed, roses in a green glass vase on the bureau, and the lace curtains blowing softly in and out of the opened upstairs windows. Lilies, trembling grass, and Grandpa's grave in the graveyard, and doughnuts and currant jelly—oh, dear!

As soon as the baby and the mother were well upon the road to normal living, Philip and Abigail had seriously discussed going home. Then old Senora Castellazo had died, and her sons had wished to dispose of the Santa Clara hacienda. Four hundred acres for nine hundred dollars, Philip had considered it a wise investment. There was fruit—some fruit—there already, there were sheep and cattle included in the sale price. If figs and grapes would grow there, why not other fruits—peaches and pears?

He would take his wife and daughter back to New England, he promised, on the first suitable ship; it would be a long hard trip for a woman with a baby, but the journey across the plains would be worse, and there was no further hope of the Abby Baldwin.

No, upon consideration it had seemed to Philip that this sunshiny, sheltered flat region, well inland, was the coming district, and that by holding onto this property ten years, fifteen years, he and Abigail could not fall to be among the prosperous pioneers of the new world. Philip was one of the men who had shot dead the gold craze with an epigram: "a flash in the pan."

Meanwhile Fanny Lucy had been born. "Look here, young lady, aren't there any boys where you came from?" Philip had said, half serious, half teasing, as he held his second daughter in his arms. Abigail had looked at him anxiously. But he had not been really angry.

Only it had been rather trying that a fine ship had left for South America and eastern ports on the very next day. She had delayed so long in San Francisco harbor that Philip and Abigail had really hoped to be able to sail on her. But Fanny Lucy had deflected, too, and had unconsciously affected her parents' destinies thereby,

For letters had gone to Boston on that ship, and letters, four months later, somehow had struggled overland in answer. The respective families of Abigail and Philip had been perfectly delighted at their venture, and wrote that they were certainly envious of the dwellers in a country where there was no snow, no thunderstorms, and no poverty.

Abigail wrote glowing accounts of her new life to the family at home. She and Philip were going to build a really nice frame house, with bay windows, a bathroom, and a cupola. Everything they touched prospered; people called them "the Lucky Lawrences."

And Abigail had eight daughters, and one son, and the girls all married, during the late Sixties and early Seventies, in a land in which women were still rare and prized.

San Francisco grew like a mushroom, and Philip might have opened a thousand doors to great wealth, had he been a man to see. But he closed one after the other with his own hand, and went blindly on in an infatuation of satisfaction with his rolling acres, his miles of fruit trees, the growing family over which he ruled supreme.

Some of the girls went west when they married, some lived in San Francisco or Stockton, some died. It was not a salubrious day for pioneer women, with one out of every seven dying in childbirth. Some were poor, opening boarding houses, scripping in lonely crossroad villages.

But no one of them ever forgot that she was a Lucky Lawrence, and belonged to a distinguished New England family. They talked incessantly of the significant fact that the Lawrence had not come to California as pioneers—oh, dear no! Mother Lawrence had come to San Francisco harbor on her wedding trip, on one of Grandfather Baldwin's own trading ships.

The one son, Patterson Lawrence, duly married, too, and lived in the house with which his parents had replaced the old adobe hacienda.

Abigail, and after her her daughter-in-law, in their fervor to encourage shade in that hot, dry country, planted everything upon which they could put their hands, close to the house. They did not foresee that the pampas grass and the verbeena trees, the peppers and roses and evergreens, would grow closer, thicker, darker every year. Eventually the pretentious old frame building, with its scullions of mill work and its bay windows, its cupola and balustraded roof, was caught tightly in dusty heavy foliage, and the garden filled with mossy, slippery patches where even in summer no light crept in on the sickly grass.

For thirty years the House of Lawrence had been in eclipse, and the garden showed it. Acre by acre old Philip Lawrence and his son Patterson had watched their fortunes decline; the old pioneer of the Yerba Buena days lived to see the end of the century, and the end of his own prosperity, and died, leaving what remained in hands even less capable than his own.

For Patterson Lawrence was a poet, who lived merely to gather worthless old books about him, to dream over the painstaking penning of insignificant essays, which were rarely printed and for which he was never paid.

At forty he married a poet's daughter, who had been precariously existing for all her sixteen years upon bread, water, and the "Sonnets from the Portuguese," in a shanty on Rincon hill. Editha, before her early death, brought to the House of Lawrence two sons and three daughters. Sixteen when she married, ten years later, when Ariel was born, she quietly, happily expired, to music, as it were.

For Patterson had been reading poetry to her, the four older children, by some miracle, quiet and occupied down by the creek, and Ariel in her mother's arms taking a fourth-day view of life, when death came.

"She looks as if she were listening, Pat! She's going to be a great poet, and make all our fortunes!" Editha had said. And one minute later she had slipped away, leaving the prophecy to gild little Ariel's childhood.

