

When San Jose Was Young

A Series of Interesting Articles of An Historical Nature
Prepared Especially for The News by a Well Known
Author and Journalist.

NO. 69 THE PUNISHMENT OF A SPY

In the early days in San Jose, Spanish-Californians sometimes severely punished women. One of the most conspicuous wrong-doers before the American occupation was a woman accused of being a spy. She was suspected of giving information to the Americans in the country. This woman's name was Senora Josefa Perrez. She came from Santa Cruz, the home of so many sinners.

Josefa Perrez was tried before the Alcalde. She was found guilty and sentenced to be put in stocks in the *jugado* for a term.

One-third of the *jugado* was occupied by the soldiers, one-third by the Alcalde, and the rest was used as the calaboose, or jail.

In the calaboose Josefa Perrez, the spy, was confined. Her acquaintances who were many, there visited her, and she was an object of great curiosity, pity and indignation.

Sometimes a mild offender was punished in the stocks by having only one leg placed therein. More desperate criminals were imprisoned by both legs, and the incorrigibles had their legs and neck in the stocks. Josefa

Perrez was sentenced to having two legs in the stocks. In consequence she was compelled to receive her friends lying on the floor, her legs outstretched and bound. The Don who told me about Josefa Perrez visited her in the calaboose. On the whole he thought that Josefa's punishment did her good. After that she behaved herself, and gave no more information to the Americans.

Sometimes immoral women were made to clean the streets near the Plaza. That was a very different task from such work today. Before the Americans came the streets were unpaved, and the work that these women did was equivalent to cleaning rough country roads.

The priests at Santa Clara had another punishment for bad women. At the mission such offenders were locked in a small adobe house built for wrong-doers. Here were confined bad women of the upper class. Their work was to grind hours every day in metates of stone, not corn, but coarse stone. The crunching of the stones, the impossibility of breaking them, the futility of the task made this work not only monotonous, but nerve racking.