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George Payson**

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REALITIES ***

**GOLDEN DREAMS
AND
LEADEN REALITIES.**

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AND

LEADEN REALITIES.

BY

RALPH RAVEN.

WITH AN

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER,

BY

FRANCIS FOGIE, SEN., Esq.

New York:

G. P. PUTNAM & CO., 10 PARK PLACE.

M.DCCC.LIII.

Table of Contents

	PAGE
INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.	5
CHAPTER I.	15
CHAPTER II.	28
CHAPTER III.	34
CHAPTER IV.	39
CHAPTER V.	47
CHAPTER VI.	59
CHAPTER VII.	68
CHAPTER VIII.	73
CHAPTER IX.	84
CHAPTER X.	103
CHAPTER XI.	116
CHAPTER XII.	132
CHAPTER XIII.	143
CHAPTER XIV.	157
CHAPTER XV.	173
CHAPTER XVI.	190
CHAPTER XVII.	207
CHAPTER XVIII.	223
CHAPTER XIX.	232
CHAPTER XX.	245
CHAPTER XXI.	257
CHAPTER XXII.	274

CHAPTER XXIII.	289
CHAPTER XXIV.	304
CHAPTER XXV.	316
CHAPTER XXVI.	326
Transcriber's Notes	

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INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

[Pg 5]

So! I have come to be an old man at last! and I hav'n't been a great while about it either. No one is a great while about anything nowadays. Where is my life? heighho! here I am holding tight on to the little end, and it slipping all the while faster and faster out of my fingers. And no wonder; sixty-nine years all taking hold of the rope, and all pulling together, walk it off as fast as two engines racing to a fire, and here is the seventieth running to join them. By the way, what a strange dream that was I had the other night! if I were superstitious, I should suppose it meant something, for I never had any like it before—the world on fire! ten thousand bells ringing the alarm! hurry up the engines! pour on water! but the ocean is burning too! Payne's problem is solved at last. Hark to those volcanoes! great guns, double shotted, there goes Mount Etna, and there's Vesuvius, and that, that must be Cotapaxi; what a tremendous burst there'll be when the fire reaches the great central magazine! but where are the mourners? do the stars miss one of their number? will its ashes reach their sphere?

Well, I have seen a great deal—magnetic telegraph railroads, woman's rights, crystal palaces, California, Australia, and now, ships of twelve thousand tons, the Atlantic turned into a horse-pond: what is the world coming to? There was no such thing when I was young—we didn't profess then to be wiser than all before us. I'm glad I shall soon be out of the way. And yet I should like to see the end. The end, when will that be? and who can tell what it will be? Heighho! it racks my old heart all to pieces, like a locomotive on a corduroy road. No wonder man's life has been shortened to three score-years and ten. How poor old Methusalah would have stared! why we live as long in a year as he did in one of his sleepy centuries. He never could have stood the racket, unless he had first been dried in an oven. It would have fretted the skin off him, as it did off that big juicy apple I had in my pocket when I rode Squire Smith's old trotting horse. Let me see, that was forty, fifty, yes, fifty-one years ago—strange how I remember such a trifle.

[Pg 6]

Well, well, I have overlapped my time, I don't seem to belong here. That was what that young fire-brain, what's his name, said this morning. He and I were like an ox yoked with a locomotive. I'm the ox; yes, yes, he's right; I can't keep up with their new-fangled ways; nor I don't want to either, they are too fast altogether. All I want is to die and be buried before they harness their steam to the hearses; and yet they've done that already. What was that railroad train the other day at Norwalk but a train of hearses, a great funeral procession? only that they put the folks into them before they were dead.

Yes, yes, the dead ride fast—tramp, tramp, along the land they go; splash, splash, along the sea; and why shouldn't they, if they like it, as well as their betters?

And I won't be buried in the city neither, nor in Greenwood. I've been crowded enough in my life-time—I'll have room enough after I'm dead. But where shall I go? There are places a plenty now, but in fifty years, or ten, who can tell that there won't be a hundred thousand trampling over my grave? Five dollars a square foot, let me see, that would be thirty dollars. Alas, poor Yorick! who would give thirty dollars to secure you a quiet sleep?

That was a glorious idea of that world-weary old Goth to be buried under a river, forever sounding his funeral dirge; but it's no sort of use now—that's the very place to be turned topsy-turvy. I'll be sunk in the very middle of the Atlantic—yes, that'll do—I shall be safe enough there, in an iron coffin. But wait a minute. They are talking already of laying their wires to Europe—yes, and then I shall hardly have settled myself for a nap of a thousand years or so, when they'll be sure to come foul of me, and perhaps fish me up again, or at least give me a confounded shock.

I used to think I would be buried by my old mother, under the old elm in the quiet churchyard. But it's no use: the churchyard is quiet no longer; the old elm is as dusty and worried as I; and the old tombstones have stopped mourning for the dead, to stare, and gape, and gossip over the living. No, I'll not be buried there, to be waked up every hour by that infernal whistle.

[Pg 7]

Heighho! what a strange thing it is to grow old all alone, and when everything else is so young! I used to think the world would grow old with me, but I believe it's younger than ever. But it's no such thing—it's only paint and varnish; the older it grows, the thicker they lay it on. Wash that off, and what is there but a withered, wrinkled old hag? Faugh! I'd as lieve sit down to dinner with a skeleton. There's nothing old but the hills. They're not ashamed to be grey, God bless 'em! They never can paint Mr. Washington.

How I love the sight of their conscious yet unpretending majesty, their quiet, self-reliant strength! With what grand and noble pity they seem to look down on our fretting, bustling insignificance!

But stop. Where am I? right in the middle of the nineteenth century—the last of my race—the last of the old fogies. There's something in that. There'll never be another after me. Noah, he was the first, and I'm the last. Who is there to mourn for Logan?

But, no matter. They've enough to do to mourn for themselves. From my soul I pity them, poor helpless creatures! stuffed full of self-sufficiency, they've no longer any occasion for our services; they're no longer sensible of any obligation. When I was young it was the fashion to respect old

age for what it had done, if not for what it could do; but we have changed all that.

[*He turns over some old papers and reads.*]

"July, 1812. Some reflections on the exceeding folly of growing old." Let me see: what is this? Oh, ha, ha, [*laughing feebly*] I remember now. It's that paper I wrote for my grandfather when I was younger and not so wise as I am now; and sister Mary—where is she now, I wonder—she wouldn't let me put it in his way.

[*He reads here and there.*]

"What a fine thing it is to be young, and in this time of the world too! We are the cream of all that have gone before us. We really live their life; we begin where they ended; we stand on their shoulders; their whole learning is only our alphabet; they laid the foundation, we build the superstructure. But poor old fogies! they would never have got any farther if they had lived a thousand years. It's a lucky thing for the world that they didn't—useless lumber, withered stubble, trees dead at the root—cut, burn, and bury them out of the way: they have done all the good in the world they ever can do, and the world wants them no longer."

[Pg 8]

"They are a clog on its machinery—dirt in its wheels—rust in its joints—a pebble in its shoe—it's never been a merry world since old men came into fashion."

"If a man must grow old, if he will be so unreasonable and unseasonable, let him keep it to himself and not infect everything about him. If his hair is grey, is that any reason why the sunshine should be so too?—if he walks with crutches, must the brooks stop running?—if his eyes are dim, must we put out the stars or clap a pair of spectacles on to the nose of the moon?"

"Heaven bless the mark! nothing grows old but man and his inventions—the sky is as blue—the sun's eye, though he has but one, is as bright—the wind is as frolicsome, as when they first shone and danced through Eden; the very flowers, though they fade and go out, yet keep their heart young to the last—who ever heard of a decrepit rose, a superannuated violet, or a greyheaded butterfly?"

"I never mean to grow old. I can ride as fast and as far as any of them—my heart beats as many beats to a minute as the best, no one shall ever ride over me, or cry to me to get out of his way.—My last pulsation shall be as vigorous as any that preceded it."

[*He lays down the paper with a cold shudder.*] Who said I was old? who was that talking about being buried? away with such idle fancies! I shant be buried these twenty years. I'm not old—I'm as vigorous and active as ever I was in my life—there's as much strength in that arm [*here he stretches out his right arm, and clasps it with his left hand*] as when I was thirty, and my limbs are as light, [*he gets up and dances*] I should like to see the young man that could tire me out, [*he sits down rather suddenly*] only I want practice to strengthen my wind; and as for my mind, I believe it is capable of greater exertion than ever, [*he knits his brow, and appears to be solving some knotty question in state or finance*] yes, I have twenty years yet as good as the best; hurrah boys! never say die! [*he swings his hat feebly round his head, then sits down in a tremor of shame and indignation at being detected by his youngest clerk in such outrageous fashion*].

[Pg 9]

In this state he takes his pen and with infinite labour writes these brief observations, as if all the fog of all the Fogies were in his veins.

If the author of the following narrative had taken my advice, he would never have gone to California in the first place, nor written this book afterwards. It is obvious to the dullest capacity that he wouldn't have written the book if he hadn't gone; and as for the other, he allows himself in the very first chapter that I did all I could to prevent it. It may be gratifying to the reader to know that I am the very person there mentioned in such flattering terms, and I can assure him that that account is by no means exaggerated. I believe I am, at least I have always enjoyed the reputation of being as sober and prudent as my neighbors; and it was therefore no more than natural that I should express the unalterable conviction there referred to. I added moreover my reasons for that conviction which the author has seen fit not to mention, possibly because his folly and obstinacy would thereby appear still more inexcusable than they do now; but he shall not escape so easily, as I am determined to set the whole matter in the clearest possible light.

My first and principal reason then was that I did not believe there was any such place as California.

"No such place as California! Well, you have found out your mistake by this time I suppose."

Not at all, I don't believe it now any more than I did then.

"What! not with all the gold that's pouring into the country, and the thousands of ships and hundreds of thousands of men that have gone there!"

Softly, my young friend, all this proves nothing. Indeed, if you have seen California, you of course are justified in believing, but not otherwise. I remember a great many people used to believe in the existence of such a man as Napoleon Bonaparte, and the papers were full of the subject, just as they are now of California. In fact, (I was younger then than I am now,) I used to believe in him myself, and dare say I should have gone on believing to this day if it hadn't been for that little book of the Bishop of Berkshire proving to a mathematical certainty that such a series of events was clearly impossible according to the world's history. But I'm sure California is just as

[Pg 10]

improbable, just as much out of the common course, and we've no more proof, in fact not so much, of its existence, for it's a good deal further off, and though it is a little bigger, it can't make half so much noise; so that is about equal. To be sure, as you say, any number of men and ships have set sail for California, but that's no sign that they ever got there. They say so of course, for no one likes to be humbugged, but for all we know, they might just as well have gone to India, or China, or Japan. I have noticed they are never very fond of talking about their adventures, and when they are, they say very little about the gold they have brought home, though that after all is the only real proof; and they are sure to go into a huff if any one asks them how much they made, or to give some ridiculous and impertinent answer. So you see that, reasoning *à priori*, the balance of probability is decidedly opposed to the existence of any such country.

But supposing that there is such a country, it doesn't follow that there is any gold in it. In fact this is even more improbable than the other. There is no gold in New York—why should there be any in California? Is it because it is so far off? or because it lies on the Pacific? or because it is good for nothing else? None of these reasons will answer. There are other countries equally distant, equally valueless, and in the same ocean, but they contain no gold; why then, I say, should California?

But a simple proposition will set the matter at rest at once. The world has now existed, according to the strictest calculation, six thousand years; which being multiplied by three hundred and sixty-five, the number of days in a year, will give over two millions of days, on any of which the gold might have been discovered. The chances then that it would not be discovered on the first day of the six thousand and first year are as two millions to one. If we then take into the account, that during all this time the population of the globe has averaged about five hundred millions, and that all this immense number has never made this discovery, the improbability that it should be made by a single individual, and one too that nobody ever heard of, is as five hundred millions to one; and these two chances multiplied together, ought surely to satisfy any reasonable man that there is no gold there, and never has been.

[Pg 11]

Besides, even supposing California really to be, and to be as full of gold as it is represented, my acquaintance with the character of the late author, was enough to convince me that he would never get a morsel of it. I was not very well acquainted with him, to be sure, having only known him twenty years or so, and his character being of that shallow order, that one could read it at a glance if he would only take sufficient trouble; but as far as I did know, he was always an idle shiftless fellow, with an education he had not the capacity to improve, nor the courage entirely to disown, so he used to say, though I must confess I never could discover why it should require such a prodigious effort. He had waited a long time in hopes something would turn up, and used to justify himself in this particular by reference to one Mr. Wilkins Micawber, who, according to his account, had amassed a considerable fortune in that way; though for my own part I never heard of such an individual before, and always believed that to be one of his own inventions.

He was fond too of talking, in his barbarous and senseless fashion, about his having been engaged, at such an early age that he really had no voice in the matter, to one Clio or Chloe, some person of colour I suppose, though nobody to my knowledge ever saw her, and he declared that now he was arrived at years of discretion, (discretion indeed!) as the laws of society, which he was pleased in his wisdom to pronounce foolish and absurd, rendered a divorce difficult, he was determined to run away from her altogether; and the California fever breaking out just then, he was one of the first to be taken. But though California seems expressly designed by Providence for the accommodation and relief of just such good-for-naughts, lazy clerks, runaway apprentices, men without professions, and professions without practice—he was really as unfit for anything of the kind as could possibly be imagined or conceived of. He has seen fit to indulge in much unseemly and unbecoming mirth over the misfortunes of some of his acquaintances, but I will venture on my own authority to maintain that among them all there was not one but was better calculated to make his way in the world, and in California too, for that matter, than himself. He might have walked right over a lump of gold weighing a hundred pounds every day for six months, and would have been sure to tumble into the hole after it had been taken out, and wonder he had not seen it before.

[Pg 12]

As for faith and energy, he hadn't as much as could ride on a thistledown; and though he could dream fast enough, I warrant you, of thousands and of millions, yet when it came to the actual, downright, wide-awake necessity, he was of no more account than a child or a philosopher.

It was in view of these various reasons that I declared my unalterable conviction, that he would not get gold enough to carry on his thumb-nail. Of course, being unalterable, I have never thought of altering it. And there has been no reason. He did, indeed, for some time after his return, carry about with him a snuff-box, half full of an ugly yellow dust he called gold, and some folks were credulous enough to believe him; but I was too old a bird to be caught with such chaff. It looked as much like brass as it did like gold. Besides, nobody knew, nobody could know where it came from, and like enough he had it manufactured for the occasion. Anything was more probable than that it came from California.

I could forgive him anything, however, even his good fortune, easier than his inconsequential, illogical mode of reasoning. It is very evident that he did not meet with that success he had expected; but instead of giving the true reasons for his disappointment, he seeks to conceal his weakness by a variety of evasions equally futile, ridiculous, and absurd.

In the first place, he was sick! When I was young no one ever thought of being sick except women and old men; but, I suppose, now the case is different. But see the folly of the thing! For why?

I've known him, as I said, any time these twenty years, and, to my certain knowledge, he was never sick in his life; and then, to go and be sick just then, at the most critical and important crisis, as it were, when so much was at stake, his whole future prosperity, as one may say, hanging on it, that is, on his being sick or well—to be sick at such a time, I say, argues the most deplorable folly and shortsightedness. Why in the world wasn't he sick during the voyage, when he had nothing else to do? or why not wait till he got home, when he could have things comfortable about him?

[Pg 13]

But the Burke rocker? surely that was a most grievous misfortune. Not if he had known how to use it. For they employ the Burke rocker to this very day in the enlightened States of Virginia and North Carolina; and, of course, it is good enough for such a semi-barbarous country as California. But, for my part, I wonder at his ever thinking of anything so plainly unfit for the purpose.

Then there is the loss he sustained by the submarine armour. All I can say is, served him right. I never saw one of those machines myself, and know nothing at all about it, but I should as soon think of ploughing with a balloon, as of digging under water, or out of water, with a feather bed on my back, a bolster on each leg, a pillow on each arm, and a great copper kettle on my head.

The project, then, of going to California was conceived with rashness—determined upon with obstinacy—and executed with folly. He, to be sure, sets up in defence the fact that the scheme was finally successful, as if that were enough to silence all objections. Now, I am an old man, and may perhaps be growing a little crotchety and whimsical in my old age, but I must and will protest against any such dangerous and heretical doctrine. Success has here nothing to do with the matter; in fact he had no business to succeed; his success was and must be a positive insult to all who are in the habit of governing their conduct by judgment and right reason. If this plea is to be received in vindication, there is no crime or blunder that may not be excused in the same way; we have no longer any use for our boasted reason, and are at once plunged from the firm ground of induction and analogy into the quagmire of chance and conjecture. He was always a sort of wildfire, and knew no more about logic than Will-o'-the-Wisp does of straight walking. But as even a Will-o'-the-Wisp is sometimes very useful, in pointing out to the benighted traveller the marshy and dangerous ground over which it hovers, so the reader may, perhaps, in like manner, take warning from the example here set before him; and if so, the author, like a piece of rotten wood,—I cannot stop to perfect the simile,—will have shed more light from his folly, than he ever could have produced by his wisdom.

[Pg 14]

Golden dreams and leaden realities

[Pg 15]

CHAPTER I.

Early in 1849, the unwilling ship in which I had taken passage for California, was dragged away from the wharf in the sooty hug of a remorseless steamtug, like a struggling, kicking schoolboy in the arms of a hated master. Such an event was not then so common as it has since become, and an immense crowd had assembled to witness our departure, with some such feelings as if we had been bound on a voyage of discovery to the moon, or, at the very least, in search of the Northwest Passage.

It was a cold grey day; the deck of the *Leucothea* was sloppy with melting snow, and littered with chaotic little piles of luggage, among which the passengers wandered up and down like a hundred cats smelling about in a strange garret. Some were still crouched, shiveringly, on the high piles of lumber amidships, to which they had ascended to take their last view of home; others jostled in the gangways, as they revolved in their uneasy orbits from stem to stern; while a third party, without any ostensible motive, kept running up and down the cabin-stairs. Everybody looked cross and out of sorts, as if he would like nothing so well as to get into a quarrel with everybody else.

After proceeding a few miles down the bay, we put back and anchored, for the night, just out of sight of the city; and the deck being now almost entirely deserted, I groped my way down the winding stairs and into the little cabin. At first, I could see nothing but the misty light of a lantern swinging amidships, faintly illuminating the white-washed beams, and oil-cloth covered table; but, as my eyes became used to the darkness, I discovered a small party gathered round the unsocial airtight, and conversing in a sort of subterranean tones, of their present dismal condition. Sitting down among them, I was not so much occupied with my own bitter and thick-coming fancies, as to take no note of their broken dialogue.

[Pg 16]

"Ah," said one, with an abortive laugh, "Charley feels bad enough to-night."

"Yes, he wishes he was up to M—, I guess," returned another, whose faltering vivacity plainly declared he wished so himself at any rate.

"Humph," retorted Charley, with something between a whine and a growl, "I think we were all a set of darned fools; if I was only safe back, you'd never catch me in such a scrape again; you'd

better believe it."

"Well," said his companion, "there's a chance left yet; you can go back in the pilot-boat tomorrow."

"I ain't quite such a fool as all that comes to" sneered Charley; "we're in for it now, and I mean to put her through."

This speech was followed by a melancholy laugh, and then by a profound silence, in the midst of which, they, one by one, dropped off to bed in the adjoining staterooms; leaving me alone in the dingy little cabin, with the ungenial airtight,—the puffy lantern, with one big, drunken eye in its belly,—and the greasy table, whose pinching, miserly face said, as plainly as words could speak, that if it had ever witnessed one generous feast, it was so long ago that it remembered nothing about it. I was unable to resist these combined influences, and soon slunk away to my berth, with a heart heavy as the gold I was pursuing.

[Pg 17]

In refitting the *Leucothea* for a passenger ship, eight supplemental staterooms had been built on deck, covered, as well as the space between, with what is called a poop deck, extending from the stern several feet forward of the mizenmast. My berth was an upper one, and its already alarming elevation was aggravated by a miscellaneous collection of boots, shovels, and pickaxes, which I had stored under the mattress, partly to economize space, and partly to prepare myself, by this sort of hardening process, for the privations I expected to encounter in the mines. Owing to the hurry of my departure, and the crowded state of my trunks, I had been obliged to resort to a very ingenious expedient to transport my superfluous wardrobe. When one shirt became soiled, I hid it with a second, and this process I repeated till I had no less than six lying one above another. I then improved upon this invention by adding two vests, a frock, a sack, a great coat, and a pea-jacket, so that I might easily have been mistaken for one of those early Dutch navigators immortalized by Irving, who thought it a great hardship to be obliged to go aloft with only five coats apiece. Thus fortified, and having my feet encased in a huge pair of boots, I climbed with infinite difficulty into my berth, where I slept about as securely as an elephant on the roof of a house.

The next morning we stood out to sea, which somewhat revived our drooping courage; as, in battle, it is easier to advance boldly against the enemy, than to remain, a long time, passively exposed to his attacks. But our fortitude was soon to be subjected to a still severer test. Very few of our number had ever been to sea before, and some had never seen any larger body of water than the pond or river in which they had fished and bathed in boyhood. All, however, had heard of the ocean, of its grandeur and sublimity, and, of course, had already made up their minds to be duly affected, as every one possessing the least share of sensibility must be, by its mighty attributes. Accordingly, the sharp outline of the horizon was still broken on one side by the gradually sinking land, when they went to work with most commendable ardour and perseverance to raise their imaginations to the proper level.

[Pg 18]

I confess, for my own part, to an entire inability to enter into these emotions. I have no affection or admiration for the ocean, *per se*. I love it in our winding bays dotted with sails, and reflecting the flickering shadows of green banks or populous cities, and have been, once or twice in my life, awe-and-wonder-struck on beholding it swelling from afar against the rock-bound coasts of New England. Here its beauty is multiplied by contrast, and its power thoroughly aroused by opposition.

It is pleasant to lie on some lofty promontory and gaze away off into the illimitable blue, and dream that so it goes on forever, without any opposing shore. I am even willing to make short excursions with it, to meet it half way, as it were, on this neutral ground; but I care not to go home with it, or to venture into its own undisputed domain. As Shylock says to Bassanio, "I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and so following,—but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you"—there is such a thing as too great intimacy. The sea itself suffers by this undecent familiarity. Instead of that mysterious and salutary dread we formerly entertained towards it, we come to regard it, in a manner, as our bond-servant, or beast of burden. Its sublimity is gone—its vastness becomes wearisome monotony—its royal pomp and power sink into peevish ill-humour or sullen bravado. It is not so very big either. A circular disc of salt water, thirty or forty miles across, is all you can see. If its waves were indeed mountains—if one sailed among Alps, in valleys lighted only by the mid-day sun, or along the face of a precipice, towering as high towards heaven as it sunk sheer down to the abyss—then, indeed, the naked, melancholy ocean would not need to borrow any element of sublimity from the continent earth.

[Pg 19]

This was the nature of the reflections produced by the first view of the rounded ocean; if I should hereafter take just the opposite side of the question, I hope not to be charged with inconsistency;—in a long voyage one's opinions change almost as often as the winds. The revolution, however, is seldom as sudden or as ludicrous as in the case of our unlucky enthusiasts. While they were even yet expatiating on the grandeur and sublimity of the scene, they became aware of certain uneasy and mysterious sensations, the precise locality of which it was hard to determine, but which seemed to have their capital seat somewhere in the region of the diaphragm. Strange horrors seized them, and pangs unfelt before. But it is the nature of this malady to dispose its victims to conceal their weakness as long as possible. They shrink from the mortifying disclosure, and obstinately persist, to the last moment, in declaring they never felt so well in their lives.

The little party of Vermonters, the same that had collected in the cabin the preceding evening, were among the first to feel the advances of the insidious foe.

"I say, boys," cried Charley, "isn't this—ugh—worth going to California for?"

"Grand!" "splendid!" "magnificent!" echoed the three boldest of the party, with sundry unaccountable grimaces, while the rest thought it more prudent at that moment, to keep their mouths shut as tight as possible.

"I hope, a—ugh—you ain't a going to be—a—ugh—sick," returned Charley, glancing doubtfully at the pale faces of his followers, as if to satisfy himself how many he could rely upon in the approaching struggle. "I—a—a—ugh—don't feel sick in the least," and away he hurried to lee-ward, where, for the next hour, the whole party might be seen, hanging like so many dish-clouts, over the bulwarks.

[Pg 20]

"What do yer see—a whale?" drily inquires an old salt, with a cold-blooded cruelty, of which no one with the heart even of the most magnanimous mouse, would be guilty. But they are too sick to be angry—contempt, that pierces the shell of the tortoise, touches them not,—there is a dignity, springing from the very depths of their abasement, that sets them above the reach of injury or insult—their ridiculous, indeed, reaches to the sublime. Solomon and Dr. Johnson are commonly considered the highest authority on the vanity of life—but was there ever a sufferer from sea-sickness who did not moralize, by the hour together, in a far more affecting strain? Every sigh is a book of Ecclesiastes, and is there any other philosophy like his? so sudden and effectual in its operations? that dives down so deep to the very root of pride and self-laudation?

For three days and nights I lay in my berth, dressed as I have said, parched by thirst, and tantalized by waking dreams of every cooling and delicious draught. Meanwhile, the Leucothea had reached the Gulf-stream, and in that region of storms, encountered one of the most terrific. Huge waves came foaming in over the bows, sending their crests even to my door, and pouring down the forehatch into the steerage, drowned out the frightened passengers in the very dead of night. The alarm was so sudden that some had time only to snatch their clothes; and, with them in their hands, they came running aft as to a place of comparative safety. When reproached for their pusillanimity, they offered the paltry excuse, that the water came down the hatch as big as a hogshead, and that it was already deep enough in the steerage for a man to swim in. This might have touched my healthy sympathies, but it now gave me no concern. I believe I may say without vanity, that at that moment I felt perfectly reconciled to the idea, thus suggested, of thirty or forty of our fellow-passengers being drowned like so many rats; though, for my own part, so great was my thirst, I doubted whether there was water enough in the ocean to drown me. Through the open door of my stateroom I could see the white tops of the waves, as the ship leaned over to embrace them; and I thought it no great thing to make my throat a passage for the whole Atlantic.

[Pg 21]

But I had still no relentings of purpose; through storm, and thirst, and burning fever, I was sustained by dreams of golden joy. At the period of our departure, what is commonly called the sober and prudent part of the community, regarded California as a mischievous humbug. None of my friends favoured my going; and one, still more sober and prudent than the rest, had emphatically declared his conviction, adding considerately that he did not wish to discourage me, that I should not find gold enough to lay on my thumb-nail. Few, however, who had set their hearts on going, were ever dissuaded, I apprehend, by such arguments; even the last pleasant and ingenious comparison failed to convince me: having once made up my mind, I fixed my eyes on the mark and overlooked all intervening objects. Yet my calculations, so I thought, were by no means extravagant; the simple brevity of argument with which I silenced all opposition was \$2,000 certain—\$20,000 probable—\$100,000 possible. I now saw these numbers printed in glaring ciphers, with all the lifelike, seductive reality of a lottery placard, all over the walls of my stateroom. Who would not, for such reward, endure the discomforts of a four months' voyage, even though every week should be like the first?

The idea of a life in the mines was rather agreeable. It had about it a smack of Robinson Crusoe; and then, it would be so exciting to bring our gains home at night, and, every two or three days, to light upon a whole nestful of ingots—hunting birds' nests would be nothing to it. If the first discoverers, I said to myself again and again, have met with such astonishing success, with their pans and wash-bowls, what may I not expect, with my improved machines, and the experience I have gained by reading of their adventures? As I said this, I glanced, with a look of complacency, upon the ingenious fabric of our invention which was stowed piecemeal just above my head, and was destined, in spite of its humble pretensions, to work out such astounding results.

[Pg 22]

It consisted simply of a roll of wire-webbing, with meshes about one-sixth of an inch in diameter, and several rough boards six or seven feet long, with which we proposed to construct three huge sieves, one for each of our company. If these implements failed of their intended purpose, or indeed were never constructed, it was not owing to any fault in them, but entirely to the unexpected, and, if I may be allowed to coin a word, unexpected nature of that perverse country whither we were going. I saw, in my mind's eye, an immense sandy plain, intersected by rivers, and sentinelled about by lofty mountains. The auriferous sands were to be sifted through our wire-webbing, while the bit of gold would be caught in the meshes. When some meddling adviser suggested that these were too large, and that we should thus lose the finer particles, I, magnanimously, and rather disdainfully, replied, that I intended to leave something for those who should come after me, and that, for my part, I cared for nothing smaller than peas.

Thus, three days and nights I lay; while day dreams, as bright as those of Alnaschar, and oh, too like in sad event! alternated in my sea-sick brain with visions of a darkened chamber—of a spacious bed covered with soft white sheets—of women's voices soft and low—of cool sherbet and

fragrant lemonade—and all the "monarchal prerogatives" attendant on a sick man's state at home. Here there was nothing but the casual attendance of the cabin-boy bringing me an occasional cup of gruel, and the querulous sympathy of others as helpless as myself. In a week, however, most were sufficiently recovered to take their meals in the cabin, though in a few instances, the sickness was much more prolonged. A German from Hamburg was the greatest sufferer, the experience he had gained in once crossing the Atlantic seeming not to assist him on the present occasion. For weeks after the rest of us had almost forgotten our trials, he still lay hoaning and moaning to himself in his berth.

[Pg 23]

"Well, John," asked one, with as much sympathy as could be expected to remain in his oblivious stomach, "how do you feel this morning?"

"Oh!" he replied, with a dolorous shake of the head, "if I live two week, I shall die!"

The ladies on board were almost equally unfortunate—and here I beg their pardon and that of the reader for not having sooner introduced them to each other. It was not every ship in those days that was blessed with female society; and the owners of the *Leucothea* had taken care to make the most of this important distinction. In setting forth the advantages of the "good ship *Leucothea*, of superior accommodations," this had been the brightest star in the glorified galaxy that was to dazzle the eyes of the genteel adventurer. The library, the piano, and the ladies,—learning, song and beauty were to shed their benign and humanizing influence over our rude and savage natures, and prevent us from sinking back into worse than heathen darkness and barbarism. It must be confessed that the piano was sadly out of tune, and that the library consisted mainly of such books as everybody had read, or else nobody ever does read; and, furthermore, the proportion of ladies was small, only three or four to a hundred; but then it is well known that a drop of certain substances can be detected in a whole hogshead of water, and I have no doubt that the sight of a bonnet or lady's slipper hung in some conspicuous position about the ship, nailed to the mainmast, for example, would exert a most salutary influence; in the same way as a horseshoe nailed to a barndoor is a most effectual scarecrow to all predatory ghosts and witches.

Be that as it may, the presence of the ladies, considered simply as an abstract idea, was highly edifying and satisfactory to all on board; and it was no fault of theirs, if we failed to derive from their society all the benefits we had expected.

[Pg 24]

Mr. Tape, our supercargo, was a man of infinite good nature; he smiled easily, and made promises with equal facility. "Do you think we had better lay in any private stores, Mr. Tape?" we inquired, after settling more important matters with that smiling functionary.

"Oh, no sir, no sir; there's no need of anything of the sort. You'll find everything you want aboard the ship."

"But," we persisted, "we might take a few preserves or crackers, or——"

"No; save your money. You'll want it more when you get to San Francisco. You'll eat at the same table with Mrs. Tape and the other ladies, and I suppose you don't want to live any better than they do."

"Oh dear! no, sir! not we! no indeed!"

"Well, then, it's all right," and away bustled little Mr. Tape to go through the same form with another applicant.

A few weeks sufficed to dispel the pleasing illusions which these assurances had produced. As the cabin was too small to accommodate us all, we divided into two messes; or, as we styled them in our amateur nautical phraseology, the starboard and larboard watches. But when all had recovered from sea-sickness, even this expedient was found insufficient, and here arose a plausible pretext for a third division. The captain, the supercargo, and the doctor retired with their wives into the after-cabin, already dignified by the presence of the library and piano; and thus, at one "unexpected blow, worse than of death," annihilated all our hopes of that feminine grace and propriety that was to preside over our meals, converting the salt junk into delicatess beef, the muddy coffee into nectar, and the ship-biscuit into ambrosian cates.

To be sure, we were still allowed to behold them at long intervals, sitting on deck in chairs lashed to the mizenmast, or to hear their dulcet voices, rising like a steam of rich distilled perfumes, through the skylight of the after-cabin; but our former state and dignity were departed forever. We no longer basked in the sunshine of royal favour, but resembled rather a capital city from which the seat of empire has been removed, and which is left to languish in obscurity and neglect. The steerage passengers regarded us with commiseration, or made odious comparisons in our hearing. The delicacies in which we should have shared, were borne past our door into the after-cabin, and their place supplied with lobsouse and dunderfunk—the first, a detestable hash or ragout of everything edible in the ship—the second, a johnnycake constructed on the same principle, except that the beef and pork were commonly excluded. I always looked with suspicion upon the man who professed a fondness for lobsouse; and if, in our expressive phrase, he was able "to go" dunderfunk, I avoided him as if he had the leprosy. It was impossible to reconcile such tastes with the least twinkle of high or generous feeling; one might as well associate with a cannibal or a ghoul.

[Pg 25]

In order to add the pleasures of anticipation to those of actual fruition, or to cheat our

imagnations with the semblance of more terrene banquets, a bill of fare was duly provided, calculated, apparently, with the far-reaching accuracy of an almanac, for the whole duration of our voyage, and for any meridian. Here, each dish had its own peculiar day, to which it returned, from its hebdomedal revolution, with all the punctuality of Encke's comet. Two days—I remember them well—Monday and Thursday, were allotted to baked beans—three to salt beef, pork, and potatoes—one each to salt fish and ham. The names of Tuesday and Wednesday were lost in the more alluring and alliterative appellation of Dough-days; the first syllable being made, by a double analogy, to rhyme with tough. Some do even spell it Duff, but this is a manifest cacography, and of the most pernicious description, since it loses sight of the etymology of the word, which would otherwise at once explain its meaning to the most cursory reader.

[Pg 26]

For breakfast and supper, there were tea and coffee, most "pitiful hearted butter," pilot bread, lobsouse, and dunderfunk. Two or three times a week we had hot bread; once a week we had gingerbread; and, on one occasion, a nondescript article about which there was a good deal of curious speculation, till at length one, more ingenious than the rest, suggested that it was intended for an apple-pie. This solution was hailed with shouts of applause, and it was at once voted to present the article, with the thanks of the company, to the lucky discoverer, who happened to be the identical Charley so often mentioned; who being naturally of a philosophic and inquisitive temper, wished to add this unique specimen of naval architecture to a list of curiosities he was then engaged in collecting; and which already consisted of a shark's left eye "kep in spirits in a bottle," and a set of very ingenious checkers made out of his back bone.

The third week of our voyage a terrible feud arose among the passengers, something like that recorded by Gulliver as having existed between the Lilliputians and Blefuscians as to the proper method of eating eggs. The cause of quarrel in our case, however, was even more mighty and important, since it involved the nicest casuistry, and furnished the most unfailing test of character. The question at issue concerned the lobsouse, and the warcries of the contending parties were "onions" and "no onions." The two factions were almost equally divided; and, though the onionists had the captain on their side as well as most of the old fogies, the revolutionists, or liberals, as they styled themselves, by help of the doctor and supercargo, still upheld the war. As this dissension finally threatened the most serious consequences, a compromise was effected, and it was agreed to settle the difficulty by a division; when the parties being drawn up on either side of a seam in the deck, the disonionists were found to have a majority of one, and thus the matter was brought to a peaceful termination.

[Pg 27]

CHAPTER II.

[Pg 28]

In a few weeks we had run through every variety of climate, and at the end of February, while our friends at home were still shivering in great-coats and cloaks, or rubbing their hands over coal fires, we were basking beneath the sky of June. I had thrown off, one by one, my outer garments, within which I had shrunk (the effects of long sickness and starvation) like a silkworm in its cocoon; and now, like the same insect, I came out light and airy, in a summer suit of bright calico and nankeen.

There is something very pleasant in thus anticipating summer, in forestalling the all too-punctual sun returning leisurely from the south, and in bartering a certain quantity of snow and ice for the unadulterated sunshine of the tropics. Yet I could not help thinking that we were intruders, interlopers, in thus presuming to thrust ourselves where we had no right, and to snatch her bounty from the liberal hand of nature, instead of waiting patiently, like good children, till it was our turn to be served. The baffling winds that opposed our progress into those golden gardens of the Hesperides, seemed to favour this idea,—for many days we were unable to head our course, and were compelled to sail in an easterly direction, and even north of east. It was little consolation to a landsman, naturally credulous as he is in all matters pertaining to "sea-ography," to be told that we were thus making the necessary Easting, and that at sea it is especially true that the longest way round is the nearest way home; nor could I bring myself to believe, when the ship's head was turned towards Europe, that we were actually taking the shortest cut to Cape Horn. Under the most favourable conditions, the Leucothea was a dull sailor, a broken down, superannuated cart-horse, jogging along "the right butter-woman's rank to market," which, in this case, was so distant, that we sometimes doubted whether we should ever get there at all.

[Pg 29]

This was rendered more tolerable, however, by the delicious breeze, that flowing from the coast of Africa, was tempered by the wide extent of water that lay between.

"With such delay
Well pleased they slack their course, and many a league
Cheer'd with the grateful smell old ocean smiles."

The last expression is peculiarly significant. Here was indeed the many-millioned smile of ocean. It seemed impossible that this amiable monster should be the same we had so lately seen swelling with rage, and threatening our instant destruction. But the naked ocean, even when in good humour, is after all a tiresome companion. I had formed my ideas of a sea-voyage almost entirely from Irving's description of his voyage to Europe. I remembered reading, in my younger

days, of the many hours of delightful reverie in which he had indulged, and of the amusements he derived from watching the unwieldy monsters of the deep in their uncouth gambols. It seemed to my boyish fancy as if the shark, the whale, the porpoise and the dolphin, and perhaps, even the veritable sea-serpent himself, had come at his bidding, as the beasts came to Adam in Paradise. But either these noble personages are less accommodating since his time, or are unwilling to pay their respects to any less distinguished visitors. Their privacy has been so often invaded by troops of cockney tourists, that it has now become almost impossible to obtain an introduction.

But if these dwellers beneath the surface, these aborigines of the ocean, indigenous, if we may so say, to the soil, failed to gratify our curiosity, or to answer our extravagant expectations, this was far from being the case with the comparatively alien but dominant race of man's introduction. A ship at sea is as different from the same ship lying at a wharf, as the lion of the desert from the cringing brute of a menagerie; I no longer wondered that such should seem to the ignorant savage, beholding them for the first time, living and intelligent creatures, tamed and subjected to the service of a superior race of beings, nor did the ancient fable of their transformation into sea-nymphs seem altogether incredible.

[Pg 30]

We spoke several ships at this time, bound in different directions. Such an event never failed to produce the most intense excitement, and a feverish anxiety to know the name of the vessel, where she was from, and whither she was bound. To compare great things with small, it was as if two worlds should cross each other's path in the heavens, and should "heave to" a moment in their breathless career to hold brief converse on their state and destiny. It would be an interesting question what matters should be introduced at so august a meeting; though it were much to be feared, that in their anxiety to touch upon none but the most important, the precious, irrecoverable moment would be altogether lost.

In the present instance, however, the question and answer are both ready beforehand; and even the order of precedence is determined by some freemasonry of the high seas, the mystery of which I did not unravel. A few moments are commonly sufficient for the purpose; the captain, who has the first words, pours through his trumpet a hoarse bellow that would be quite unintelligible if its purport were not already known,—the other courteously replies,—the flags are run up and down, to take the place of that head and hand shaking that attends the meeting of two magnates on land, and away go the obedient vessels, to meet, perhaps, no more during their whole career.

[Pg 31]

When three weeks out, we spoke an English ship from Madras, which thus became exalted, in our imaginations, to a place of vast importance. She sent her boat to obtain a supply of fuel; and we regarded the crew with almost as much interest as if they had belonged to a different planet. Charley Bainbridge, who was always on the look-out for such opportunities, slid down into the boat, and presently returned with some article he had found in her bottom, mysteriously guarded in his breeches pocket. On being pressed to exhibit his treasure, he steadily refused till after the boat had gone; when he drew forth a pebble, which he said came from Madras, and being obtained in that odd way, would make a very handsome addition to his cabinet.

A yet more lively interest was awakened by our meeting, soon after, a ship bound from Calcutta to Boston. She had been in sight all the afternoon, and, in compliance with our invitation to speak, altered her course sufficiently to come up with us just after dusk. A lantern was suspended at our poop, and guided by its light, which seemed quite absorbed by the immense darkness, she came cautiously feeling her way along, till, suddenly shooting into our little illuminated horizon, she hove to and waited to know our pleasure. All the while our ship was silent as the grave, but more than a hundred pair of eyes were peeping through the blanket of the night, as if, though the frailest and softest things, they would really tear it into shreds. We had no sooner, however, learned the destination of the stranger than our decks swarmed with sudden life. As a delay of even a few minutes is regarded as a serious inconvenience, especially by your fast-sailing Indiaman, there was little time to prepare our letters, but most on board, in expectation of such an opportunity, had everything in readiness; and the boat was hardly lowered before the mail-bag was thrown into it. When our visitor had filled her sails, and her tall shadow had merged in the surrounding blackness, a feeling of loneliness settled down upon us, that we had not known since leaving home. In a few weeks she would be in Boston; while, at the same time, we should be off the stormy Cape. It seemed like severing the last tie that bound us to home; as if we had now really begun to slide down the backside of the world, without any possibility of ever climbing up again.