The widowed elderly father did the best he could for them all until his oldest son was nearly eighteen and Gail a capable, bustling house manager two years younger. Then the big guns began to boom across the water, the service flags flashed in answer upon many a quiet flag pole in Clippersville, and Patterson Lawrence, fifty-eight years old, put a copy of Keats in one pocket and a copy of Shelley in the other and hurried off to die of flu in overcrowded Washington, just as sure as his loyal children were sure that he was helping his country and doing the patriotic thing.

Then Phil and Gail had to shoulder the burden. Gail Lawrence was supremely the girl for the job. She was squarely built, womanly at sixteen, brimming with interests, activities, ambitions, and enthusiasms.

By this time the once lucky Lawrence had almost no money. Phil had all but finished high school, and all the friends, relatives, and neighbors said that certainly a bright fine boy like that ought to complete his course. But as Phil and Gail quite simply agreed, meals were more important than education. So Phil stopped his schooling and went to work at the Iron Works, and Gail, upon being offered a job in the public library, accepted it gratefully.

They scrambled along in the disreputable old house very happily; they were always laughing, singing, going on picnics; they were passionately devoted to each other, and everyone was sure that they would get along splendidly. Were they not the last of the Lucky Lawrences?

Surest of all was Gail, the resolute, undaunted, optimistic,

ter, cook, nurse, and lawmaker in one. Life had been a story to Gail, for a few years, and she had turned a fresh page eagerly every day. She and Edith were going to marry delightful men, and Phil should marry, too. And Sammy should live in Edith's house and Ariel in Gail's, and Ariel should write wonderful poetry. There would be plenty of money for everything, as there always had been . . . soon.

But somehow it had not worked out that way. Gail had grown a little more sober, a little thinner, as the years had slipped by; they had all grown shabbier. Even to her, poverty began to seem a serious matter.

Phil, to her concern, had never quite seen the joke of being poor and being orphaned. He had always been brief, worried, and unresponsive when Gail had tried to drag him into her dreams. And Edith hated poverty, too; it hurt her pride. She had grown quieter, bookish, intellectual, something of a recluse.

Sammy had done nothing except slide through his shoes and get "minus" marks in his studies. And Ariel was completely spoiled. They had all hailed her as a poet before she could fairly write. She did write poetry, and that was enough for Clippersville. Clippersville was not critical. The Challenge published everything Ariel wrote. And Ariel was discontented, proud, and unmanageable.

Altogether, the outlook was discouraging, and promised to grow more so. There were moments when even Gail could not quite believe in the luck of the Lawrence.

Her twenty-third birthday found her a quick-witted, eager, capable girl, secretly a little bit scared and doubtful, but outwardly gay, irresponsible, and pleasant to look at—like all the Lawrence. Even the boys never seemed to go through lumpy or spotty phases, but were clean-skinned and bright-eyed through boyhood as through babyhood. The older four had tawny thick hair, which had tumbled all over their heads as children, but which on occasions could be made to take more fitting positions.

Ariel was different; frail, pink-cheeked, and cream-skinned, with frightened big hazel eyes and a small mouth. Ariel's hair was corn-silk gold.

Phil worked in the Iron Works for eighty dollars a month, Gail was paid half that monthly for a seven-day week in the public library, Edith made thirty dollars a month as assistant in the book department of Muller's big store, Sammy was supplementing his school career at nineteen with eager labors as errand boy and general office help on the Challenge and Ariel was supposed to be in high school. Ariel was now a fairytale seventeen.

And Gail was twenty-three today. She had presents at the breakfast table in the good old Lawrence fashion. Nobody knew where they came from, or who paid for them, but the Lawrence always managed to give each other presents on anniversaries.

They Gail and Edith rushed the breakfast paraphernalia into the sink. Ariel was off to school, Phil had disappeared; Sammy had gone first of all. The two girls scrambled through the necessary kitchen work with a speed born of long practice.

The big kitchen was shaded, was in order. The cold water faucet dribbled suddenly, audibly, in the silence, as Gail and Edith, breathless and hot, paused at the hall door. Edith crossed the splintery floor to turn off the tap.

Then Gail and Edith went upstairs, passing the open front door on their way. They hesitated a minute, looking into the jungle of garden. There was a hush of spring green grass, contraband daisies, and a burst of untidy bridal wreath down by the old fence. "Look at the pear tree, Gail!"

"Doesn't it just take your breath away?"

They shut the door and went upstairs, Gail saying of the unmade beds, "Let's flap 'em."

Edith's face clouded a little. She hated compromise and slovenliness; she hated the hard conditions of her life that made some truce with them necessary. The clock on the landing struck once for the 1:12 hour after eight; she was due at the cement store, and Gail at the library, at nine.