[Pg 32]

We had now become somewhat accustomed to the dull routine of a long voyage. Sunrise, commonly flat and insipid, even on land, had here the superadded monotony of life at sea. The sun came bouncing out of bed, without a rag of a cloud about him, as if in a great hurry to find out whether we were just where he left us the night before. Soon after we began, one by one, to drop down from our berths; and having drawn on our pantaloons, we shuffled along, towel and wash-bowl in hand, to the waist of the ship, where we were used to perform our ablutions. A fireman's bucket attached to a stout rope had been considerably provided for the use of one hundred passengers; or, to speak more accurately, for the use of the cooks, the passengers having the benefit of it only by sufferance of those sooty dignities.

In warm weather, and quiet seas, drawing water was no great hardship; but when the seas and the latitudes both ran high, and the ship was rolling and pitching at such a rate that it was no easy matter to stand upright,—I could not help thinking that the old nursery ballad

What! cry to be washed?
Not love to be clean?

was not after all quite so orthodox in its irony as I had supposed.

Leaning over the bulwarks, with feet well braced against the slippery deck, his hair in his eyes, and the crook of his elbow nervously hooking the rigging, the unlucky ablutor picks up the "superior accommodation," and throws it over the gunwale into the sea. This is a simple and facile operation; there is no need of plumping the bucket up and down in order to fill it, the swift current has already done that for you, and has at once drawn out the whole length of the rope, while the bucket, with open mouth, seems ready to burst, like the frog in the fable, in the vain attempt to swallow the whole ocean. But to regain possession, or as Dan Carpenter, one of our Vermonters, had it, "revocare bucketum, hoc labor, hoc opus est."

[Pg 33]

This important duty being at length accomplished, we proceeded, in fine weather, to promenade the deck till breakfast. The forenoon was occupied in a great variety of ways. Some disinterested and inquiring individuals kept a constant look-out for sails, sharks, and whales, in order to gratify the universal craving for novelty and excitement. These were the newsmongers and express agents of our little community. A shark could not show his dorsal fin within a cable's length of the ship,—a whale could not wag his tail or blow his nose within five miles,—and a sail could not steal into the wide horizon of the masthead, without being at once detected by half a dozen curious eyes, and straightway reported to all below. Various groups on deck were occupied in reading, talking, and smoking, or in games of chance or skill. A few bolder spirits had even the hardihood to attempt "Spanish without a Master," but they got no farther than the story of the three travellers, and the ominous moral, "Desgraciado el que aspira a riquezas,"—miserable is he who aspires after riches.

CHAPTER III.

[Pg 34]

The party to which I belonged consisted originally of but three members. Captain Bill was a short, broad-faced, blue-eyed Saxon, who no sooner felt his sea-legs, as the sailors said, well under him, than he began to discover an aptitude for naval tactics that might almost be called genius. Instead of spending his time in those light and trifling pursuits that engrossed the attention of those about him, he applied himself with unwearied assiduity to the acquisition of that knowledge that is usually so distasteful to a landsman; and had constantly in his mouth some such horrid and uncouth phrases as, "How's she head?" "Keep her off half a point," "Haul in your jib-sheets," and others equally portentous. He at length acquired such a facility in this sort of exercise that he came to be regarded as a very high authority in such matters, and hence received from his companions the honorary title of Captain, which his subsequent fortune strangely confirmed. One of the sailors whom I met by chance in the maintop, assured me that he, Captain Bill, knew almost as much as the Captain himself; and that it was a great pity he had not been sent to sea when he was a boy, as there was no knowing what might have happened. I assented to all he said, but took care to say nothing about it to my companion, for fear of inflaming his malady; as his conversation, even then, was almost wholly made up of the phrases above mentioned, and it was well nigh impossible to obtain from him an answer such as a landsman could understand. As Captain Bill, in spite of this little infirmity, was a very clever fellow, and was reputed to have a great deal of what is commonly called luck, I felicitated myself, not a little, on having him for a partner, as I thought I must surely share in his good fortune.

[Pg 35]

A younger brother of the author, who having like Captain Bill lost his proper title, was distinguished by the name of Tertium Quid, or simply Tertium, and a big bull-dog called Zachary Taylor, completed our little party.

The most conspicuous person in the ship was Charley Bainbridge; who, without being acknowledged as such, was generally regarded as the representative head of the Vermonters. He was the spoilt child of his parents, just beginning, curiously, to dabble in the great mudpuddle of the world. Laughing blue eyes, hair brown and curling, a frank, good-humoured expression, and a fine manly figure, had stamped him plainly as one of that happy or unhappy class who never do anything for themselves, but are always sure to find others ready to do for them. He, as well as his companions, were declared decidedly green, at the outset of our voyage, by some who had seen a little more of the world; but, as the same uncomfortable wisdom had pronounced a similar judgment upon the author, the reader will readily perceive how much it was worth. Our hero left home with an abundant allowance, but this being exhausted by the time we arrived at San Francisco, he was obliged to borrow money in order to reach the mines. The air of the Yuba, whither he first directed his steps, did not agree with his health, and we next heard of him in the southern mines, where, being still unsuccessful, he borrowed money for the fourth time, and returning to Sacramento went into the business of cleaning tripe on a very enlarged scale, that plainly declared him intended only for grand and arduous undertakings. He would undoubtedly have succeeded in this new enterprise but for one of those unlucky accidents that sometimes befall the wisest, and would certainly never have entered into the calculations of Napoleon himself. He was one day backing his cart, filled with the precious commodity, too near the bank of the river, which here falls some thirty feet at a very dangerous angle, when the wheels

[Pg 36]

suddenly passing beyond the brink, the tripe, the cart, and the horse went rolling over each other down the declivity into the river. He stood awhile in amaze, such an illustration of the laws of gravity having probably never been heard of in the halls of old Harvard; but, finding that there was no hope of an immediate resurrection, he cast one longing, lingering look behind, and going at once on board the boat bid a final farewell to the country that had used him so ungratefully. I was the more interested in the adventures of this hero, as I thought they discovered a temper, like my own, too noble for what weaker and more grovelling minds call success.

Dan Carpenter belonged to the same party. He was oftener called "Old Herculaneum," from an admirable misapprehension of the sense of that word, which he was wont to use, in connection with grasp, as synonymous with Herculean. He had studied a little law, and was the best man at checkers in the ship. His conversation was rather homely than brilliant, but he sometimes blundered into what were considered at sea very tolerable jests.

A man of a very different stamp was Thomas Busby, our Manhattan merchant. He was an admirable representative of his class, and prouder of the distinction than if he had written "The Reveries of a Bachelor." He thought a Broadway merchant the greatest man in the world, and himself the greatest merchant in Broadway. He was the most respectable man I ever saw,—the valet, I forget his name, in David Copperfield, was nothing to him,—and this was the more remarkable, since his figure was too slight to act the character to advantage. His manner was everything; though really below the medium height, he had the art ascribed to Louis XIV. of impressing the beholder with a painful idea of his majestic proportions. Methinks I see him now; his slight but jaunty figure cased in the finest of broadcloth, his head thrown back, his chest expanded, as if about to toss a roll of cloth on to a counter; and then his voice! it seemed impossible it should proceed from anything less than a giant,—indeed I never believed it rightfully belonged to him, but was one he had stolen from some thick-witted Goliah, with whom he had left his own piping notes in exchange.

[Pg 37]

His most amusing idiosyncrasy, however, was his contempt for college learning; it amounted to a positive mania. "When any one," said he, "applied for a situation at our store, (he was fond of telling how many clerks he employed at once,) I always asked him if he had been to college; and, if he had, that was enough—I had nothing more to do with him." In spite however of this antipathy, he had once studied a little Latin, and adroitly contrived to be vain of this distinction, and, at the same time, of having forgotten all he had learned.

The little spice of the ridiculous thus mingled in his composition only made Busby the more agreeable as a companion; as it is impossible to feel an affection, I had almost said respect, for one at whom we cannot sometimes laugh.

Then there was —, that Will-o'-the-wisp, that strange compound of opposite and seemingly, contradictory qualities, the unwinking, almost ubiquitous celerity of the lizard, and more than elephantine clumsiness. He needed to tie up his wits, as Lightfoot in the story tied up his legs that he might run slow enough to catch the deer. He walked with a pair of seven-league boots, and stept beyond the mark continually.

At table, he was the victim of more unlucky accidents than all the rest of the ship's company. He upset his soup into his lap. He ran his fork through his cheek. He stept into the slop-pail. He trod on his own toes. He tript himself up. If it had been possible, he would have run between his own legs. He was always sure to spit on his own boot, or on another's. He emptied his wash-bowl on the Captain's head. Off Cape Horn he fell overboard, and only saved himself by catching his leg in a rope that lamed him for a week. As he said, nobody else could have possibly done it; but nobody else would have fallen.

[Pg 38]

CHAPTER IV.

[Pg 39]

Nearly two months after leaving home we entered the harbour of Rio; or, to borrow the spirited lines of Madame W. our poetess,—we were so fortunate as to possess the species, both male and female,—

"We crossed the line in cheerful glee,
And anchored safe in Rio Janee."

We were nearly out of sight of the city; but its scattering suburbs lay all around in the laps of the mountains, the white walls of the houses contrasting finely with the deep green of the back ground. The nearest mountain peaks stood with their naked feet in the very bottom of the bay, presenting, on the water side, a smooth, and, in many places, almost perpendicular wall, and enclosing between them long winding coves, stretching away almost out of sight.

We were obliged to remain on board all the next morning, until the officers had made their customary visit, but having endured this formality with what patience we could, and eaten a dinner of "fresh," as it is called at sea, we went ashore in a boat manned by four slaves entirely naked. We landed near the emperor's palace; and having no particular object in view, strolled through the streets as chance directed. Partly from thoughtlessness, and partly to obtain a better

view of the buildings, we walked carelessly along, in the middle of the street, staring about us like a parcel of backcountrymen just landed in the city of New York; at least so said the respectable Busby, who never, in any case, forgot his propriety, and even now, though nobody about him talked with an English tongue, or saw with English eyes, conducted himself precisely as if he had been in his favourite Broadway.

[Pg 40]

But we were too much engrossed with the strange objects about us, to waste a thought on our own appearance. It was as if we had gone back to the days of childhood, and recovered, for a season, that delicious sense of novelty that gave those days their peculiar charm. We resembled a piece of sponge, from which the last drop had been squeezed, suddenly plunged into a vessel of water. Every sense, every pore, seemed made the highway for a whole host of new ideas. We read volumes at a glance, sucked up knowledge at every breath, and found sermons in the very stones of the streets. Slaves were crossing the great square in every direction, carrying on their heads tall jars of water, baskets of clothes to be washed at the fountain, and large trays full of fruit and flowers. They moved with a peculiar erect and springing gait, balancing their awkward burdens with such dexterity as made them seem rather a natural excrescence than anything they could lay aside at pleasure. Others were basking in the sun, in the very middle of the street, like so many bundles of old clothes.

When they were wanted for any purpose, and failed to arouse themselves at the first signal, the impatient master would run upon them, and, after an enlivening series of hearty kicks and thumps, hale them along to their work like a refractory or worn-out horse; and indeed they performed most of that work assigned to horses in more humane countries. Every thing whose weight permitted they carried on their heads or backs, and these burdens were often so heavy, that two or three men were required to raise them. In other cases they made use of a rude cart, with two low wheels, which was pushed and pulled along by a dozen slaves. One usually took his station at each wheel, and tugged, apparently very hard, at the spokes. But all were evidently skillful adepts at the art of sogering; and a single horse, with a properly constructed cart, would have drawn three times their ordinary load.

[Pg 41]

As we were walking through a narrow street, about thirty slaves came suddenly upon us, round a corner, moving at a slow trot, carrying on their backs bales of sheeting, and keeping time to their step by a loud, monotonous chant. They threw down their loads at a door we were passing, and, stopping their music, one by one, hurried away like the genii of the Arabian tales, who, having performed their master's bidding, disappeared as mysteriously as they came.

The buildings of Rio are generally heavy and substantial, with little exterior decoration. Their churches resemble, in this respect, the shell of an oyster, rough and rude without, but of a metallic brilliancy within. It was a festival of some sort at the close of Lent, and the churches were all open, though we saw but few worshippers. Little boys were dragging effigies of Judas about the streets, and beating them with sticks, with the most edifying zeal and devotion.

Having somewhat satiated our curiosity, we returned to the Hotel Pharoux, to take a supplemental dinner. This was a French café in spite of its Egyptian title; the cooking was excellent, and the idea of being served by veritable Parlezvous highly gratifying, at least to the provincials of our party, who had very likely never seen one of those animals before.

"Here, garson!" cried Charley Bainbridge, with an air, "donny moy some pully à potage, and some pang à boottre."

"Oui, monsieur" replied the ready Frenchman, who had acquired by long practice a marvellous facility in interpreting the *patois* of his guests; but as the reader may be less successful, I would explain that the mysterious substantives above, signified chicken and potatoes, bread and butter.

Charley's example was, as usual, contagious, and presently there arose a Babel of English, interspersed with such mongrel French and Spanish as might have taxed the triple throat of Cerberus himself. Captain Bill, whose whole stock in foreign languages, if we exclude that in which we have already shown his proficiency, consisted of three words, *si, monsieur, and mademoiselle*, traded upon this slender capital with unequalled success. "Si monsieur," or "si mademoiselle" he constantly repeated, whenever any of the waiters approached the table, sometimes interrogatively, sometimes affirmatively, and sometimes suggestively, but always with a bland smile, expressive of the highest self-satisfaction and contentment.

[Pg 42]

Our dinner consisted of *bifstek*, potatoes, bread and butter, and coffee, all of the finest quality—but we were somewhat alarmed, when our bill was presented, at sight of a long row of figures swelling up to a total of several thousands. A few words, however, soon removed our apprehensions; the thousands were nothing but reys, twenty of which make one cent. The milrey, or thousand reys, is a silver coin equivalent to our half dollar. They have also a copper coin about equal in value to two cents, of a very clumsy form, and appropriately called a dump.

The Hotel Pharoux was our favourite lounge while we remained on shore. It was constantly thronged with a motley crowd of Californians, man-of-war's men, and others of various nations, presenting altogether a scene of the most lively and amusing description. We now began, for the first time, to feel the suck and swing of that mighty maelstrom into which we had ventured. Sixty ships had been at Rio before us—and, while we were there, the number of Californians in port was over a thousand. We naturally regarded all these as, in some sort, our rivals, and the excitement of competition was thus aggravated a hundred-fold. It was impossible to get rid of the absurd notion, that the whole country would be appropriated before we had set foot in it, and

that we should thus be in the awkward predicament of a dilatory guest, who arrives only in time to be tantalized by sight of the fragments of the feast. [Pg 43]

The next day was Sunday. It was ushered in by the chiming of bells, bursts of martial music, and the thunder of cannon. Going early on shore, we found all the shops open as usual, and nothing to distinguish the day but the increased display in the churches. Hearing that the Emperor was to be present in the cathedral attached to his palace, and fronting the great square, we went at an early hour for the purpose of seeing his Majesty. After we had stood several hours, he came in at a private entrance, attended by the Empress, and took his seat on an elevated platform that afforded us a fine view of his person. He was tall and finely formed, dressed in military uniform, and was, altogether, just such a figure as one would naturally expect in an Emperor.

The cathedral shone like a great jewel box, with gold and silver; a numerous and enthusiastic band played martial airs with all their might and main; and the Emperor, and the priests, and the dignitaries of the Empire, and the foreign ambassadors, standing meekly and foolishly in a row, like a class of school boys—and all the congregation, save and except some unterrified Californian, and the saints that stood in gold-and-silvery dignity around the sides of the cathedral, kept kneeling down and getting up again in the most unexpected manner.

After some time spent in this way, an ecclesiastic, richly dressed, climbed up into a sort of martin-house that stood on one side; and poking his head and shoulders out at the top, somewhat in the manner of those ingenious bouncing toys with which children are so deliciously frightened, he began to shout down to us below like a sweep on top of a chimney. But no one regarded him, though he doubtless talked very wisely, and in Latin, too; and, in fifteen minutes, he came down again, very warm and red in the face, and again the band struck up their music.

The long service being at length over, the Emperor left the cathedral, and passed through the whole length of his palace to the principal entrance, where a carriage was in readiness to convey him to his country-seat. Having handed his empress into the carriage as politely as if he had been only a private individual, he took his seat beside her; the door was closed, and the six horses instantly set off at full gallop, diagonally across the square, to the imminent danger of his loyal subjects, who had much ado to get out of the royal road. The whole scene reminded me very pleasantly of a picture I had often studied, with great interest, in somebody's geography, representing a nobleman—in Austria, I think—riding over a cripple, who held up his wooden leg bayonetwise against the frightened horses. When the emperor has thus swept away like a whirlwind, and his escort had gone galloping after him on diminutive horses, his suit also got into carriages, and followed, more soberly, in the same direction. [Pg 44]

We spent Monday and Tuesday in wandering about the city, and in purchasing a few luxuries for use at sea. Wednesday morning, I went, with a small party, in one of the ship's boats, several miles up into one of the arms of the bay, for the purpose of buying oranges. Leaving the boat anchored a short distance from the beach, we struck into a narrow lane or footpath leading up into the country, and shut in, on both sides, by the queerest and most eccentric forest I had ever seen. Every tree, shrub, and flower was a most decided humourist, and had its own way of growing, entirely different from its neighbours. Instead of harmonizing with each other, like the twin quakers of a Northern forest, each one seemed trying to be as odd and outre as possible.

There were beauties there of every description, but they needed a cunning hand to sort and arrange them. The effect, though almost bewildering by its brilliancy, was not, in the end, agreeable to my plain republican notions. The eye is wearied by so much slovenly magnificence, such wasted prodigality, and ostentatious vanity; and would gladly turn to "the sober realm of leafless trees," even of our own November. [Pg 45]

Walking a mile over the deep, fine sand, we came to the plantation to which we had been directed. The house, which was small and light, like a huge bird-cage of bamboo, stood in the midst of an orange orchard, where the fruit was hanging on the trees in the greatest profusion. The price demanded was twenty-five cents a hundred; we were to gather the oranges ourselves, and wherever we pleased, with the exception of half a dozen trees, the fruit of which, being of a higher flavour, was reserved by the owner for his own use. It was a very pleasant novelty—this picking oranges as though they had been apples—tasting one, here and there, and throwing it magnanimously away, if it were not quite first-rate; but we had little leisure for such pastimes. We selected the sweetest trees, and stopping only to pick the thickest of the fruit, we had collected by noon more than five thousand oranges, which we thought as many as our boat would hold.

After eating the dinner we had brought from the ship, we strolled off to a neighbouring plantation, where we found a similar bird-cage perched on a slight elevation, and its owner, a little, squat, bandy-legged Frenchman, engaged in drying coffee on mats spread before the door. He received us with the greatest cordiality; and after his heart was a little warmed by the wine he had compelled us to drink with him, he began to give us some account of his former history; and at length informed us that he had served in the armies of the great Emperor. Stripping up his sleeve, with characteristic vivacity, he exhibited the wounds he had received in his service, with as much pride and enthusiasm as if they had been the cross of the Legion of Honour. It seemed strangely incongruous to find one who had played a part, even though the humblest, in that stirring drama, mouldering away, like a forgotten firebrand, in this woody solitude, long after the fierce flame of battle had gone out on the field of Waterloo. [Pg 46]

We were employed the whole afternoon in conveying our booty to the boat. After working hard all

the morning, we found little romance in carrying one or two hundred oranges, in bags, on our heads, over the hot yielding sand; and there was a general exclamation of satisfaction when the last load came heavily down to the beach. We reached the ship long after sundown, and bid a final farewell to Rio the next morning.

CHAPTER V.

[Pg 47]

My quiet room-mate went with us no farther. He was disheartened by the length of the voyage, and perhaps thought Brazil presented quite as many advantages as California. His place was filled by a young, red-haired Scotchman, who had formerly lived in Edinburgh, and sat on the knee of Sir Walter. He had been on one or two whaling voyages, and had evidently seen the world. He played on the guitar—sang a variety of songs, some of which were of a very doubtful character—was an expert boxer—had something of a turn for poetry and light literature—and, in spite of his unsettled, wandering life, still possessed, to an unusual degree, that sort of native refinement that makes one tender of the feelings and weaknesses of others. He seemed, however, to value these various accomplishments only as passports to the favour of the other sex. His successes in that line had been very numerous, according to his own showing, and had confirmed him in the belief that there was no such thing as virtue in the world.

On leaving port, we plunged at once into the region of storms. The tropic of Capricorn seemed an actual wall of separation, dividing two distinct climates as smoothly and evenly as it does the zones upon the map. On one side, all was bright and serene; on the other, cloudy and tempestuous. Off the mouth of the La Platte, the mariner is sure to encounter heavy seas, as if there floated down that magnificent river, from its mountain birthplace, nothing but miniature Andes to encumber the smooth surface of the deep. Day after day we climbed up and down these hills, as slowly and painfully as a man walking over a ploughed field. We gained, seemingly, not a foot; and I sometimes thought we were to remain there forever seesawing the same dull wave. Every morning we found ourselves apparently just where we were the night before; the same ill-looking wave on our quarter, the same dirty cloud over head. Drive as hard as we could, there was no getting away from them; they still, like the headless horseman, preserved the same relative position.

[Pg 48]

But the ocean was no longer a solitude; the space around the ship resembled rather an immense barnyard thronged with a greater variety of poultry than is often seen, even in the enclosures of the most successful fancier. There were little bevvies of Mother Cary's Chickens—flocks of Cape pigeons, gonies, hagletts, and mollymocks; and, largest and noblest of all, the solitary albatross. They followed us for miles, floating on the water till almost out of sight, then regaining their position by a hasty flight. We fished for them with great success, using for bait a bit of pork attached to a stout hook, which, being suffered to float on a piece of board, far behind the ship, was eagerly swallowed by these greedy scavengers.

The largest albatross measured nearly twelve feet across his wings, though his body was no larger than a goose. Their powers of flight are unrivalled. I used to watch them for hours together, circling with prying eyes round the ship, now rising, now falling, now coming up heavily against the wind, then suddenly shooting away before it, like a kite that has broken its string; and all, apparently, without any more exertion than is visible in the flight of a thistle down, their "sail broad vans" remaining constantly motionless, with the exception, now and then, of a single, almost imperceptible flap, as they varied their course to one side or the other.

[Pg 49]

When drawn on board, and placed upon the deck, the albatross lost at once all this poetry of motion, and became an awkward, ungainly bird, unable to rise into the air, and in constant danger of tumbling forward on to its ugly nose. I was rather disappointed by the indifference of our sailors on this interesting subject. They viewed the death of their patron bird with as little concern as if it had been a turkey; they had no superstitious fears about ill-luck thence arising; and, indeed, I am sorry to say, were as little given to superstition of any kind as the stoutest enlightener of the masses could desire.

Some of the smaller birds were also killed for food; but their feathers were so disproportioned to the flesh, that they were not worth the trouble of picking. A far more abundant and grateful repast was furnished by a porpoise, that was harpooned as he frolicked past the bows. No sooner was the approach of these playful creatures discovered, than the inspiring cry of "porpoise," "porpoise," was echoed through the ship, and all hands were instantly on the alert. They generally made their first appearance on our quarter; and speedily overtaking us, rolled, in broken files, and with many an awkward bound and splash, directly under the bowsprit. A harpoon was always kept in readiness for such an emergency, and the second mate, who was an old hand at the business, taking his station on the martingal, waited a favourable opportunity to hurl his weapon into the back of one of the plunging monsters. This was the first time he had succeeded, and now twenty or thirty of the passengers, bousing away on the rope to the tune of Uncle Ned, soon landed our game on deck. He weighed several hundred pounds, and the flesh, which was remarkably sweet, closely resembling beef, furnished an excellent dinner for all on board.

The sight of a strange sail in these lonely seas aroused our most eager speculation. She was bound in the same direction as ourselves, and we had no difficulty in conjecturing that she was

[Pg 50]

seeking the same golden gate. She proved to be the ship Sweden; had left port three weeks after us, and partly by not stopping at any port, and partly by her superior sailing, had gained so decided an advantage. We raced with her two days in succession, but, as the wind freshened, she slowly crept ahead, and our captain gave orders to put on more sail. The Sweden followed our example, and both vessels, crowded with all the canvass they could bear, staggered, like a drunken man with a barrel of whisky on his shoulders, heavily, along their uneven path, showing many feet of their bright and dripping copper at every spring. Suddenly the Sweden carried away her foresail, and we began to recover the ground we had lost. But it was set again with provoking rapidity, and, ere long, we were compelled to abandon the contest. Before parting company, however, we endeavoured to find out if her commander intended to go through the Straits of Magellan, as there was a great diversity of opinion on board our ship as to the expediency of attempting the passage. A board was put up in the rigging with the question printed on it in large letters; but though, as we afterwards learned, they saw the board, they could not make out the inscription, and our captain, in his perplexity, finally referred the matter to the passengers. The majority, knowing nothing of the difficulties of the undertaking, and naturally desirous to shorten the voyage as much as possible, were in favour of going through the Straits; but we were fortunately prevented from making the trial by adverse winds that drove us wide of the mark, and compelled us to take the longer, but far safer passage round the Horn.

About the middle of May we arrived off the coast of Patagonia, and soon after made Staten Island. In these inhospitable latitudes, we found the serenest weather since leaving Rio; the sea, though heaving in lazy swells, was almost as smooth as a looking-glass. It was evident that our coming was unexpected, and that the fierce brood of storms that infest that region had left home on some distant marauding expedition. We were so near the coast that we could easily distinguish the helmets of glittering snow worn by the hills drawn up in solid phalanx near the shore; but we were unable to catch a glimpse of that race of giants that had so imposed upon our childish fancy.

[Pg 51]

Passing Terra del Fuego, and the little island of Cape Horn, at too great a distance to obtain a view of those famous headlands, we held steadily on our course into still higher latitudes; till, having gained a sufficient elevation to avoid all danger of being blown back into the Atlantic, the ship's head was, at last, turned towards the west; and on the morning of the twenty-second of May we waked up in the Pacific, with something of the feeling of those early navigators when they first burst through into this unknown sea.

The sun off Cape Horn is a very sleepy fellow, with none of that inconvenient propensity to early rising that elsewhere interferes so much with our arrangements; he rose about eight, attained a meridian altitude of some twelve degrees, and retired at four. The weather was now cold and squally. Spirits of rain or sleet, or what was still worse, the tops of the waves driven in upon us by the winds, made it almost as hard to remain upon deck as if it had been swept by the fire of a battery. The ship seemed almost entirely deserted; a few of the more resolute sort, their heads drawn into their shoulders, purple with cold, and half blinded by the spray, still clung to the rigging, and stared stupidly, with puckered mouth and eyebrows, out into the immeasurable gloom. The rest had retired, like bats and owls, or a somnolescent bear, into the most out-of-the-way places they could find; and it was about as safe and agreeable an operation to disturb one of them as to stir up the abstracted, meditative gentleman last mentioned from his hollow tree.

Slinking away to my berth, I wrapped myself in great-coats and blankets, and strove, by the aid of a feeble lantern and an entertaining book, to conjure up more pleasing associations; but the result was a wretched failure. My narrow stateroom, six feet by four, contained, within its dark green walls, as much that was gloomy and repulsive as the wet, slippery deck, and melancholy ocean—everything had the feeling of a "cold, damp, uncomfortable body."

[Pg 52]

Cooking, in such weather, was well nigh impossible, but fortunately we had no appetite. We were put on an allowance of water, three quarts a day; but then we could not have drunk half of it if we had tried. Everybody, however, was out of sorts; and the dismal weather, the wretched fare, and the unjustifiable length of the voyage, afforded sufficient matter, if not cause, for grumbling. In such a state of mind it is anything but agreeable to be left behind by more successful rivals. A handsome, gaily-painted ship came up with us one of these days, and the usual question was propounded, how long she had been out. "Sixty-one days," was the ready and self-satisfied answer; "how long have you?" "One hundred and four," very slowly and reluctantly. We heard the passengers on the Loo Choo repeat the number with jeering triumph, as she forged ahead, flinging up her heels, and showing her bright yellow bottom in a very insulting manner. I hurled after them a wish not of the most amiable character, and looked to see them go down together; but they held on their course, rejoicing in the successful flam they had put upon us. The first question we asked, on arriving at San Francisco, was about the ships we had spoken on the way; and it gave us no little gratification to learn that the Loo Choo had not yet come into port. At the time of our meeting, she had really been out eighty-one days, and her whole passage was even longer than our own.

We then knew nothing of all this, however, and it would be hard to find a more discontented, distracted set of beings than was on board the Leucothea after the Loo Choo was fairly out of sight. A merry party got together round the windlass for the express purpose of cursing the ship and all concerned in her, the day in which they ever heard there was such a place as N—, and themselves, most of all, for having taken passage in what their prompter called such a lubberly, blubber-hunting craft. They were unfortunately interrupted, however, in their well meant design, by the cheerful cry of "porpoise," "porpoise," and hurrying to the bows, we soon had one of these

[Pg 53]

delicate monsters floundering on deck, which, like a lump of sugar to a peevish child, put us all, for a time, in good humor.

Early the next morning, before it was light enough to see the ship's length, a fierce and sudden cry of "put the helm hard down, lower the boat," pierced every part of the ship, falling on the ears of the sleeping passengers like their funeral knell. "What's the matter? is the ship sinking?" cried at once a hundred voices, and a hundred hearts stood still for the answer. The next moment, "a man overboard" explained the alarm, and converted the lively apprehensions for our own safety into a comparatively inert sympathy for another. The waves were running mountains high, and the boats were all firmly lashed in their places, so that lowering one was both difficult and dangerous, yet ten minutes found the man safe in the ship, though so thoroughly exhausted by the intense cold as to be unable to stand alone. His escape was almost miraculous; he was stationed just beneath the bowsprit, trying to harpoon a porpoise, when the ship plunging heavily, he was swept off by the waves. As he passed along the side, he uttered the cry that had produced such an excitement, and was thus the first to announce his own danger. He afterwards contrived to kick off his boots, and being an excellent swimmer, kept his head above water till the boat, pulling directly in the wake of the ship, came to his relief.

The night came on unusually cold and blustering. I was sitting with Tertium and Captain Bill, in their stateroom, when a faint smell of fire attracted our attention. As it grew stronger, we became greatly alarmed, as indeed we well might, for nothing can appear more hideous to the imagination, than a ship loaded with passengers, on fire of a dark, stormy, wintry night off Cape Horn. Captain Bill now hastily descended into the cabin and roused the captain, who was already asleep, and became almost palsied with fright on hearing the dreadful tidings.

[Pg 54]

"Even such a man, so faint, so spiritless,
So dull, so dead in look, so woe begone,
Drew Priam's curtain in the dead of night,
And would have told him half his Troy was burn'd."

Before, however, he reached the deck, we had opened the door of the adjoining stateroom, and discovered the seat of danger. The wife of one of the seamen, who occupied the room, had incautiously placed a hot brick between the sheets, to answer the purpose of a warming pan, and the whole bedding was soon in a light blaze. It was extinguished without difficulty, and, as I had displayed, through the whole of this trying occasion, that presence of mind of which I am so justly proud, I was able to laugh without mercy at my companions for their needless alarm.

This was the last of Cape Horn. Near the end of May we fell in with a favourable breeze that bore us, in ten days, farther than we had sailed in any preceding month, and promised a speedy arrival at Talcahuano—but, a few hundred miles south of that port, we encountered a violent head wind, against which we slowly toiled for nearly a week, and it was not till the 12th of June that we came in sight of the coast of Chili.

We came to anchor, the same evening, in the little bay, abreast of the town and a quarter of a mile from the shore. The next morning we were surrounded by native boats, bringing narrow-necked earthen vessels full of milk, fine white rolls, and baskets of eggs and apples; for all which we paid about the same prices as are usual in our own cities. Going on shore we found ourselves in the dirtiest little village in the world, except one that I afterwards visited in Central America, consisting of a few streets of low houses built of large coarse brick, or rude basket work daubed with clay. Talcahuano, or Turkeywarner, as it is oddly enough called by sailors, though hardly known to the civilised world, has long been the favorite resort of ships engaged in the whale fishery. They generally remain a week or more in port to recruit and lay in a stock of fresh provisions, and the town has hence become the very hot bed of vice. As we walked through the filthy narrow streets, the open doors on each side were full of women, who kept up an incessant cry of "come in, Californe;" "Californe, come in;" adding often other allurements of a yet more unmistakable character.

[Pg 55]

In the afternoon a large party sat down to dinner in a shambling, tumbledown edifice called a hotel, and kept by an American. Ascending a flight of narrow, rickety stairs, we passed through a range of rooms and galleries presenting the very picture of desolation, till we came to one a little superior to the rest, and just wide enough for the long narrow table that by its royal plenty gave the lie to all about it.

A pig, crispily roasted by some firm yet gentle hand, graced the upper end, supported, at convenient intervals, by beef, turkeys, chickens, and pigeon pie; flanked, in their turn, by a small but delicious species of oysters, potatoes, and string beans, bread and butter,—the last imported from the States—with a noble array of pitchers and bottles containing a liberal supply of the cheap wine of the country—all furnished for the moderate sum of half a dollar. The reader can but faintly imagine the wholesouled delight with which our senses, after so long mortification and self-denial, expatiated over this dainty repast. Yet call it not animal, sensual, that agreeable titillation, having its principal seat indeed in the palate and stomach, but thence diffused over the brain and heart, making the one apprehensive, quick, forgetive, full of nimble, fiery and delectable shapes,—disposing the other to gentle and kind offices, and producing, in fine, the most perfect harmony of the whole man.

[Pg 56]

But a more potent influence was at work to inflame our imaginations. While we were at sea, that

faculty was comparatively quiescent; our droning, isolated life was by no means favourable to excitement, which can hardly exist without novelty and frequent contact with others. We now found both of these in abundance, and the marvellous reports we heard on every side seemed to acquire a greater degree of credibility from our near approach to the fountain head. In the inflated language of our narrators, that portion of Chili was almost exhausted of its male population. All along the coast they were hastening to the El Dorado; some in foreign shipping, and others, who could not obtain a passage, crept along the shore in boats, or set out on a still more perilous journey by land. Parties had already returned with sums varying from twenty to two hundred thousand dollars; one woman in particular was instanced who had dug fifty thousand with her own hands, and my informant had seen the kegs and boxes that held the gold. To all these stories we listened with the gravest deliberation, and having, with a degree of sagacity that did us infinite credit, rejected one-half as falsehood, we swallowed the remainder without any further difficulty.

Our little party of three was here converted into a quadruple by the addition of a fourth member, who had been thus far hesitating between the mines and San Francisco, but was now determined to try the former. In honour of this new member we considered it necessary to add somewhat to our bill of fare for the diggings, and I accordingly went with him to examine into the merits of some jerked beef, an article we had heard highly recommended for that purpose. It was in bundles as big as a flour barrel, and was nearly as tough and unpalatable as the strips of hide that bound it together; but it contained a deal of nourishment, there was no doubt about that; and as for troubling our heads about the quality of our food, while making a hundred dollars apiece a day, such an extravagance never entered our calculations.

[Pg 57]

We had brought with us from home an abundant supply of beans, rice, biscuit, pork, and sugar—cold water we expected to find in the mines; and on this lenten fare we had no doubt we should be perfectly content. But this hung beef was peculiarly detestable, and therefore highly appropriate as an addition to our list of comestibles; the only thing, in fact, wanting to add the finishing touch to its unique ugliness. Accordingly we bought the beef, congratulating each other on our good fortune, carried it with us into the mines, and there incontinently hung it up on a tree as the only way of getting rid of so formidable an incumbrance.

Thursday it rained heavily, and the swell that came in from the sea rendered all communication with the shore extremely difficult. Busby and Captain Bill attempting, with several others, to come on board, were caught by a roller that stove their boat against the beach and drenched them all in salt water, to the serious detriment of their Old-World hats and chest-wrinkled broadcloth. This being the season of the winter solstice, we were agreeably disappointed at finding the sun shining brightly the following morning, which encouraged us to pass the day on shore. A party even had the hardihood to hire horses and ride to the city of Concepcion, a distance of ten miles; but they found the road in a wretched condition, and were horribly scared by robbers, from whom they escaped only by unparalleled valour, perhaps a little tempered with discretion.

We met with various delays in obtaining a supply of water, and as it was not all on board by Saturday night, the crew were set to work the next morning. They were already dressed to go ashore; and Sunday being considered a holiday, though anything but a holy day, they at first declared they would not hoist a cask, but finally pulled off their coats, and went to work, to the tune of "Bright Canaan, that happy land!" and the chorus being enthusiastically helped along by some fifty voices, the casks came in merrily, and the task was finished in a few hours. In the afternoon I took a long walk into the country with Busby and Number Four. The flocks of sheep feeding on the hills and the soft green turf, the absence of which I had noticed at Rio, reminded us pleasantly of New-England; but the enormous cacti, a foot in diameter, and the odd little wattled cottages, built in unexpected situations on the hill sides, at once dispelled the illusion. We put to sea Monday evening, and will now take leave of Chili in the words of our gifted poetess:

[Pg 58]

"Among the fruits to be found there,
Are apples, cabbages, onions, and pear.
The animals is the same with the exception of the mules;
But in this land of freedom, we oughter be thankful no slaveholder rules."

CHAPTER VI.

[Pg 59]

The Leucothea crept timidly out of the harbour, like a mouse out of its hole; but had scarcely got to sea, when one of the Northers that prevail at that season was upon us, and drove us far to the south. Thus each time, on leaving port, we had met with storms; and each time I had suffered from a renewal of sea-sickness, though far less severely on each successive occasion. The young Scot, who had shared my stateroom since leaving Rio, had now sold his berth to an American named Lewis, and taken up his quarters with the first mate, of whom he was an old friend and crony.

Lewis was about thirty-five years of age, of a slender habit, and a genteel sort of stoop, as if

constantly afflicted with the stomach-ache. He possessed the most remarkable faculty of exaggeration, which he began to display almost as soon as his foot touched the deck. It was generally boastful, or egotistical; but, sometimes, free from the least taint or alloy, as if the habit had become so confirmed that he continued to indulge in it even when no motive could be detected. He had been a sailor, and engaged for many months in the opium trade on the coast of China, but, several years before, had settled in Chili, where he had since enjoyed great consideration as a master mechanic.

It was not to be expected that such a stick of drift wood should remain long in one place, especially in the height of such a freshet as was now sweeping past. He came on board with a large chest of sandal wood, a Spanish sarape, and a pick-axe about a foot in length, that looked more like a plaything for children than an instrument for the hard hands of a California miner. But he had not been long in the ship before the little pick-axe was regarded with a sort of mysterious envy by all those who had been unfortunate enough to provide themselves with the common two handed implement. In his hands it seemed the key which was to unlock those sumless and sunless treasures hidden in the bowels of the earth. It was a nut-picker, with which he intended to pick out the yellow meat from its stony shell. He was not going to burden himself with pan or rocker; but, with his pockets stuffed with provisions, his sarape on his back, a big leathern pouch in one hand, and his little pick-axe in the other, he would roam leisurely and pleasantly among the mountains and over the plains for two or three months; when he should have as much gold, so he said, as he knew what to do with. He had acquaintance, Chilians, who had been there before, who had promised to take him to places where there would be hardly enough difficulty in the work to make it pleasant.

[Pg 60]

All this seemed, by some strange necromancy, to grow out of that mysterious instrument; and, as I lay in my berth listening to his droning narrative of what he had heard, and what he intended to do, I was sometimes tempted to steal it while he slept. My envy, however, was somewhat allayed by his consolatory assurances that, even without such aid, I could make a very handsome fortune. Having hinted to him one day my modest expectations, "Humph," he said, in a tone that seemed to imply a degree of contempt for such poverty of spirits, "Humph! if that's all, there's no danger but what you'll make it fast enough; the least you can do is to dig fifty thousand this summer." If any one else had made this assertion, it would have carried no weight with it; but his manner was so imposing, and then there was the little pick-axe—it seemed to give a sort of authority in such matters. I felt grateful to him as if he had said, "I give you, out of the nobleness and generosity of my disposition, so many thousands."

[Pg 61]

Such stories, constantly repeated, could not fail to have their effect; the excitement in the ship visibly increased, and Lewis, by virtue of his superior knowledge, arrogated to himself prodigious importance. Meeting him on shore, a few days after we landed at San Francisco, I asked him when he was going to the mines; when, to my infinite surprise and consternation, he replied that he had made up his mind not to go at all. Nothing could have given my faith such a fearful shock; but just then, when it seemed about to perish altogether, it was fortunately confirmed in a new and surprising manner, an account of which will be given hereafter. Lewis, as well as my last room-mate, was something of a literary character, and the extent of his acquirements may be inferred from the fact that Lippard, and Rev. G. Chauncey Burr—I love, as the good vicar says, to give the whole name—were his favourite authors.

The storm having, at length, blown itself out, the ship began to present a scene of unusual activity. The hurricane deck was filled with tent-makers and boat-builders, a carpenter's bench was put up amidships, and a blacksmith's forge puffed and glowed under the forward galley. Knapsacks, powder-horns, pick-axes, boatsails, hammocks, and gold-washers were made or refitted; and those who were already provided with these various articles, or expected to have no use for them, caught the busy infection, and began to schrimpschong with most laudable perseverance. Schrimpschonging is a word of most varied significance. It is derived from the low Dutch, and includes all those kinds of labour between the useful and ornamental, but verging more on the latter. Whittling is the simplest form of the disease; most kinds of ladies' work, all those ingenious inventions in silk and worsted, must be regarded as still more alarming indications. With us, it manifested itself chiefly in making ornamental dippers out of cocoanut shells, and a certain necromantic puzzle, for which one of the crew, himself a confirmed schrimpschonger, had furnished the model.

[Pg 62]

We began also at this time to compare our different plans for the approaching struggle, all different, but all alike monstrous and impossible. From my present advanced position I look back upon our ignorant simplicity, with smiling pity, as if I possessed a duplicate personality, and had, in my present self, no concern in any of those absurd fictions that then imposed themselves upon us for truth.

I have already given some hints of our rude geographical and geological knowledge of California. The rivers there occupied a very prominent position. They were broad, placid streams, flowing gently between green banks. Several parties in the ship were now at work painting and enlarging the boats they had brought with them for the purpose of ascending these favourable rivers. They talked, with the quiet complacency of superior wisdom, of sailing along from point to point; searching out the richest portions—now shooting a fat buck, as he stooped to quench his thirst—now digging out a peck of nuggets like so many clams—now gliding through the unbroken forest—and anon shooting out into the sun in front of some little encampment of miners—till, having filled the boat with gold, they would throw overboard all their tools, and, with colours flying and guns firing, drop down the river to the bay, and return home.

It was, indeed, a most seductive picture, glowing like an Eastern tale, or the stories of those old buccaneers rifling a Spanish galleon—how the word seems to roll in riches—and aroused our desires to go a gold hunting in the same privateering fashion. Some one suggested that there might be steamboats or schooners on the rivers, that would carry us up as far as we wished to go; but this idea met with little encouragement from any one, and was scouted by all the boat-builders with the highest indignation.

[Pg 63]

Another subject of nearly equal interest was the great variety of gold-washers, from which we had to make a selection. One party brought out a heavy iron tub, as big as a cartwheel, and exhibited its mode of operation with a ludicrous mixture of doubt and complacency, as if they were afraid of it themselves. It worked admirably when there was nothing in it except a small quantity of sand and shot; and then, it was so very heavy; surely no one would have made anything so clumsy, unless for certain advantages not possessed by a simpler construction. But the name was still more imposing, and was evidently the cunning device of one who had no faith in Shakspeare. "The patent centrifugal gold-washer and California chrysolite," stamped in honest iron letters into the very substance of the machine; could anything be more satisfactory? On landing at San Francisco, we found the beach strewn with similar contrivances, that we could have bought "as cheap as stinking mackerel."

We had expected to celebrate the 4th of July in San Francisco; but the day came, and found us still south of the equator. Not to lose entirely, however, the benefit of the occasion, we determined to show ourselves as patriotic and as independent as our unfavourable circumstances would allow. In the morning there was the usual military parade, but on a scale of unusual magnificence. Charley Bainbridge arrayed himself, as the law directs, in knapsack and cartouch box; and shouldering a rusty musket, marched with measured step several times round the ship; looking, all the while, over both shoulders to see the admiring crowd that followed at his heels.

He included in his single person all the varied pomp of captain, lieutenant, private, and musicians; his whistling was indeed extraordinary, and only to be surpassed by that now classic Ethiop who used to keep a barber's pole, so it was said, just out of the Bowery, and was wont to entertain his customers by whistling two tunes at once, one out of each corner of his mouth.

[Pg 64]

Like the Irishman who surrounded his enemy, or Kehama doing battle with the king of hell, he seemed to multiply himself for the occasion. He walked

Forth without more train
Accompanied than with his own complete
Perfections; in himself was all his state,
More solemn than the tedious pomp that waits
On princes, when their rich retinue long,
Of horses led, and grooms besmeared with gold,
Dazzles the crowd, and sets them all agape.

"He carried arms, and he presented arms,—he faced to the left, he faced to the right, and he faced to the right-about;" "he wheeled forward, and he wheeled backward, and he wheeled into echelon—he marched and he counter-marched, by grand divisions, by simple divisions, and by subdivisions—by platoons, by sections, and by files—in quick time, in slow time, and in no time at all; till having gone through all the evolutions of two great armies, including the eighteen manœuvres of Dundas," and charged bayonets with signal success upon an unlucky dog that had dared to bark at him, though as his owner alleged in excuse, not as captain but as private, he dismissed his company, and we all sat down to dinner.

By clubbing together our scanty resources, we succeeded in getting up quite a tolerable repast. True, our meats were something old,—our peas and green corn could hardly be distinguished from each other, except by sight,—and our patriotism, too, was getting a little musty; but our wine was sufficiently new to make amends, and we were none of us disposed to be hypercritical. Toasts were given as usual; but, though they were received with shouts of laughter, none, that I remember, would bear repeating. They would suffer by this preserving process even more than the meats and vegetables that accompanied them. Lewis, who had not been among us long enough to become imbued with the prevailing spirit of discontent, offered, for his sentiment, a wish that we might all find ourselves, on the succeeding anniversary, again assembled on board the *Leucothea*, each one with his pile. This toast was received with a wonderful degree of coolness, considering the final clause; but not even that could reconcile us to the idea of repeating such a voyage in such an ill-omened craft—that pill required more gilding.

[Pg 65]

But alas for the hopes that mocked us! and of which his words were but a feeble exponent. Just in proportion to their brilliancy, was their vanity; as the soap-bubble becomes the brighter the more it is attenuated. The succeeding anniversary came, and found not a few of our number in the grave; while a still larger proportion, wasted by toil and sickness, and harassed by disappointment, cursed the day that they had ever heard of California.

In the evening a grand shingarnie was held on the quarter-deck, when an intellectual repast was provided of about the same quality as our dinner. There was a young fellow among the steerage passengers who, from some real or fancied resemblance to that individual, had received the cognomen of SMIKE, though "the Artful Dodger" would have been perhaps more appropriate. He seemed afraid that some one was about to lay hold of him from behind, and hence kept himself in

constant readiness for flight; so that his gait became the debateable ground between walking and running, where one ends, and the other has not yet begun. This gave his body a slight inclination forward; and the agreeable slope thus produced, found a fitting termination in the short skirts of his fuzzy, blue roundabout, that projected a few inches from his person as if, like the eaves of a house, intended to shoot off the rain. The beholder, on seeing this jacket for the first time, was unavoidably impressed with the belief that it had originally started with the intention of reaching the knees, but having been stunted in its growth, had stopped short half-way between that point and the waist, which gave the wearer somewhat of the appearance of a rooster who has shed his feathers, and is waiting for his tail to regain its full dimensions before he ventures to indulge in his wonted strut. His hat, which he wore on the back of his head as if to restore his centre of gravity, seemed in truth ill-fitted for the purpose, both rim and crown having been sadly shorn of their fair proportions.

[Pg 66]

All Shakspeare's seven ages were huddled together in his face, his chin being the seventh. To look at that alone, you would affirm he was a hundred years old; each feature led to a different conclusion, but all together involved the question in painful uncertainty. If you paid to his nose the reverence due to old age, a glance at his mouth made you blush with indignation at having wasted your courtesies on a boy; but if his mouth tempted you to treat him as an equal, his eyes frowned reproach upon such unbecoming familiarity. His physiognomy thus became a perpetual trap to the unwary, as it was an enigma that defied all the speculations of the curious.

This boy-Methuselah was the first performer, and his part was that much abused monologue of Hamlet, "To be or not to be." He took his station on the quarter deck, with the mizen mast at his back; and the spectators stood, or sat, or leaned, wherever they could find support. I do not remember whether he decided to be or not to be, but his effort was received with immense approbation, and in honour of this achievement, he was henceforth called Hamlet, in addition to his other titles.

The next performer was a very Hercules of a fellow, who, if he had been cut into pieces, would have made three of his diminutive rival. He had formerly been an actor, and it was easy to see that he must have gained great success. He bellowed, he muttered, he whispered, he hissed,—he stamped, and the hollow deck resounded; he spread apart his Colossus-like legs, and raised his arms as if to hold up the sky; till having run through all those parts so envied by Bully Bottom, he suddenly broke away in a whirlwind of passion, and resumed his place among the admiring spectators.

[Pg 67]

During the remainder of the month little occurred worthy of notice. Our water again failed, and we were once more put on an allowance of only three pints a day, and two of these we gave the steward for our coffee. The beans and rice in which we had luxuriated were no longer seen on our table, for there was no water to cook them. Once a week we were summoned into the cabin to receive our hebdomedal allowance of butter. On the steward's table, in his little pantry, were set out, in tempting array, on half sheets of letter paper some forty pats of butter, each weighing exactly four ounces, and, like the candy in a confectioner's window, exhibiting all the colours of the rainbow. Not only candy, but many other articles, are all the more pleasing for this variety, but butter possesses no such versatility; here yellow is your only colour; blue, and green, and red, though elsewhere highly becoming, should be rigidly excluded. Yet I remember hearing the steward trying to convince one young fellow, who rather demurred about taking the fortieth and sole remaining pat, as being more curiously coloured than the rest, that it was nothing more than natural, since streaked and speckled cows always gave butter of the same pattern.

CHAPTER VII.

[Pg 68]

On the morning of the 13th of August a sail was discovered in the horizon. She rapidly overhauled us, and when sufficiently near, a boat was sent to obtain, if possible, a supply of water, our own being now nearly exhausted. The boat returned after several hours, bringing a cask of water and a number of papers from Valparaiso, from which we gleaned a variety of interesting items. The Helena left home a month later than we, but though their voyage had been thus comparatively short, her passengers were no better contented than our own. They had just eaten their last pickled salmon; and the mackerel, fresh beef, and potatoes, which still remained to them, could not efface from their tender stomachs the recollection of their recent bereavement.

In view of this afflictive dispensation how unreasonable now seemed our own ungrateful discontent. Henceforth, if any one grumbled, as some are sure to do under the most favourable conditions, because our water looked like soapsuds, or because we were forced to dine seven days in the week on salt beef and pork, he was sure to be cut short with, "Why!! they are out of pickled salmon on board the Helena!" and unless he were a peculiarly obstinate and hardened offender, this rebuke did not need to be repeated.

The next morning the Helena was out of sight, while, far to leeward appeared another sail driving hard after us towards the same centre of attraction. We had now been more than six months at sea, and every day increased our feverish impatience to be at the end of our voyage. Every change of wind was watched with intense anxiety, and "How's she head?" was asked, at least, five hundred times a day. But there was no hurrying the Leucothea; one ship was passing us after

[Pg 69]

another, but she would choose her own time, and gang her ain gait. We seemed like one oppressed by a hideous nightmare, who tries to escape from some threatening danger, but can hardly move a limb. With some, this impatience finally gave way to settled apathy; they had been at sea so long, they didn't care whether they ever saw land again or not;—they wouldn't take the trouble to look at the compass, or even to ask "how's she head;" to all such matters they were profoundly indifferent. The weather sympathized with this class rather than the other; not that it was indifferent, but it was sullen, sombre, and peculiarly disagreeable, far colder than in the same latitudes in the Atlantic, and inconstant as man, or woman either.

August 22d we spoke the Memnon, one hundred and fifteen days from New York, and asked for a supply of water. While they were getting it out of the hold, her main and mizzen topsails were hove aback, and she lay almost motionless on the water, yet apparently trembling with suppressed eagerness. She was by far the finest ship we had seen—a clipper of a thousand tons;—her tall rakish masts were crowded with canvass, and her long, low hull, beneath its rounded softness of outline, seemed, like the "velvet grace" of a tiger, to promise muscles of prodigious flexibility and power. I could not help feeling a sensation something like pity, when I heard of her loss several years after somewhere on the coast of Africa. The cask of water being now lowered over her side, the Memnon filled her topsails, and went off like a racehorse, as docile and highspirited; and the Leucothea went tumbling after.

Sunday, the 26th, was a day of various excitement. Long lines of pelicans sailed slowly over head, or dropped, with a sudden splash, into the water;—herds of fin-backs heaved up their huge bulk on every side, affording us a better view of their vast proportions than we had obtained during our whole voyage; and several times we heard them bellow, a sure sign, according to our old whalers, that they were aware of our presence. By our reckoning, land could not be far distant; we could even hear the trampling of the surf upon the shore, and cannon fired, as we conjectured, from the port;—but a dense fog shrouded every thing from sight. A bottle of wine was promised to the first discoverer, but there was no need of any such inducement,—men were already at the masthead trying to get above the fog, and others had rowed off some distance in a boat, in hopes of seeing through or under it.

[Pg 70]

We were at dinner when the startling sound of "Land, ho!" was heard through the cabin skylight. Going hastily on deck, I turned my eyes to the larboard bow, and saw, under the partially lifted fog, cliffs towering apparently higher than Mt. Washington. The next moment, however, I perceived my error; instead of being, as I supposed, ten or fifteen miles off, they were not more than four; and, as I made the discovery, they suddenly shrank down to their proper altitude of only a few hundred feet. No one in the ship was familiar with the entrance to the bay; and as by reckoning we were some distance to the north, the ship was put on the other tack, and soon, to our infinite chagrin, land again faded from view.

Late in the afternoon, a sail appeared astern, when our mizzen topsails were hove aback, and we waited for her to come up in hopes of obtaining the necessary information. As she toiled sluggishly on, she seemed alive with men; they swarmed black as ants out on the bowsprit—they clustered like bees in the rigging,—while the matted heads that looked at us over the bulwarks, seemed almost as thick as a pile of cocoanuts.

Every ship that we had thus far spoken seemed to have its own peculiar character. The Memnon was a decided aristocrat, with, no doubt, noble blood in her veins,—the Sweden was an honest, hard-working, mechanic,—the Loo Choo, a swelling coxcomb, and the Helena a substantial tradesman. The character of the Humboldt, our new acquaintance, was equally unmistakable. She was an out-and-out vagrant, a beggar born and bred, with an hereditary taint of mendicity that all great Neptune's ocean could not wash out, and all the perfumes of Arabia could not sweeten. She was ninety-eight days from Panama, having left that port about the time we passed Cape Horn, so that we had gained on her the whole length of South America. She had on board three hundred and sixty-five passengers, and a more squalid set of wretches are seldom seen in so small a compass. When we exchanged the customary salute, they sent up a shout that fairly drowned our feeble cry; it seemed as if a voice had come from every plank and timber in the ship.

[Pg 71]

As the captain of the Humboldt was equally at a loss with our own, we held slowly on our way, and Monday morning again came in sight of land, which many asserted to be the same we had seen the day before. Standing further on, we passed lofty bluffs against which the sea roared like distant thunder. They were succeeded by a long table-land terminating in a point white with foam, the whole agreeing with tolerable accuracy, with the chart. While we were at supper, the water suddenly shoaled to four and a half fathoms; and huge rollers lifting the ship like a feather, filled all with instant apprehension lest she should be dashed the next moment on the sands. There was a sudden bustle and trampling over head, and in a twinkling our table was deserted. The helm was jammed hard down, and we once more stood out to sea.

When we had got to a safe distance, and had time to think a little, it was concluded that the cause of alarm was after all nothing but the bar at the mouth of the harbour, and that if we had kept boldly on, we should have been by that time quietly at anchor opposite the city. It was too foggy, however, to repeat the experiment that day, and there was nothing better to do than to come to anchor where we were.

[Pg 72]

Tuesday was also very foggy; a boat was sent out on an exploring expedition, and a gun fired at intervals in hopes of receiving an answering signal. After a long absence the boat returned with the information that we were really off the bay; and at the same time a small brig with a long Moorish name, coming up on our quarter, gave us directions how to steer. After waiting several

hours longer for the turn of the tide, which here runs with extraordinary rapidity, we hauled up the anchor, and with a fair wind and clear sky, slid rapidly into the bay, and round the point that forms the harbour of San Francisco. One ship, and then another, and another, till we could count no further; chafing there idle and forgotten, like a horse tied to the paling, while his master courts away the flying hours within. Dodging skilfully in among them, our sails were lowered one by one; the anchor was soon imbedded in the lazy mud, and the Leucothea, wearily swinging round to her moorings, at length rested from her long travel of two hundred days.

CHAPTER VIII.

[Pg 73]

As it was sunset when we came to anchor, we deferred our landing till the next morning; but one of the owners coming on board brought a large budget of letters, among which there were several for our party. Having devoured them with that intensity of interest that can be understood only by those who have been in similar circumstances, we laid them aside for a more careful perusal, and gathering round the two or three old settlers who had come from the shore, listened with breathless attention, the careless, genteel indifference with which they talked of hundreds, of thousands, and of millions, affecting the imagination far more than the wildest excitement. As the old man says in the play, there is a positive pleasure in simply talking of such big numbers; they fill the mind with such grand and noble ideas.

The next day boats came from the shore in hopes of obtaining passengers.

"How much do you charge?" cried Captain Bill, looking suspiciously down upon the boatman.

"Only one dollar!" he replied, and in a tone that seemed to say that the rates of fare had recently fallen; but our minds had not yet sufficiently expanded to receive this information with the gratitude it deserved. We looked admiringly upon the sturdy knave who dared to speak thus disrespectfully of the almighty dollar, but preferred to wait till we could obtain a passage in one of the boats belonging to the ship. An opportunity soon offered; and in a few minutes we were gliding across the bows of the vessels that lay in denser phalanx near the wharf. On the high yellow bank stood groups of men ragged and miserable. They leered upon us, as we passed, as much as to say, "Now then, here you are! but wait awhile my hearties, till you've been here long enough to find out a thing or two; and then,—"

[Pg 74]

This, however, was only a subsequent interpretation; at the time, I had no doubt that everybody had his pockets stuffed with gold, and, like enough, a heavy belt around his waist filled with the same precious metal; and the rags and tatters that flaunted so boldly seemed rather to confirm this gratifying supposition.

Strolling, yet that is not the word, buzzing a few hours through the city was enough to fill us brim full of excitement. To repeat the figure already employed, we had descended farther and farther into this worldwide maelstrom, and seemed now each moment about to plunge into the vortex. Round and round, faster and faster, spun the dizzy tide; sure such a devil's dance was never danced before.

Everything was on a monstrous and perverted scale. The apparent simplicity of the means employed was ridiculous compared to the sublime result. It seemed impossible that a wealth greater than the Indies should flow through such a narrow channel;—that such prodigious power should be confined in the one story, wood and canvass houses of that awkward shambling city. It was as marvellous almost, and incredible, as that the genie of the Arabian tale should have shrunk his steeple bulk into the little copper vessel,—or that the more modern genie of steam, which the other so well symbolized, should suffer himself to be penned in any other than walls of iron and brass. Piles of merchandize of every description, bags, barrels, boxes, and bundles, filled the stores to suffocation, and ran over into the street. Fat gouty mittens, bursting with gold dust, —the thumb alone stiff with a hundred dollars,—turned up their round yellow bellies on the rude counters, like a frog in the last stages of the dropsy; while bars and lumps of still more seductive unity nestled on the window seat, or leaned poker-and-shovel-wise against the corners. Pounds and ounces took the place of dollars and cents,—the appearance of one of the latter was sure to provoke a laugh, but the dollar, though a decided parvenu, was gradually working his way into good society. The time had past when a pinch of gold dust was the lowest standard of value, and when, for want of silver, the nobler metal was forced to perform the most menial offices of trade.

[Pg 75]

Among all this, in the midst of all these symbols of wealth and power, the miner who had called them into being, moved about with an air of sturdy independence, which received a fresh accession every time he squeezed, between his thumb and fingers, the buckskin bag in his breeches' pocket. Little groups assembled at the corners, and in the principal stores, each one striving to surpass the last speaker in his stories of big lumps,—of holes that paid five or ten dollars a bucket,—and of pockets that made the lucky finder rich in a single hour.

There was something very attractive in this use of the word pocket. There was an appropriateness, an harmony about the idea that imposed upon the understanding. There was such a thing, to be sure, as an empty pocket,—but the old grandam earth had lived a great many years,—she had always been a saving sort of a body, and must have hoarded up quite a handsome pennyworth; it would certainly be a fine thing to have the ransacking of her chinks and crannies.

But the gambling-houses presented scenes of yet fiercer excitement. The finest buildings in the city were devoted to this purpose. Wide doors, standing constantly open, admitted the visitor at once into spacious apartments, where, for every hour in the twenty-four, except a short interval in the morning twilight, were heard the chink of gold and silver, and the confused hum of voices. There is no employment so thirsty as gambling; and the large and splendidly appointed bar was the most striking feature in these establishments. Here the fever-and-anguish gamester sought by one fire to put out another; one drank because he was hot, another because he was cold,—this one because he was losing, that because he had gained.

[Pg 76]

A curious crowd of spectators circled among the little tables, watching, with an interest second only to that of the principal performers, the movements of the game; or gazing boldly, or with modest obliquity of vision, upon the lascivious pictures that hung on the walls. Little boys of ten or twelve called imperiously for brandy smashes, and staked their all on the turn of a card, or the rolling of a ball with hideous nonchalance; while the next moment oaths as big as cannon balls rolled from their hard lips to testify their impish malice or exultation. The simple novice from some New England village, who has never before been farther from home than the nearest town, proud of his first beard, and champing the ends of his moustache between his lips, sidles timidly up to the bar, and calls in a low voice for a glass of lemonade.

"Yes," cries his Mephistopheles, with a patronizing laugh, "and put a stick in it."

"Well," he replies, laughing in his turn, but more feebly than the other, "I guess I will have a stick in it."

Delighted with the puzzling novelty of the phrase, that, without seeming to mean anything, means so much, he soon repeats the experiment, partly to show he is not afraid, and partly from an indescribable, often unconscious pleasure of doing what he would hardly have dared even to think of at home. He thinks of his mother and sisters and aunt Mary, and wonders what they would say, if they saw him in such company and drinking brandy, at a bar! and in a gambling house besides!! The idea of their horror and incredulous wonder is rather pleasing to his selfish vanity; one is very apt to be vain of such loving tender pity. He has learned to put a stick in it; well for him if he does not ere long put in his whole foot.

[Pg 77]

After several hours thus spent in wandering from one centre of attraction to another, we returned to the ship, weary of excitement, and hoping to find there at least one place free from the general infection. On reaching the deck, however, a hubbub of voices assailed our ears in which every other word seemed to be diggins, holes, lumps, pockets, &c., &c. Other parties had been like ours wandering through the city; each had brought on board its own budget of news, and now poured them out before us in bewildering confusion.

One had a long story to tell of a lump found in the southern mines. The man who told him knew the man who saw the lucky fellow that found it. Most of these stories were in this respect, too much like the final clause of the story of the house that Jack built.

Others were more interested in the price current of different articles. Saleratus was eight dollars a pound, and everybody wondered he had not brought a few barrels; it would have been the easiest thing in the world, and would have made his fortune at once. Salt, on the other hand, which we had all taken care to bring with us, was worth nothing. On hearing this, Charley Bainbridge hastily descended into the cabin, and presently returning with a bag containing some twenty or thirty pounds, plunged his knife into its belly, and triumphantly emptied the salt into the sea.

"What are you doing there?" cried Busby, who had just come aboard.

"Only throwing overboard some salt," returned Charley, with a chuckle, as if he had been performing some very brilliant action.

"Why," replied Busby, staring very hard as if he did not exactly see the humour of the thing; "you might have given it away if you didn't know what else to do with it."

"Oh," said Charley, "'taint worth anything."

"Ain't worth anything!" retorted the other indignantly; "it's worth twenty-five cents a pound, and I call that something."

[Pg 78]

This turned out to be the fact; and Charley never heard the last of this adventure, though he said he didn't care, the fun was worth the money any day.

Every one vented his delirium in his own fashion. Dan Carpenter, who was one of the worst affected, clasped his hands on the top of his head as if afraid it should fly away like a balloon; but in spite of this precaution he was raised bodily from the deck, and danced up and down for the space of half an hour, striking his heels three times against each other at every spring; when thoroughly exhausted he was dropt with such violence into a campstool, that it gave way, and let him treacherously down on to his back; whereupon Captain Bill advised him to keep steady, and haul in his jib-sheets; and every one gave him a word of counsel and exhortation.

Such being the food of our waking imagination, it is easy to see what stuff our dreams were made of. All day long we talked and thought of nothing but gold,

And then, in dreaming,
The clouds, we thought, would open, and show riches
Ready to drop upon us; that when we waked,
We cried to dream again.

The mines were now all before us where to choose; but there was no visible Providence for our guide; and among so many conflicting reports, it was difficult to arrive at any fixed conclusion. The southern mines abounded more in lumps and rich deposits, but the gold was distributed more equally in the northern, and the labourer was accordingly more certain of his reward. In each of these grand divisions there was an endless variety of creeks and rivers, every one of which had its advocates, who set forth its advantages to the best of their ability, till the new comer, weary of weighing these opposing probabilities, often rested his decision upon the most trifling coincidence. Twenty dollars a day was said to be the average earned by the miners, but each man's hope told him a far more flattering tale.

[Pg 79]

Under these circumstances it may seem unaccountable that we should have waited nearly two weeks at San Francisco for our provisions to be unloaded, when, if our calculations were well grounded, we lost so much by the delay. The hope that every day would be the last, and the difficulty of unlearning all at once, that system of pennywise economy in which we had been educated, are the only explanation of this anything but a masterly inactivity.

In the mean time, through the agency of Captain Bill, whose good luck was signally manifest on this occasion, we made the acquaintance of a Mr. Primrose, said by some to be the most scientific miner in California. To a digger of any experience, the word scientific would have indicated nothing but the most besotted ignorance; but, to our Old-World notions, it sounded grand and imposing.

This scientific miner had a machine,—a scientific machine,—a machine such as is used in the gold mines of Virginia, and must of course be equally well adapted to this new territory. The machines had not yet arrived; but the scientific miner assured us that the vessel in which they had been shipped had sailed months before, and was now expected every day. In the meantime he would be happy to show us a drawing, from which we could form a tolerable idea of the mode of operation. We accordingly examined the drawing with great attention; we turned it upside down,—we looked at it straightforward and obliquely,—we looked at it with both eyes, and squinted at it after the most approved fashion with only one,—and finally came to the conclusion that it resembled nothing so much as a patent beehive, and of course must be a very scientific machine indeed.

"But will it work?" we asked the scientific miner.

[Pg 80]

The scientific miner, who was by the way a tall and rather comely personage, in a white neck-cloth, something between a clergyman and a broker, made no immediate reply, but taking from a table several hemispherical cakes of gold, looking like so many cakes of beeswax, and thereby confirming our notion of the patent beehive, placed them in our hands with a bland smile, and asked if that would do.

"Certainly," we replied, "that would do very well, if we could do it often enough."

"What do you say to once a week?" inquired the scientific miner.

Captain Bill looked at me, and I looked at Captain Bill, with a smile, half of satisfaction, half of incredulity, but made no answer.

The scientific miner noticed this telegraphic communication, and went on with mathematical gravity and precision.

"This gold," said he, "was washed out in a single week by one of these machines now in operation at Mormon Island; and that, too, from earth that had already been through the common rocker. With one of these machines you can make a thousand dollars a week from almost any earth in California, and ten thousand under favourable circumstances."

Having paused a moment, as if to enable us to digest these assertions, the scientific miner went on in a pleasant and confidential manner that was very encouraging.

"You know how it is," said he; "most that come to this country are ignorant mechanics and labourers, that are not fit to be trusted with such things; but with such energy and intelligence as you possess, you cannot help being successful."

At this, we both looked as intelligent as we possibly could; and Captain Bill, gazing respectfully, almost fearfully, at the drawing, asked the scientific miner how many men were required to work the machine; to which he replied that four could work it when everything was handy, but five or even six might sometimes be necessary. The price was one thousand dollars, on which a short credit would be allowed; but as only three hundred machines were expected in the first vessel, it would be necessary to decide without any great delay. Most of these were already engaged, but he thought he could manage to reserve one for us.

[Pg 81]

As soon as we got into the open air our enthusiasm, which we had prudently restrained in presence of the scientific miner, at once burst forth.

"Keep cool, boys, keep cool," cried Captain Bill, slapping his thigh, as his manner was, his broad, good-humoured face shining like a pewter platter, "steady your helm and haul in your jib-sheets."

"Look here, Bill!" I began, with a look intended to repress all such unseasonable mirth, "I'll tell you what we'll do. A thousand dollars is a good deal, I know, to give for a machine; but what of that? we can pay for it in a week, and all we make after that will be clear profit."

"Si," said Captain Bill.

"Well, then, if we find it work, you know, we'll just send down and order three more, one for each of us; and then, all we'll have to do will be to oversee the workmen, and attend to the amalgamating process."

"Si,—si,—si," said Captain Bill, once to each of the three rockers, but slowly, and at long intervals, as the magnificence of the idea gradually insinuated itself into his mind, like a boa-constrictor gorging a buffalo; and he already saw himself sitting lordly on a stone, engaged in the agreeable occupation of reckoning his gains, and keeping a sharp lookout on the poor fellows that were toiling for him at their miserable pittance of eight dollars a day, simply because they hadn't a scientific machine too; "but I say; this is one of the machines you read of, isn't it."

"Taking the very lowest calculation," I continued, striving to quench his fervour by my cool, business-like manner, "that 'ill be a thousand dollars apiece a week; or we may as well make it twelve hundred while we are about it, so as to cover all expenses; and, at that rate, I think I could be content to stay in the mines a year."

[Pg 82]

"Yes, yes," cried the Captain, now at last driven to the use of his own vernacular, "so could I."

"But," said I, with inexorable coolness, "we must be cautious—very cautious. It won't do to be in too much of a hurry. We'll wait and see the machine at Mormon Island, and then we shall know what we know."

"Mr. Primrose seems a very clever sort of a man," returned Bill, "but, after all, it's the lumps that does the business."

Number Four had already been to see the scientific miner, but neither he nor Tertium were aware of the extent of their good fortune; and now Captain Bill taking them, as was his wont, mysteriously aside, undertook to enlighten them. He led them along softly, step by step, touching briefly on the machine, the chief merit of which was that we knew so little about it,—descanting at some length on the honesty and uprightness of the scientific miner, of which we knew still less,—coming down with ever-increasing emphasis on the lumps,—and finally, seeing them now prepared to receive it, winding up with a grand flourish on the twelve hundred a week.

The others listened attentively, but Tertium, who was always a horrible fellow for doubting, was still incredulous.

"Take him to see the lumps," I suggested, somewhat indignantly, for I must confess I felt hurt at his want of scientific ardour, "for, as you say, it is the lumps that does the business."

And indeed there was no getting over the lumps,—they were most weighty arguments, stubborn facts, addressing themselves to sight and touch with a silent eloquence no words could equal. Tertium saw them, and hesitated; he lifted them, and was convinced. Still, we determined to proceed with the utmost caution; and, for my part, I believe I derived almost as much satisfaction from the contemplation of my own superior wisdom, as from gloating over the fifty thousand that only waited my arrival to fall into my hands. We were careful to say nothing of our discovery to our less fortunate companions, for fear they should go at once and buy up every one of the thousand machines, leaving us, when too late, to lament our foolish procrastination.

[Pg 83]

CHAPTER IX.

[Pg 84]

After many unlooked for delays, a half-barrel of pork which we had long sought in vain was got out of the hold; and on the 8th of September we bid a final farewell to the Leucothea, and transferred ourselves to the Patuxent, the regular packet for Sacramento. The Patuxent was a very pretty schooner of about one hundred tons,—had formerly been engaged in the slave-trade, but now bore at her masthead a flag showing that she carried the mail for Uncle Sam.

We set sail about four in the afternoon, with a fine breeze that we hoped would last all night; but it went down with the sun, and we were obliged to come to anchor before we had gone half across the bay. Having eaten a frugal supper of boiled ham and biscuit, the ham costing only forty cents a pound, we began anxiously to look about us for sleeping accommodations. Picking my way carefully over the bundles of dead and living lumber that strewed the deck, I at last succeeded in reaching the spot where I had left my blankets, which I found in the possession of a most delicate monster, with four legs and two voices, who had coiled himself in them for the night. Pulling him by the lesser legs, I presently awakened his forward and backward voices, which showed at once, by a duet of curses, that they could both utter foul speeches on occasion.

"Never you mind," I said to myself, "I have not scaped drowning so long to be afeard now of your four legs;" and then adding a few words of explanation, I received back my property with many

[Pg 85]

apologies. But it was a more difficult matter to find six unoccupied feet of plank; and I was at last obliged to put up with a small chest about three feet in length; where, half sitting, half lying, I nodded and blinked till early morning.

Sunday was an extremely dull day; there was but little breeze,—we began to tire of the stupifying monotony of ham and bread, and to feel somewhat of the enervating effect of the climate.

I found, however, considerable amusement in studying the peculiarities of our fellow passengers, nearly all of whom were entire strangers, and presented a greater variety and novelty than I had yet met with. There was a fair proportion of old miners, who had been down to San Francisco to get letters from home, or to have a frolic, and were now returning to the mines; but a far greater number of newcomers like ourselves. There were English, Irish, Scotch, French, Germans, Spaniards, and Chilanos. The captain, who was a Dane, with a nose like Julius Cæsar's, seemed to have almost entire charge of his little vessel, and to be in every part of her at once. I never could discover that he slept at all;—he took his meals holding the tiller under his arm; and, to save himself the trouble of giving orders, chose often to haul on the ropes with his own hands.

The individual who sometimes relieved him from charge of the helm was a laughing, chirruping, little Frenchman, rather gaily dressed, with a bright red flannel shirt, and a showy scarf round his waist. His untamed vivacity smacked strongly of the prairie; and, in spite of the manifest anachronism, I was once or twice on the point of asking him if he were not the Antoine or Pierre of whom I had read in Astorian story.

The night was intensely cold, and I fared even worse than before. I fell asleep several times on my feet; till, towards midnight, some one gave me a seat on the narrow cabin stairs, where I slept and shivered in weary alternation. Monday, however, was a glorious, true California day;—a moderate breeze bore us steadily up the river, whose banks presented a pleasing panorama. Though it was now near the end of the dry season, the Sacramento seemed here brimming full; the trees, and shrubs, and vines crowding so close to the bank that there was no room for even a footpath between. Ascending into the rigging I obtained a fine view of the surrounding country. Beyond the narrow strip of forest that guarded the banks, extended, as far as the eye could reach, tule marshes,—with here and there an island, like a gigantic billow, breaking the straight outline of the horizon.

[Pg 86]

As we advanced, the soil became higher and fit for cultivation. A narrow clearing running down to the water,—a canoe floating in the shade of the tree to whose roots it was fastened,—a rude hovel standing in the midst of a patch of melons or corn, all proclaimed the adventurous squatter, who, Boonelike, had led the forlorn hope of civilization.

At length, at a sudden turn in the river, we descried at a distance the masts of Sacramento mingling with the branches of the primæval forest. On landing, a scene presented itself of the most novel and bewildering character. On one side was the lonely river, still lonely in spite of the numerous ships that lay, side by side, moored with long ropes to the trees on the bank;—on the other, was the infant city yet maintaining a precarious struggle for existence with the surrounding wilderness. The mighty oak that had possessed the soil alone for centuries, or at least with no other rival than the wandering Indian, now looked down with wonder upon the audacious intruder at its feet, and thrust its long, gnarled branches among the taper, slender spars.

Awnings had been erected over several ships, which were thus converted into convenient stores and lodgings. The front rank of buildings stood drawn up in a straight line about two hundred feet from the river; and the streets, named after the letters of the alphabet, ran back at right angles from the levee. The canvass walls were ornamented with painted signs of the same material, which were generally in inverse proportion to the size of the edifice, so that, in many cases, hardly anything else was visible. In spite of the sombre presence of half a dozen wooden buildings, the lighter fabric so far predominated, by the aid of a thick settlement of miners' tents, as to give the whole place the unsubstantial, ephemeral appearance of the encampment of a militia muster, or a gypsy horde.

[Pg 87]

We took supper in an eating house, a small open tent, with no floor but the bare ground, and nothing on the table but coffee, bread, and beefsteak; but the owner said in excuse that he had not yet got a-going, and should accordingly charge us only a dollar a-piece. We slept this night on board the Patuxent, and the next morning looked for a more stylish restaurant, when, in addition to what we had for supper, they set before us liver, sausages, potatoes, and Indian pudding, all cooked à la California, that is, fried in pork fat, but very good, and cheap besides, our bill amounting to only five dollars.

At noon, Capt. Bill and Number Four set out for Mormon Island, to satisfy themselves by ocular demonstration as to the merits of the Virginia rocker; while Tertium and myself remained behind to dispose of some merchandize we had brought out on speculation. We set up our tent, a tall cone or sugar-loaf, upon the levee, borrowing for that purpose a wagon-pole that lay, like the Irishman's crowbar, strewed all over the bank; and erected about it, for greater security, a frowning fortification of barrels of rice and beans, while we disposed the lighter articles within.

Our nomade life had now fairly begun; hitherto we had hung, like puny nurslings, on the dry breasts of a sickly civilization; but henceforth we were to shift for ourselves. Having kindled a fire and made some coffee in a bright tin coffee-pot, like a young couple just setting up housekeeping, I proceeded to the nearest baker's shop, and having bought a couple of loaves, marched back

[Pg 88]

through the streets, Franklin-wise, to our camp; when Tertium, who had in the meantime fried some steaks, arranged the whole very tastily on the top of a barrel. We had each a new tin plate as bright as a looking-glass, a pint cup, with an iron spoon, and a big butcher's knife stuck into our girdle. The supper was excellent—I must except the coffee—and in fact we had enjoyed nothing so much since leaving Talcahuano.

After supper, as we sat in the door of our tent, with a little bit of home-feeling already stirring in our hearts, a man passing along the levee stopped to ask what we had for sale. He had on a monkey jacket, a pair of heavy cowhide boots drawn over his pantaloons, and coming well up to his knees, and presented throughout so great a contrast to his former self, that we were not a little surprised at discovering his identity with the fine gentleman we had so often seen promenading the streets of B—.

As we were anxious to dispose of our goods as soon as possible, without much regard to price, our bargain was soon completed. He paid us in gold dust, the first that had come into our possession, which, for want of a more fitting receptacle, we poured into a pewter cup. When I afterwards emptied it into a vial, a little remained sticking to the bottom, reminding me of the Forty Thieves, and the gold measured in a bushel. "Who knows," I said to myself, "but that we may have, before long, to resort to the same expedient?"

It was now time to go to bed; we carefully examined our pistols,—stationed a lusty bag of beans as sentinel before the door, and spreading our blankets in the dust, were soon sleeping as carelessly as the veteran on the field of battle.

The next morning we sold the remainder of our goods, including a large portion of our provisions, and were now all ready for a start; but were obliged to wait until we heard from our companions, as we were doubtful whether we had better make our first experiment at Mormon Island, or on the North Fork as we had at first intended. In the meantime, fearful lest they should let slip the favourable opportunity, I made haste to write a most pressing letter, urging them, by all means, to lose no time in securing at least one of those machines that every day seemed more scientific and more desirable.

[Pg 89]

Friday, having a few hooks, we amused ourselves with fishing in the Sacramento. We caught a number of fish about a foot in length, full of bones as they could hold, but furnishing a very welcome addition to our scanty bill of fare.

The next day we received a note from Number Four, advising us to join them at Mormon Island, as they found themselves quite unable to decide so important a question without our assistance. It was too late, however, to commence so long a journey, and we very reluctantly waited till the following week.

Sunday, two other parties from the Leucothea came up the river, Capt. Fayreweather's, in a flat boat they had built on board the ship, and the Vermonters in a packet.

The Vermonters pitched their tent among a large number of others in a thick grove in one corner of the town, and then commenced the arduous task of transporting thither their provisions; the imperious, headstrong Charley disputing all the while with his rebellious satellites, with most amusing pertinacity, as to the amount of labour performed by each, and the proper method of conducting the simplest operation.

Monday afternoon they started on a long journey of ninety miles up on the Yuba; and, at the same time, we set out for Mormon Island, twenty-five miles from Sacramento, with a mule wagon to transport our provisions and household stuff, for which we had to pay eight cents a pound. After passing Sutter's Fort, the road for several miles lay over an open prairie; the evening was calm, and the solitude and silence greater even than at sea. A little farther on, the surface became more undulating; fine old oaks dotted the ground at long intervals, seeming, like the stars in the sky, set all at an equal distance in a wide circle, of which we were the centre.

[Pg 90]

We encamped for the night near the American river,—the sun had long been set,—we were cold and hungry, but it was too dark to find materials for a fire, and we were compelled to go supperless to bed. We spread our tent on the ground, and muffling ourselves in our blankets, crept in between the folds, in dumb expressive silence, while our driver, equally unsocial, stretched his length, like a watch dog, under his wagon. It was a relief to hear the roar of the river that on one side seemed to furnish a wall of defence, as if it had weakened the surrounding loneliness by cutting it in halves; it was a relief even to hear the barking of the coatis as they prowled round the wagon; but I never recall that night by the American river, and think of the profoundest desolation that brooded over us, without a shudder,—a shudder of delight, as children listen to tales of ghosts and goblins.

We hailed the first dawn of day with intense satisfaction; before the sun was up our coffee-pot was singing over a crackling blaze, and a steak sizzling in the frying-pan sent forth a most savoury odour. There is an immense difference between going to bed darkling and supperless, and getting up to a hearty breakfast on a bright sunshiny morning; we were no longer the same persons, and, full of beef and coffee, felt ready to encounter any difficulty that might present itself.