"We'll have to," she conceded briefly, sighing.

"I'll bet you they flap 'em in the most expensive hotels!" Gail stated dauntlessly.

"I shouldn't have worn my office dress to breakfast," the older sister observed, glancing at her cuffs. She got a bottle of some cleaning extract, and began to dabble at spots.

"Egg!" she said disgustedly. Her glance approved of Edith. "That looks better on you than it ever did on Mary Tevis," she observed.

Edith studied herself in the mirror dispassionately.

"I never would have gotten it," she said. "I don't like dots. But it certainly has come in usefully."

"The worst of Mary Tevis is, she'll give you a bunch of things one time, and then forget you for seven years!" Gail, having made herself comparatively presentable, said briskly. "Now, when I'm rich, I shall have a list of girls—D—n such a shoe lace!"

"Abigail, you ought not say that. You'll get Ariel saying it."

Gail mended her lace, looked up with a flushed face.

"Didn't you think Ariel was beautiful at breakfast, Edie?"

"Oh, yes, she really is."

"Do you think—this may all be my imagination—but do you think she's interested in boys, already?"

Their eyes flashed together consciously. "Oh, yes, I know she is!" Edith answered unhesitatingly.

"She's only seventeen!"

"I know," said Edith, who combined

a recluse's sensitiveness and temperament with an occasional flash of daring. "I was fond of the boys at sixteen."

Edith, pretty as she was, had never had a beau, and Gail knew it. But it was the unwritten law of sisterhood not to say so.

Gail merely said perfunctorily, "Oh, well, yes, so was I! But, Edith, there seems to be something—different, in the way Ariel is."

The younger sister's quick keen gaze was lifted; Edith's serious look met Gail's consciously.

"Secretive," she offered.

"Well! Well, yes," Gail answered on a nervous laugh.

"Ariel will get married before either one of us, because we happen to be a little more particular!" Edith pronounced, with her little air of old-maidish snobbery. When Edith said things like that it vaguely irritated Gail.

She left Edith at Montalvo boulevard, and turned up the Calle to the Plaza, where the library stood.

"Heavenly day!" Gail said to Francis Wilcox, the librarian.

"Fine what about those slugs?" Mr. Wilcox answered without punctuation.

"They're here."

The day had begun. Gail unhasped the street door, and the usual waiting group of stragglers came in. Miss Foster clumped the newspapers into their holders; little Rose Cahill wheeled wire crates full of books to the different cases, and Gail took them from the barrows and filed them away in their places. The dim big rooms saw various noiseless activities afoot.

Gail thought of her youngest sister, as the dreary dim hours in the library began to slip by. Ariel was less fitted than any of the other Lawrence for the struggle of life. She was only an innocent, bewildered child.

She wanted—in fact all of them wanted—leisure and beauty and luxury in life. Ariel seemed to want it more than the others, somehow, or in some indefinably different way. She seemed drawn for beautiful gardens, beautiful porches, spacious, luxurious rooms. She pined, she drooped, in the atmosphere of poverty, griminess, dullness.

Thinking of all this, Gail abstractedly stamped and scribbled, and tossed the books about. When the whistles pranged noon, and a sudden responsive pang of hunger stabbed her, she put on her blue hat and walked up the street to Muller's, to meet Edith.

Edith, neat, cool, and clean, lifted an ecstatic look to Gail as she decorously finished the sale of seven novels to a passing motorist. The girls idolized and idealized each other, and were proud of their friendship. All the passion of the younger sister's rather cold nature was in the look; this was one of her awaited moments every day, when her flushed, adored, tousled Gail came in and they went to lunch together.

They went in at the side door to the home kitchen, and let up the shade, and began their preparations for lunch. The kettle was boiling over a bead of gas, for Ariel always came in promptly at twelve, and had her lunch and was gone before the older girls arrived.

Edith sat wearily, luxuriously, over rolls, honey, and tea, her eyes absent, her hand idly stirring the cup.

"Gail, I was thinking that we ought to learn some more poetry, as we do the beds. 'Member how we used to rattle it off, when we were little girls?"

"Oh, do I? 'The Lady of Shalott' and 'Grandmother's Story of Bunker Hill' and 'The Lost Leader' and James Whitcomb Riley—"

"We ought to do it again! It was lots of fun. I'd like to learn Noyes' 'Highwayman,' and some of Hodgson's poems, 'Eve' and 'The Old Bull.'"

"Ede, do you suppose things'll ever be any easier for us? Do you suppose we'll have clothes and a car, some day, and belong to a country club?"

Edith pondered it.

"I—don't really—know," she said at last hesitatingly.

"I mean," Gail fumbled along wistfully, "poor people—people who have a hard start—do!"

"Yes, I know they do!"

"Edith, I could stand anything for myself. But it worries me—about Phil and Ariel."