We travelled all day through an open forest of oak, passing one or two houses, or ranches as they were oftener called, and meeting occasionally an empty wagon returning to Sacramento. We met also a young fellow dressed in a new calico shirt of the gayest pattern, with a bright scarf round

his waist, galloping carelessly along the sweeping glades of the forest, and swinging round his head the long braided lash that forms the end of a Spanish bridle. I looked after him with envious admiration; for thinks I to myself, there is a lucky miner who has made his fortune, twenty or thirty thousand at least, and is now going home to enjoy it. But it was pleasant to think that in another year we too should be galloping over the same road, each with just such a horse and painted shirt, and with as well filled saddle-bags as he. Then how we would exult over any unlucky pedestrians we might chance to encounter!—with what self-complacent condescension we would stop to answer their absurd questions! looking down upon them, all the while, from our twofold elevation, with most delightful pity,—pitying them, so to speak, as hard as we could, and then wrapt away from their sight in a cloud of dust.

[Pg 91]

Solacing ourselves with many such "sugared suppositions," we came at night to a small roadside inn, called the Willow Spring House, and built in that place for the sake of the water which is very scarce in all that region. Several parties were already resting on the little green slope opposite the house; we joined them, and cooked our supper at their fire; while, after the fashion of Californians, we gave each other a brief account of our adventures. Some of our companions we found had come like ourselves round the Horn, and we were mutually anxious to learn the names of our respective vessels; some had come by way of the Isthmus,—and others had travelled across the plains of Mexico, or over the Rocky Mountains. They came together, at this secluded spot, for the first and last time, and parted in the morning; some going down to Sacramento, which they had not yet seen, and others up into the mountains,—while we continued our march, and in an hour arrived at Mormon Island, where we found our companions in a state of great perplexity at our long delay.

With their assistance our goods were soon unloaded at a spot hastily selected at the side of the street; we counted out eighty dollars on a stump for our driver,—hung our tent to the overhanging branch of a small oak to avoid the necessity of a pole, and piled our provisions round its trunk.

[Pg 92]

Our next door neighbour, an old man with a loud, good-humoured voice, and who kept a sort of small eating-house at the farther end of a monstrous pine that stretched from his door to ours, was cooking his breakfast at a fire built against the middle of the log. While our coffee was boiling, he began to sing the praises of some bean soup he had just concocted; and, on my expressing some doubt of its excellence, nothing would do but I must taste it. "There," said he, as I dipped my iron spoon into the shallow tin plate he had provided, "what do you say to that?" I was forced to acknowledge that it was very good indeed, and I further flattered the old man's vanity by asking for the recipe, which he gave me at once, with an infinite deal of chuckling and gesticulation, flying round all the while among his pots and kettles with twice his usual dexterity.

Having fortified ourselves with a hearty breakfast, we proceeded all together, Capt. Bill leading the way, to the island, to see the machine that had gradually climbed so high in our imaginations. Mormon Island proper is nothing but a large bar on one side of the river, converted into an island by a narrow canal dug round it for the purpose of draining that portion of the channel. The name, however, has extended itself to the village that has grown up on the neighbouring bank, and which consisted, at that time, of a single street nearly as broad as it was long,—lined on three sides with a few scattered tents and log houses, though several stores and hotels of much greater pretensions have since been added.

Crossing the canal by a bridge made of a single log, and walking a few rods over a succession of miniature hills thrown up by the miners, we came to a small hollow where the machine was at work. A sudden weakness,—shall I confess it?—now came over me, and I paused a moment to recover my self-possession before venturing to face this miracle of science. I then slowly advanced till my eyes, rising above the stony ridge that surrounded it, peered curiously down into the hollow.

[Pg 93]

Three times in my life have I met with severe disappointments—once in my eighth year, hurrying home from school in the confident expectation of having apple dumplings for dinner, and finding that, through some dreadful cook's blunder, there was nothing but salt beef, cabbage, and potatoes—once in my maturer years, in a still more tender point—and now, to complete the mighty three, I saw—instead of the cunning invention possessed of mysterious, almost fearful powers, which I had imagined—only a big, clumsy rocker, mounted on a frame still bigger and clumsier than itself, and weighing altogether some five or six hundred pounds. Underneath the riddle or castiron sieve that extended the whole length of the machine, was a trough about eight inches deep, and divided by numerous low partitions into narrow cells intended to contain the quicksilver used in washing. It was this feature that had suggested the idea of a patent beehive; and in the last or lowest of these cells we had expected to find the gold in a state of perfect purity. We now discovered our mistake—these partitions corresponded simply to the ripple-bars of the common rocker, which indeed the whole machine resembled much more closely than we had supposed. Five men were required to attend to its various wants; one to rock—one to pump into it a constant stream of water—one to feed it—and two to bring the earth from the hole.

Several of the owners, members of the company of which the scientific miner was president, were standing by, watching the operation; and one of them I thought, from his conversation, must be almost as scientific as the scientific miner himself. They were all pleasant, gentlemanly fellows, living in a fine large tent on a breezy hill just above the island, and in such style and comfort as became the owners of a thousand thousand-dollar machines, like themselves.

[Pg 94]

But our hopes were doomed to receive another and still more overwhelming shock. The scientific

miner had assured us that we could make our thousand a week from almost any earth in California—we didn't quite believe him, to be sure—but now the second scientific miner, not indeed so scientific as the first, but horribly scientific for all that, advised us, by all means, not to remain at Mormon Island, but to prospect a bar he had himself visited, just below Coloma, and which he thought from its *formation* likely to prove unusually rich.

"But," replied Tertium, shrinking from the idea of another long journey, and still possessed by the chimerical notion suggested by the scientific miner, "why wouldn't it be as well to remain here? There's that hill yonder, to the right of the village; I don't see why that shouldn't pay as well as any other place."

You should have seen the smile of benevolent pity with which this audacious speech was received by the miner who was only less scientific than the scientific miner at San Francisco. It was really delightful to see how easily his science enabled him to solve a question which we could have decided only by pickaxe and shovel.

"Ah, my dear sir," he replied, his politeness struggling hard with that noble disdain he could not help feeling, "there is no gold there—the geological formation shows that it is impossible. If you look again, you will see that the river here makes a sudden turn to the right; and besides, gold is never found in such soil as that hill is composed of."

Here Capt. Bill looked at me as much as to say, "He's one of the men you read of;" and we all frowned upon Tertium as a sign that he should hold his peace; while, in accordance with the second scientific miner's suggestion, we did look again—saw, as he said we would, that the river did turn to the right, and of course could never, by any possibility, have flowed in any other direction; whereby our opinion of science in general, and of the second scientific miner's in particular, was marvellously confirmed.

[Pg 95]

Lest I should forget it, I would here simply mention, that not long after, some ignoramus, not having the fear of science before his eyes, and digging stupidly into this identical hill, discovered veins of such richness as turned half the heads in the village.

This hill in fact seemed one of those awkward exceptions designed by nature expressly for the discomfiture of just such philosophers; as if, like the rest of her sex, she would not give her suitors too much encouragement, lest their presumption should make them forget their modesty. The good lady, if the truth must be told, seemed in this matter even more capricious than ordinary, and bestowed her favours with so little discernment that the least deserving were often the most successful.

I encountered many other scientific miners during my travels, but never met with one whose science was worth his salt. It did not seem so much a means as an end, and was continually leading them astray from the real object of pursuit. They acted often as foolishly as the man who in travelling would not take the common highway that led directly to the spot where he wished to go, but chose, because he could move a little faster, to get into a railroad car that was going in just the opposite direction. In short, their science was like that discriminating salve which, being rubbed slightly on one eye, disclosed all the treasures of the earth, but being applied to both, resulted in total blindness. Yet to hear them talk of geological formations, of strata and deposits, with their primitive and secondary, it would seem as if they were thoroughly acquainted with the diagnosis of their patient, and could put their finger on the very spot in nature's loins where she had hatched the all-worshipped ore, with as much certainty as a modern Esculapius can determine the seat of a disease.

However, the second scientific miner had said it, and accordingly the next morning after our arrival, and before the blisters had dried off my feet, I set out with Number Four for Coloma, twenty-five miles farther up the river. Our blankets were slung over our shoulders, and we carried in our pockets a bit of bread and cheese to beguile the way somewhat of its weariness. We commenced our journey in high spirits, but had not walked more than two miles before the stiffening which my limbs so much needed seemed all to have settled in my boots, where it was not needed at all; and I found, to my indignant surprise and consternation, that I, who had never, so to speak, been sick in my life, was thus shamefully betrayed into a downright fit of dysentery.

[Pg 96]

It was now the middle of September, a season when the heat, if no longer quite so intense, is even more oppressive than in summer; all vegetation was burnt up, and the parched, dusty ground quivered in the dizzy rays.

Loitering slowly under the scattered trees, and quickening our pace in the unbroken sunshine, we came at noon to a circular sandy plain about two miles in diameter, without a leaf in its whole extent, and glowing under the fierce meridian like the focus of a burning-glass.

Collecting our forces for a desperate rally, we hurried in eager emulation across this little desert, and found on the other side a ranch, with a spring, shaded by a few solitary oaks, at some distance from the roadside, and offering a convenient resting-place. We stopped here several hours, nibbling at our bread and cheese, and scooping up water from the spring in a cocoanut shell I had brought from Rio Janeiro; but the sun playing "bo-peep" with us round the tree made it impossible to sleep, and at length compelled us to resume our journey. The country became, as we advanced, more and more hilly and thickly wooded; and after crossing Weaver's Creek, a small stream four miles from Coloma, the road seemed entirely made up of a succession of long steep hills. The degree of exhaustion to which I was now reduced, exceeded anything of which I had supposed the human frame was capable; at the top of every hill I hurried forward, hoping to

[Pg 97]

hear the roar of the river, or to catch a glimpse of the tents of Coloma at the bottom; more than once I threw myself on the ground with the full determination to proceed no farther till morning, but the urgency of my companion prevailed, and again I set forward to encounter the next ascent.

It was long after dark when we at last saw the lights of the village far below. Slowly winding down the long hill, we passed the scattered suburbs of tents, with little groups of miners sitting round their drowsy fires, and in a few minutes reached the store to which we had been directed, where I sank onto a bench, as it seemed more dead than alive.

They gave us for supper some wretched tea, of which I drank eagerly four or five cups—cold stewed beans, and an apple-sauce of dried peaches, of which I ate more sparingly, but my stomach, with superior instinct, refused to retain any such villainous combination. We slept on the dirty open floor of the dining-room, fanned by the night air sifting through, cold and dust-laden—and lulled by the beating of that mill that will henceforth, while the world stands, be more renowned in story than many a royal palace. Among our companions were two or three dogs continually running in and out, and smelling round our faces, and a poor woman who had walked that day twenty-five miles, with an infant in her arms, to meet her husband, and was now inconsolable at his delay.

In the morning we walked out to see the place. It stands in a narrow valley, hemmed in by high rugged hills, among which the South Fork worms its way, sometimes dark and deep, but oftener widening into a stream so shallow that it can almost be crossed dryshod. There by its side was the mill that had made all this stir, worth a hundred thousand dollars, yet working away ignobly, day and night, like any of the thousand saw-mills that bestride the streams of New England.

[Pg 98]

After breakfast we borrowed a pick, pan and shovel of our landlord; and, striking into a footpath over the hills, walked a mile down the river to the bar so highly recommended by the second scientific miner.

This bar was much larger and higher than Mormon Island, with many trees scattered over it; but its surface remained unbroken, and the merry dash of the miner's rocker was nowhere heard. Near the lower end a natural dam had formed a romantic little pond, with pebbly beaches running down between the bushes into the water, where we saw the fish glancing beneath the surface. A more commodious and delightful spot for a miner's encampment could hardly be devised. The slender pines were admirably fitted for a log house—the solitude was like enchantment, and what could be pleasanter than to sit in some shady nook, and fish all the long, lazy summer's day in those fairy waters?

But imperious necessity compelled us to shut our eyes to all these features of delight, and to look simply at the amount of gold that might be expected to reward our labour.

We selected a spot at the upper end of the bar, as most likely to contain the precious metal, and at once set vigorously to work throwing out, like two rampant antlions, the paving-stones and gravel that came tumbling back upon us in the most vexatious manner. Occasionally Number Four filled a pan half full of earth, and carried it down to the river to wash out. The first trial gave nothing, the second a little more, and at length we were so fortunate as to obtain a panful that yielded the incredible sum of three cents. We rested an hour at noon to eat our salt beef and biscuit, and again resumed our labours, but with no better success; we returned to the attack the next morning, and at another part of the bar; but three cents was the best it could do for us, and we finally abandoned it in sore disgust.

[Pg 99]

Oh, that second scientific miner! and, oh, that "promising formation!" Promising! yes, it was promising, but it lied consumedly.

In the afternoon, we met a number of our fellow-passengers who were mining in the vicinity. The account they gave of the Coloma diggings was not such as to induce us to remain any longer in the place, and we determined to return to Mormon Island, without any further explorations; the more especially, as we were somewhat tired of paying nine dollars a day for such board and lodging as I have described. As Number Four, however, preferred to wait till the next morning, I set out alone at half-past four, expecting to finish my journey by moonlight. To avoid the exquisite torture inflicted by my boots, I cut off the tops of an old pair I picked up in the street—drew them up over my feet like a napkin by a string passed through the four corners—and thus, with my boots in my hand, shuffled along with that awkward waddle peculiar to all the webfooted tribe. No one would have had the slightest difficulty in following my trail, which, besides the elephantine footprint, was marked at regular intervals, as by mile-stones, by the little piles of dust and gravel I had emptied out of these gouty appendages. This answered very well for several miles, but by the time I reached Weaver Creek, the soles of my feet had become so sore that I was obliged to resume my boots. The sun set soon after, but I still proceeded very comfortably by aid of the moon, though the deep shadows of the hills and trees sometimes hid the road completely from view. About nine I came suddenly upon a piece of bog that ran directly across the road, and which I had no recollection of seeing on my way up; at the same moment, as ill luck would have it, the moon dipped very ill-naturedly beneath the horizon, thus depriving me of her light just when I could worst do without it.

While I was bewildering myself more and more in my vain attempts to find a passage, a Will-o'-the-wisp-ish sort of light, dancing about at no great distance, attracted my attention. I was greatly pleased, on coming up with it, to find it of a more friendly character; a man was looking after his cattle, and told me, in answer to my inquiries, that the road here turned at right angles,

[Pg 100]

and that the black shadow I saw at a little distance was the Green Spring House, where it will be recollected we had rested on our way to Coloma.

I should have remained at Green Spring all night, but unfortunately I had left my blankets behind me, and had no desire to make the acquaintance of the strange bedfellows one was sure to encounter in a California inn. I stopped accordingly only long enough to obtain a glass of water; the bar-keeper scowled because I did not ask for brandy; and having at length, with some difficulty, found the road, which ran just before the door, I again set forward. I at first proceeded very slowly, stooping from time to time to make out my course by the shimmer of the wheel-tracks; but becoming tired of this species of locomotion, I pushed on more rapidly, and soon lost the road altogether.

Fearing at length that I might be going in the wrong direction, I pulled out my pocket-compass and a box of matches; and having ascertained the position of the north star, determined to steer my course as at sea, without turning to the right hand or the left. But after what seemed many weary miles, no signs of life appearing, I began to think I had passed the island, and was now perhaps half way down to Sacramento. I knew, however, that the river was on my right; I supposed it could not be far distant, and that, if I once succeeded in reaching it, I should have no difficulty in determining my true position. There never was a greater blunder—for more than an hour I toiled on, over hill and valley, stopping now and then to catch the far-off roar of the river, or any other sound that might prate of my whereabouts. Suddenly I heard a dog bark far down the stream, and then the lowing of a cow. These cheerful sounds gave me courage. I pressed on, and soon saw below, the black-and-white water gliding under the ghostly starlight, along its rocky channel. I scrambled down, nearly breaking my neck in my eagerness, by tumbling over a bank some ten feet high; and sitting on a lump of granite I dipped my cocoanut again and again into the stream, and drained it with as feverish relish as if I had been scorching beneath the sun of Sahara.

[Pg 101]

Finding it impossible to make my way along the craggy shore, I again ascended the high ground, when I waded for a long time through a deep sea of hemlock. Emerging from this I wandered on, by trees, and rocks, and hills—nothing civilised, nothing moving but the coati and the hare that "from my path fled like a shadow." I stopped and hallooed, though half frightened at the sound of my own voice, but echo was the only answer. On I went, further and further into the big blackness of the night, feeling my way, as it were, by continued shouts, as a blind man pokes his way with a cane. My efforts were at length successful.

"What in the d— are you making such a hullabaloo for, at this time o' night?" said a gruff voice coming out of the darkness. I looked in the direction of the sound, and saw, close at my elbow where I wondered I had not seen it before, a large wagon covered with white cotton. Approaching somewhat nearer, I became aware of a head, to which apparently the voice belonged, projecting tortoise-like from the end of the wagon. In answer to my inquiries, the head, that in spite of its first salutation, seemed a very good sort of a head, informed me pleasantly enough that Mormon Island was only a mile below, and that I could not fail to hit it. As I turned away, I heard a woman's voice, sounding smothered out of the cart's belly, say, "poor fellow;" and I blessed her with all her sisterhood.

About three in the morning, Capt. Bill suddenly awaking, was dreadfully startled to perceive a tall figure standing at his feet. He instantly aroused his companion, who, sitting up on end with most courageous trembling, began fumbling under his head for a pistol, while he boldly demanded "who's there?" No answer being returned, his finger already pressed the fatal trigger, and another moment would have ended my adventures before they had well begun, if I had not made haste to relieve their fears by the assurance that I was not the bloody thief and murderer they had been so quick to imagine.

[Pg 102]

I have been the more particular in describing this little bit of travel, as it was our first experience of the varieties of California life, and a fitting introduction to what was to follow. California at that time was an almost unbroken wilderness, with a few villages scattered at long intervals on the principal rivers, and a single house here and there along the roads. The forests were supposed to be infested by wild beasts and more savage Indians, and on this very occasion I was startled more than once by hearing the dead branches by the road side snapping under the tread of some heavy animal, which I boldly maintained, gainsay it who will, must have been a grizzly of the first magnitude; though I will allow that no animal more formidable than a coati was ever seen in that neighbourhood.

CHAPTER X.

[Pg 103]

The next day was our first Sunday in the mines. It had not come any too soon. Through the long sultry hours I lay stretched on my blankets, watching the coquettish play of the leaves drawn on the camera obscura of our canvass walls, and dreaming, oh! how dreamily! of all we had left behind. At noon, Number Four made his appearance, not at all fatigued by his journey; and, as it was probable that we should now remain some time at Mormon Island, we determined to remove to a pleasanter locality. We selected for this purpose the hill on which the second scientific miner and his party had pitched their tent, and by Monday night were snugly settled in our new quarters.

Having, as before, hung our tent on the north side of an evergreen oak, we strewed the floor with pine twigs, and a species of coarse hummocky grass that grew in great abundance on the rocky hill sides. Our narrow bedsteads, hastily constructed of rough poles, resting on low crotches driven into the ground, were made to fit into the circumference of the tent, so that I could only sleep on my right side, and Tertium could only sleep on his left, and there was no turning over except by changing beds. A barrel of biscuit, a half barrel of sugar, together with sundry bags of beans, and rice, and pork, filled all the centre of the tent, leaving only room enough to get in and out.

The hill, on which we had thus encamped, and where we remained several months, rose directly from the river, and was agreeably shaded by white and evergreen oaks, not standing close together or in clumps, but at almost as regular intervals as the trees in an orchard, which at a short distance they closely resembled. In front, looking down the river, and towards the sunsetting, was the sleepy little village, with its scattering suburbs of tents, peeping out among the hills, and now and then, a heavy baggage-wagon, attended by a party of impatient miners, slowly creeping down the Sacramento road beyond—the river more to the right winding round the rocky island, swarming with men like a great ant-hill—and, far beyond all, and forming a fitting back-ground to the picture, a hill of surpassing beauty, rising in successive terraces, as sharp and regular as if formed by art, to a height of several hundred feet.

[Pg 104]

Five or six parties were encamped in our neighbourhood, and on the summit of the hill, a hundred yards behind us, was a large tent, occupied as a store by the same enterprising individual to whom we had sold our tinware at Sacramento.

Tuesday, the Captain and Number Four were employed by the second scientific miner in working his machine, for which they received the usual wages, eight dollars a day, and also acquired some knowledge of its operation. At the same time, as Tertium and I did not wish to be idle, and had not yet obtained a rocker, we set to work on the river bank with pans, modestly limiting our expectations to an ounce a piece.

Panning is to the beginner a very curious and mysterious operation. An old miner had initiated my brother in the process, and he now gave me the result of his experience. "You must do so, and so, and so," said he, suiting the action to the word. I accordingly did as I was told, shaking and whirling, and dipping with all my might, though with a strange mixture of faith and unbelief as to the result.

There was nothing in the appearance of the earth to distinguish it from what I had seen a thousand times at home. It was simply a mass of sand, and stones, and gravel, such as is often found on our sea-shores, and in the beds or along the banks of our more rapid rivers. Yet this was the earth I had come twenty thousand miles to seek, and in that earth, unnoticed among the baser substances, but worth more than all of them, there lurked, so I was told, and so I partly believed, divers grains of gold.

[Pg 105]

While I thus wondered, I had gradually thrown out the lighter sand and gravel, but a portion of black sand still remained; and now, as with gentle violence I sank the edge of the pan beneath the surface, the inrushing water brought to view a few brighter grains contrasted, and in appearance multiplied by this intimate mingling with their sooty brethren. Good! I said, there must be at least two dollars; but when the black sand was all floated out by the dipping process just mentioned, I found, to my great mortification, that there was not more than twenty-five cents.

That part of the bank which we had selected had already been once dug over, and most of its riches abstracted; but as the first miners had done their work in a careless and slovenly manner, contenting themselves, as I had thought to do, not indeed with the biggest lumps, but with the richest portions, they had left numerous little patches scattered among and under the rocks that afforded very good pickings to their successors. Our labour was not, however, in this instance very profitable; we made only three dollars, and were glad the next day to change our employment.

Number Four set out on an expedition of inquiry among the miners on the North Fork,—Tertium took his place at the Virginia rocker—and I was engaged to assist as a journeyman carpenter in putting up a small iron house belonging to a Mr. Mowbray, who had lately arrived in the diggings in such style as to produce an immense sensation.

He was a young man of good family and rather genteel figure—rich and well educated—understood thoroughly the art of spending money, but had probably never earned a dollar in his life. Tired at length of this barren inactivity, and seized with a dreamy ambition to do something in the world, he had pitched upon California as a suitable field for his first essay. His plan of operations was equally bold and ingenious; he determined to conquer nature, and transport the comforts of civilization into her rude and rugged fastnesses. He had no objection to the romance and excitement of a miner's life, but he would have none of its accompanying hardships.

[Pg 106]

Naturalists have described a species of spider that, in order to gratify its amphibious propensity, makes a diving bell of bubble, and dwells in this palace of light secure beneath the waters. So Mowbray plunging into an unaccustomed element, still carried about him his bubble of old associations. In spite of the seeming greatness of the change, his atmosphere was still the same; his nature had undergone no transformation, and he walked now over the hills of California as formerly along the pavements of Broadway. Others might sleep on the ground, and live on pork

and flapjacks, but he would sleep softly and fare luxuriantly—they might toil for an ounce a day, he sought no lesser game than thousands.

And if the most lavish expenditure of money had been all that was wanting, his success would have been placed beyond all doubt. During the three months of preparation previous to his departure, he had forgotten nothing, however trifling, necessary to his undertaking.

You would have thought him a second Robinson Crusoe about to embark voluntarily for his desert island. First and foremost came a chest of tools, though I grievously fear that our dainty crusader could hardly have told a chisel from a handsaw. But then, fortunately, he had a scientific dictionary in two fat volumes, from which he could easily obtain the necessary information. Next there was a horse-power, a heavy mass of iron-wheels, so called, I suppose, because nobody but a horse could move it—india-rubber pontoons, looking marvellously like the skin of a huge black snake—a large tent of the same material to use in prospecting—together with a whole army of picks and shovels, to look at which you would suppose our hero had as many arms as Briareus.

[Pg 107]

He had, too, a most knowing belly, and one that evidently abhorred a vacuum as much as Dame Nature herself. According to the strictest calculation, and assuming as a standard the most primitive of all measures, the capacity of the respectable functionary mentioned in the first line of this paragraph, there was of sugar, three hundred and fifty—of Stewart's syrup, ditto—of cheese, sixty—of flour, eight hundred—of tea and coffee, a thousand—of spices, pickles, preserves, &c., six hundred—of pork, two hundred—and of beans, horresco referens, not one.

These various luxuries, together with the house already mentioned, and more than all, two mahogany bedsteads with mattress and pillow, excited the unqualified admiration of less fortunate or less sagacious adventurers.

Certain sturdy miners indeed, who could carry all they owned upon their backs, shrugged their shoulders at all this, and even laughed outright at the mahogany bedsteads; but they were poor creatures who could never by any possibility be made to appreciate an enterprise conducted with such liberality and magnificence.

To supply his own want of practical knowledge, and thus make assurance doubly sure, Mowbray had brought with him a companion of a very different temper, and who seemed by his habits and education fitted to make as useful an ally as the simple-hearted Friday; that most delectable of blacks till Uncle Tom came to divide our sympathies. The idea was a good one, but his selection was unfortunate. Our Friday was a genuine cockney, who had never been out of the sound of Bow-bells, or out of sight of St. Paul's. He had lived, to be sure, several years in the United States, and professed to entertain the highest admiration of our institutions, but had not really gained a new idea. Indeed, he was not a man of ideas, but of education, or, to speak more accurately, of instruction, and had no more to do with the formation of his own mind than an india-rubber shoe has with that of the mould that shapes it. He was obsequious to a fault, and even slavish in his dependence, so that, as Capt. Bill observed, one wanted to kick him for his humility. He had neither the versatility of a Yankee, or of a cat in his composition—he could "make the thing, but not the machine that makes it,"—and every sudden emergency took him entirely by surprise. In the hands of a master he would undoubtedly have made an efficient instrument, but in the hands of Mowbray he was worse than useless.

[Pg 108]

It was to assist this character in erecting his house, that I was now employed by Mowbray, who was himself suffering from dysentery, and therefore unable to attend to it in person. The frame, which was only ten feet by twelve, had been prepared under Friday's supervision; yet the work had been done in such a bungling manner, that we were three whole days in putting it together and fitting in the iron sheets that formed the walls. When all was done, however, a very comfortable house was the result, presenting in its air of snugness and security, a marked contrast to the loose open tents by which it was surrounded. Mowbray at once took possession, and assumed, by tacit consent of the pork-and-flapjack democracy about him, some such state and dignity as usually attaches to the great house of a country village.

Number Four returned on Friday; he had seen a number of our old shipmates, who were mining on the North Fork, but though they were generally doing better than with us, the advantage was too slight to counterbalance the evils of a removal, and we accordingly made up our minds to remain where we were.

The next Tuesday, which was the second of October, the long-looked for machine for which we had finally bargained with the scientific miner, made its appearance in an oblong box somewhat bigger than a coffin. The omen was unfortunate, but in our infatuation we disregarded every warning and rushed blindly on our fate. We found the difficulty of putting the parts together greatly increased by the carelessness of the construction and the improper nature of the materials; and our vexation at this delay received a fresh accession every time we compared the exorbitant price of the machine with its actual value. Besides, we had insensibly come to regard the unwieldy monster with doubt, if not with absolute aversion. I can not explain now any more than I could then the sort of somnambulic process by which we had arrived at this state of unbelief, but in some way the conviction had been forcing itself upon us that neither the Virginia rocker, nor California itself, were all we had so fondly imagined. We had not yielded even so much as this without a struggle; machines of a very similar construction were already at work on the island and their owners were by no means getting rich, but then, as the second scientific miner said, they were not exactly the same, and on this apparently unimportant distinction depended the very secret of success. There was one, however, exactly the same, but it had not

[Pg 109]

been thoroughly tried. Old miners smiled significantly at us as they passed, and sneered at the company's expectations. But it was only envy. Thus we disputed every inch of ground, still hoping against hope, when our best friend would have been a wise despair.

The whole week was consumed in various operations. After putting together the machine, and the heavy frame on which it rested, we erected a stout scaffold ten feet high to support the pump and the man who worked it, and who was thus raised to a very doubtful dignity above his fellows. Spouts were also required to convey the water from the pump to the rocker, and to make these we cut up the coffin already mentioned, into long strips three or four inches wide. In all this it is but fair to mention that we derived great advantage from the chest of tools possessed by our friend Mowbray.

[Pg 110]

In the meantime we had bought for fifty dollars a claim on the island, abandoning one that we already held, and which afterwards proved by far the more valuable; and the first of the week, everything being in readiness, Tertium mounted the scaffold—Number Four took his station at the handle of the rocker—I assumed the responsible office of feeder—and our two hired men, Capt. Bill being sick with dysentery, were appointed hod carriers; the said hod being a large half-barrel slung between two poles, and weighing, when full of earth, about as much as three barrels of flour.

And now began the hardest labour I ever encountered—such labour as that must be, when man is yoked, as it were, together with a lifeless piece of mechanism, and compelled to keep time to its undeviating regularity. Having once started there was no cessation—the rocker must rock—the pumper must pump—and the digger must dig, as if life depended upon their exertions,—the only rest was by change of labour. As one hand left the handle of the machine, another slid into its place—the one at the pump could not vacate his high office until his successor had already mounted the scaffold, and the diggers must keep ahead of us all.

"More dirt, more dirt," cries the feeder, and the next moment two slender figures are seen rounding the corner of the hole, and tottering, staggering, half running, half walking under their awkward burden. Their poor legs, fit only for counter-jumping, seem fairly to bend and buckle like a whalebone, as they slip and stumble over the uneven path, and their faces, like our own, shrivel under the fire that streams from the burning sun above, and burning stones below.

We rested three hours at noon, and finished our day's work of ten hours about seven. And now for the gold!—a hundred hods of earth had passed through the machine, and out of that quantity it should have digested at least a hundred dollars. We should not wonder if there were two hundred, but should feel satisfied, as it was the first day, with only one. We gathered round, we three, and put our heads together over the trough, now drawn part way out of its place, while our hired men peeped respectfully over our shoulders.

[Pg 111]

Tipping the rocker first to one side, and then gently reversing the position, the pure liquid quicksilver ran rapidly across the bottom, while the amalgam lingered behind. Number Four scraped it up with his fingers, and having squeezed and moulded it in his hand, disclosed to our view a lump about as big as a bullet, and worth three or four dollars.

On further examination we found that several pounds of quicksilver had escaped from the rocker; and as this was worth quite as much as the gold we had obtained, our first day's labour left us just one ounce in debt. None but an Irishman could get rich in this way, so we betook ourselves at once for consolation to the second scientific miner, who somewhat reassured us by saying that it was no more than was to be expected; that it required thirty or forty dollars to saturate the quicksilver, which it seemed would do nothing until it had gorged itself to repletion, and that the next day we should do better. He also sent one of his company, a young gentleman who, either because he had very long legs, or a good deal of whisker, and that sort of nobility, was called Count Eggenheim, to discover the secret of our losing so much quicksilver. The Count directed us to set the rocker steeper, and rock more rapidly, seventy beats to a minute: and these various alterations effected such an improvement that we made the next day twenty dollars. But I will not weary the reader with a more continued detail; at the end of five days, after paying for our hole and hired labour, we had left just fifty cents apiece; and though Capt. Bill still retained something of his early predilection for our patent bee-hive, the rest of the party were so opposed to giving it any further trial, that the whole scheme was then and there abandoned.

[Pg 112]

Subsequent observation convinced us that we were right in our decision, and that the Virginia rocker, so far from being what it had been represented, was in no respect superior to the common cradle, while its great size and weight were very serious objections. With the cradle the miner was perfectly independent—he moved from one spot to another at pleasure, and washed only the richer portions. The Virginia rocker, on the other hand, was comparatively a fixture, and to move it even a short distance so arduous an operation that it was avoided as long as possible.

It will be recollected that the first scientific miner, among other arguments in favour of this machine, had stated that the hemispherical cakes which he exhibited had been obtained from earth that had already been through the common cradle. We now learned in what sense these words were to be understood; a miner who had been at work on the island all the time the company had their machine in operation, assured us that several small rockers were in use at the same time, and that their contents had been twice a day passed through the Virginia rocker for the purpose of separating the black sand and gold by amalgamation. So in the famous partnership between the dwarf and the giant, the giant carried off all the glory from his humble companion—so in a nest, the big glutton starves his weaker brethren, and so always the rich

absorbs the profit for which the poor man sweats.

But it was a comfort to know that, after all, the scientific miner had told nothing but the truth, though his distance from the scene of operations and his scientific method of viewing matters had kept him in ignorance of some important particulars. The company of which he was chief proved their own faith in the machines by subsequently setting up ten of them on the island in a single body; water was brought on in a flood by means of a trough several hundred feet long, and a waterwheel erected at an expense of three or four thousand dollars, to rock the machines, though the same labour could have been performed far better and cheaper by hand. Their whole object seemed to be to wash as much earth as possible, or rather to force it through the rocker. They worked in this distracted manner only a short time when the rainy season set in, their waterwheel was washed away—the company was dispersed, their state and magnificence forgotten, and all their thousand machines might have been bought for a song.

[Pg 113]

Mowbray had watched the progress of their experiment with intense solicitude, either because he was a silent partner in the concern, or because he intended, if they were successful, to make his fortune in the same way.

About this time he bought a pair of mules and a large wagon, and filling it with stores set out on a prospecting expedition through the northern mines, accompanied by his trusty body-servant Friday. It was usual in the mines, when one went a prospecting, for him to sling his blanket on his back, and, with his pick in one hand and his shovel in the other, creep slowly up and down the rivers, sleeping at night on a rock, and solacing his labour with a slice of salt pork and a bit of biscuit. If his journey were long, and he were able to afford the expense, he would sometimes aspire to the dignity of a mule to transport his tools and provisions, and perhaps himself; but it was reserved for Mowbray to introduce so magnificent an innovation. He returned in a few weeks with an account of a rich bar he had visited on the Yuba, where claims had been offered him at a price so monstrous that they must needs be of extraordinary value. Nothing, however, could be done till spring, and in the meantime he thought he should find the south of California or the Sandwich Islands a much more agreeable residence than the mines. He accordingly sold his house, his mules, his provisions, and everything else for which he could find a purchaser, and turned his back on the mines, I believe for ever. Overwhelming as was the contrast between the beginning and the end of his adventures, he would yet have been, if he had succeeded, even more remarkable, and almost the only one of his class. The respectable Busby's sarcastic depreciation of educated men found but too many striking instances in California. Of all with whom I became acquainted, I remember only one or two who were finally successful in mining; they either never made anything, or were sure to throw it away on some monstrous project that would never have occurred to any one else.

[Pg 114]

To return from this digression, which has led us several weeks in advance of our story. Our party was not the only one that had stumbled over the Virginia rocker. It had found its way into all parts of the mines; Capt. Fayreweather, at Coloma, though already provided with the most ingenious invention of his wary Nantucketer, had wasted time and money on this more pretentious novelty; and in our own neighbourhood several parties had discarded it, as we had done, after a longer or shorter trial.

A small company of Bostonians, who had pitched their tent just in front of our door, and afterwards assisted in working our machine, were among the most unfortunate. They, too, had been so happy as to make the acquaintance of the scientific miner; and it so happened, oddly enough, that their energy and intelligence had also excited his admiration. They had bought the machine, and in their anxiety to secure so invaluable a treasure, had actually paid for it in advance; and furthermore, sent one of their number on to Mormon Island to select a favourable spot for its operation. He remained at the island several weeks, boarding at an expense of three dollars a day, and when his companions arrived, led them triumphantly to the claim he had so vigilantly maintained. But as, unfortunately, he had not thought it necessary to make any comparative trial of its value, contenting himself with washing a few pansful a day in order to hold possession, the claim turned out to be good for nothing; while twenty others that had been subsequently appropriated were paying very handsome dividends. They continued, however, to work their machine for more than a month, but finally abandoned it, as we had done, though, as might have been expected, with yet greater reluctance.

[Pg 115]

A little incident that occurred while we were yet at work on the island, will admirably illustrate the strange vicissitudes of California adventure.

Three men who left home after we did, but had been in the mines long enough to make their piles, and were now returning, stopped a moment on their way to visit the island. While they stood observing our operations with complacent curiosity, a second party approached, among whom they recognised several of their acquaintance who had left home in the same ship with themselves, but had been delayed, they knew not how long, on the isthmus. They had, in fact, just arrived, and were now anxiously inquiring where they could find the best diggings. Their more fortunate associates, with a disinterested benevolence that did them infinite credit, gave them all the information in their power, and even described minutely the very spot where they themselves had taken out their thousands, whereby the others could not help being greatly comforted and encouraged.

As they turned away, "Ah," sighed Number Four, who, like myself, had dabbled a little in Spanish, "Ah, lo que es el mundo!" while Tertium hummed,

"The race is not forever got by them that fastest runs,
Nor the battle by those people that shoot with the longest guns."

CHAPTER XI.

[Pg 116]

Our scientific machine—the great Virginia Burke rocker—the patent bee-hive, from which we had expected to take every day at least two pounds of the precious comb—was now nothing but so much useless lumber.

Capt. Bill could not bear this unexpected reverse; he had set his heart upon the Burke rocker, and could never descend to the common cradle. Mining with the one was honourable; with the other, base and contemptible. It was as if one should descend from the dignity of a horse and wagon to a hand-cart, or as if the captain of a Liverpool packet should decline into the skipper of a fishing-smack. From this time mining lost its charms, and a favourable opportunity presenting itself about the middle of October, he accepted a situation as clerk in one of the mining districts, at a salary of three hundred dollars a month and his board; thus depriving us, at once and forever, of all that advantage we had hoped to derive from so propitious an alliance. His good fortune excited no envy, for the mines were still untried.

After his departure our little company, now reduced to its original number, was conducted on a different principle, our gains being no longer shared in common. Number Four bought a cradle on his own account, together with a hole, a crowbar, a shovel, and a cheese-box; while Tertium and myself still continued in partnership. We also bought a cradle of sheet-iron, for which we had to pay seventy dollars; and after one or two trials of different localities, we settled down on the same part of the bank where we had made our first experiment with the pan. The bank here as elsewhere was high and steep, consisting of an irregular ledge of soft granite that had been originally covered with a thin coat of soil, but was now, for a width of forty or fifty feet from the water, picked as clean as the bones of a thanksgiving turkey. Owing to this circumstance we seldom remained long in one place; but, like bone and rag-pickers hurrying from one barrel to another, we gleaned a bit here and a bit there, comforting ourselves with the hope of suddenly lighting upon some of those rich deposits of which we had heard such seductive stories, just as the magnanimous gentry last mentioned are forever soothed and excited by a pleasing delusion of silver spoons and gold watches.

[Pg 117]

So we worked all the rest of the month, making about twenty dollars a day, on the solitary bank of the river, listening soberly to the eternal bass of its waters, and the sharp, sudden crash of some distant rocker keeping faithful time to the beating of its master's heart.

There was then no laughing in California; everybody was terribly in earnest, and a settled look of more than Puritanic severity was in every face. There was such depth of passion that only the fiercest commotion could stir up the bubble laughter from the bottom of the heart; and, for my own part, I seem almost entirely to have lost that human faculty, as if I had tarried too long in the cave of Trephonius.

The extraordinary sickness that prevailed during that season may partially account for this all-pervading austerity; hardly a tent in which there was not one prostrated by scurvy or dysentery—hardly a miner who had not suffered in his own person from one or both of these dreadful diseases. Every one of our own party had been attacked at different times and with different degrees of severity; but I was the most unfortunate. It was several months before I found any relief either from medicine or change in diet, and during the whole of my first year in the mines I was never free from apprehension, the least imprudence being sufficient to bring on a relapse.

[Pg 118]

We had thus far enjoyed uninterrupted fine weather,—a few drops only of rain had fallen through the whole of October; but November was ushered in under very different conditions. The little party of Bostonians, our next door neighbours, who had been for some time preparing to move into the dry diggings, had hardly stowed the last of their baggage in the wagon, when a sullen shower commenced, that quenched at once their deserted camp-fire, and continued almost without cessation for a whole week. The conical firmament of our tent, usually almost transparent in its brightness, except when flecked with the dancing shadow of the leaves, now assumed a uniform, leaden and opaque hue, corresponding to the lowering character of the sky. Heavy drops collected on the inside, and, rolling half-way down, fell maliciously on our heads. Sitting on our low bedsteads, with knees drawn up to the chin, we shrank into the smallest possible compass; while we found a whimsical amusement in wondering where the next drop would fall, and in rallying each other on our involuntary contortions. Mowbray, and a Dr. Collyer, with whom we had been some time acquainted, were now almost our only visitors. The latter, a middle-aged man, of a peculiarly sour and morose temper, seemed to find no employment so congenial as grumbling, and the subjects on which he most delighted to expatiate were California and the Burke rocker.

"Well, gentlemen," he would exclaim, with nasal bitterness, "California is a miserable country, a very poor country; it is as much as a man's life is worth to remain here through the winter;" and then, like Sairy Gamp, to give greater emphasis to his words, he would reverse the objurgatory

phrase till he had run it through all its changes, while we, in our feeble way, echoed assent to every one of his propositions, glad to find one who understood so thoroughly the true merits of the question.

[Pg 119]

Mowbray, on the other hand, never very talkative or vivacious, and now doubly oppressed by the untoward aspect of the weather and the uncertainty of his future movements, hardly spoke except in monosyllables.

Cooking, in such weather, was plainly impossible; and the ship-bread and molasses to which we were consequently reduced, were never very thankfully received. Once, indeed, during a brief lull in the storm, I ventured out, and succeeded in boiling a pot of coffee and in frying a little pork, and these two smoking dishes somewhat dispelled the chill that was creeping over us.

The fifth night the storm increased. The wind blew with fearful violence, and drove the rain in sheets through that side of the tent most exposed to its fury. Tertium was awakened by a choking sensation, and found himself lying with his face in a puddle of water almost deep enough to drown him. On my side it was rather better; my outer blankets were thoroughly saturated, but the inner one still remained tolerably dry.

The tent writhed and struggled with the tempest. The fastenings on one side at length gave out, and as it flapped its wet and clinging folds about our faces, we expected every moment to hear it fly bodily away, leaving us entirely exposed to the pelting of the pitiless storm. We were finally compelled to leave our beds, and leaning against the bags and boxes in the middle of the tent, we fell asleep, like the ship-boy on the high and giddy mast, in all that elemental uproar.

Returning sunshine wrought a wondrous alteration in our feelings. The country, always beautiful, now presented a still more attractive appearance. After months of drought and dust, Nature seemed to have washed her face and put on her best attire, while the birds singing in every tree, and the fresh green of the shooting grass, were far more suggestive of May than of November.

[Pg 120]

The fine weather, however, brought with it one disagreeable necessity—that of working without knowing where we could do it to advantage. There were, indeed, plenty of places where we could make five dollars a day, but we were not yet, thank heaven, reduced to that extremity. We had sunk our expectations from thousands to hundreds, and were willing to work for any reasonable compensation; but there was a point at which such poverty of spirit ceased to be a virtue. We were confirmed in this lofty temper by hopes of what we would do in the spring. There were other rivers not yet so completely turned over as the South Fork, and other places not so entirely worn out as Mormon Island; we would be among the first to force our way into these new diggings, when we should easily make up for all we had lost.

In the meantime the best thing we could do was to make ourselves as comfortable as possible; and our late experience had shown that to this end nothing was so essential as a fire in rainy weather. Our neighbours had generally effected this by building a heavy chimney of stones and earth against one side of their tents; but, aside from the difficulty of such an undertaking, the quantity of fuel that would be thus required was a very serious objection. We thought ourselves, therefore, very fortunate in obtaining a small sheet-iron stove of the rudest construction, that had been manufactured the preceding year for a trader in the village, for the very moderate sum of two hundred and eighty dollars. On bringing it home, we found no room for it in the tent, except just within the door, where it stood like a sturdy little three-legged Dutchman, valiantly presenting its gaping blunderbuss of a funnel in the very face and eyes of the audacious intruder, who verily thought that if he escaped being blown to pieces, he should infallibly be suffocated by its pestilent fumes. To tell the truth, however, greater part of the smoke made its way directly back into the tent, when it seemed to find huge delight in circling round a hornet's nest in the very summit of the sugar-loaf, and to wonder strangely that it could not get out; till Tertium happily conceived the idea of fitting an old boot bereft of its toe, on to the other end of the funnel, after which the smoke found no difficulty in walking in a different direction.

[Pg 121]

Mowbray having determined to leave the mines, we seized the opportunity of laying in a stock of winter provisions. We bought half a barrel of sour flour, the same quantity of syrup, of sugar and salt pork, together with half-a-dozen Dutch cheeses, as many boxes of sardines, fifty pounds of soda crackers, and a variety of smaller articles.

All this wealth added to what we had before, rendered a larger tent indispensable; and as we could find none for sale in the vicinity, I went with Number Four to examine one belonging to a man on the North Fork.

It is impossible to describe the beauty and glory of California at that fine season. The crisp frosty air of the morning is quickly succeeded by a warm hazy glow resembling that of our Indian summer. It is not summer, nor spring, nor autumn, but a most artful and delicious combination of all three. The country is an endless succession of hills, whose distant slopes remind one continually of thrifty apple orchards, while from every summit a prospect is presented apparently out of all proportion to the trifling elevation.

Our course led us first a mile down the South Fork to where it unites with the North to form the American river; crossing the boiling current in a dug-out, we ascended the steep-hill on the other side, and walking a few rods up the North Fork, came to the store where our old friend Capt. Bill was clerk. It was a log-house, long and low, and divided into two apartments, one of which served for the store, and the other for a dining-room. A large number of miners were at work in the neighbourhood, and some of them boarded at this establishment; which thus united the dignity of

[Pg 122]

a grocery or variety store to that of a village tavern.

The salutations and inquiries usual on such occasions were followed by the never-failing invitation, "Well, boys, what 'ill you take to drink?" and an enumeration of all the various liquors supposed to be suited to our different palates.

We had not then, however, been long enough in the country to accommodate ourselves to this fashion; and soon after, continuing our walk, we came in a few minutes to the tent of which we were in search. Finding it to our liking, we weighed out two-and-a-half ounces, and at once set out on our return, with the tent on our shoulders, stopping every now and then to call each other's attention to some prospect of unusual beauty—to the hares and squirrels that sported carelessly among the rocks—or to the striped acorns that covered the ground almost as long and taper as a lady's finger.

The next day, in spite of the threatening sky, we went to prospect some ravines four miles from the island on the Sacramento road. Dr. Collyer had already moved to this locality and had promised to send us word if he found it favourable for mining; but as we heard nothing from him, we determined to make a personal examination. The walk, though totally unlike that of the day before, was in some respects even more agreeable. Far to the left a range of low hills seemed to hold up the sky, while the leaden clouds, oozing down between, communicated their own dark mysterious hue to the softened slopes and winding valleys.

On arriving at his tent, which was pitched in a very damp, unwholesome ravine, we found the doctor was not at home; but keeping on from one gulch to another we at last spied his hat just dodging behind a bank of earth in which he was at work. He seemed far more surprised than pleased at our sudden advent, and after a few moments' conversation, suddenly jerking out his watch, exclaimed, "Well, it's nearly twelve, and I must be going home to dinner; good morning, gentlemen," and away he hurried, leaving us divided between laughter and indignation; but inwardly resolving that it must be a very bad conscience indeed that could put a watch a whole hour out of the way. After his unceremonious departure we continued to prospect the ravines in the neighbourhood, but found none worth coming so far to seek. There was very little water running in any of them, and the two or three miners we saw at work were obliged to use the same scanty supply till it became too muddy to answer the purpose.

[Pg 123]

We spent the next three or four days in putting up our new tent and arranging the furniture within; for, as we expected to remain here several months, we did everything in the most substantial manner. The tent itself was nearly square, being twelve feet wide and fifteen feet long. Near the two sides, which were about three feet in height, we set several thick posts with stout crotches at the top, and laid in these heavy logs to which we secured the ropes that served to stretch the roof. As the tent was made of cotton drilling which we had already found insufficient to keep out the rain, we bought cloth enough to make a second roof, called a fly, which we stretched over the first, leaving a space of several inches between. The ridgepole, which was formed of the spouts belonging to the Burke rocker, and projected at each end beyond the roof, was supported by the tall stumps of two oaks we had cut off for the purpose, and was also strengthened in the middle by a pole passing through the centre of our little table. The whole was surrounded on every side but one by a thick array of branches, like a chevaux-de-frize, that broke the force of the wind, and imparted an appearance of great snugness and security.

The stove thrust its pipe out of one of the gables, just at the left of the door, and smoked away right lustily, day and night, as if conscious that a good deal depended upon its vigilance and fidelity. Altogether our new abode was of a very picturesque character, and I doubt not that many a humdrum citizen, yawning fearfully in his luxurious apartments, would consider it a very desirable residence—for a single day.

[Pg 124]

The interior was fitted up in a style of corresponding simplicity and elegance. A dry-goods' box that stood on end between the door and stove, and did duty as a sideboard, seemed to give an air of dignity and refinement to the apartment. It may not be in very good taste to parade the price of one's furniture; but as I know that many, at the present day especially, are apt to be curious in such matters, I will simply mention that our sideboard, though of pine, could not have been bought for less than fifty dollars.

Half a dozen tin plates and dippers—we could have had gold if we had pleased, but that was too common—two or three pans and pewter mugs—a large tin pail for making soup—a frying pan and coffee-pot, together with a squad of battered boxes that had once contained sardines or preserved meats, composed the list of our culinary utensils.

We had been sometime seeking to add a stewpan to our possessions, and meeting one day a party who were about leaving the mines, we inquired if they had such an article to dispose of. In reply they introduced us to a coffee-pot as tall as a two-year-old infant, and lifting the lid, Number Four peered curiously down into the capacious interior, as into the crater of an extinct volcano. It was a perfect geological curiosity. Beef, pork, beans, rice, potatoes, and onions, lying in distinct strata, or mingled into a dense conglomerate, rose half way to the top, while a faint and steamy odour from all these various ingredients drove us back as from the witches' cauldron.

At the foot of one of our beds and in the centre of the tent, stood the table—a few boards laid on the top of a flour barrel; the corner behind the door was used as a store room for our provisions, while all the remaining space was occupied by our beds. These were framed of sticks and grapevines, and covered, instead of a mattress, with grass and moss; we carpeted the floor with

[Pg 125]

the same material, and then, having exhausted our ingenuity, had nothing left to do but run in and out, and admire our own handiwork.

Many trifling improvements were subsequently added during the tiresome monotony of stormy weather. Tertium fitted the sideboard with shelves and a swinging door, and paved the space around the stove with smooth stones. He contrived a fastening for the door so artfully that he could not open it himself in less than half an hour, and even carried his ingenuity so far as to make a pair of bellows that blew equally well on all sides at once. I succeeded in manufacturing a pair of tongs out of an iron hoop, and then undertook to build an oven, but desisted after labouring at it several weeks, by which time it bid fair to rival the biggest of the Egyptian pyramids.

Thanksgiving came as usual, and found us still in the bustle of house-building, but as we had been invited to dine out, we did not intermit our labours till noon, when we dressed ourselves in our cleanest shirts, and walked over to our entertainers.

The party to which we would now introduce the reader had been some time our nearest neighbours, and since the departure of all our other acquaintance, we had contracted a sudden intimacy which afterwards ripened, with one of them at least, into a lasting friendship.

Colonel Oldbuck, the eldest of the party, was a man of about the middle size, with a neck much too large and long for his body, and which seemed to have bulged out a little at the top in order to form a head. He had a narrow rounded forehead, thick features, and a bilious complexion. His voice was very agreeable, and like his walk, slow and measured. Even when in a passion, and he was a very choleric individual, he never lost this advantage, and would bespatter his adversary with all the unsavoury epithets at his call without rising for a moment above the imposing baritone of his ordinary conversation. The same peculiarity was discovered in the self-sufficiency that was his most notable characteristic. His conceit was none of your vulgar blustering sort, clamorously betraying its own weakness, but, on the contrary, it was exceedingly quiet and genteel, and if it is not a contradiction, modest and unassuming. It was undoubtedly this very thing that made it so effective. It came upon you before you were aware—it aroused no opposition—excited no suspicion. A nearer acquaintance discovered that in spite of this seeming moderation, it was really most grasping and comprehensive. Nothing was too high for it, or too low—it pervaded his whole being, and seemed to envelope him, wherever he went, like a cloud.

[Pg 126]

At home he had been a man of very extensive influence, and the scene that was enacted at his departure somewhat resembled the parting of Washington and his army. The tears which were shed on that occasion, as a distinguished orator observed, after falling and watering the earth, ascended magnanimously and triumphantly into the firmament, when they marshalled themselves into a cloud that should accompany their hero in all his wanderings.

Though only a farmer and country trader, the redoubtable Oldbuck had, by sheer force of genius, attained the office of Justice of the Peace—Colonel in the state militia, and others equally responsible. No one could read the Declaration of Independence so touchingly as he, or was so popular an orator at cattle shows and country fairs. His fellow-citizens were even now impatiently awaiting his return that they might hear from his lips how much to believe of that mighty humbug that was now convulsing the whole world. He had distinguished himself no less in his military capacity. We listened to his simple, unpretending narrative of his heroic exploits with thrilling interest, and each in his heart wished that heaven had made him such a man, when we saw in fancy, the keen edge of his ruthless sword describing a horrid circle in the air, and then, at one tremendous blow, cutting in twain the unhappy watermelon, if it should not rather be considered happy in so glorious a death—held meanwhile between the hands of one of his compeers. This performance was a happy union of the achievements of both Richard and Saladin, demanding for its successful execution, the ponderous strength of the one, and marvellous sleight of hand of the other; and it carried me back to the chivalrous times of those glorious old Knickerbockers, who erewhile waged such doubtful war with those pestilent pumpkins.

[Pg 127]

The same noble ambition that had carried our hero to such heights of fame at home still burned in his heart, inciting him to gain fresh laurels in this new field of action. During his stay at Mormon Island an election was held for alcalde, and by the advice, or, as he would say, the urgent entreaty of many of his friends, the Colonel proposed himself as a candidate. But though he arrayed himself for the occasion in an imposing suit, consisting of a blue jacket that came half-way up to his shoulders, and a pair of tight trowsers that came half-way up to his knees, and in this guise walked up and down before the crowd of admiring fellow-citizens assembled at the polls, he, for some reason I could never fathom, failed to produce his wonted impression; and the office, to his infinite mortification, was given to another.

In addition to his other good qualities, Colonel Oldbuck was an excellent mimic—told a good story, with broad Dutch humour—and was in fact a very entertaining companion. He occupied the post of honour at our little table.

Crowded up into one corner of the tent—his corner—sat a shy, quiet Scotchman, who read incessantly, except when working and sleeping, and lived in a perpetual atmosphere of snuff.

The third, and much the youngest of the party, was a little doctor, who signed his name with a vanity to be pardoned in no one else, C. Fox Browne. As doctors were plenty in California, and we ourselves became acquainted with no less than four bearing this ancient and honourable cognomen, some such distinction seemed necessary. But among his friends our doctor needed no

[Pg 128]

such meretricious addition; his plain Charles Browne was better than the tandem titles of the most name-tormenting pedigree.

Any one, on slight acquaintance, might have been inclined to charge him with vanity. But if so, vanity with him was elevated and ennobled into a virtue. No one could possibly object to it, or wish it had been less. One might as well wish that he had been less disinterested or good-natured. But what these careless observers would call vanity was really a very different quality. It was simply a disposition to be easily pleased, and to look on the bright side of our cloddish humanity. Vanity begins and ends at home; it is essentially egotistical, and must finally refer everything to self. It comes from the company of its own swollen imaginations, like Gulliver from among the Brobdingnags, and in the same way looks on common men as dwarfs. But our doctor's complacency was of the most catholic nature. It made no invidious comparisons; if he thought highly of himself, he had even a better opinion of others, and his eyes were as blind to their faults and open to their virtues as to his own.

Oldbuck, who could never bear the least approach to a jest at his own expense, was continually making game of his companion. "Browne—he did this or that," was his favourite exordium on such occasions; and his eye would begin to twinkle, and his mouth to twitch, as premonitory symptoms of the low, hearty chuckle that was sure to follow, while the doctor seemed to enjoy the whole thing as much as any of us.

These three were now the solitary remnant of a party that had originally consisted of forty members. Half only, however, came to California, to encounter the perils and hardships of the mines; while the others paid all the expenses of the expedition, and sat secure at home. They had brought with them various improved and scientific machines, and among them one for dredging in the bottom of the rivers, of which they seemed to have formed the same idea as myself. Assuming as a basis the accounts that had reached home of the wealth of California, they had sat down, coolly and deliberately, with pen and paper, to calculate the profits they might safely expect from two years' labour. The result at which they arrived was every way pleasing and satisfactory; indeed, so much so that even their inflated imaginations were unable to receive it in all its vast proportions. They accordingly went over the work again with an excess of caution deserving the highest credit, and finding all correct, gradually settled down into the comfortable belief that at the end of two years they would each be worth just half a million.

[Pg 129]

Dr. Browne's whole time was to be occupied in amalgamating and weighing the gold; and, if practicable, casting it into ingots. Murray, the quiet Scotchman, had brought with him twelve tin boxes, each containing a quart of snuff; and he confidently expected, as fast as they were emptied, to fill them with another dust yet more precious and titillating. When I heard this story of their magnificent conceptions, I felt vexed and ashamed at my own comparatively grovelling notions; for it certainly must have been a fine thing to believe oneself, for ever so short a time, the possessor of such a princely fortune, and thus familiarize the mind to these ennobling contemplations. One could hardly fail to think and speak more loftily for it all his life, as the humblest individual who should become a lord or a king, even for a single day, could never lose the smack of greatness thus acquired.

Dinner was waiting when we entered, and we at once took our places, without loss of time in idle ceremony. A sailor's chest, covered with a real table-cloth, and raised to a convenient elevation by two low boxes, formed a very commodious table, the difficulty we experienced in disposing of our legs, and which compelled us to lean gracefully forward at an angle of forty-five degrees, being the only material objection. And this trifling annoyance was soon forgotten at sight of the truly royal banquet prepared by our munificent entertainers, and which I will describe at greater length, to remove, if possible, an odious impression, as I fear too generally prevalent, that the California miner absolutely eats nothing but pork and flapjacks.

[Pg 130]

The great advantages secured by division of labour were here apparent. Instead of each member of the company taking his turn, day by day or week by week, in performing all the culinary operations, as was the usual custom, each one had exclusive charge of some particular department. Oldbuck superintended the meats, the bread and pastry were confided to the doctor, while Murray, being only a novice and as yet unequal to the higher branches, was serving an apprenticeship at washing the dishes.

As might have been expected from so judicious an arrangement, everything was excellent and in perfect keeping. The first course consisted of boiled ham, roast venison, a venison stew or pasty (Friar Tuck's was not half so good, though, I take it, the best pasty in the world), and potatoes at a dollar a pound. After we had done ample justice to each of these dishes, and washed them down with a brimming cup of coffee, the plates—real china, by the way—were removed and expeditiously rinsed outside the tent by Murray, while we testified our growing complacency by a between-course of jests and sly allusions to the decidedly aristocratic pretensions of the colonel's establishment. The second course consisted of a huge platter of molasses gingerbread and indisputable peach-pie, accompanied by two bottles of wine; but where they came from, whether from Madeira or Kamtschatka, is beyond my conjecture. Colonel Oldbuck fidgetted a little at this unexpected apparition, for he was a teetotaller, and carried his principles with him to California, and, what is more, kept them there—an example that the great Kneel Down himself might have found it hard to follow.

[Pg 131]

Songs and stories now succeeded. "The youngest gentleman in company blew his melancholy into a flute," and fortunately managed also to blow considerable out of it, and about four o'clock we rose from table highly gratified with our first Thanksgiving in the mines.

CHAPTER XII.

[Pg 132]

It was now the beginning of winter, but the weather continued mild and favourable. The nights were cold, and the ground in the morning sometimes covered with frost; but our tent was always abundantly warm, and the sun no sooner rose above the hills than the whole atmosphere became of a most delightful temperature. The change was equally sudden at night, the disappearance of the sun being followed by an instant chill, that seemed to settle down upon the earth like a mantle, and drove us from our work at an early hour. During rainy weather the wind was invariably warm from the south-east.

Our life now moved on with great regularity. We rose at daybreak. The fire, which usually kept alive all night, was soon wide awake, and the coffee-pot sung cheerily on the stove. A little practice had enabled us to acquire a very tolerable proficiency in the noble and primitive art of cooking. A few weeks before, we had smacked our lips over certain flapjacks of the most amazing toughness and solidity, every one of which seemed to say, "Let me sit heavy on thy soul tomorrow," and seldom failed to attain its aspirations. They were made of unleavened flour, with a plentiful admixture of rice, the latter substance alone affording any reasonable hope of a speedy digestion. Yet even Mowbray condescended to express his approbation of them, and once manifested considerable curiosity to learn the secret of their composition. But they were only my first essay, as inferior to my subsequent productions as the first feeble rhymes of a fledgling poet to his maturer efforts, and I felt vexed that he should have gone away with such an inadequate estimate of my powers as these crude conceptions were calculated to produce. In the mean time, I extended my researches in every direction. Our little frying-pan was no longer large enough for the purpose. It answered very well for those earlier cakes, as round and thick as the shield of Ajax, but required too much time for the delicate, almost transparent wafers that now alone satisfied our refined palates. In going to and from our work, I had often passed an old Dutch oven, that, having a large hole in one side, was no longer fit for its legitimate purpose. One day a happy idea seized me. I took possession of the oven, and carrying it home, knocked off the remaining sides, and having cleaned it with fire, converted the bottom into a very commodious griddle.

[Pg 133]

Robinson Crusoe could have felt no greater pride and exultation when he drew his first rude crockery from the expiring embers. I now knew that nothing was too hard for me—frying pork, that had once seemed the summit of attainable excellence, no longer affected my imagination—the mysteries of beef and venison, of which we had at this time a satiety, became palpable and commonplace, and I found, like Newton, the circle of scientific discovery continually widen as I advanced.

My next achievement surpassed all that had preceded it. For several days I had been unusually silent and abstracted. My companions attributed this change to a constitutional melancholy with which I am at times afflicted, but it was really owing to the pains of travail in which my genius now laboured. It was on the eventful morning of the 13th of December, that I first took from the top of the stove, where they had reposed all night under a polished cheesebox, a tin pan of undeniable baked beans, the classic time-honoured dish of old New England. Such a thing had never before been known in the diggings, where indeed stewed beans—*procul procul à nobis*—were plenty with their pale watery complexions, but baked beans never, with their rich brown, almost golden, hue. My triumph was complete. Oldbuck and the doctor, between whom and ourselves there had long existed a kind of rivalry, began to cavil and detract, but were convinced and silenced at the first mouthful.

[Pg 134]

After this I went no farther. Amazed and almost terrified by the boldness of my conceptions, I felt how impossible it was ever again to equal them. I rested my claims upon this single effort, with the same calm assurance with which Columbus rested on his discovery of America—to surpass either, one must needs "find out new heavens, new earth."

Having eaten our breakfast of savoury fritters, or less pleasing ship-biscuit, molasses, and fried pork, and thoroughly warmed our inner man with a pint of coffee, black as night, we sallied forth to our work, leaving our tent and all its contents in perfect security, even if we should be gone for weeks. In no country in the world were life and property ever more secure than at that time in the mines of California. We had now moved someway down the river, and were at work among huge toppling rocks, where in the intervening crevices we found a scanty proportion of black vegetable mould that, according to the prevailing theory, should have contained no gold, but actually paid sometimes as much as thirty cents to the bucket. In fact I never saw any description of earth in California that did not, in some situation or other, afford the miner a very fair return.

Our labour was by no means hard for one in health, and if our success had equalled our expectations, would have been in the highest degree agreeable. But continued disappointment disposed us to regard everything in the least favourable light. We were glad when it was noon, and still more pleased when the sun, "wheeling his broad disc" behind the opposing hills, warned us to bring our day's labour to a close. The large pan beneath the rocker was usually by this time half full of black sand and gravel, the successive accumulations of our afternoon's washings. To wash or float out these baser substances, leaving the gold nearly unmixed in the pan, was a long and tedious process, with the mysteries of which, however, I suppose the reader is already

[Pg 135]

sufficiently familiar. While one is thus occupied, the other, first removing the cradle from the edge of the river to a place of greater security, hurries home to make the necessary preparations for supper, followed in due time by his companion, whose walk, heavy and slow, or erect and springing, affords a very fair index of the success they have met with. Arrived at home, the pan is placed a few minutes over the fire to dry the small quantity of black sand still remaining, which is then blown out by the breath, leaving nothing but the pure bright yellow. The pan is now passed from one to another, that each may express his opinion of its value.

"Humph," says the first, scanning the gold curiously out of one corner of his eye, as a hen takes the dimensions of a worm or a grasshopper, "is that all? I thought we should have had at least an ounce apiece. If our hole is agoing to retort out at that rate, it's high time to be looking about for something else; but if I know where to go, I hope to be swowed."

"Here," cries another, "let me have a squint at it;" and after a careful examination, "Well, I don know; that ain't so bad; there's hard on to forty dollars, and we should ha' thought that pretty good day's wages in the States."

But it is astonishing what a glow a little gleam of success throws over the whole party—their stoop disappears—they have actually grown an inch taller; while every one has some merry quip fit for the occasion. They are unwilling to let the gold out of their hands—they slide it back and forth across the pan, making it assume every grotesque and pleasing variety of form. Hardly any sight can be more delightfully suggestive—gold coin is nothing to it, dull heavy slave that it is! If I were required to name those hours when I have enjoyed the greatest happiness, next to that arising from inward and inexplicable sources, I should fix upon such an evening in the mines, when each one has a hundred dollars for his day's labour. If there is anything better, it is when he has two hundred, with the added hope of getting as much more to-morrow.

[Pg 136]

In our particular instance a much smaller amount was sufficient to produce a general hilarity. When each had guessed its weight, it was slid carefully into the scales, thence transferred to sundry vials or tin boxes, and the amount duly registered in a book kept for the purpose. By this time supper was ready; we drew our kegs and boxes up to the table, and fell to work on the fried beef or venison with hearty good will. This was by far the pleasantest meal of the day; we lingered over our coffee, and dwelt with prolonged relish on every mouthful, ere we reluctantly dismissed it down our expectant throats; and thought how much we should enjoy the surprise, if some of our friends at home could suddenly pop in upon us.

After supper our pipes were lighted—we stretched ourselves on our beds, and conversed at intervals of the day's work, of what we should do next summer, and of going home. Number Four, whose spirits never flagged, hummed some old-time airs, or breathed them through that simple and classic instrument styled the harmonicon. It was pleasant in stormy weather to lie and listen to the rain pattering on the well-stretched canvass, and watch the sides of the tent flapping and bellying like sails at sea; while occasionally, in the pauses of the tempest, we caught brief snatches of the doctor's melancholy sounding strange and unearthly like the wail of a departing spirit. We could hear the wind apparently coming for miles up the river. A short lull would be succeeded by a faint, almost inaudible murmur like the distant tramp of an army—it came nearer and louder—now it had reached the village—we heard it hurtling through the trees at the foot of our hill, and the same moment it rushed by with headlong speed, holding us breathless with excitement, and rolled away up the valley.

[Pg 137]

Never before had I so fully realized the winds of the heathen poets—the names which had seemed so unmeaning, now impressed me as actual existences; and Notus, Eurus, and Auster, with ten thousand of lesser degree, seemed "now fighting on firm ground a standing fight, then soaring on main wing tormented all the air."

We thought ourselves very fortunate whenever we succeeded in borrowing a book from any of our neighbours, but were still more interested in the papers that we obtained usually as often as once a month. We read them through, advertisements and all, often two and three times; and I have not yet lost the relish thus acquired for that sort of reading.

Oldbuck and the doctor used sometimes to come in and spend the evening in singing, gossiping, and telling stories. When conversation flagged, "Come, Browne!" Oldbuck would cry, "suppose you run down cellar, and fetch a basket of apples and a pitcher of cider;" and the conceit never failed to give general satisfaction, though he might as well have asked for a roc's egg, or the dome of St. Peter's.

"Apples and cider!" repeated the doctor, "Jerusha, don't I wish I had some?" and then a pause ensued, while each thought himself again at home, basket in hand, cautiously descending the rickety cellar stairs, groping his way along to the bin or barrel, and, as he filled his basket, reserving the finest for the pleasant voice calling after him encouragingly from the upper air. But there are no cellars in California, and no apples to put in them;

And *thee*, aye me! the seas and sounding shores
Hold far away.

There were half a dozen tents in our immediate neighbourhood, and in the course of the winter we became somewhat intimate with their occupants. We remained however a long time ignorant of their names, and were consequently obliged to return to the ancient custom of designating an

[Pg 138]

individual from some natural or acquired peculiarity, as Blackbeard, Greybeard, Brushhouse, and California Hat.

Brushhouse was a stumpy little fellow, not more than five feet high, who obtained his name from living most of the winter under a pile of pine branches, into which he crept like a wild beast into its den. I thought when I first saw him that he was a Bohemian or gipsy, but afterwards learned that he was from the north of Ireland. It was impossible to determine his age with any certainty, as he knew nothing about it himself, and his face showed only that he was somewhere between twenty-five and fifty,—and though his various adventures seemed to confirm the latter supposition, his beardless face, high squeaking voice, rapid utterance, and almost childish simplicity, were as much in favour of the former. His geographical knowledge was by no means contemptible—he had heard of Australia, which he believed to be in Bombay and to belong to Austria; and when, in answer to some inquiry, I had assured him that Brazil was independent, "Oh yes," he cried, "I know—Independent Tartary."

One day, when he had come into our tent to thaw his fingers at the stove, I asked him where he was working.

"Oh! I been't working anywhere now," he replied, in his peculiar rapid manner, which had about it such a winning, supplicating air as would melt the heart of a stone. "I had a hole up here in the ravine, and there was two other men working by the side of me, and they kept working so" (here he illustrated his words by putting his two forefingers together at an acute angle), "and bimeby I hadn't any hole, and they gave me an ounce not to say anything about it, and I thought I had better take the ounce, though the hole was worth a good deal more than the ounce."

Poor fellow! we could not help laughing at his simplicity, though we condemned the selfish cunning that would stoop to take advantage of it. In the spring, Brushhouse joined himself to two Dutchmen to go up into the mountains, and the three together bought a mule to transport their luggage. But just before reaching Coloma the wary mynheers demanded of him a certain sum for freight, and because he had nothing to pay, having exhausted his all in his previous preparations, they took his share of the mule and departed, leaving the unlucky dwarf sitting by the roadside, trying in vain to find out how it happened that he had to buy a mule and then pay freight besides.

[Pg 139]

Greybeard, who was "a good portly man i' faith, and a corpulent, his age some fifty, or by'r lady inclining to three-score," used often to come in on a rainy afternoon, on which occasions the following conversation invariably took place:

"Well, sir, and how do you feel to-day?" one of us would say, with a full assurance of what was to follow.

"Oh! I don't know," he would reply, with a long-drawn sigh, and placing his hand on his heart; "I feel so weak about here, it seems as if I could hardly breathe. I shall never be any better as long as I stay in the mines. I was never sick before in my life. When I left the ship I weighed a hundred and eighty, now I don't weigh a hundred and fifty. I can't sleep more'n half the night, and there's that Glass—he'll lie there and snooze—he don't care, and I took him in. The whole tent and everything in it is mine. I knew his father, at home; he's a nice likely man, but none of his boys take after him. He was sick a long time and couldn't help himself, and I had to take the whole care of him. I had a claim at the time that was paying more'n an ounce a day, and I lost it; and now he's got well, he won't do a thing. He made some soup t'other day, and 'twas all burnt so't I couldn't taste a mouthful. How much room you seem to have here! I declare I don't see how 'tis, our tent is a'most as big as yours, and we've hardly room to turn round. But there's that Glass—I told him, when he was fixing his bed, 'toughtn't to be way out in the middle—I should ha' fixed things different, but there's that Glass—I could chop faster when I wan't more'n ten years old, but he don't know nothing—his father's a nice likely man, but none of his sons take after him. Your stove seems to work first-rate—ours smokes awfully. I knew 'twould;—but there's that Glass"—and here he had to stop for want of breath.

[Pg 140]

The effect of this long series of anathemas was infinitely enhanced by that artful dropping of the last syllable, by which his indignation seemed to be condensed and compressed into tenfold bitterness. If he had simply said, "There's that Glassford," it would have been nothing; but there's that Glass, was positively awful. It at once curtailed the unfortunate object of his spleen of half his fair proportions, and reduced him to a minim of a man. It was as good as conjuring. It reminded me of some scene in Arabian story where a fairy first transformed her enemy into a monkey, and then slew him with a bodkin. "There's that Glass" at length became with us a household word, which was constantly applied when any one attempted to shift the burden of his own remissness on to the shoulders of another.

Other sources of amusement were not wanting. A checkerboard, made on a box-cover with chalk and charcoal, wiled away many a heavy hour; and Tertium now and then passed nearly a whole day tramping over the hills in search of deer, and was sometimes so fortunate as to catch a glimpse of their tails as they went whisking past. The keen sportsmanlike zest with which he used to enlarge upon his success, reminded me of that devoutest of anglers who, after waiting patiently in one spot from morn till noon, from noon to dewy eve, was at last rewarded by a glorious nibble.

But there were places at no great distance from the island where more skilful hunters had little difficulty in securing their game. A regular business was carried on in this way, and for several months our market was supplied with an abundance of venison, which was usually sold for forty

[Pg 141]

cents a pound. Now and then a deer, ignorant of the changes a single year had wrought in his hitherto undisturbed domain, came boldly to drink in the same river where he and his fathers had quenched their thirst for centuries; but now found every pass guarded by lurking foes. A fine buck ran one morning directly before our door: he had evidently been hard pressed by the hunters, and his heavy sobs confessed his fatigue; but a hundred enemies starting up on every side compelled him once more to plunge into his native solitudes.

There was so little to distinguish Sunday from other days in the week that I sometimes thought we should have to resort to the same expedient practised by Crusoe, and notch the time upon a post. Most of the miners, it is true, ceased on that day from their ordinary labours, but it was far from being on that account a day of rest. The stores were all open, and three times as busy as usual. The gambling houses were thronged—the bars drained dry—the week's wages wasted in a day's debauch. Those who avoided these vices, filled up the time with a great variety of occupations. First, their clothes were to be washed, but this was speedily accomplished, as all they had to do was to tie them to a rope, and let them swim half a day in the river. Then there were letters to write, tools to mend, walking, hunting, and prospecting, for which last many considered the day especially lucky. If there were several rainy days during the week, some of the more skilful casuists among the miners counted them as Sunday, and went to work on that day without scruple. Others who would not have made this transfer wittingly, were sometimes betrayed into it through ignorance.

Walking one Sunday half a mile up the river, I found our little friend Brushhouse hard at work in a small ravine.

"What!" said I, in affected surprise, for I really didn't suppose the poor fellow had any more notion of religion than a Hottentot, "do you work Sunday?" [Pg 142]

"Why!" piped he, innocently, "is this Sunday? I thought yesterday was Sunday, and I didn't do any work at all."

I afterwards made a similar blunder, though I was so far out of the way as to mistake Sunday for Friday; nor was I convinced of my error till I had referred the vexed question to all our neighbours.

So, easily our days slipt away, like skaters on a frozen river. Ah, gay and gaudy time! and shall I ever grow too old for thee? Shall those rose-coloured recollections, with wings softer than the softest cloud, ever cease to rise in my soul? As I sit and gaze steadfastly into the past, all those well-known scenes sweep like a fairy pageant across my aching sight. Now waves of slow and stately music fill the air, floating faintly from that distant shore. Oh for some charm to make the spell perpetual! But I know 'twas no such thing. This pleasant dream is all a delusion—that life that now seems so fair was then weary, dreary—then as now, walking in the cold shadow, I saw the distant prospect, behind and before, rioting in the golden light.

Yet sing me that well known air once more,
For thoughts of youth still haunt its strain,
Like dreams of some far fairy shore,
I never shall see again.

CHAPTER XIII.

[Pg 143]

About the middle of December, Number Four obtained a situation as clerk in the store already mentioned, on the hill behind our tent; but, as he still continued to live with us, this step produced but little change in our household economy.

According to our calculations, it now rained about one-third of the time, though Colonel Oldbuck insisted that the proportion was at least one-half. The river, like all mountain streams, generally rose with great rapidity, and we were not always prepared for these sudden freshets. Going early one morning, after a gentle rain that had fallen interruptedly for several days, to look after our rocker, I found the spot where we had left it, deep under water, while the river, now swollen to a frightful extent, was fretting itself furiously against the jutting rocks that formed its banks. Hundreds of rockers were swept away, and one man below the island took out forty that had found a harbour in an eddy near which he was at work. Our own, though of iron, was forced to the surface by the violence of the current, and lodged against a snag not far below; but the unconscionable wreckers that saved it charged us an ounce for salvage.

As the waters subsided, the impatient miners hastened to resume their operations on the island from which they had been several days excluded. The fierce flood that had swept over it had produced a wonderful change in its surface, and in some cases almost obliterated the ancient landmarks; so that the different claimants were not a little perplexed to settle the boundaries of this disputed territory. Some also maintained that a fresh deposit of gold had been distributed

[Pg 144]

over the bar; and a single incident that produced a great excitement, seemed for a time to favour this supposition. A young fellow, at work on the upper end of the island, took out several hundred dollars, in a few buckets full of earth, from a part of his claim that he swore positively was entirely bare before the freshet. The gold, however, was much coarser than the minute scales universally characteristic of those diggings, so that the curious were for some time at a loss to account for its mysterious appearance. It was at length recollected that a man at work the preceding summer, on a dam just above the island, had lost a purse containing five hundred dollars; and the conclusion was irresistible that this was the treasure so curiously brought to light. The lucky finder celebrated his good fortune by having a complete "blow out," or jollification, and went roystering about at the head of a party of good fellows, till he had not a particle of his luck remaining.

Our diggings on the bank were now nearly exhausted. We had spent nearly half the working days of the last two months in prospecting—O word of fear!—had dived into the ravines—run up and down the river—tried the bank to-day, and the island to-morrow—and, in fact, fairly reduced ourselves to the verge of desperation. To confess the truth, if the reader has not discovered it beforehand, we were sadly lacking in faith, hope, energy, and perseverance, and, indeed, all those qualities that are capable of being converted into ready money. No one could work harder than we with a certainty of success, but deprive us of that, and our heads hung down like a bulrush.

It was easy enough to work in a hole already opened, but to start a new one in gravel, clay, or loam, all alike dumb, mysterious, inscrutable—to dig five or twenty feet through unsympathizing sand when it was so improbable that there was any thing there—it was really unworthy of a rational being.

[Pg 145]

But working on the bank was attended with another inconvenience arising from the difficulty of avoiding the poison-oak. This is a small shrub generally not more than a foot in height, though sometimes as tall as a man's head, with dark venomous looking leaves resembling in shape those of the oak. Its poison is of the most subtle and diffusive nature, approaching more nearly, perhaps, to that of the fabled upas than any other in the vegetable kingdom. Some, indeed, can handle it with impunity, while with others not only the merest touch but even holding it a few inches from the hands or face is followed by most painful consequences. The hands, as being most exposed, are usually the first to discover its presence. Numerous little swellings make their appearance between the fingers and on the wrist, causing an intolerable itching; and the least contact being sufficient to communicate the infection, it soon spreads to the face and other parts of the body. In a few days, with proper precaution, these symptoms commonly disappear, but are sometimes followed by others yet more unfavourable. The parts affected swell to a prodigious size, and become exquisitely painful; pustules form and break until the whole surface becomes an offensive sore, and in some cases death even has ensued. As we were both unusually sensitive to this poison, we were unwilling to expose ourselves to its influence for any thing less than eight dollars a day, and we were once more driven to the island.

This now presented a truly formidable appearance. Imagine an irregular field of about ten acres, with the stones that would rightfully belong to ten thousand acres of the stoniest pasture, collected on its surface in piles of every conceivable form and relative position. The whole had been already turned topsy-turvy, and many parts two or three times in succession yet scattered parties of miners were still at work;—our neighbours Browne and Oldbuck among them—and we heard now and then of their making fifteen or twenty dollars in a day, though the average would not have exceeded six or seven. They began, it hardly mattered where, by throwing out the stones with their hands till they reached the bottom of rotten granite, and had thus made what is called a good face for their hole; and then, scraping off a few inches of the surface, they washed it together, with the smaller stones and the trifling quantity of earth that still remained. We went to work in the same manner, and after a hard day's labour, found we had made just ten dollars.

[Pg 146]

It rained gently and at intervals all the next day and night. Wednesday morning I rose early, and stepping to the door of the tent, looked down towards the island. To my great surprise, hardly space enough remained uncovered to pitch a tent on—in twelve hours the river had risen fifteen feet—our rocker was again submerged, and this was the last we ever saw of it. I walked a short distance up the bank, and though I had been over the same ground a hundred times, I was almost bewildered by the novelty of the scene. The usually rapid river now rushed along with the speed of a mill race, and a multitudinous, deafening shout. The rocks among which we had worked, and the path where we had walked, were now all far below the surface. The waters continued to rise until the whole island was covered, but the next morning, though it was still raining, it again heaved its broad back above the waves.

In the evening we received letters from home announcing that a third brother was on his way to join us, and was, perhaps, even then in San Francisco; pleasant news, though we had so little encouragement to give him on his arrival.

Monday, Jan. 20th, we received a visit from our old friend and shipmate, Capt. Fayreweather, now on his way home. It is impossible to imagine a greater contrast than he now presented to his former self. When we sailed from N. I remembered him in a long camlet cloak, all chirping and officious good humour—not even the ignominy of being hauled up a steep plank, like a beerbarrel in a nightgown, was able to ruffle his abiding complacency. But now, his humour was dry and sarcastic, and had that peculiar tone that persons of his character are apt to assume when they wish to show that they consider themselves slighted or in any way ill-used. Between him and the

[Pg 147]

smallest man in the ship there existed the same sort of antipathy as between the cat and the mouse, or the elephant and the pig. As this sentiment was instinctive on both sides, and such as often manifests itself between two such opposites, I was not a little amused at the manner in which he referred to his puny antagonist—"little Flanders," with a jerking emphasis on the first syllable. It really seemed as if I could hear the bones crack as he mumbled him in his month.