"I don't think Phil minds being poor so much—not since he's been going with Lily Cass," Edith offered.

"Well, I think I want him to mind! I don't think Phil is ambitious," Gail countered, with an anxious little laugh.

"Maybe we're foolish ourselves," Edith said, suddenly gloomy. "Maybe our luck's changed."

"Fooling ourselves?"

"Yes. Do you think we are?"

"I don't think I quite understand you," Gail said uncomfortably.

"Oh, yes you do!" Edith answered with a laugh.

"You mean," Gail said soberly, after a space, "that we aren't getting anywhere?"

"Well, are we? We are stuck in Clippersville," Edith summarized it. "Nobody knows we're alive. We're not in debt, because the doctors and dentists won't send us bills—but we ought to be. We haven't any clothes, any social standing—"

"Oh, we have that, Ede!"

"Well, if we have, if we are the Lucky Lawrences, if we were one of the most important families in California, once, what are we now? Who's going to marry us? Who is there here for us to marry, anyway? What's to prevent our living on and on here, old maids, scraping along as best we can—Phil marrying that horrible Mrs. Cass, Sam getting a job somewhere and going away, Ariel—committing suicide. I suppose—"

"Oh, Edith, Edith!" Gail protested horrified. "Don't talk like that! You're blue. You're just tired today,

or it's spring, or something! Why, darling, nobody knows where changes are coming from, or when. We're having our hard times now instead of later, that's all! We'll have dresses and country clubs and trips and—and fun, theaters, I mean, and everything, one of these days!"

Edith's grave, intellectual face was doubtful.

"You're twenty-three," she suggested significantly.

"I don't think I mind for myself; I mind for you," Edith said as they



"We Are Stuck in Clippersville— Nobody Knows We're Alive."

walked back to work. "You ought to be having good times. You ought to be dancing, and going to little restaurants, and—and everything."

"And so ought you!" Gail answered cheerfully, although she felt a knife in her heart.

"Oh, I—!" Edith dismissed herself lightly, and immediately fell into that silly strain for which Gail could find no better expression than "old maids."

"I have a feeling," Edith went on complacently, "that I will meet my husband and be married to him all in a very short time. You know that fortune teller that was at Mabel's—"

"I wish she wouldn't talk that way!" Gail thought, suddenly hot, irritable, and discouraged.

She felt more weary and discouraged as she went on her way. The long afternoon in the library dragged. She felt bored. A sense of injustice oppressed her. Twenty-three—and she might just as well have been fifty-three.

## CHAPTER II

She walked home in languid twilight; all Clippersville was relaxed and laded after the fierce, unexpected heat of the spring day. Gail thought that summer would be upon the world in no time now, the hot, dry, inland summer of California. Edith would buy four yards of dark blue dotted swiss, as she always did, and make herself a dainty, cool summer dress to wear with her lace collar. And Ariel would get out her cheap little silk slips and striped frocks.

Gail looked at a dress in Muller's window, a blue organdy with thin orange ribbons hanging in a bunch from shoulder and waist.

Turning away from the window, she walked straight into the miracle.

"I beg your pardon!" she said, laughing. For she had really crashed into this man inexcusably.

"Gail Lawrence!" he said.

For a second she was bewildered, taken back. Then with her own peculiar graciousness she extended both hands, and her round face lighted, and her blue eyes.

"Van Murchison!"

"Well, hei—lo!" he said delightedly.

"But I didn't know you were in town!"

"But I wasn't!"

And they both laughed ecstatically. "No, but seriously, Van," Gail presently began, in a delicious gutter but with a sensible and businesslike air, "seriously, when did you come and why, and how long are you going to be here, and what about Yale?"

"Seriously," he answered, dutifully, although still visibly abrim with laughter and excitement—"seriously— But are you walking home?"

"I am. My honest working day is done."

Laughter. Van put his hand with delightful familiarity under her elbow. They turned toward the Lawrence house, some three or four blocks away.

"Isn't it amazing how the old place has grown?"

"Well, isn't it? But you've not seen it for five years, Van!"

"And are you all still living in Racketty-packetty house?"

"Oh, that's what you used to call it!"

"That's what you called it."

"Yes, we're all here."

"Gee, Gail," Van said with simple fervor, "it makes a difference to me, having you here!"

"But tell me—you haven't told me—"

She turned her face to him, the sunset behind her aureoling her tawny head with gold. "Tell me what you're doing here, Van!"

"Well, I went back to coil after Christmas, see?"

"I see."

"Well, and I got a bug. Coughed, and pitted up, and was awful!"

Their joyous laughter, suddenly ringing out, was anything but amiable.

"You mean—lungs?"

"A pulmonary congestion. So now I have to lie in bed, drink milk, and rest."

[To Be Continued Next Week]