We could not help pitying the old man, and fancying—I hope it was only fancy—that he was not quite so stout and comely as he had been; we invited him to stay all night, and I gladly gave up my bed for his accommodation. As the evening advanced, he waxed more merry and genial, and some faint flashes of his wonted spirit showed what he must have been ere age and disappointment had chilled his blood; but in the morning all his fire was exhausted, or had retired inward to warm and strengthen his heart. He left us immediately after breakfast, and we soon saw him toiling up the steep hill on the other side of the village, on his way to Sacramento.

A scalded dog, says the Italian proverb, fears cold water; though possibly the case might be altered if the scalding were administered on sufficiently scientific principles, or if the said dog should happen to be blest with a taste for scientific investigation. However, it may still be thought that our recent experience with the Burke rocker should have deterred us from any further experiment of a similar nature; but the same burning zeal, or zeal for burning, that impels that humble victim of science, the moth, already singed by the blaze, again to venture within the charmed circle, and the thrice-escaped navigator to intrude again within the polar seas, was now urging us on to the same fatal catastrophe.

[Pg 148]

It was but too evident that by the commonplace methods of mining we should never achieve that brilliant fortune our hopes had promised—five dollars a day was only fifteen hundred a year, by all the known rules of arithmetic, and it was therefore incumbent upon us to strike out some bold and original plan of operations, which should at once declare our genius and secure its reward. If we could only get at the beds of the rivers without the slow, painful and uncertain process of damming, and lay our hand upon the riches that had been accumulating there for a hundred generations, as the busy waters winnowed away the chaff, we should have nothing more to ask; but how to accomplish this important object was now the question. Damming, as we have just seen, was attended with the greatest uncertainty—after months of profitless and unremitting toil, the miner often discovered that the portion of the channel thus laid bare was absolutely worthless, and that all his labour had been expended in vain. Our first thought was to convert a hogshead into a diving bell, and invade the possessions of the river gods in this moving citadel; but the difficulties that beset the construction and the use of such an awkward contrivance left no reasonable hope of success. I remembered to have read, years before, of some experiments made in the harbour of New York with a curious invention called a submarine armour, and from my recollection of its operation on that occasion it seemed exactly what was wanted for our present purpose. The more I thought of this project the more pleasing it became—doubt slowly gave way to hope, and hope rapidly ripened into full assurance of success. So I sat down and wrote a letter with trembling fingers to a friend in New York, requesting him to send me out one of these Fortunatus dresses without delay.

[Pg 149]

In the mean time, though with so brilliant a prospect before us, we continued to work on the island for the contemptible pittance I have mentioned, and with the merest apology for a rocker, which I had patched up out of the wreck of one we found on the shore nearly embedded in sand. We were thus occupied one afternoon about the beginning of February, Tertium being at the rocker, while I was on my knees scraping up the rotten granite with an iron spoon, when, hearing a voice behind me that sounded tolerably familiar, I threw as much of the California stoop out of my shoulders as possible, to welcome my brother from whom I had parted just a year, and a week, and a day before, and who now recognised us, somewhat to my disappointment, without difficulty, in spite of our rude dress and unshaven faces. As the day was nearly spent, we resisted his importunity to fall at once to work, assuring him that he would soon be able to gratify his natural ardour and curiosity to his heart's content, and in the mean time we were devoured with eagerness to hear what he had to say of friends at home, and of the incidents of his journey.

He finally submitted with a good grace, considering how sore a disappointment such a delay must necessarily be to one just arrived in the mines, and who, like all in that situation, is burning with impatience to make his first dive into the treasures that lie strewn around him.

We took him captive therefore, and led him in triumph to our tent, where it afforded us infinite delight to exhibit our housekeeping, and to listen to his simple questions on matters that had long since lost all mystery to us. His feverish desire to be employed at first occasioned us considerable perplexity—I shuddered when I saw his profane hand thrust into our treasured deposit, and laughed at the scrupulous care with which he cleaned his finger nails of the minute particles that adhered to them; but I did not feel easy till I had settled him quietly in one corner near the stove, while I proceeded to furnish forth such a supper as befitted the occasion, pleasing myself all the while at the thought of the agreeable surprise that was awaiting him.

[Pg 150]

The next morning we went all together, a mile up the river, to consider a claim that had lately been offered for sale. As this placer played quite an important part in our mining operations, and was at that time considered an exception to all established rules, scientific or otherwise, it will be necessary to describe it more particularly. About thirty feet above the river, and separated from it by still higher rocks, ran a short ravine or gully, through which, ages before, a portion of the stream probably flowed. The path along the river led directly through this little valley, and hundreds of miners had walked over it without a thought of the riches that lay under their feet.

At length came the first great freshet I have mentioned, burying at once, all the river diggings, and driving the miners every where in search of others. Curiosity led one to prospect in this ravine, when he found, to his equal surprise and gratification, that it paid as much as three or four ounces a day. The news spread like wild-fire, and the whole ground was instantly divided among a dozen claimants; and though it did not all prove equally rich, it continued for several months to yield a better return than almost any other in the vicinity.

At the time of our visit the richer portions in the bottom had been exhausted, and the miners had advanced several feet into the face of the bank which was here about ten feet high, and extended back from the river in a level plain several hundred yards. This bank, like those on the immediate edge of the water, grew constantly poorer the farther it was explored; but a considerable portion yet remained that we thought would yield us each half an ounce a day. Our former experience in buying holes had made us rather shy of this sort of merchandize, but as the price was insignificant, and the prospect satisfactory, we, after some hesitation, paid the money, and took possession in the usual manner by placing a shovel in the hole, which was thus held by as inviolable a tenure as if it had been locked up in an iron safe.

[Pg 151]

But all this while the reader should have seen the rapturous novelty with which St. John, like a new-fledged butterfly in a flower garden, was disporting him among the rocks. While I was washing one panful of earth after another, in order to be sure we were getting the worth of our money, he also having obtained a pan, went rushing here and there, thrusting his head into all sorts of odd-shaped crevices, and scraping out, to the infinite detriment of his fingers, the few handfuls of dirt and stones that had lodged in them; till having at length filled his pan, he spent another quarter of an hour in washing it out, and then, with an air worthy of some great discoverer, presented it for our inspection.

"Ah! yes," we replied coldly, for we considered it a duty to dash his enthusiasm somewhat, "that is very fair certainly, but is there any more dirt like it?"

"Oh yes!" cried St. John with the utmost animation, "there is plenty more, only see here!" and with these words, he fished out three or four spoonfuls of gravel from a narrow cleft in the ledge.

On his way home his inexperience was continually leading him into fresh vagaries, and I was very glad that neither of the scientific miners happened to be present, as such shocking perversity could not have failed to arouse their most virtuous indignation. He walked with his eyes fixed on the ground, like a man looking for lost treasure, and trod softly, as if he expected to come upon it by surprise. The yellow mica that glittered among the sand was a never-ending source of deception. At every step he discovered a spot that he was sure must have gold in it, or, at any rate, it would do no harm to try. It was in vain that we assured him that we had tried it already—that we even pointed out to him the very holes we had dug, as indeed they might be seen at intervals of three or four rods all up and down the river; wherever there was room for another hole between two already existing, his ignorant faith and ardour, now in their newest gloss, insisted upon making the experiment. We spared no pains to convince him of his mischievous error—we knew that the unpalatable truth must sooner or later be forced upon him, and the sooner the nauseous draught was swallowed the better for his peace.

[Pg 152]

We well remembered "with what compulsion and laborious flight we sunk thus low," and would gladly have spared him the same lingering painful process. But instead of gratefully receiving our well meant ridicule and friendly expostulation, he only hardened himself the more, and we were at length compelled to let the disease run its natural course.

The passing gleam of sunshine that shone on us immediately after his arrival, confirmed him in his heretical opinion, and it was not till he had spent several days in prospecting that any change for the better was discernible in his behaviour.

Having thus enlarged our business, a single rocker was no longer sufficient, and we commenced the construction of another that same afternoon. I finished it during the whole of Monday, while Tertium and St. John went up the river to make their first experiment in our new territory. Their report was not very encouraging—they brought back at night only eight dollars; but as St. John attributed this result entirely to the rocker, which was indeed a wretched affair, and I attributed it, in part at least, to my not being there to see, Tertium was the only one seriously disturbed by their ill fortune.

The next day fully justified my expectations. The earth was a most tenacious clay mixed with stones and gravel; the whole forming a solid mass of concrete that yielded slowly and painfully only to repeated blows. In spite, however, of this extraordinary hardness, and the distance of the bank from the river, one of us found little difficulty in digging and carrying as fast as the other two could wash, the clayey nature of the soil impeding this operation even more than the first. We had now discarded the raisin box, with a hoop nailed to its sides for a handle, which had hitherto served us for carrying earth, and had substituted a couple of aristocratic wooden buckets, and a very convenient implement known in some parts of the country as a sap yoke, which if not very flattering in its associations, at least made our labour a good deal easier. We rested at noon only long enough to eat the luncheon we had brought with us, and returned home at an early hour, where, on weighing the proceeds of our day's labour, we found we had just an ounce and a half.

[Pg 153]

Our bank continued to pay larger and larger dividends all the rest of the week till Saturday, when from one hundred and eighty buckets we washed out nearly three ounces, more than we had ever

obtained before. After this the tide began to ebb, and our earnings gradually fell off from forty to thirty, from thirty to twenty, and from twenty to fifteen, when, it being near the end of March, we finally abandoned the place to go up into the mountains.

The month of February was unusually cold, rainy, and disagreeable; the sky was smooched with clouds, and there were one or two thick flights of snow, which melted, however, as soon as it reached the earth. On the 18th, Dr. Browne, accompanied by the snuffy Scotchman, and several others from the neighbourhood, set out for the mountains; but they encountered a violent snow storm soon after leaving Coloma, and California Hat, who went with them, became disheartened and returned to Mormon Island to wait for a more favourable season. Oldbuck, who had in vain dissuaded his companions from their enterprise, and still remained inactive in his snug quarters, could not conceal his gratification at the turn things had taken, both because he was vexed that they had not, as usual, been governed by his advice, and because his superior sagacity had been so signally illustrated. He now invited Number Four to lodge at his tent, and we were thus relieved from that horror of all saving housewives, the necessity of making up a spare bed every night, as we had done since St. John's arrival.

[Pg 154]

One Sunday, about the middle of March, while we were sunning ourselves in front of our tent, our attention was attracted by a sudden commotion under the bank, a little to the right of the village, and which was the same so emphatically denounced by the second scientific miner. Hurrying to the spot, we found a large crowd desperately at work digging out two men who had just been buried beneath a large mass of earth. The unfortunate victims of their own guilty imprudence had been picking out the thin stratum of rubble at the bottom of the bank, when the overhanging cliff, which was composed of a fine sand, some twenty feet in depth, fell in sudden ruin on their heads. In about fifteen minutes a shout from one of the workmen proclaimed that one of the bodies had been found. It was a shocking spectacle—blood, and dirt, and death—the head first, falling on the breast, then the nerveless arm, and at last, the whole poor, deserted body—how swift had been the flight of the startled garrison, at that dread alarm, along the winding ways of the heart and veins.

This incident confirmed the remark so often made as to the insensibility of the miner to the fate of his companions. Though there were of course some exceptions, the indifference generally manifested on such occasions seemed to argue that charity and humanity are not the natural spontaneous growth of the human heart, but a forced and artificial production that can exist only in the hot-bed of permanent society. After satisfying their curiosity to hear the name and residence of the deceased, the crowd disperses, and the whole matter is speedily forgotten amid more exciting interests, or remembered only as a bit of gossip a little out of the common course. If the sufferers have any friends to perform for them the last sad offices, they are carried to their final resting-place with little of that solemnity that seems inseparable from such a ceremony; and if not, they are hurried into the ground with still more indecent haste.

[Pg 155]

Spring was now rapidly advancing. The air, except during rainy weather, was the most delightful that can be imagined, and far warmer than in corresponding latitudes on the Atlantic; the mercury standing at noon on the 25th of March, at 82° in the shade. Flowers of the greatest beauty and variety sprung up, as if by magic, in a single night; there were here no masses of snow and ice whose gradual thaw keeps back the tardy, lingering spring long after the sun has passed the equator; he looked upon the earth with gladsome eye, and every ray was the birth of a flower.

As we lay in our tent, in listless idleness, through the sultry hours of noon, the uninterrupted buzzing of the flies that already heralded the approach of summer, fell on the ear like the murmur of a brook over its pebbly bed, or the sighing of the wind among the trees; no sight, no unassisted effort of the imagination could recall so delightfully the varied pleasures of that delicious season—closed blinds, open windows, watered streets, white dresses, ices, and fruits, and new-made hay. But we did not go to California for any such purpose as this; it was another shine and another glitter than of sun or flowers that we had come so far to seek; we could not turn them into coin, nor bottle them up for future enjoyment.

Accordingly the second week in April we prepared, with many misgivings, to leave our present comfortable, and even luxurious quarters, to encounter the hardships and privations of a nomadic life among more rude and uncivilised regions. The difficulty attending the choice of a location, and the doubt that clouded the whole undertaking, inclined St. John to remain where we were; but this counsel was overruled by a majority of the company, and after some hesitation we fixed upon the Middle Fork of the American River as the scene of our summer campaign.

[Pg 156]

CHAPTER XIV.

[Pg 157]

We left Mormon Island early Monday morning, leaving the trees that had supported the ridge-pole of our tent—the heavy fortification around it—and the rude but not inelegant bedsteads where we had slept so many months, still standing in their original position, but looking weird and fantastic now that the tent which had harmonized them so well was at length removed. It reminded me of Eothen's amiable shrinking from giving up again to the desert the little spot of sand that had borne, even for a single night, the print of London boots and patent portmanteaux—and I threw backward many an involuntary glance towards the bit of earth we had so long

rescued from the wild, and which seemed now to reproach us for the desertion.

We packed the most valuable of the articles we left behind us in a large cask, as the safest storehouse we could find, and left it in charge of Number Four till our return. We carried with us our tent, bedding, tools, cooking utensils, and a quantity of provisions; and to transport all this baggage we employed the same individual of whom we bought our claim in the bank, and who since that time had been engaged in a sort of peddling between Sacramento and different parts of the mines. Besides our own goods the judge, for so he was called, had agreed to carry nearly as many more for two other parties who lived in a ravine a mile up the river, and were now travelling in the same direction. On arriving at their houses, which were covered with thatch quite down to the ground, and presented a very picturesque appearance, we found they had made few preparations for departure, and the wagon was consequently obliged to wait several hours. St. John, who had been unwell for nearly a week, had now a violent sick headache, and all the symptoms of a bilious fever; and we tried to persuade him to remain behind a day or two, till his health should be somewhat restored, and he could travel with safety; but he insisted that he should feel better after we had once started, and I finally consented to walk on with him in advance.

[Pg 158]

After a brisk walk of several miles, we found we had taken the wrong turning, and retracing our steps, we struck into a by-path that we concluded would lead us into the Coloma road, and then hurried on faster than ever, in hopes of overtaking our companions, who we doubted not had entered the path before us. It had been drizzling undecidedly all the morning, but the rain now poured down in torrents, and even an India-rubber coat with which St. John was provided proved but an insufficient protection. We came at last, however, into the right road, and stopping at the first house, or rather skeleton, as there was nothing of it but the frame, we endeavored to learn if our wagon had yet passed.

They could tell us nothing, so we crouched down on the wet floor, and looked enviously at the warm matron that was frying some beef over a cook-stove, the only sight of comfort anywhere to be found. Some parties of miners who joined us, one after the other, looked wringing wet and intensely unhappy. Little puddles collected round their feet, as round a guttered candle, or a dripping umbrella. They slapped their hats forcibly against the posts to free them from the superabundant moisture, and put them back flabbily on to their lank hair. They made no attempt at conversation except by whistling, and the rain took all the tune out of that as effectually as the stiffening out of a dickey.

An hour passed and still no sign of our companions. The fever in St. John's veins was quelled by the wind that searched us through, and we were compelled to warm our blood by taking once more to the road. We measured back three weary miles, expecting every moment to meet our little caravan; then, fearing lest we should miss them in some of the crossroads, we hurried back to our stopping place, having thus walked ten miles to accomplish not more than three.

[Pg 159]

The wagon came along at noon; we hailed its appearance with a sigh of satisfaction, and resolved not to lose sight of it again, that day at least. The road for the next four miles was well nigh invisible; but our course was marked with tolerable certainty by the quagmires through which we floundered. Some of the party were kept constantly in advance, sounding the mire with long sticks in order to find the hardest bottom, and it was nearly sundown when we came in sight of our intended stopping place. In sight of it, but not at it, for the road here took a wide circuit to avoid a low piece of ground, where the wagon would have been reduced to a total wreck.

"Don't leave me here, boys!" cried the judge, in despair, as he saw two or three skulking off towards the house, and surveyed with rueful countenance the prospect before him;—"the mules can never get through here in the world—see that now!" and at the word, the wheels on one side sunk quite up to the hub, and probably nothing but the axle prevented them from going quite out of sight. We were now, however, somewhat accustomed to this course of things, so putting our hands to the spokes with sullen resignation, while the driver whipped and shouted on his staggering mules, we in another hour arrived within a hundred yards of the inn, where the wagon stuck fast, nor men nor mules could move it further, every effort only serving to sink it deeper in the mire.

We took out our blankets and carried them to the house, while the judge unharnessed his mules and tied them to a tree in the rear of the building. The dining-room was full of guests, and I noticed that, without moving their heads, their eyes continually followed the movements of a buxom servant maid, who was darting back and forth between the supper-table and a cook-stove standing in the open porch. The look of quiet complacency that slowly came out on their weary faces was not owing merely to the fragrant steam that was lazily curling from the tempting dishes before them; it was dreamy and imaginative, and showed that their thoughts were far away by their own wives, and children, and cheerful firesides. After supper the tables were crowded to one side, and a single drowsy candle, that could hardly keep its own eyes open, watched over the busy sleepers. We spread our blankets in the open porch or verandah, and threw ourselves down, saturated with mud and water, and anything but enlivened by this dismal commencement of our expedition.

[Pg 160]

The next morning, however, the sun shone brightly; it dried our damp, revived our spirits, and gave us courage to encounter the dangers of the road, which the travellers who came from that direction represented as far worse than what we had already passed. We found their accounts by no means exaggerated. We had not gone far before one of the mules, stumbling in the slough, fell and broke the pole of the wagon, which we were then obliged to haul out ourselves. After

repairing this damage, which was a very tedious operation, we again set forward; but were presently again brought to a stand-still by a long stretch of marshy ground where the mules were entirely helpless. Nothing was left for us but to carry everything across on our shoulders, and then, pulling the wagon over to firmer ground, we reloaded our goods and once more got under way—all in less than an hour. Broken carts and wagons strewed all the road; ten yoke of oxen were sometimes required to extricate one of the lumbering arks that had come over the plains, and we always knew long beforehand when we were approaching any place of unusual difficulty by the shouting, or rather yelling, of the drivers, which in those profound solitudes could be heard to a great distance.

[Pg 161]

By making incredible exertions, we succeeded in reaching Weaver Creek, ten miles from our last stopping-place, and here we halted for the night. Quite a village had grown up here since my first visit; a stage whirled, or, I should say, crawled through just after dark, and, in spite of the expostulations of the more timid passengers, kept on to Coloma. We slept under the wheels of a huge ox-wagon, over which we had spread the fly of our tent. The night was cold and damp, and in the morning I emptied half a pint of dew out of the hollow of the cloth; yet all the while St. John was drying up with a burning fever, and his strength was so far reduced that he could hardly endure the fatigue of even our short journeys. There was no help for it now, however, but to push on.

The next morning we crossed the creek. It was swollen by the late rains into an impetuous torrent, and it was a fine sight to watch the long train of wagons coming down to the ford one by one;—a splash—a spring—a scramble up the gravelly hill beyond. We crossed it lower down, on a fallen tree, and entered at once into the hill-country. Here we were no longer incommoded with mud, but found nearly as great an obstacle in the loose stones that covered the road, and the jagged rocks projecting from its surface. The forward axle received such a strain in one of these encounters that it snapped just after crossing the new bridge at Coloma, and we were consequently obliged to remain here till the next morning. We made a good supper out of our stores, slept magnificently in a carpenter's shop, and started the next day, about ten, to ascend the great Coloma hill. We had been told that it was utterly impossible for two mules to draw a loaded wagon up this ascent. However, we succeeded in torturing our way by spasmodic efforts to an elevation of several hundred feet, and then, finding it impossible to proceed any further, half of the load was taken out; and while the judge went on to the summit, followed by the rest of our companions, I remained behind, to watch over our goods and assist him in reloading on his return.

[Pg 162]

The scene before me was one never to be forgotten. Drawn back among the bushes and trees that shaded the hill, I looked down the winding path upon a wide valley, like an immense panorama, with the South Fork glancing, here and there, like a string of pearls among the hills, that peeped over each other's shoulders on every side as far as the eye could reach, bounded only in one direction, by the everlasting snows of the Sierra Nevada. Parties of miners flowed by in a continuous current, generally with packmules, but now and then a loaded wagon. All seemed bent on some urgent business; if they lagged for a few steps, the next moment they roused themselves, and, quickening their pace, urged on their unsympathizing four-footed companions. It was absolutely awful to see the crowds, and I involuntarily drew back farther into my snug retreat.

The whole of the mining region was at this season in a ferment. An ant-hill, just disturbed by some sudden alarm—a crowded steamboat, on the point of starting—afford apt illustrations of the frenzy that had now invaded the entire population. From a plausible conclusion that generally prevailed that the rivers would prove the richer the nearer their source, the great object with many was to penetrate as far into the mountains as possible. Rector's Bar, far up the Middle Fork, was the principal point of attraction in this section, while hundreds and thousands were hurrying with the same breathless eagerness over on to the Sacramento, the Yuba, and the Feather rivers.

Every one was afraid he should be too late—that he should not go to the richest placers—that he should not find the fortune intended for him—that he shouldn't be able to return home the coming winter—in short, that he should not improve the present golden opportunity to the very utmost. And the question was, in truth, one of no trifling interest. Such an opportunity would never again present itself, and hundreds who had thus far been disappointed, trusted to it as to their last resource,—hoping, in some of these, as they thought, untrodden valleys, to reap the same rich rewards that had fallen to the share of the first adventurers. On their present decision rested, therefore, in great measure, all their subsequent fortune.

[Pg 163]

We entered into these feelings to the fullest extent. Before us lay an immense tract of mining country; Murderer's Bar, Spanish Bar, Ford's Bar, Big Bar, and Rector's Bar, on the Middle Fork—the more northern rivers still beyond, and cañons without number on every side. We knew nothing of all these except by reports, and those so contradictory that they involved the subject in yet greater perplexity.

After several hours, I heard our wagon jolting down the stony hill. We hastily threw in our goods, and winding up the long and toilsome ascent, at last reached the summit, where we found our companions lying prone at the foot of a steeping pine, the bark of which was punctured as high as we could see with holes just big enough to admit the slender acorn that was stowed in each for winter's use, but whether of bird or squirrel we could not discover.

Georgetown, fourteen miles from Coloma, was the present end of our journey. This is a small and

sombre collection of log-houses in the midst of a dark pine forest. There are few objects more pleasing and picturesque than a log-house standing by itself in an open clearing; but twenty or more of them together, in formal rows, are anything but attractive. Their dark rough walls drink up all the sunshine. They are as much out of place as an Indian or trapper in a great city, and have an air of melancholy about them, as if they pined for their native solitudes.

We found here, however, a very decent lodging, where they gave us a good supper, swept the floor clean for our blankets, and charged us only two dollars apiece for all these attentions. The next morning before breakfast the judge hauled our luggage over to a neighbouring hill, where we suspended our tent between two trees, and our companions pitched theirs at a short distance, to wait till one of their number who had "gone a prospecting" should give them the result of his explorations.

[Pg 164]

Monday, the 15th, they started for Rector's Bar, which they had finally selected as offering the greatest promise. We would gladly have accompanied them, but St. John's illness, which had now become very serious and alarming, obliged us to remain; and before he was well enough to travel, we heard such accounts as induced us to abandon that scheme altogether.

The week succeeding their departure was one of uninterrupted quiet. All around us rose hundreds of "tall and sombrous pines," many of which were scathed and blackened by fire, their naked, branchless trunks standing like mouldering tombstones in a churchyard of giants. The ground sloped away in front into a deep and narrow ravine. There was near us no human sight nor sound—a rising hill hid the drowsy little village entirely from our view, and the whirling tide of which we had so lately formed a part, swept by unheeded.

Often, as we lay reclined on the thick bed of pine that covered the floor of our tent, the wind sounding hollow among the trees imposed upon us the delightful illusion that we heard afar off the bells of our native city; time and space were forgotten—everything about us seemed dreamy and unsubstantial—a curious phantasmagoria, to which we surrendered ourselves without any interfering reflection. A story that I happened to have with me, written by Horace Smith, and the scene of which was laid at Venice, was in perfect harmony with this indolent after-dinner existence.

Friday, a cold dismal rain darkened this agreeable melancholy into gloom, and in the afternoon I padded over to the village in quest of a little excitement. The gambling houses were in full blast, nor was this at all a matter of wonder; in the absence of all rational amusement, and on such a day as this, I rather felt inclined to wonder that I did not gamble myself.

[Pg 165]

As St. John's health was nearly restored by this week's rest, it seemed time to be looking about us in search of a favourable opening. The rivers, so far as we could learn, had not yet begun to fall, and the accounts we heard from Rector's were so discouraging that we abandoned all present thought of advancing any further into the mountains. There was no lack of ravines in the immediate neighbourhood, from some of which immense sums had been extracted; but almost every foot of ground was appropriated; and the labour, beside being far more toilsome and disagreeable, was entirely different from that to which we had been accustomed. Buried in those deep valleys, shut out from the wholesome light of the sun, breathing the pestilent damps of stagnant water, and a rank vegetation, the unlucky miners who worked there purchased their gold at the highest possible rate, in cramps, and agues, and premature old age.

Our old friend Dr. Browne was only seven miles off, at Ford's Bar; and no better alternative presenting itself, I set out early Monday morning to make him a visit and see what could be done at that point in the way of mining. My path ran at first through the open level of the pine forest, then cutting off the head of Oregon Cañon, made a sudden dive about three miles from Georgetown into Cañon Creek.

Capt. Fayreweather in his wanderings had come as far as this place, and had given us a marvellous account of the steepness of the hill, and the depth of the valley; where, he said, the sun never shone, even at midday, and the miners who entered into it were obliged to climb every evening to the upper air to expel and evaporate the noisome vapours they had absorbed. Perhaps a little incident that occurred at the time may partially explain this bitterness on the part of the too sensitive old patriarch.

[Pg 166]

One night, after a long and fatiguing day, he found himself far from home, and gladly accepted the invitation of some chance acquaintance to accompany them to their camp; but when, after a long tramp over two or three high hills, they at last reached the spot, instead of the snug log cabin he expected he found nothing but two big logs laid cornerwise; which, however it might suggest the first rudiments or tender shoot of what might in time grow into a royal palace, as yet afforded but little protection against the biting winds. His friends having ushered him into this truly aboriginal bed-chamber, set about preparing and eating their own supper without wasting a thought upon their unhappy visitor, who would undoubtedly have starved before morning with hunger and cold, if he had not fortunately had the precaution to fill his pockets with bread and cheese before leaving home.

Having descended the hill, not without several tumbles, I crossed the narrow stream running through the bottom, and which was diverted from its original channel in a hundred places by the indefatigable miners, and again ascending, came in less than an hour to the brow of the hill overlooking the Middle Fork. Much had already been told me of the rugged wildness of this river, but I was wholly unprepared for the scene that now so suddenly burst upon me. Two thousand

feet below, but so near that it seemed as if a vigorous leap would land me in the middle, Ford's Bar, like a mighty wedding cake, lay sleeping in the sun: the stones on its surface dwindled into sugar plums and almonds—the tents into sugar houses, with almost invisible mites creeping among them. Directly opposite, rose a hill of still taller proportions, running in and out, in irregular phalanx, as far as the eye could see up and down the narrow crooked valley—so crooked that the first thought was of wonder how the river ever got in—the second of still greater wonder how it could ever get out. A solitary turkey-buzzard, sailing like a practised skater in long swinging curves down the stream, now grazed with his wing the stunted bushes on this hillside, and the next moment threw his shadow athwart the rugged slope of the other.

[Pg 167]

To venture into such a chasm was like the frogs jumping into the well; but fortifying myself with the reflection that we should never have heard of such a place unless some one had returned from it to the upper world, I commenced the descent. The narrow shelvy path ran in short zig-zags down the face of the mountain, and naturally supposing it to know best, I followed its example. I found this mode of progression much easier than walking, though I was often obliged to check my career by clutching at the low bushes that had thrust their roots among the disjointed rocks, and in half an hour reached the bottom, my knees trembling and knocking against each other so that I could hardly stand.

Dr. Browne was at the upper end of the bar engaged, so he informed me, in the erection of a hospital for the accommodation of his numerous patients; for since his arrival at this place, where he had no longer to divide his profits with the cunning Oldbuck, he had entered in earnest on the practice of his profession. The building or edifice honoured by this lofty appellation, was a tent about six feet square, and barely high enough in the middle for a man to stand upright. It stood in the midst of burning rocks without a rag of shade about it, and seemed in every respect well fitted to test the efficacy of fire-practice in the treatment of diseases.

The prospect on the Middle Fork was not encouraging, and when I left the bar, I fully intended never to return. I was an hour and a half in ascending the hill, whose slaty sides almost crackled under the intense heat of the sun; that now declining from the zenith, levelled his perpendicular rays full against the western slope. But this being past, and the mountain forest receiving me into its grateful shadow, I was able to give wider scope to the consideration of the important matter now before me. Wherever I turned, I was headed off by the ugly question, "If you don't go to Ford's Bar, where *will* you go?" There was no way of dodging it, so we effected a compromise, and I concluded to go over a few days to give the place a trial, the result of which would perhaps enable us to arrive at a final conclusion. So have I seen a long-headed rat arguing to himself the expediency of choosing a trap for his future residence, and finally concluding with equal sagacity to go in, just to give the place a trial.

[Pg 168]

However, my brothers inclining to the same opinion, early the next morning I quietly submitted to having packed on my back the fly of our tent and one of our cradles, a burden more inconvenient from its size than weight,—St. John was similarly equipped with our blankets,—we each carried in our dexter hand a shovel or a pick, and thus accoutred we went humping along the road, in a strain of the profoundest humility. Tertium accompanied us to the brow of the hill, with the sap yoke and two well-filled buckets; and then returned to Georgetown to wait, in solitary dignity, the arrival of a portion of our goods that had been left behind at Mormon Island.

In addition to our former burden, we now each took one of the buckets in his other hand, and committed ourselves to the descent. Subsequent experience made the difficulties of this passage seem trifling in comparison, but at the time they presented themselves with a most formidable aspect. The elevation, indeed, was inconsiderable, compared even with that of Mount Washington, but the steepness of the path, its uneven, slippery surface, broken into steps a yard high, or covered with minute fragments of slate that afforded no sure foothold, and, more than all, our awkward burdens that sadly dislocated our centre of gravity even on level ground, compelled us to proceed with the same high-strung intensity of muscle as a dancer on the tight rope.

[Pg 169]

Once or twice I dropped in haste what I carried in my hands in order to save myself from blundering over a precipice by clinging to the bushes; and the rocker on my back received many an unlucky bump, and my dignity many a grievous affront from the compulsory sittings-down that I encountered. In an hour and a half we reached the bottom in safety, and then picked our weary way stoopedly over the stones to the store where Dr. B. had fixed his quarters. This store, a large oblong tent, stood at the upper end of the bar, near the mouth of a brook called Otter Creek, that found its way down in a succession of small cascades between two spurs of the mountain range, and emptied at this place into the Middle Fork.

We proceeded a short distance up this stream, and kneeling down camelwise upon the ground, contrived, with some difficulty, to ease our shoulders of their unaccustomed burden. Our first object after recovering somewhat from our fatigue, was to find a few poles on which to suspend our tent, or rather the long broad piece of drilling that was to take its place. This was not so simple a matter as it might seem; there was nothing in the immediate neighbourhood but two or three gigantic pines and scattered clumps of bushes; and we had to go a long way up the continuous arbour that shaded the creek before we could find anything fit for our purpose. For bedding we covered the floor with an aromatic shrub resembling the willow, the odour of which was so pungent that it filled our eyes with tears, and brought on an interminable fit of sneezing.

Having thus completed our simple arrangements, we were at leisure to look about us, and see what kind of a world it was into which we had fallen. There were about a hundred miners in this

place, some of whom had pitched their tents, like our own, on the banks of the creek; but the greater part were scattered up and down the bar. Besides these, there was at least an equal number who had camped here and there along the river for several miles above and below, but were in the habit of coming to Ford's Bar to buy their provisions. There were two stores, the one already mentioned, belonging to a merchant in Coloma, and kept by a genuine Nantucketer, smooth-faced, disputatious, lank, cadaverous, and good natured; and another about the middle of the bar, owned by a man who was in every respect the opposite of the first, and went by the name of Dutch Tom.

[Pg 170]

Wednesday, we went to work in a claim given us by Dr. B., who, having taken up another of greater value, was unable longer to retain possession. In opposition to the prevailing rule, the surface was here richer than the earth below, the first foot yielding fifteen cents to the bucket, and the stratum lying immediately beneath, only four or five. But neither was fifteen-cent dirt at all suited to our notions; we had done far better than that at Mormon Island, and thought it no great things either; so the next day, leaving a pick in the hole, by which, according to the laws of the bar, we could hold possession four days without working, we set off a prospecting down the river, in the confident expectation of lighting upon a spot richer than we had yet seen except in dreams.

The Middle Fork here presented the strange anomaly of a river without banks; the mountains stood face to face, foot to foot, their broad stubbed toes actually fitting into each other, and breaking up the stream into a constant succession of falls and rapids. The bar afforded comparatively easy walking, but this being past, we found ourselves now sidling along the face of a precipice, now leaping from rock to rock at its base. Here and there, a little brook, bubbling out far up among the nodding pines, came trickling, like tears or sweat, down the deep wrinkles of the mountain, till it was drunk up by the spongy moss, and juicy bushes thick with fragrant flowers.

But wherever we came, others had been before us; and, in fact, in all my California rambles—I record it with grief and shame—I never had the exquisite pleasure of going where man had never been before, and never, except once or twice, of digging a hole where there were not others all around in most disheartening proximity.

[Pg 171]

This river, which we had thought to find an unexplored, almost virgin stream, had been already trampled by a thousand feet, and far more effectually ransacked than even the South Fork itself. This was partially accounted for by the comparatively small quantity of soil, which both in depth and extent bore no proportion to the broad deep banks of the latter river. Except on the bars it was very unusual to find earth more than two feet in thickness; and often there was nothing but the crumbling slate in whose crevices the gold had found a lodging.

The result of our explorations, while it at once precipitated us from the pinnacle of present promise, left us the largest liberty to hope as much as we pleased from the morrow; and thus our fall was broken by the same never-failing feather bed of future anticipation on which the gallant Micawber so often rested. The river must fall some time or other, though it was certainly very long about it; and then, every body said, we should find rich pickings.

In the mean time we were in great perplexity where to spend the next six weeks; we thought at first of returning to Weaverville or Coloma, until the melting snows should cease to swell the rivers, but a natural aversion to taking any step backward interfered.

We passed the evening at the store, where a small party was usually assembled; some engaged in card-playing, others in conversing on various topics, among which the mines furnished the most frequent and the most interesting. Some veteran gold-hunter, with the beard of '48 still on his face, commonly occupied the post of honour, and, with the importance, he had also a full share of the license of the professional story-teller. We were of course, like all good citizens, devout believers in every thing appertaining to the early history of our little colony; and Ford, from whom the bar received its name, was with many nearly as great a hero as Captain Kidd. For three weeks in succession he took out seven hundred dollars a day from a particular spot that was ever after regarded with almost religious reverence; but being then taken sick, he was obliged to leave the mines and make the best of his way down to Sutter's Fort, at that time the nearest point where he could obtain the necessary assistance. Before he reached the fort, however, he had not only spent all his previous earnings, but was besides in debt to the amount of fifteen hundred dollars; the enormous price he had to pay for medicine and attendance having swallowed up in a few days what would have sufficed for his whole life.

[Pg 172]

Whether this story were true or not, the ending was in strict accordance with all my own observation. I had at different times encountered many of the first year miners, but, though they all professed to have met with the like incredible success, not one of them was then a whit the better. They no sooner succeeded in scraping together a few thousands than they either got into a drunken frolic and drank it all up—which was no difficult matter with liquor at fifty dollars a bottle—or went down to San Francisco, where they found at the gaming table a still more expeditious riddance. This universal delirium must be ascribed in part to the ease with which they obtained their wealth; but far more to the character of the men themselves—disbanded soldiers—runaway sailors—and the half savage scouts or pioneers of civilization scattered over California and the adjacent countries.

Having at length concluded to remain at Ford's Bar, we became impatient to make some improvement in our style of living; for, indeed, we were all of us of a somewhat soft and luxurious temper, and began already to pine after the fleshpots of Egypt that we had so unwillingly left behind us at Mormon Island. Our only cooking utensil was a coffee-pot—we dipped our biscuit into a mixture of ants and butter, and sweetened our coffee with ants and sugar in nearly equal proportions. This is, I dare say, very delightful to read of, but for some reason we did not find it so pleasant in actual experience; and accordingly the last week in April St. John walked to Georgetown, and returned the next day with Tertium, bringing another rocker, and the more indispensable of our kitchen furniture. The judge had not yet arrived with the remainder of our goods, and they therefore left the tent still standing in the ghostly forest.

The next thing was to provide ourselves with a more commodious habitation. We ripped the fly apart, and having sewed it together again in the form of a small tent, set it up in a very convenient and agreeable situation, a short distance from that we had hitherto occupied. Between it and the water a flight of rude steps led down a few feet on to a narrow shelf, or platform, terminating on the side next the tent in a low wall, against which we built a fire-place of stones. By the side of this platform, which we intended to use as a kitchen, was another of somewhat narrower limits, which, being on a level with the water and shaded by a low-hanging tree, furnished a pleasant dining-room and place of resort in the small hours of the afternoon.

[Pg 174]

As we had long wearied of eating nothing softer than ship-biscuit, we now determined to follow the example of all around us, and, like good housewives, bake our own bread. Our first experiments were not very encouraging. The saleratus and citric acid we used instead of yeast produced but a very slight effervescence, and our loaves were nowise remarkable for lightness. For a long time, we were in the habit, on baking a new batch, of throwing a morsel into the creek, and if it floated, which did not often happen, it was considered a prodigious triumph, which only the most fortunate conjuncture of circumstances could hope ever to equal.

But in process of time we abandoned this imperfect method, and first allowing our dough to sour, neutralized the acid with a due proportion of saleratus, and thus succeeded in producing loaves which, as Dr. B. pertinently remarked, may have been surpassed, but have never been equalled. Our first cakes—I think I see them now, round, saffron-coloured, of a lead-and-leathery consistence—were baked in the universal frying-pan, which, like acting in oratory, is the first, second, and third requisite in a California kitchen. But this requiring too much time, St. John, who was something of a tinker, manufactured a baker, or reflector, out of a tin box that had contained salmon or pickled herring, and with this our success was every way satisfactory.

Our claim on the bar, originally of small extent, and, as we have seen, of no great depth, was rapidly lessening, and nothing now remained but a circle of a few yards in diameter. When we first commenced operations, a tent occupied the centre of our ground, and we at once laid siege against it in regular form. We pushed our works nearer and nearer, and with so much spirit and success, that by the fifth day we had obtained possession of one of the most important outworks—the kitchen; and having thus stopped his supplies, we had strong hopes of compelling the enemy to an unconditional surrender. He held out, however, nearly a week longer; but then, seeing us about to undermine his outer wall, he sounded a parley, and to avoid the horrors of a storm, agreed to evacuate the premises, and marched out with all the honours of war. This was the general rule, the right of the miners being considered paramount to all others, and no one being allowed to occupy, for building or similar purposes, ground that contained gold enough to pay for washing.

[Pg 175]

As a few days would finish our work on this spot, it became necessary to look out for another. We could find none, however, of any promise unappropriated, except one a few feet in width, half a mile down the river, and which at present resembled the little Frenchman's water-lots too closely to be of any great value; but trusting that we should not have so long to wait before walking over our property, we threw an old pick into the river, leaving the handle just projecting above the surface, as a notice to all concerned that we intended to work the claim as soon as possible. Some more ingenious individuals kept always on hand a store of worn-out picks and broken shovels to be used for this very purpose; and as long as they were undetected, succeeded in retaining possession of several claims all at the same time; so that the new-comer often found, to his dismay, every available point defended by this superannuated batallion.

Not yet satisfied with our possessions, and tempted by the delicious shade in which the creek was embowered, we determined to give its banks a trial, though they were generally held in very light esteem. We placed our cradle on a rude bridge just on a level with the water; the trees springing from the mossy banks on either side formed a complete arch overhead, and the whole scene presented the strongest possible contrast to the bar bleaching and blistering in the sun. It was the very poetry of mining, and paid about as well as poetry in general, our whole morning's work yielding only three dollars.

[Pg 176]

I was so far from being disheartened by this repulse that a few days after I made a second experiment at a spot not far from our own door. The bank at this place had apparently been formed by a landslide from the adjacent mountain, and here both science and experience agreed that gold was especially likely to be found. A pennyweight, nearly a dollar, that I obtained from a single panful of earth at the very outset of my undertaking, lured me on with constant hope of lighting upon some rich deposit, till having at length struck the ledge at the bottom, and found

nothing more, I abandoned the project in disgust.

Monday, about the middle of May, I walked alone to Georgetown to bring over to the bar the remainder of our provisions. I obtained also five letters, for which I had to pay ten dollars, the extra postage being charged by the express agent who brought them from San Francisco.

It was easy to see, from expressions in these letters, and indeed in all that we received during our absence, that our friends at home were still in a most deplorable state of ignorance as to the extent of California. They invariably took it for granted either that the mines were in San Francisco, or at least so near that we could go there as often as we pleased. At the same time they seemed to suppose that we knew nothing of what was passing in the great world; and instead of telling us who of our acquaintance was born or married, and similar important and interesting matters pertaining to our little circle, they filled their letters with such impertinent details as the trial of Dr. Webster, the death of President Taylor, or some misbegotten battle in Hungary, in which we either at that distance felt no particular interest, or had read the whole story months before in the New York or Boston papers.

But in spite of this unfortunate misconception, our letters were well worth all we paid for them; it was impossible wholly to exclude the air of that home where they were written, and even the simple envelope with its familiar superscription came laden with a thousand tender associations.

[Pg 177]

In order to transport our tent and other articles, I hired two mules and a muleteer at twelve cents a pound as freight, for a distance of only seven miles, the usual charge of one cent a mile being in this instance increased on account of the extraordinary difficulties of the way. This is just two thousand times the cost of transportation in the New England States.

Before the end of May our first claim was quite exhausted, and the river was yet too high to permit us to commence operations in the other. In the mean time three courses presented themselves—one was to go to work on the bar, where we could always make four dollars apiece a day—another was to prospect with the dogged perseverance of a bloodhound, as others were doing, in search of the numerous little patches of richer earth that still remained hidden under the overturned masses of worthless rubbish along the banks—and the third was to do nothing.

Pride and indolence both revolted against the first—we had not a large enough bump of hope for the second—and, finally, the third was far more congenial to our temper and inclinations.

There was a small circulating library at the store, containing, for a wonder, some valuable books; and I found it far pleasanter to sit in our cellar, with my feet in the water, and my back against the tree that embraced me with its shadow, and read such delightful stories as *The Home*, *Picciola*, *Lamartine's Confidences*, and *The Ancient Regime*, or *Reg-i-me*, as our doctor had it, than to dig, and carry, and wash, on the burning bar, with the mercury at a hundred in the shade—and all for only four dollars a day.

When we tired of reading, or our spirits craved fiercer excitement, we strolled over to the store, where every variety of character presented itself for our amusement. A tax which was at this time assessed upon all foreign miners produced a great deal of dissatisfaction among that respectable class of the community; and the question was often argued with considerable bitterness on each side, though Thing, the storekeeper, and champion of the liberal party, generally contrived to put all concerned in good humour by the unanswerable argument in which he always took refuge. After exhausting all the objections usual in such cases, as that the law was unjust, unconstitutional, and the like, and thus rousing his democratic sympathies to the proper level, he would exclaim with admirable pertinency, and pausing for a moment in his labours, with the brimming scoop of sugar or flour in his uplifted hand, "We call America the land of the free and the brave, and all that; and then, when the poor fellows come here and try to earn a little money, we put a tax on their labour!"

[Pg 178]

At this the assembled Irish, Spanish, Dutch, and all the rest of the free and the brave aforesaid, who happened to be present, would express their admiring satisfaction each in his own fashion, while the natives, equally delighted, would applaud uproariously.

"And by the powers," cried a strapping Hibernian, who rejoiced in the honourable surname of The Tinker, and who was likewise reported to have a D branded somewhere on his person, "and that's what I call the right kind of talk any way."

"Yees," rejoined a paunchy little Dutchman, "me tinks so too; Meester Ting ish a very nice man;" while a dirty Mexican, adjusting his poncho, reiterated his *Si Señor! muchas gracias!* and other like points of admiration, with all the conscious dignity of a grandee of Old Castile.

But these scenes had sometimes a far more serious termination; and Sunday especially, when the miners came from every direction to buy provisions, seldom passed without a drunken frolic. The last Sunday in May was particularly distinguished in this manner; a new rum-shop had been opened, and all the hard drinkers in the neighbourhood signalized the event by swallowing a double allowance of liquor. They went from one store to another, drinking two or three times at each, till after several hours spent in this way, they reached that point when their natural inclinations manifested themselves without restraint.

[Pg 179]

An Irishman who, when sober, was a very clever fellow, first attacked me, as I sat on a pork-barrel, watching the progress of this strange drama, asserting that I had spoken of his countrymen the day before in a slighting and contemptuous manner, and challenging me to fight.

While I was eagerly protesting my innocence, and assuring him that, on the contrary, no one had a better opinion of them than myself, The Tinker thrust himself into our party, and began, in a thick, drunken voice, to give an account of a fight in which he had been the hero, but whether in New York, or Mexico, or green Ireland, we could only conjecture. He illustrated his narrative by sundry vigorous passes in rather unpleasant proximity to the nose of his patriotic countryman, who thereupon taking sudden fire, knocked The Tinker behind a row of barrels that lined one side of the tent, where he lay a long time unable to extricate himself, his face only peering at intervals in drunken grimace over the wall of his prison. His antagonist was rendered almost frantic by this easy victory; he dashed his hat furiously on the ground, and rolling his eyes and twisting his face into horrible contortions, he flung his arms about like a stout-hearted old windmill, defying a thousand or more Don Quixotes to mortal combat.

A wiry little Scotchman, hugging his friend one moment in maudlin affection, and the next launching out into a strain of high moral eloquence—a doctor, young, handsome, and of good family, sitting on the ground and moaning to himself, the very picture of helpless imbecility,—a generous, highspirited volunteer, who had led on his company when three-fourths were cut down by the fire of the Mexicans, and who now whimperingly called on his friends to say if he was a coward,—together with half-a-score of more common soakers, quarrelsome and ill-tempered, were the principal actors; while among the crowd of spectators there was hardly one who was not, more or less, under the same influence.

[Pg 180]

They finally adjourned into the open air with the intention of going on to the next stopping-place at Dutch Tom's; but to do this it was necessary to cross the creek, here about four feet deep, and bridged only by a single log. All but one crossed in safety,—some running, some creeping on their hands and knees, and others, to show how entirely they were unaffected by the liquor, balancing along in a kind of country dance.

The dizzy pate who had fallen heels over head into the creek, no sooner recovered his footing than, seeing a number laughing at his catastrophe, he burst out with "I spose you think I'm drunk, eh? but it's all one for that; I only jumped in here acoz I was thirsty. Anybody that says I'm drunk,"—here he shook his head, with a look of direful meaning,—"I say, anybody that says I'm drunk—"

"Well," cried another, "what is it?—out with it, man."

"Well, anybody that says I'm drunk—I don't care who 'tis. *You* think I'm drunk?" he added, turning fiercely upon our little doctor, who had incautiously advanced too near the edge of the creek; "do you know, sir, that I was graduated, sir, at Edinboro'?"

"Si, señor, I have heard so," replied the doctor, who had studied a little Spanish, and was, like all the rest of us, fond of letting it off on every occasion.

"And do you know who I am?"

"Si, señor."

"Don't you say see senior to me," returned his amphibious antagonist, with drunken deliberation, and shaking his fist portentously at every syllable; "I know what see senior means as well as you do—it means darn your eyes."

[Pg 181]

While this was passing, a fierce dispute arose among the crowd on the other side, when one of the combatants seizing a small crowbar, dealt his enemy such a blow on the seat of honour as fairly knocked him into the creek, then jumping in after him, they instantly grappled with deadliest animosity, each striving to force the other's head under water, until they were with difficulty separated by the more sober among the spectators. This did not end the disturbance, however; knives were drawn, and matters began to assume a decidedly bloody aspect, when a miner named Graham, a man of unusual energy, seized an empty musket and threatened incontinently to shoot the first man who should renew the contest. This was an argument that all could understand; the ferment gradually abated, and something like the peace and quiet of a New England Sabbath was at length restored.

By far the greater part of the miners regarded these scenes with abhorrence; and to prevent their recurrence as far as possible, and wipe off from Ford's Bar the reputation of being the worst place on the river, they appointed a meeting to be held the next day for enacting certain laws, and choosing officers to see that they were executed.

About fifty miners assembled at the time appointed, and after a long discussion, arising from the folly of some who thought everything must be done in the same formal and cumbrous manner in which parliamentary proceedings are conducted, in more civilized communities, a few simple laws were agreed upon, Graham chosen Alcalde, and a bulky Missourian sheriff of Ford's Bar and the adjacent diggings.

The very next day an opportunity occurred of testing the new regime. The Tinker was again the hero of the play. Having swum the river, at this place comparatively smooth, he entered the store entirely naked; and after calling upon us to view his fine proportions, and touching briefly but with infinite power of expression upon his only sister, then residing in the elegant neighbourhood of the Five Points, he slung four bottles of brandy round his neck, and again committed himself to the rapid current. He would undoubtedly have reached the other side with little difficulty, even though encumbered with his precious freight; but having imprudently ventured to make a display

[Pg 182]

of his amphibious powers, he was drawn into an eddy, and compelled to abandon his brandy to save the only thing he held more dear—his life.

Our hero, or rather our Leander, having thus, like hook-nosed Cæsar landing on the shores of Britain, reached the farther bank and escaped the dangers of the deep, was compelled to do battle with a yet more cruel foe. Thickset, bull-headed, exasperated by the loss of that liquor in which he was a partner, the burly giant rushed upon The Tinker, who received him nothing loath, and then ensued a combat such as was often witnessed in the classic games of Rome, but is seldom seen in these degenerate days. The contest was fierce and obstinate—long time in even scale the battle hung, but when the dust cleared away from the field of view, our reporter, intently watching the progress of the fray through his levelled glass, announced that The Tinker was victorious.

Sitting astride on the body of his prostrate foe, like Mr. Dhu on poor Fitz Jamie, or Warburton on his astonished crocodile, a junk bottle—fit instrument for such a deed—already gleamed high in air, and the next moment, as next moments always are, would have been too late, if Thickset had not suddenly drawn a knife from his right boot, and by sundry cuts and thrusts diverted the deadly blow.

Now drawing a knife upon any one was one of the offences included in our criminal statutes; but the sage legislators of Ford's Bar no more thought of including a bottle in their list of prohibited weapons than king Kehama, though possessed of superhuman wisdom, thought of charming his son's life against a stake. The Tinker therefore escaped, while his antagonist having been brought into court by the sheriff, and tried before Justice Graham, assisted by a jury of three members, was fined twelve dollars and ordered to leave the bar within twenty-four hours under penalty of a sound flogging. Accordingly, early the next morning he was seen ascending the mountain, and was shot several months after in a quarrel somewhere below Mormon Island.

[Pg 183]

This instance of prompt severity exerted a very salutary influence; though little disputes were constantly arising, the services of the judge were not again called into exercise, at least in criminal cases, through the whole summer, and Ford's Bar became tolerably quiet.

Men, to be sure, still continued to get drunk. There was no attempt that I ever heard of to introduce the Maine Law into the mines, and the only restraint imposed upon their excesses was an empty purse and failing credit, or a feeble resolution of our Nantucketer to sell no more liquor to a man who was already too tipsy to stand without leaning against the counter.

The high moral Scotchman before mentioned and one or two others were seldom seen when they were not, to say the least, somewhat elevated. They had long before reached that stage when a man can hardly be said to be himself except when animated by liquor. Deprive them of that, they were dull lifeless machines, like a run-down clock, and needed every few hours to be wound up afresh. Pour into them a little brandy and the effect was electrical—the hidden springs and wheels began to move, and soon the whole complex apparatus was in active operation. Then, what flashes of wit and humour! what eloquent harangues! what high-toned moral sentiments! Alas! what hypocrisy, what inconsistency is like that of strong drink! how high in profession, how less than nothing in practice!

Then, no matter what subject might be started, our friend Pop or Poppycoc was ready at a moment's warning to mount a box or barrel, and declaim for the hour together in any style that should be required, pathetic, didactic, historical, or argumentative. The last, however, especially suited his humour. In his mouth the expression, That's all poppycoc, from which he obtained his name, and which he had borrowed from some scenes in *The Mysteries of Paris*, possessed an almost magic significance. It was a mortal stab, a downright crushing blow that could neither be parried nor evaded. No matter how wisely his opponent argued, nor how good the cause, the inevitable "That's all poppycoc," broke through all his defences, and compelled him to an ignominious retreat. It was the bar of iron forty feet long on the shoulders of the dwarf, and equally confounded all degrees.

[Pg 184]

The same week on which these events occurred, our society received a most agreeable accession in the person of a little German doctor with whom we had become partially acquainted at Mormon Island.

Dr. Tabisch was a short squat figure, with a low wrinkly forehead, unusually wide, especially at the eyebrows, small piercing gray eyes, and a very large, long, and pointed nose, wearing its spectacles, for they plainly had nothing to do with the eyes, way down at its lower extremity. His mouth was also large, something between Washington's and Henry Clay's, or the blind man's that stands near the Old Brick, with long thick lips, that yet met when they were at rest, which to be sure was not very often, in a firm straight line. He wore in all weathers a long brown surtout secured under his chin with a single button; and being prevented by age and infirmity from mining, he went stumping about the country, visiting his neighbours, indulging his natural taste for botany, and making regularly, as often as once a month, what he called wonderful discoveries about the gold.

His voice was his most remarkable peculiarity, and would have made the fortune of half a dozen singing masters or ventriloquists. It began way down in his chest, and came rolling and rumbling, then shrieking, up his throat like an echo behind mountains or a locomotive coming from under a covered bridge. He uttered his first words in a smothered German guttural, and gradually raised his voice to a sharp falsetto; and if the sentence were longer than common, he went through the

[Pg 185]

same process the second time. He had a habit, while speaking, of shaking his head in a very impressive manner, and bending his face towards the ground, while his sharp grey eye—it seemed at such times as if he had only one—glared terribly from under its ambush eyebrows, and his forefinger, as if to give greater certainty to his aim, vibrated slowly from the end of his own nose to that of his fascinated victim.

Such flexibility of voice could not exist without equal mobility of feature. His mouth worked incessantly, whether he were talking or not; sometimes he champed the ends of his iron-grey moustache, at others gnawed his nether lip, or protruded both as if he were about to whistle Old Hundred, or were trying to drink cider out of an imaginary bung-hole without the aid of a straw.

Add to this his strong German accent, the odd way in which he prolonged many of his vowels, those especially belonging to his bass notes, and the simple child-like vivacity he displayed on every occasion, and we had one of the funniest, most agreeable little old gentlemen I ever met with.

He had been a great traveller—had seen much of the world—and his stories were none the less interesting for being delivered in such outlandish phrase. According to his own account he had been in the allied army in 1813, and consequently entertained the most profound aversion towards Napoleon whom he allowed to possess no other merit than that of a great legislator.

"Napoleon," said he, in his most characteristic manner, "was *mean—disagreeable—not handsome*: he made the monks of St. Bernard furnish piece *bread*—piece *cheese*—glass *wine*—to sixty-seven thousand men, and *then!* only paid them forty thousand francs."

[Pg 186]

In this sentence the words in italics were thrown up with a sort of jerking emphasis, in the highest falsetto; while the rest, especially the forty thousand francs, was ground slowly out in most scornful gutturals.

Like most of his countrymen, he was jealous, and extremely irritable—had no relish of a jest—and was furthermore opinionative and dogmatical to the last degree; so that to continue long on good terms with him required no little caution and subserviency.

He remained but a short time at Ford's Bar, for, finding the air of the place unfavourable to his rheumatic affections, he was obliged to return to Mormon Island, leaving his son, who had hitherto accompanied him, still mining on the Middle Fork. "Well, doctor, and how much have you made?" cried Col. Oldbuck one day soon after his return.

"Five hundred dollar," returned the sturdy Knickerbocker, in his gruffest tones, and not deigning to turn his eyes on his inquisitor, who, stepping out the next moment, the doctor exclaimed, "Impudent fellaar! I did tell him lie—ask how much I made!—I would tell any man lie."

Sunday, the 9th of June, I attended church for the first and last time in California. The services were held in the open air, under the shadow of a huge pine, a short way up the creek. The congregation were seated on a pine-log, and the preacher, a strapping hirsute individual, who went by the name of Old Grizzly, stood at one end, and thus poured his eloquence into our left ear.

It was impossible not to feel the influences of the occasion. The listening mountains, older than the pyramids—the laughing brook, their twin-sister, yet so suggestive of eternal youth—the clouds that swept over the valley, and the breeze that had haunted there since creation—all disposed the soul to the most devout and lofty contemplations.

[Pg 187]

The next day we were invited to attend a funeral. Poor Van Scheick, a miner who had been suffering several weeks under two dreadful diseases, scurvy and dysentery, in more dreadful combination, had at length given up the unequal contest. He was buried high up on the hillside, that his grave might never be desecrated by the unrelenting hands of toiling avarice. No useless coffin enclosed his breast; and there, in more than regal solitude, with none to elbow him for room or grudge him his scanty six feet of earth, he laid him down to his last sleep.

There is something very affecting in this utter isolation from one's kind even in death. On our frequent visits to Georgetown we had often noticed, in a secluded spot a little way from the road, two graves side by side, with rude head-boards containing the names and residence of the deceased. I was more affected by this simple emblem of mortality than by the costliest monuments of populous graveyards. There death has become, as it were, common; it is the rule, and not the exception—it ceases to be a distinction, and no longer affects the imagination. But, in a new country, death comes to us with something of the freshness of novelty. We are not yet familiar with its aspect. We thought, perhaps, that we had left it behind—had escaped beyond its jurisdiction. Indeed, it always seemed to me strange and unaccountable that men should die in California—they came there for so short a time, and for so different a purpose; unless it should be thought they had gone twenty thousand miles simply for that!

Early in June we at length obtained possession of one fourth of a submarine armour. We paid for it three hundred and twenty-five dollars, or nearly one half our little capital; but such was my own confidence in the success of our schemes that I parted with the money that had cost us so much labour without the least reluctance. St. John was less sanguine, and I saw him turning it over in his palm with an expression of profound solicitude, as if debating the question whether a fish in hand were not worth two in the water. However, he soon decided, and clutching the purse in his fist walked rapidly down the Bar. When he returned, the purse was empty and the share

[Pg 188]

was ours. The remaining shares were held by men at Big Bar, eight miles farther up the river; but, for the first scene of their operations, they had selected a spot about three miles from Ford's, and reported to be one of the richest on the Middle Fork.

The distance from our camp, trifling as it may seem, was rendered truly formidable by the nature of the path which wound along the edge of the river, sometimes dipping beneath the surface and at others rising high on the shelvy face of the mountain, or over rocks where a single false step would precipitate the unwary traveller a hundred feet down into the boiling current. At one place, called Jacob's Ladder, a flight of gigantic steps brought the giddy climber to a narrow projection resembling a pulpit, though in height a very steeple, over whose tottering verge, if he had nerve enough to make the trial, he could see the sunken rocks and whirling eddies directly at its base.

One dark and stormy night, soon after our friend Dr. B. arrived on the Bar, he was called by a stranger to go two miles up the river to visit a man supposed to be dying. Fortunately, he had never been over the path before, or his presence of mind would certainly have failed him; but, on returning the same way the next morning, he could hardly credit his senses on seeing by daylight the dangers through which he had passed, in the pitchy darkness of night and rain, with no other assistance than the pressure of the hand or hurried warning of his guide.

As these difficulties in effect greatly increased the distance, and would render it impossible for the one who assisted in working the armour to return oftener than once a week, and as he would in consequence be exposed to many hardships and privations from which our more civilized life was comparatively exempt, it became a question of considerable importance on which of us the lot should fall. The difficulty was removed, however, by St. John's magnanimously offering himself for this enterprise, which not only far exceeded our apprehensions, but proved to be the most stirring episode in the whole course of our adventures.

[Pg 189]

In giving an account of his experience, I shall still continue to make use of the third person, partly for convenience, and partly from a foolish fondness I have always had for that individual.

CHAPTER XVI.

[Pg 190]

What have we here? a man or a fish? dead or alive? A fish;—he smells like a fish; a very ancient and fishlike smell; a kind of, not of the newest, Poor John. A strange fish!

One glowing summer's day, in the pleasant month of June, two travellers might have been seen slowly winding along the narrow path that led from Ford's Bar, on the Middle Fork of the American River, to Big Bar, eight miles above. It needed but a glance at the arms and equipment of the first, to see that he was a knight of distinguished rank, who was now, doubtless, wandering over the world in search of adventures. The light cap that he wore on the back of his head, showed crisp-curling black hair, sparkling eyes, united with a rather thoughtful and grave expression, as of one equally skilled in counsel and in fight. His helmet, which he carried slung over his left shoulder, was of very unusual dimensions, and apparently made of burnished copper, that fairly dazzled the eyes of the beholder as it glinted back the rays of the morning sun.

If any one, however, had taken the trouble to peep into this resplendent headpiece, he would have seen enough to satisfy him that this exalted personage was now bent on some peaceful mission, and had not the most remote fears of any encounter. Potatoes and onions, with a great piece of ancient Dutch cheese, a goodly lump of salt pork, and a great variety of smaller articles, all of the like harmless and soft-hearted temper, reposed quietly in its warm belly, as the lion, in early days, dandled the kid. The squire, who, according to the custom of the time, walked a few paces in the rear, carried, with no little difficulty, the remainder of his master's armour. It consisted of a puzzling pair of large brass tubes, somewhat in shape resembling an opera-glass; but the experienced observer had no difficulty in determining at once their dangerous and destructive nature. They were the invention of a very profound philosopher, who proposed to destroy his enemies without the effusion of blood, by cunningly sucking the breath out of their body. The squire carried this cumbrous implement of destruction astride on his shoulders, and in his right hand grasped a weapon more suited to his degree, and of the same description as was erewhile employed by that distinguished jester, the Saxon Wamba, in his renowned combat with Isaac the Jew.

[Pg 191]

A stout pair of blankets, strapped firmly to his back, completed the squire's equipment, and showed that he was ready at any time, if need were, to bivouac in the open air.

The sun had sunk behind the western hills—the broad shadow had slid across the river and crept noiselessly up the steep face of the mountain on their right; but still our travellers toiled on, now dipping their dusty, burning feet in the cooling flood, now balancing cautiously along the narrow path, where a single false step would have been destruction, and where one resolute man could have held the pass against a thousand foes. The stars were already appearing in the darkened sky, when they at last halted beneath a sombre pine that had thrust its roots deep in among the rocks.

The place seemed well chosen to guard against attack; on one side was the river shutting off all

approach in that direction; behind them was a rugged mountain which no one in his senses would think of descending; and on either hand the narrow path rendered all access almost equally difficult. The knight disencumbered himself of his helmet, and laid it, with due regard to its precious contents, carefully in a hollow beside him; the squire did the same with his breath-compelling weapon, and after a frugal supper of bread and cheese they stretched themselves on the smoothest part of the rock, and were soon fast asleep.

[Pg 192]

All this might have been seen, dear reader, and that too without any greater stress of imagination than is usually demanded on similar occasions; though strict veracity, that veracity that forms so pleasing and fundamental a part of the character of bully Bottom, may require a little explanation.

In good sooth then, our knight was no knight at all, but simple Ethan Allen, not of revolutionary memory, but one of his numerous descendants, degenerated from that rantipole, thundering, Ticonderoga hero into a soft-tongued, smooth-faced varlet, who hated the British by hereditary right, and still swore by the Continental Congress. I had the honour of being his humble companion, and the deadly mischief on my aching shoulders was neither more nor less than the ponderous air-pumps that were to furnish a substitute for gills in our proposed aquatic incursions.

Having given this brief word of caution, we will continue our narrative in the more sober style befitting a grave and discreet chronicler. We had expected to find the rest of our companions awaiting us at the appointed place of meeting; but they did not make their appearance till the next morning, when we at once set about making the necessary preparations for putting the machine in operation.

From one to two hundred pounds of shot were required to overcome the buoyancy of the armour; and as this could not be obtained nearer than Coloma, Allen started alone on this errand, leaving to the rest of us the work of constructing a raft. Incredible as it may seem, the preliminary operations necessary to this simple undertaking occupied us a whole week; the only trees fit for the purpose grew high up on the mountain, and when we had at last succeeded in felling them, the still more arduous task remained of getting them safely down to the river's brink. The easiest and most natural method was to set them in motion by crowbars and long levers, when their own momentum would without any further trouble on our part carry them crashing down the steep; but besides the danger of losing them altogether by their plunging into the river, their ungovernable rage and impetuosity would, in case of their striking any sufficient obstacle, dash them into a hundred pieces. We were accordingly compelled to proceed with the utmost caution, and let them down gradually by a rope passed once or twice round a tree, in the same way that whalermen check the fierce flight of *their* victim in his frenzied efforts to escape.

[Pg 193]

This being at length accomplished, we proceeded to throw them into the river, when one after another, as fast as they reached the water, sunk like a stone beneath the surface, and settling cosily side by side at the bottom, left us staring at each other with a ludicrous mixture of amazement and indignation. Greater amaze could hardly have seized the followers of the pious Eneas when their ships threatened with hostile flames plunged goddesses of the sea beneath the waves. There was no time to be lost, however, in useless lamentation; and finding by this decisive experiment that live timber knew too much to swim, we immediately commenced a search for some drier and more stupid material. Some distance above our claim we found lodged among the jagged rocks where it had been left by some previous freshet, a mighty pine bleached as dry and white as the thigh bone of some antediluvian monster. Its spongy elastic fibre long set at defiance our united efforts, but having at last cut it into logs of a convenient length, we rolled them into the water, and guided them down the river by long ropes, the rapidity of the current rendering the task as difficult as the steepness of the hill had done before, and often threatening to wrest the log entirely from our control.

It was usual for the miners to rest several hours during the heat of the day; but though our work was far more laborious, our impatience to finish this undertaking hardly permitted us to relax our efforts for a moment. Several days while we were thus occupied, the mercury stood at 105° in the shade and the reader can but faintly imagine what we endured standing on burning rocks, exposed to the fierce reflection from the water, and at the same time obliged to exert our energies to the utmost in overcoming the stupid obstinacy of large sticks of timber, of all labour the most humiliating and discouraging.

[Pg 194]

From six till seven we toiled without intermission, stopping only an hour at noon for dinner, and sleeping in the open air, on the softest rocks, with no other canopy than the branches of a spreading oak, through whose scanty foliage I could see the stars winking and blinking in my face.

We found little time for conversation during the day, and it might be supposed that we should have had little inclination for it at night; but weary as I was, I could not resist the garrulity of one of my companions, whose amusing narrative, continued night after night, might well sustain a comparison with the more classic stories of Scheherezade.

Passing over the earlier parts of his history in which, as with other distinguished characters, his birth, whooping cough, and measles occupied the principal portion, we come to the time when the young Weaver, for such he was entitled, first displayed his ardent love of heroic adventure by running away from home, and embarking in a long and hazardous voyage in pursuit of mackerel.

This was the turning point in his life; and from this apparently unimportant step the skilful historian will easily trace all his subsequent career—all those striking ideosyncracies that, whether they betrayed the greatness or the weakness of his character, equally distinguished him from the mass of ordinary men around him.

The fishy odour of that first voyage still lingered about his person, as grateful to his senses as to others the bank of violets where they had played in childhood. He loved to talk of barrels and of quintals, of schools of mackerel and of cod; till in his flowing figures the little fishing smack assumed the state and importance of some mighty whaler, and his puny prey was invested with all the terrors of Leviathan.

[Pg 195]

No such mackerel were ever seen in these degenerate days, and no such storms as he then encountered. When, in process of years, the greater love of ease, and lessening spirit of adventure induced him, yet unwillingly, to give up what had hitherto been his favourite pastime, he manifested his ichthyological propensities and the strength of early associations, by declining his affections upon an oyster. In the society of those amiable and suggestive testacea he passed many grateful hours, sailing the while in fancy o'er his much-loved Banks of Newfoundland, or watching the dying flounderings of some gigantic cod that had erewhile yielded to his victorious hook.

His observations on life and manners in the metropolis of New England, had about them the same smack of fishy sagacity, plainly declaring from what source his philosophy had been derived.

"Boston," said he, with a melancholy shake of the head at the tender recollection of some earlier passages in his varied experience, "Boston, I will allow, is a mighty dangerous place for a man to be out o' nights: yet, somehow'r other, I never felt very ticklish about it, though they know't I was in the habit of carrying about considerable sums o' money. Many and many's the time 'at I've been through some o' the very worst places in the city, with as much as a gallon or two of iseters, and sometimes the money for 'em, too; but nobody ever offered to touch me—I s'pose acause they'd a kind o' stinking notion 'at I'd be likely to prove an ugly customer.

"The gentleman as I was a working with used ollus to send me to carry the iseters; 'cause,' says he, 'Weaver's a man as can be depended on, and what he says he'll do, he'll do.' I remember one day, when we was all-fired busy—seems to me folks in Boston never ate so many iseters before—a gentleman was going to have a large party, and he sent for me to come and help. Boss, 'cause we was so busy, you know, was agoing to send somebody else; but the gentleman, he says, says he, 'I don't want nobody but Weaver.' So I went, and I was out in the kitchen a opening iseters for dear life, when the gentleman he came out, and asked me, why I didn't go in and see the folks. So, bimeby, I went in—I had on my best close, and looked about as smart as any on 'em—and his wife and daughters—he had four, and they was none o' yer milk-an'-water things either—they said, 'how d'ye do, Mr. Weaver? We are very glad to see you.' So I told 'em I was very glad to see them; and then I sat down and talked awhile, and bimeby somebody said sumthin' about iseters—so I began, and told 'em all I knew about it, and all about my going a-mackereling, and they was so interested, you never see.

[Pg 196]

"And then, sich a supper as they had! It was just the beatimost thing I ever did see; for they was real tip-top folks, and no mistake—and, as for the iseters, you may be sure, I looked out for them myself.

"So, after the party was over, and the folks was going home, the gentleman steps up to me, before 'em all, as perlite as could be, and says, says he, 'we're very much obliged to you, Mr Weaver; I really don't know how we should ha' got along without you:' and then he offered to pay me for the iseters; but I wan't agoing to do no sich thing. 'Not a cent,' says I, 'not a cent;' for I thought 'twould be real shabby to go to his party, and then make him pay for the iseters. So he put the money back into his pocket, and everybody laughed and looked so tickled, 'at I knowed I'd done just about the right thing. And then he said, he hoped he should have the pleasure—I misremember the exact words, but that's near enough—of seeing me again at his house, some time'r other, and so I mean he shall; for, as soon as ever I git ten thousand dollars, I'm going straight back to Boston, and I mean to call on him the very first thing.

[Pg 197]

"And, then, I'm going to the old shop where I used to work; and, first, I shall call for a dozen raw—and then I shall call for a dozen fried—and then for an out-and-out stew; and then! I'll walk up to the counter, and pay 'm in gold dust! won't that make 'em stare?"

When the cunning Weaver had woven so much of his fantastic web, he invariably turned over and went to sleep—very wisely, as I thought; for, surely, no wit of man could blow a more airy and buoyant bubble than that on which, balloon-like, he now set sail for the land of dreams.

The morning brought with it less seductive realities. For breakfast we had, at first, coffee without sugar—the sugar and pepper having become too intimately blended during their rough journey to answer their legitimate purpose—ship biscuit, with a bit of pork or bacon, and, now and then, a dish of stewed beans. After living this way a week, we obtained a keg of butter and a small quantity of flour; and, one evening, "Now," says Weaver, "I'm going to have some nice biscuit for supper, so hold on, boys, I'll have 'em ready in a twinkling."

Weaver was a short, thick-set fellow, and wore a pair of oilcloth pantaloons, strikingly suggestive of his former avocations. Owing to their natural gummy and adhesive nature, their original colour had been overlaid and aggravated, something like a painter's palette, by numerous successive layers of every variety of hue, among which, however, dirt-colour was decidedly predominant.

This process of accretion had been carried on with most perseverance and success on that part of his nether garments that would naturally stand in greatest need of such patching, and which, from constant manipulation, now exhibited a truly Parthian polish, almost dazzling to behold.

Having emptied a due proportion of flour and water into one of the large, shallow tin-pans used in mining, Weaver gave his hands, fresh from their day's work, a desperate slide over the part aforesaid, and, without more ado, plunged them half up to the elbows into the paste. A liberal supply of saleratus was added, and, in half an hour, he placed upon the smooth stone that served us for a table, two small loaves of a greenish-yellow complexion and about the consistency of a middling-boiled egg.

[Pg 198]

"There!" said he, triumphantly, as he drew a long knife from his boot, and, breathing upon it, gave it a preparatory wipe over his breeches, "that's what I call despatch. Now for some butter!"

The butter was brought in a plate, already bearing the indisputable marks of pork and beans; though a bowl would have been the more fitting receptacle, the heat of the sun having converted the contents of the keg into a state of perfect fluidity.

"Never mind," said Weaver, "I'll fix it to-morrow;" and with the word, five knives clashed together on the bottom of the plate, and returned as if they had been dipt in oil.

Weaver was as good as his word; he had said that he would fix the butter, and he did. Sometime the next day, the butter, which had partially cooled during the night, having again melted, he set the keg in the edge of the water; and, not long after, we witnessed the novel and pleasing spectacle of what seemed a river of oil or honey. The water had risen, as it did regularly once in twenty-four hours, and the whole of our butter issuing out of the keg, had floated tranquilly down the stream.

The next morning, when Weaver was preparing to renew his culinary operations, I, by some manœuvre, called his attention to a man just performing his matin ablutions on the opposite side of the river, and cautiously suggested that it might be as well to follow his example. He received the hint, as if the idea had just dawned upon him for the first time; and, having bathed his hands and face, declared that, really, he didn't know before how much better a man felt after being washed; and he thought it would be a good plan to do it every morning, or at least as often as every Sunday.

[Pg 199]

I am sorry that I am unable to state whether this knight of the knife and the shell ever attained the summit of his modest ambition; but I am rather impressed with the belief that he never succeeded in throwing off his old habits, and may still be found at his former quarters in Devonshire street, busily and not ignobly employed in studying his favourite science of conchology.

On fastening our logs together by wooden bolts and ropes of bark, we found the raft thus constructed altogether inadequate to sustain the necessary weight consisting of four men, the armour weighing about one hundred pounds, and nearly double that quantity of shot; but by means of ropes attached to the outer corners, and made fast to the rocks, we made it sufficiently buoyant to answer for the first experiment; and our eager impatience would not admit of any longer delay.

As none of our company felt willing to play the part of diver, we hired for that purpose a man who had already been down in one of "the masheens" at home, and now gladly embraced the opportunity of making somewhat higher wages than he had been in the habit of receiving. It was not a little curious and amusing to watch the operations of his toilet while preparing for the descent,—seldom is the proudest belle while being drest for a ball waited upon by more zealous and obsequious attendants; he seemed indeed like some turtle fed alderman now disabled by gout or other infirmity, and dependent upon the services of others.

Our nabob divested of all but shirt and pantaloons, seated himself on a stone, while two of his ready servitors pulled on his boots and breeches all in one—a suit of genteel black very wide at the hips and having a copper ring round the waist. We next arrayed his highmightiness in a close jacket of the same fashion, with a second ring at the bottom, and at the top a monstrous copper basin somewhat larger than a water bucket, "within which his head seemed to have shrunk away like a dried filbert in its shell." He looked out through two glass eyes having that lidless stare peculiar to the sculpen, and there was a still larger window opposite his mouth, opening by a screw in order to give him air while dressing.

[Pg 200]

The jacket and trowsers were screwed firmly together by means of the two copper rings—the bags of shot and sand tied over his shoulders and round his waist—the viser closed, and the air-pumps at the same moment put in motion. A long hose of india rubber connected the pumps with the top of his helmet, and as the unwieldy figure rose to its feet, and waddled forward to the edge of the raft, while the inrushing air puffed out his flabby skin to its full extent, he looked like an infant elephant on its hind legs, or some of the monstrous idols of heathendom, among which, however, he would certainly have carried off the palm for ugliness. He was not like most other amphibious animals, awkward and clumsy on land, but all alert in the water; his awkwardness never deserted him, and the ridiculous splash, it could hardly be called a plunge, with which he settled into what seemed a more congenial element, reminded me of nothing so much as Ma'am Bridges sitting unexpectedly down in her own wash-tub.

After he had been gone some ten minutes, and no signal twitch had been given at the cord

provided for that purpose, we began to look at each other with a mysterious sort of dread, and debate the expediency of pulling him up. My own position at the pumps prevented me from taking any more active part, but I did my best to induce my companions to haul him in without any further delay, and they at length yielded to my expostulations. But, to our infinite consternation, we now found all our strength unable to move him from the bottom; and crying out, all at once, to a party of miners on the opposite bank, two of them came in a canoe to our assistance, and by pulling directly over the spot where the diver lay, succeeded in bringing him to the surface.

[Pg 201]

We drew him hastily to the shore, and opening the visor saw, within the depths of the helmet, a countenance paler than that of Ivanhoe when he fainted in the very presence of the Queen of Love and Beauty, at the gentle and famous passage of arms at Ashby de la Zouche. Long after his armour had been removed, he still lay apparently lifeless,—and it was an hour before he could give us any account of his misfortune. He then told us that walking along the bottom he had suddenly stepped into a hole behind a rock, and was having the best time he ever had in his life, when all at once he fell asleep.

He was not in the least disturbed by the imminent danger he had escaped so narrowly, and declared his readiness to make a second trial, if a place could be found free from rocks, and where the water was sufficiently clear for us to see him from the surface.

As no such place was to be found in that vicinity, all our previous labour went for nothing; we abandoned our raft, and moved several miles further up the river to a spot not far below Big Bar, and said in the high flown language of the miners to contain a cart load of gold.

The sand bags proving quite unfit for the purpose, Allen again set off in search of an additional supply of shot; and the rest of us set to work with redoubled energy, to construct a second and larger raft, with such improvements as our hard-won experience suggested.

In the meantime I went down the river to Ford's Bar to purchase a stock of provisions, and a number of articles required in our delicate operations. Having bought a hundred weight of flour—a small quantity of pork, sugar and coffee—and a large coil of rope at Dutch Tom's, I hired him and a mule to carry them to our camp.

[Pg 202]

As it was utterly impossible for a mule to make his way on the shore, we determined to ascend the mountain and keep along the summit as far as was convenient, and then get down the best way we could. The hill in question resembled nothing so much as a monstrous hyena, up whose tail we now slowly climbed, till we reached its spinous bristly back bone, where the travelling was comparatively smooth. Having at length arrived as near as I could judge, at the proper point, we began to descend; but had gone only a few rods when the mule came to a full halt, and Dutch Tom declared that it was altogether out of the question for man or beast to go any further; he had been over all the worst places within fifty miles, but this was a little too much even for him.

I coaxed, I threatened, I expostulated in vain. I offered to give him ten dollars more than the price we had promised, if he remained faithful to his agreement, and assured him, on the other hand, he would never receive a dollar if he deserted me in such a situation—but he swore that if the flour were turned into gold it would be no temptation, and urged me not to make the venture. I told him, however, that I could be as obstinate as any Dutchman of them all; and finding me as good as my word, he unloaded his mule and set out on his return with that unpleasant coolness and deliberation for which his countrymen are so remarkable, and which I found it mere affectation to attempt to equal.

In fact I was not cool at all, and could have thrashed the perfidious Nederlander with hearty good will, but as he was now beyond my reach, I vented my rage with far greater ease and safety against the inoffensive sack of flour, pleasing myself all the while with the thought that I was demolishing a broad-skirted Dutchman at every kick. When I was tired of this exercise, I sat down again to rest and think what I had best do next.

It was now nearly sundown—the valley below lay in deep shadow which was slowly creeping with a broken irregular front, and with the stealthy tread of an Indian army up the mountain. Tired and exhausted as I was by our long march under a burning sun I had yet no time to rest; and no sooner had the sound of hoofs died away in the distance than I sprang to my feet and commenced my descent.

[Pg 203]

Having first marked the place as carefully as I could, I made a bundle of some of the more indispensable articles, weighing in all some eighty pounds, and lashed it firmly to my back in order to leave my hands at perfect liberty. The face of the mountain consisted, like that at Ford's Bar, of broken slate that continually, as it was started by the feet, slid away in little streams awaking a strange curiosity to see how far they would go. A scattered growth of shrubs and vines covered the ground, but the first were too brittle to be of much service, and the thorns that guarded the latter only tore my clothes and scratched my hands and face without in the least retarding my downward course. Crouching down on my feet I sometimes slid straightforward a distance of several rods—at others, I was obliged to advance more slowly in a diagonal direction, when I could not help wishing that my legs, like those of the animal called the brock, were of unequal length, that they might correspond better to the sloping surface.

After proceeding thus painfully about an hour I came almost before I was aware upon a perpendicular precipice from one to two hundred feet in height, which seemed effectually to bar all further progress in that direction. I could now hear however the roar of the river with great

distinctness, and the sound inspiring me with fresh energy, I resolved to make the attempt. I accordingly took my pack from my shoulders, and having thrown it into what seemed a clump of bushes at the foot of the precipice, prepared myself to follow, though with somewhat greater deliberation.

In my cooler moments I should have shrunk at once from so perilous an undertaking; but I was now possessed with a sort of stupid, unreasoning courage that prevented me from seeing the full extent of the danger, and probably actually diminished it in the same proportion.

[Pg 204]

The first part of the way was by no means difficult; I discovered on closer inspection a narrow shelf descending steeply along the face of the precipice, affording barely room for my feet, so that in order to preserve my balance I was obliged to advance in a sidling direction with my face to the rock, and my fingers constantly thrust into the narrow seams that mapped its surface. The shelf terminated abruptly about fifty feet from the summit, and for a moment I saw no way of continuing my descent. Creeping slowly back the path I had just travelled, I came in a few steps to a sort of fissure in the rock about two feet in width and penetrating deeper than my eye could follow. By bracing my feet against the opposite sides of this hollow, I thought I would descend in the same manner in which a sweep works his way up and down a chimney.

It was a peculiarity of the state of mind I was then in that the moment any plan presented itself I hastened to put it in execution. In a few minutes I found myself far below the point at which I had started, the numerous hollows and projections in the sides of my chimney affording an excellent foothold; but now a new difficulty presented itself. The chasm had insensibly widened, till now, with my feet planted firmly against one side, and my hands braced against the other, I found it no easy matter to maintain my position. To ascend seemed an effort wholly beyond my strength, yet another step downward might plunge me headlong on to the rocks below. The little light that found its way into the mouth of the chasm did not enable me to see the bottom, but I naturally concluded that the depth was considerable.

Cautiously sliding my hands a little lower, and then stretching out one foot as far as possible, I found to my utter consternation, that the wall retired so rapidly at this point that it was entirely beyond my reach. My limbs which had been before as rigid as iron, now seemed weaker than a child's, but it was only for a moment. The next my hope revived, and I resolved, desperate as it seemed, to make an attempt to return. But just then a stone detached by my foot fell into the chasm. I listened to hear it strike with the same sort of curiosity as if I had been in perfect safety; but to my great surprise no sound followed. Could it be that the hollow was so deep, or had it,—and I trembled at the thought,—fallen so short a distance as to make no noise? It would be easy to determine the fact by another trial, but on making the effort I could not find a single stone that was loose. I succeeded however, by a violent effort, in getting my hand into my pocket; and taking out my knife dropped it carefully in the middle of the chasm and the same moment heard it strike just at my feet. A single step placed me on the level ground at the bottom, which had been all the while scarcely an inch beyond my reach. I groped about till I had found my knife; and following the slender ray of light that streamed from a short distance, soon felt the cool breath of the river on my burning brow.

[Pg 205]

Our camp, it fortunately happened, was not far off, where my sudden arrival astonished my companions almost as much as if I had fallen from the moon. I was too much exhausted, however, to satisfy their curiosity, and lost no time in stretching myself out on my bed of rocks with a far keener sense of rest and enjoyment than the bridal chamber of the St. Nicholas could ever bestow.

I dreamed all night of rolling down hill in a barrel stuck full of nails; and in the morning, when I came to feel my bruises and look at my torn and bleeding hands, I almost believed my dream to be real; hardly a spot in my body but was as black and blue as if I had been hunted by a legion of fairies through every forest in Christendom.

[Pg 206]

In less than a week our raft was completed; it was much larger than the other, with an opening at one end, over which we erected a stout triangle or tripod to assist in raising and lowering the diver. For more than a month we continued to struggle against a series of delays and vexatious such as must necessarily attend an undertaking of so great magnitude in a new country; but after all, the thing itself was the chief obstacle,—all others were finally surmounted, but we were apparently as far as ever from attaining our object. The diver was almost entirely helpless in his moving prison; he was unable to remain under water more than a few hours a day, and came out dripping with perspiration and trembling as if he had the ague.

More than once he was overtaken by the same fit or faintness that had so alarmed us before, and we were thus kept in a state of constant apprehension. He found it nearly impossible to use a pick or shovel under water, but contrived by means of a small scoop to fill an iron pot we lowered down to him; and though it contained little gold, this trifling achievement raised considerably the spirits of the more sanguine of our party.

I had for some time, however, ceased to feel any lively faith in our success, and, on consulting with my brothers, we all agreed that there was little hope of doing anything that season, and determined to sell our share without further delay. An opportunity soon offering, I disposed of our quarter of the armour for four hundred and ninety-five dollars, to be paid two days after at Coloma; and thus ended six weeks of the severest labour I ever encountered.

While St. John was occupied as narrated in the preceding chapter, we remained at Ford's Bar, and prayed that the river might speedily fall.

The same day on which we bought the armour I went with Dr. Browne to a spot not far from Jacob's Ladder, to put up a notice of our intention to construct a wing-dam at that place as soon as the water permitted. This simple bit of paper, with our names and signatures attached, was posted in a conspicuous position on a tree hard by, and secured to us possession of the territory therein described as effectually as all the sealed and witnessed and recorded formalities of more artificial society.

The spot we had selected had been found unusually rich the year before, and it was but natural to conclude that a great deal of the precious deposit still remained, which could be reached, however, only by a wing-dam. This is nothing but a thick mound or dike of stones and earth, projecting half way across the river, and then running down the stream fifty or perhaps several hundred feet. When possible, it is built just above a fall or rapid, which lowers the water in the partially enclosed space sufficiently to enable the miner with long-handled shovels to dig out the earth without much difficulty; but when no such rapids are to be found, the only advantage of a wing-dam consists in the stillness of the water, the current being generally so violent that it would be quite impossible, without some such expedient, to raise a shovelful of earth above the surface.

The miner then, standing in the water up to his middle, scoops up the gravel from the bottom, and either flings it on to the bank or empties it into a bucket held by one of his companions. Much of the gold is unavoidably lost by this imperfect process, but the labour is so slight compared with the ordinary method of damming, and requires so much less expenditure of time and money, that the miner can well afford to overlook its peculiar disadvantages.

[Pg 208]

With a wing-dam in prospect, and one fourth of a submarine armour in actual possession, we thought we might safely bid defiance to fortune. The water, however, was yet too high, and in the mean time we worked, though very interruptedly, here and there along the banks, sometimes making half an ounce apiece, and at others spending the whole day in prospecting without earning a dollar. The 12th of June was uncomfortably cool, and a slight shower fell in the morning, the first rain we had known for more than six weeks. The next day the river had contracted so much with the cold that we made a beginning in our claim at the lower end of the bar, but the water again rising, drove us out at thirty buckets.

In the afternoon we walked down to the store to see a wonderful instrument that had just been brought into the valley. On entering the store, we found a large crowd assembled, and in the midst a heavy-looking Dutchman, who held in his hands a strip of whalebone apparently taken from an umbrella, and split in two about half its length.

The Dutchman was talking very earnestly, and the crowd, as if afraid of his potent wand, kept at a respectful distance while he expounded to them the extraordinary properties lodged in this innocent-looking bit of umbrella, and the way in which it could be used to most advantage. Just as I forced my way into the circle, the operator, astrologer, magician, or what not, grasped the two ends of the split firmly in his hands, giving the whole nearly the form of the letter Y, when a pan of gold being placed under the point, it was at once depressed from a horizontal to a vertical position, as if drawn by some mysterious and irresistible attraction.

[Pg 209]

Having with some difficulty persuaded the owner to trust his magic in my profane hands, I found that the weight of the rod caused it to twist with considerable violence; but if this were to be regarded as any indication of the presence of gold, the whole floor of the tent must be underlaid with that precious metal.

Our Dutchman, however, still maintained that in his hands it manifested this dipping propensity only over the pan of gold, and explained its perversity when in my keeping by the same theory as that advanced by the believers in animal magnetism, that some constitutions are more susceptible or impressible than others. While he was defending his opinion, with a good deal of volubility and ill-temper, a buckskin purse was brought in half full of black sand, and laid upon the ground for a second experiment. On being held over it the point sunk as rapidly as before, whereupon the unbelievers set up a laugh, and even the faithful looked somewhat disconcerted; but the wary conjuror, nothing daunted on learning the contents of the purse, ingeniously contended that this was a stronger proof of his position—that there must be, of course, a few grains of gold still sticking in the corners, and that they had affected the delicate nerves of his divining-rod.

He even had the assurance to offer his services in discovering rich deposits, demanding only ten per cent. for his own share; but, the miners being generally unable to appreciate the value of his invention, he joined himself to a party possessed of superior discernment, who, trusting to the guidance of the witch-whalebone, (I never knew whether its having been part of an umbrella had anything to do with its remarkable properties,) dug one hole after another on the banks of Otter Creek, and would undoubtedly have at length discovered the treasure, had not the same envious, and malignant sprites that guard the spoils of Captain Kidd hurried it away, just as they were on the point of success.

[Pg 210]

As we were now in constant expectation of receiving an answer to the letter I had written in

February, in regard to the submarine armour, we walked to Georgetown as often as we could muster courage to ascend the hill; and, though we were often disappointed in the object of our visit, we never failed to be rewarded for our labour. After living so long in that narrow valley, the high rolling country above seemed almost like a new creation. Our thoughts expanded with the horizon, and we breathed purer and easier, as if we had just escaped from prison, or the dismal depths of a mine. We stopped repeatedly to satiate our eyes, long unused to such telescopic vision, on the circling prospect, and to inhale the larger air that came sifting through those giant pines. Every thing about us was on a grander and more magnificent scale, and Ford's Bar seemed a baby-house, a world in miniature, where the sky, the trees, the winds, were all alike stunted and Lilliputian.

In fact, we were becoming heartily tired of Ford's Bar, and of the Middle Fork, and not without reason; for neither was exactly the place that one would choose for a summer residence. By the first of July, the heat had become almost intolerable; pent up in such close quarters, it was reverberated from mountain to mountain, till their dark, slaty sides became charged like immense reservoirs, from which it was poured down upon our heads. By shortening the sun's reign, however, several hours, morning and evening, the hills sensibly diminished the evil; and a fresh breeze that flowed through the valley all the middle of the day, still farther reduced the temperature. But when, as was sometimes the case, the surrounding atmosphere was warmer than our bodies, the breeze seemed rather like the breath of an oven, and the coolest place was that least exposed to its influence.

The mercury often stood at a hundred, and rose several times to one hundred and ten; when the only way of obtaining relief was to sit down, up to our chins in the water of the Creek, like so many pond-lillies just raising their heads above the surface. [Pg 211]

To make any exertion in such weather, was not to be thought of for a moment. We had read all the books in the circulating library—Dr. Tabisch had returned to Mormon Island—Dr. Browne had also gone thither on a visit—the river fell slower than it was ever known to do before—and, in short, everything conspired to make the state of ennui to which we were now reduced more and more intolerable.

Under these circumstances, it is not very wonderful that we tired of our way of life—of sleeping on the ground—of cooking our own food—of wearing dirty clothes—of talking of our unvaried theme; or that we should long for some rational amusement—for white sheets and table-cloths—for cream in our coffee, and ice on our butter—for carpets and easy-chairs—for books and music, and the sight of a pretty face, whether of child or woman—and for a New England Sabbath.

It was not till the middle of July that the shrinking of the river brought a temporary interruption to this indolent existence, by enabling us at length to take undivided possession of our claim. The earth paid from fifteen to fifty cents to the bucket; but there was so little of it, that we were compelled to put a prudent restraint upon our energies, and work only half the time, lest we should be left entirely without occupation.

About this time, the miners who camped on Otter Creek were horribly scared by the nocturnal visits of a large grizzly bear, who came prowling round their tents, and carried off sundry legs of bacon that were hanging on trees before their doors. As our tents would prove a slight protection, in case he should desire to extend his acquaintance, it was determined, if possible, to rout the enemy out of the neighbourhood. [Pg 212]

Accordingly, one fine morning, long before the sun had gilded the topmost edge of our western boundary, a party of ten or twelve bold hunters started off in pursuit, firmly resolved not to return without a trophy; and, though I had never been hunting in my life, I could not withstand the temptation to accompany them.

I slung a heavy rifle over my shoulder, and the whole party, after advancing several miles up the Creek, began slowly to ascend the mountain, following without difficulty the rude trail of the slouching monster; till being at length, as we supposed, somewhere in his vicinity, we halted to arrange our plan of operations. The place where we stood was directly under a low, steep bank, and had evidently been occupied as a lair by the animal, as it was easy to see the hollow he had scooped out for his bed, and the coarse dark hair sticking in little tufts, where he had rubbed himself against the rocks.

"Now, boys!" said our leader, who had taken that office upon himself, by virtue of his greater skill and experience, "the plaguey varmint is somewhere here about, I reckon; so we may as well be all ready for him; for when he does come, he'll likely be pooty sudden and uproarious. But don't go to being skeered, but jist wait till you ken see the white of his eyes, and then blaze away."

"Never mind, cap'n, about our being afraid, but just tell us how we're agoing to find him; we might scuttle about among these everlasting bushes for a month without—"

"Oh, don't you be alarmed," interrupted a third, "we'll find him soon enough, I'll warrant;" and the words were hardly out of his mouth, before they were followed by a something between a snort and a roar, that seemed to come from over our heads, and almost in our very ears.

Raising our eyes all at once to the bank above, we saw the bushes parted by the pointed head, leg-of-mutton-paws, and monstrous front of a full-grown grizzly, apparently in the very act of springing upon us. His coming had, indeed, been sudden and uproarious in the last degree; no one thought of waiting till he could see the white of his eyes, but away we went, over rocks and [Pg 213]

bushes, like a bevy of partridges, in every direction; and, so successfully did we execute this manoeuvre, that no two of us were left together, and we came into the camp, one after the other, all the rest of the day, with the unanimous conviction, that if we had frightened the bear half so much as he had frightened us, he would never pay us a second visit.

This incident produced a good deal of mirth at our expense, and was the occasion of several entertaining stories. An old backwoodsman who had lived many years in Oregon was listened to with the greatest attention.

He was hunting one day in the mountains with a single companion, when coming to a little clump of rocks and bushes, they each took a different path intending to meet at the other end. On reaching the spot, however, he saw nothing of his companion; but hearing just then the report of a rifle, he walked round the other side to see what was going on. He had not gone far when he came upon a large grizzly bear sitting upright on the snow like a dog, but not a man was in sight. Wondering what all this could mean he took deliberate aim and fired, when the brute sprang growling towards him, but suddenly stopped and then walked slowly off in another direction.

Anxious to learn what had befallen his friend the hunter left the bear, and continued his search; and the next moment coming to the place where the bear had been sitting, he found his companion pressed down into the snow, and almost suffocated by his close confinement. It seems he had fired at the bear, who had rushed upon him before he could reload, and throwing him down without inflicting any serious injury, had then expressed his contempt in the most emphatic manner by seating himself directly upon his prostrate foe.

[Pg 214]

Another anecdote still better illustrated the almost human cunning of this dangerous brute. A party who were out in pursuit of cattle encountered a bear of unusual size; and being desirous of taking him alive, attacked him with their lassoes. The sagacious animal no sooner found his progress impeded by the lasso which had been thrown over his hind leg, than sitting upright on his haunches he seized the line in his forepaws and proceeded to draw towards him the luckless horse and rider, just as a fisherman would pull in a cod or halibut.

The whole thing was so sudden and unexpected that no one had time to interfere,—in an instant he laid open the horse's belly by a single blow, and the rider only avoided the same fate by falling off backwards and thus making his escape. This bear was afterwards killed, and found to weigh when dressed upwards of a thousand pounds.

On the 22d of July, having walked over to Georgetown, I received the long-expected letter announcing that a diving dress had been shipped from New York according to my directions; and St. John coming the same day from Big Bar with an unfavourable report of the aspect of affairs at that place, we determined to sell our share as speedily as possible.

In the evening a party of poor fellows just arrived in the mines were sitting round their camp-fire before the store. Leaning against the door-post, I looked at them awhile with half-shut eyes, and presently I began to laugh. In fact, I couldn't help it. I couldn't hear what they were talking about, but I knew just as well as if I had. I even knew their very thoughts. Poor simpletons! what a bitter experience was before them! what a sad seesaw of fear and faith! hope slow drowning, like a nine-and-a-half-days' puppy, opening its eyes just in time to die.

Then my eyelids drooped still farther, and my inward sight grew stronger. I saw the waiting ones at home—the young wife—the widowed mother—the helpless orphan—waiting—watching—weeping—oh how wearily!—the death-list, and the long despair.

[Pg 215]

When I opened my eyes again, the party in which I had insensibly become so interested, were just stooping to enter their tent; I flung off the chills and damps that were creeping over me, and walked swiftly up the creek.

A few days after I walked to Coloma to receive the price of our armour. Passing through Georgetown without stopping, I arrived at Coloma about noon; and after resting a few hours, as my man had not yet arrived, I thought I could do no better than to take a walk down the river to the bar that Number Four and I had prospected a year before.

I found the selfsame hole that we had dug with so much fruitless labour, and moralized over it in the most edifying and affecting manner. It was, in good sooth, fitted to excite "a most humorous sadness," and I could have wept it full of tears to think of all the brilliant hopes that had faded and gone out since we first struck our spades into the gravel. A number of miners were at work hard by, and from them I learned that the place paid only four or five cents to the bucket, and had hence received the significant title of Poverty Bar.

"Only four or five cents!" I repeated; "surely you must be mistaken. A friend of mine, a very scientific man, assured me that the formation was unusually promising."

"Formation be d—d," replied the other; "I've been at work here these three weeks, and the most I've made any day yet is four dollars and a half; but perhaps," he added, with a leer, "I don't go to work in a scientific fashion."

Turning my back on Poverty Bar, with a feeling of secret satisfaction that our conclusions had been so fully verified, I took a short cut across the hills, and presently came to a bend in the river where a large party of Dutchmen had commenced the most extensive damming operations I had yet witnessed. The river at this point made almost a complete circle, so that by digging through a hill a quarter of a mile in width they drained a mile and a half of the channel. The tunnel was

[Pg 216]

about ten feet square, dug through a ledge of rotten granite. The work went on day and night, and a wooden railroad with small hand-cars was employed to remove the rubbish. When completed the tunnel was found too small to conduct the river, and the lateness of the season obliged the company to postpone further operations till the next summer.

I took supper at a boarding-house kept by the most enterprising merchant in all that section. The extent of his business operations may be inferred from a single fact. At a time when flour was worth a dollar a pound, he was said to have from one to two hundred thousand pounds in store, and other staples in nearly equal proportions. His warehouse at Coloma was a long low building, stuffed with goods of every description, from which he supplied the trading posts he had established at Ford's Bar, and other places on the Middle Fork.

The company assembled at table was of a very mixed character, and the conversation, which had by some strange accident strayed from mining to politics, was more free and easy than is usual on such occasions. I was not a little amused by one of the company, a Col. Somebody, from Ohio, who asserted, in the same tone as if he were stating a truism, that Andrew Jackson was the greatest man that ever lived except St. Paul. I leave it to more theological politicians, or more political theologians than I, to settle this knotty question.

The next morning, having received my money, I set out on my return, but after walking about two miles remembered an important errand I had neglected, and was obliged to retrace my steps to Coloma. This was but a foretaste of what was to follow. A new road had recently been constructed by the merchants of Georgetown and Coloma, winding in a very picturesque manner along the face of the mountain, and reminding me, to compare great things with small, of Napoleon's road over the Simplon. Having reached the summit, and turned my back upon the vast panorama that had presented itself in so many different aspects as the road dragged its length like a wounded snake in irregular curves from point to point, I walked on more rapidly, without paying much attention to my path, till an uneasy instinctive impression that I had lost my way brought me to a sudden pause.

[Pg 217]

The old and new roads came together seven miles from Coloma; but though, as I supposed, I had walked much further than that distance, there was yet nothing about me that I remembered to have seen before. I found myself in a narrow winding footpath that ran along the elevated ridge or backbone of the mountain, and in the midst of a dark pine forest. The solitude was most profound. It seemed an immense manufactory of silence, enough to supply the whole world, where nothing was ever heard but the melancholy cry of the mourning-dove, the only safety-valve of a stillness pent up till it was like to burst. This bird is the most skilful of all ventriloquists; for, though he may be perched directly over your head, his voice seems always to proceed from a great distance, which gives it a startling unearthly sound impossible to be described.

After walking irresolutely back and forth a few minutes, I determined to proceed, trusting soon to meet some one who could give me the necessary information. The narrow footpath presently led me to the brow of the hill, when, instantly recognising the wide road that skirted its base as the one I had travelled the preceding day, I descended with a bound, inwardly congratulating myself on the sagacity and good fortune that had prevented me from turning back as I had at first intended. Meeting a wagon soon after, I asked the driver with the utmost confidence how far it was to Georgetown, to which he replied with a grin that, if I meant Greenwood Valley, it was not more than five or six miles, but Georgetown was in a very different direction.

[Pg 218]

On explaining my situation, he very good-naturedly informed me that I was in the wrong road entirely; and that I ought to have taken the right hand turning several miles back, at somebody's ranch. I thanked him, and promised to follow his directions to the very letter, if ever I travelled that way again, but what I wanted to know then was the nearest way to Georgetown. Opening his mouth, and setting his eyes very hard on vacancy, while he pressed his forefinger on his nether lip, he appeared to meditate for a moment; and then replied, pointing with his whip, that the nearest way was over that hill yonder, but if he was me he should go right on to Greenwood Valley and take a clean start from there.

I very reluctantly followed his advice, and having obtained a drink of water from a lonely shingle-maker I encountered in the forest, I hastened on, and came in due time to the prettiest village I had seen in California. The single broad street with its bright white houses, of canvass indeed, instead of painted clapboards, reminded me strongly of New England; but I had just then little relish of beauty of any sort, and was passing through in very ill humour, when I was saluted with, "Hullo, stranger! is that you?" and turning round, I recognised, to my equal pleasure and surprise, one of the company who had started with us from Mormon Island and afterwards left us, as already narrated, on their way to Rector's Bar. The judge was there also, keeping a bowling alley and its usual concomitants; and a little further down the street two more of the company partners in a store and boarding house. They confirmed the accounts we had already heard of Rector's; on their arrival at that place in April, they found the ground white with snow, provisions enormously dear, and no possibility of doing any thing for months. They finally broke up their camp, and came down to Greenwood, where they had been so far successful as to make them forget their former losses.

[Pg 219]

A tedious walk of eight miles brought me to Georgetown, where I stopped half an hour to rest, very foolishly as it happened; for when I prepared to go, I could hardly rise from my seat, and did not succeed in gaining an erect position till I reached the bottom of the hill at Cañon Creek. Sitting down on a log that bridged the sluggish current, I bathed my feet in the muddy water, and, thus refreshed, made my way down the mountain at Ford's Bar, just as the miners were

returning from their day's work.

The next morning, the river having now fallen sufficiently, we made trial of the spot where we had designed building a wing-dam, but found that the great depth of water at that place rendered such an undertaking altogether impracticable. We spent several of the succeeding days in running up and down the river, in pursuit of some of those rich pickings we had so confidently expected; but without success. Lest the reader should think this was entirely our own fault, I would add, that we did not find them, because they were not there. The banks, instead of improving as the waters receded, became even worse and worse—the first miners, naturally, commenced at low-water mark, and they had done their work so effectually, that nothing was left for their successors.

Before leaving Ford's Bar, we determined, however, to make one more trial of damming, and selected for that purpose a portion of the river just above the mouth of Otter Creek. For two whole days I stood up to my middle in water, painfully scooping out the sand and gravel with a long-handled shovel; and, in all that time, owing to the peculiar difficulties of the situation, only succeeded in digging a hole four feet in depth. As there was very little gold in any of the earth I had thrown out, we went no further; but another party, undeterred by our example, at once took possession, and having, after several weeks, completed their dam, found, to their own chagrin and our equal complacency, that the place was, as we had concluded, entirely worthless.

[Pg 220]

We now made up our minds to leave the Middle Fork as soon as possible, and sent Tertium on in advance to make a rapid and comprehensive survey of the diggings for a distance of ten or fifteen miles above Mormon Island.

While he was gone, we still continued to mine here and there along the banks. Returning, one day, from a longer tramp than usual, we came to a tent occupied by a party we had met several months before, on their first arrival in the mines. They were then in fine spirits; not even the clumsy packs, that bent them almost double, could crush their vigorous hope; and though I tried, with most disinterested benevolence, to moderate their extravagant expectations, it was easy to see that they gave no credit to my assertions. One of their number now lay in his graveclothes before their door; and his companions, themselves enfeebled by sickness, were waiting till some one should pass who would assist in carrying the body to the grave.

We offered our services, and, each taking a handle of the rude bier to which the body was lashed, we walked on in silence, our companions leading the way. After proceeding a quarter of a mile down the river, over such a path as we have already described, we turned to the left and began to ascend the mountain at the only place practicable in that neighbourhood. It was extremely steep and slippery; and it was only by clinging to the bushes, and sliding the bier along the ground, that we at length reached the elevated shelf or plateau where the grave had been dug. A few handfuls of fern were thrown over the body, wrapt simply in a blanket; two boards laid upon it, in the form of a roof; the earth thrown in, and all was over. Our companions thanked us for our assistance, and we returned to the bar, to inform the doctor that the patient he had seen almost well the day before, was dead and buried.

Sunday, came a letter from Tertium, advising us to return to Mormon Island, or Natoma, as it was now called; and the next Wednesday we packed our luggage on two mules, almost extinguishing them beneath the cumbrous load, and began, for the last time, painfully to ascend the winding path by which alone we could reach the lofty table-land above. We were obliged to halt repeatedly to re-adjust some perverse rocker or impracticable frying-pan; and, once or twice, the whole concern, mule and all, was only saved from rolling, in an avalanche of legs and tin kettles, down the mountain, by our catching sudden hold of the bridle, and, with the other hand, griping fast the bushes. Having reached the top in safety, we stopped awhile to breathe; then, filing softly on through the glorious pine forest, demolishing a whole colony of ant-lions at every step—like some moon-headed giant, striding from one planet to another, and unwittingly dusting away with his foot Broadway or St. Paul's—we came in a few hours to Georgetown, where we stopped till the next day.

[Pg 221]

We took supper at an eating-house kept by an honest Missourian, who had come across the Plains, and brought with him his whole family. He had the highest opinion of California, and well he might; one of his children, an interesting little girl of five, having already received quite a handsome dowry, a pint cupful of gold, presented to her at different times by the hard-fisted miners, whom her infantile grace had so pleasantly reminded of their own distant firesides.

We found very comfortable and genteel lodgings under an immense hay-rick, containing several hundred tons, in one corner of the village; and the next morning, having found a wagon going down to Sacramento, engaged the driver for ten dollars, to carry our luggage as far as Natoma. We rode this last part of the way, and had thus an opportunity of learning each other's experience. Our driver was comparatively a novus homo; he had been but a few months in the country, yet had already made several thousand dollars, and evidently placed no faith in our assertions, that we had, thus far, met with nothing but disappointment. He could not understand how a man could be a whole year in California without acquiring at least a moderate fortune. He had a store far up on the Middle Fork, where he was doing a fine business; and was now going down to Sacramento for a fresh supply of goods. It was not in human nature to feel no touches of envy, as we listened to his confident anticipations; yet I was really sorry on hearing, several months after, that he had lost his whole property by the failure of an extensive damming operation, in which he was largely interested. This is but a specimen of the ups and downs of California life.

[Pg 222]

Friday, August 10th, we arrived at Natoma, neither richer nor poorer than when we left that place four months before, but yet congratulating ourselves that it was no worse. Hundreds, who had like us illustrated the fable of the Dog and the Shadow, had not escaped half so easily, having lost not only the whole summer, but all their previous earnings. Nowhere else is it so true that a rolling stone gathers no moss; and nowhere else has the said stone the same temptation to roll as in California.

We found Tertium domiciliated with Number Four in a tent which the latter had erected with such taste and elegance as might in the mines fairly be termed magnificent. The interior was decorated with bright blankets of different colours, and festoons of cedar;—the floor covered with a carpet of snowy canvass; and the cot bedsteads standing on opposite sides seemed to promise the highest possible amount of single blessedness. Some Vandal had applied a torch to our former camp, and nothing now remained but a black unsightly blot. We pitched our tent hard by, and having concocted a savoury lobster salad, fell to thinking most vigorously what we should do next. By the time we had discussed the salad, we had come to the conclusion to make another attack upon the bank we had deserted in the spring, where we hoped to find work enough to last till winter, and gold enough to take us home, and buy a suit of clothes in which to present ourselves to our admiring friends. We had long before this been compelled to abandon our original purpose of returning home like princes in disguise, clothed in rags and tatters, but having a royal ransom hidden beneath every patch.

[Pg 224]

The spot we now selected for our encampment was in the centre of the short ravine already described, and a little beyond the part we proposed to work. Close by the side of the tent the bank rose abruptly to the height of ten or twelve feet, and leaning over it, on its very verge, stood a gigantic pine, with long heavy branches,—its roots, bare and knotted, seeming, like the barky claws of the Arabian roc, to gripe fast hold of the soil. Between the ravine and the river rose a small rocky island, or what would have been such ages before, with a few bushes resembling the horse-chestnut growing on the scanty patches of earth among bald masses of polished granite. Directly in front of this island a party of miners called the South Fork Damming Company were making preparations to drain the river; and among its numbers we found the same ubiquitous individual so often mentioned as the Judge. Between this point and Mormon Island several other companies were occupied in the same manner, and large piles of lumber, to be used in constructing their various flumes, were already scattered here and there along the banks.

Our old claim still remained as we left it, no one having had the hardihood to assail its impregnable front now baked into yet greater hardness by a five months' drought. It was easy to see at a single glance that there was work enough there for a hundred men; as to the gold, that remained to be decided. We were in no hurry, however, to commence the attack; it was necessary first to reconnoitre the bank; digging with the pick was very laborious, and we might perhaps devise some easier way; the heat was excessive, and in the mean time we had enough to do in making our home more comfortable. We built a bower before the door to serve as a dining-room, and drove a number of stout stakes into the ground to support the smooth stone slab that furnished us with a table. At a little distance we built a rude fireplace of stones. The pine-cones that covered the ground made an excellent fuel; our frying-pan and coffee-pot set up their wonted song as cheerfully as ever, and once more our little Lares and Penates came frisking and capering round our hearthstone. We now made up our minds to remain another winter.

[Pg 225]

On Mormon Island, standing like a goose on one leg in the edge of the river, was a tall awkward water-wheel, turning round with the current, and dipping up with its long arms a quantity of water, which falling into a wide spout was thence conducted into a shallow trough fifteen feet long and as many inches in width. A miner standing by the side of the trough threw into it, from time to time, several buckets of earth, which being carried along by the water to a riddle or sieve at the lower end, fell in a hundred little streams into a shallow box below. Its contents were thus kept in a constant state of agitation, and the gold working its way beneath the surface was saved, while the greater part of the sand and gravel was floated off by the water. This simple apparatus was called by the imposingly suggestive title of Long Tom. The advantage it possessed over the common cradle in enabling us to wash a larger quantity of earth was more than counterbalanced by the difficulties that would beset the use of so cumbrous an ally as the wheel. Yet the wheel was with us the principal attraction,—the splash of its paddles made a pleasing concert, and it performed its task so easily and cheerfully that it was a comfort to look at it.

My urgency having at length prevailed over the wiser counsels of St. John, Tertium maintaining a strict neutrality, we were yet obliged to wait several weeks for the big-bellied carpenter to construct the apparatus, and for the South Fork company to turn the river into their canal, on the edge of which we proposed to set up our works.

In the mean time we were led to embark in an enterprise more weighty than any of our previous operations, and which, after various disappointments, was at length, and in the most unexpected manner, crowned with success.

[Pg 226]

A quarter of a mile above our tent, a party of miners were engaged in repairing a dam that had

been built the preceding summer, and had paid its original proprietors over fifty thousand dollars. The new-comers, who had taken the name of the Washington Damming and Mining Company, had already made considerable headway in the undertaking, and expected in another week to get to work in the bed of the river. One of the members, intending to leave the mines, offered us his share for one hundred and fifty dollars; after some hesitation, we paid the money; and the next day I listened, with becoming gravity, to the reading of the constitution and by-laws, signed my name to that important document, and went to work with the rest.

The company consisted, chiefly, of English sailors and adventurers from Australia, hard-workers and hard-drinkers, but possessing little Yankee adaptation. Their names were generally Tom, Dick, and Harry; the three more prominent members who alternated through the different offices alone rejoicing in the dignity of a surname. Yet in the division of our labour we maintained strict republican equality, each, in turn, wielding the shovel and the pick, and in due time exchanging them for the more laborious task of carrying earth and stones in buckets along the narrow pathway of the dam.

The dam itself was an immense structure, and its massive solidity had enabled it partially to withstand the freshets of the preceding winter. Half the foundation was formed by a pine three feet in diameter and a hundred feet in length, which had been drawn into the river by oxen, and was now held firmly in its place by the jagged rocks against which it rested. On this were laid, at right angles, their blackened butts projecting like a close array of pikes, a large number of stout saplings; and on these, again, a second timber, much smaller, however, than the first. Large stones were then thrown in on the upper side of this rude breastwork; other logs successively added—and, when the whole had thus attained a sufficient elevation, it was made tight with stones and gravel, and, finally, the finest earth we could procure. When I joined the company, about half the dam was completed, but a large part of the river still found its way through the farther extremity. The dam was here ten feet high, and twelve feet wide at the base; and all this mass of earth and stones had to be carried to the spot in buckets, a distance of two hundred and fifty feet, the labour being but slightly relieved by a small flatboat that was employed to bring earth from the opposite bank.

[Pg 227]

As the long forenoon dragged slowly on, many a chiding look was cast towards two towering pines that stood just one hour apart, high up on the hillside. When the sun at last had reached his meridian tower above the southernmost pine, the buckets and picks and shovels fell from our willing hands; the rest of the party got into the boat and paddled slowly across the river, while I, wearily and with long breaths, picked my way over the rocks—crossed one or two deep ravines—till, reaching the Red Bank, I descended with a bound, and, stretching myself on my blankets, lay in cloddish immutability till called to dinner. At two our long afternoon commenced, and, ah! how earnestly we desired the shadow, bringing with it health and refreshing. Slowly but gently our work went on, like the coral island rising from the deep Pacific. As we hemmed in the headstrong river, the pond above our dam continually enlarged, and more of the water was compelled to find its way through the canal.

But now my companions were impatient to obtain the reward of their labour, and they all said, "Let's go to work in the river bed and earn a little money."

We dug holes here and there in the gravel, but the water filled them like so many wells, and we were compelled to work higher on the bank. Still we made little or nothing, and again returned to the dam.

[Pg 228]

There were several ugly leaks that defied all our efforts; boat-load after boat-load of earth was emptied on the spot—bushels of old clothes, enough to make the fortune of all the rag merchants of Little Germany, collected in the neighbourhood, and carefully stowed away at the bottom by the most amphibious of our party, who used to emerge from his bath, dripping like a river-god and shivering as in an ague—all was in vain. It was really too bad; we had stopped the whole river, but we could not stop that trifling leak.

And just now, too, our boat was sunk. Pushing heedlessly off from the shore, it went down, full of earth, in ten feet of water; and when we reproached the crew for their clumsiness, we received no other consolation than that of knowing they had lost their boots.

The next day was cold and cloudy—a few wild geese flying south, dripped upon us some drops of rain.

"Well, boys," cried our democratic president, "and what shall we do now?"

"The rainy season is coming! we must go to work, and make what we can, each one for himself!" cried half the members.

We made, during the forenoon, fifty dollars. "This will never do," said the president; "we must have another meeting." We sat round on stones—the surnames argued with a deal of heat and acrimony, to which Tom, Dick, and Harry, opposed an impregnable front of sullen disdain.

The president, by far the ablest man in the company,—though, like all the rest, hasty and passionate,—resigned his office in disgust; and all my persuasive flattery could not induce him to resume it. They *would* go to work in the river, in spite of my remonstrances; so I left them, and returned to assist in working the Long Tom.

The wheel, some eight feet in diameter, was attached to the end of a long, heavy shaft, projecting

[Pg 229]

two or three feet over the current, and supported at a single point by an iron bolt passing through a stout post set firmly among the rocks at the edge of the canal into which the river had been diverted. By means of this shaft, we could raise or depress the wheel at pleasure. The earth we proposed first to wash was a gentle slope, rising from the river towards our bank, and consisting of a fine sand almost free from stones, and paying from three to ten, or even twenty cents to the bucket.

Thursday morning, September 12, we commenced operations. Round goes the restless wheel, scooping up the dizzy water. The canvass hose rises and falls with its frequent pulse, like the great artery of a whale. The thirsty sand drinks eagerly the cooling stream that dissolves and sweeps it away, leaving bright grains of gold sticking here and there on the bottom of the trough. So, if nothing happens, we shall get rich, after all.

"But seems to me, the river is rising," cries St. John.

"So it is, I declare; what in the world is to pay now, I wonder; there comes Cameron; perhaps he can tell us."

"Well, Mr. Raven," cried Cameron, as well as he could for want of breath, "the dam's gone."

"Dam gone! how? where? when?"

"Just now, down the river, swept away. The Missouri Dam has burst, and the flood has swept the top of ours clean off; I just saved the tools and that's all."

"That's what made the river rise?"

"Yes, it has so."

There was our two thousand vanished into thin air; we all looked rather foolish, and then and there decided that damming was a very unprofitable business, and we would have nothing more to do with it.

It was now twelve o'clock; so raising the wheel out of the water, we walked up to our tent; where we spent an hour or two very pleasantly in forming a comparison between our own situation and that of the great mass of our fellow adventurers. It was of course highly gratifying to find that we belonged to that numerous and respectable class whose praises have been sung in all ages from Solomon to Dr. Franklin; and if half of our acquaintance had more, the other half had even less than had fallen to our share.

[Pg 230]

Full of this consolatory reflection, and strong in faith, we resumed our labours in the afternoon; but had hardly washed a dozen buckets when suddenly the water in the canal fell two feet or more—the wheel ceased its revolutions—St. John dropped the uplifted shovel—Tertium rested on the handles of the wheelbarrow—and we all stared with open mouth at this new wonder. The flume just above had burst, letting half the river back into its original channel, and we could do nothing until the breach was stopped. I laid my hand on the shaft, intending to raise the wheel, when the whole fabric slowly toppled over into the water. We at once threw off our nether garments, and wading out into the rapid current, which rose nearly to our shoulders, succeeded by a violent effort in restoring the post to its upright position. The cause of this accident was the water undermining a large stone that supported the post.

We worked like beavers all Friday morning in repairing damages, and in the afternoon succeeded in washing two hundred buckets, when the spout that received the water from the dippers, getting entangled in the wheel, was instantly torn from its position, and tossed scornfully into the stream. The wheel itself suffered severely in this encounter, and on setting it in motion the next morning its dizzy efforts to perform its stated task were pitiable to behold, and we found it necessary to strengthen it by passing a strip of hoop iron round its whole circumference.

Sunday, the 15th, there was a slight shower, accompanied by heavy thunder, the first we had ever heard in California. Monday, our wheel worked to our entire satisfaction, but not so with the Tom. A hundred wheelbarrows, equal to six hundred buckets, yielded only sixteen dollars instead of thirty; Tertium and St. John were out of all patience, and it was as much as I could do to persuade them to another trial. We raised the trough so as to increase the fall of water into the box several inches, and now our receipts were nearly doubled.

[Pg 231]

For several days we went on swimmingly, and I began to exult over my companions; when on the 22d we were alarmed by a few drops of rain, followed the same night by a violent tempest. The wind, and the rain that soaked our blankets through and through, kept us awake till long after midnight; the next morning, however, was unusually pleasant—the river showed no signs of the rain, and after a hard day's work, we retired to rest with minds unprophetic of danger.

I was awaked about midnight by a whistle coming along the ravine. It stopped just at our door, and informed us in few words that the river had risen and swept every thing away. Hurrying down to the shore, the scene of ruin and uproar that presented itself was so appalling, that we rubbed our eyes to make sure that we were awake. The moon then riding high shone upon a proud and angry flood ten times as large as the placid stream we had parted from a few hours before, and bearing helplessly along the mingled wreck of the dams and flumes that had presumed to arrest its course. Our wheel, still standing on its one leg far out in the stream, dipped its paddles into the taller waves as they shot beneath—the other articles had floated away, and we found them lying quietly at anchor in an eddy not far below.

Thus disastrous was the termination of this experiment. "I told you so," cried Tertium—"Just what I expected," said St. John; while I had not a word to offer in defence.

CHAPTER XIX.

[Pg 232]

We had now been in the mines a year, and our affairs, as will be seen from the following calculation, were in a very flourishing condition:

CALIFORNIA,	Dr.
Submarine armour,	\$420.00
One share in Washington Dam,	150.00
Travelling expenses, freight, &c.,	350.00
Rockers, shovels, pans, &c.,	200.00
Long Tom and wheel,	125.00
Clothing,	150.00
Provisions,	1400.00
Tent, and incidental expenses,	150.00

Total,	\$2945.00
	Cr.
Cash on hand,	\$75.00
Small tent and furniture,	50.00
Tools, provisions, &c.,	50.00
Sixty feet front in Red Bank,	200.00
Experience,	1500.00

Total in favour of California,	\$1875.00

Naturally supposing that the rains would render the roads almost impassable this winter, as they had done the last, and thereby cause a great advance in the price of provisions, we determined to lay in a stock sufficient to last until spring. We accordingly bought five hundred pounds of flour, one hundred of sugar, thirty of pork, besides rice, butter, coffee, dried apples, &c., &c. We also found it necessary to purchase canvass sufficient for a new tent, the small one we had brought back from our hunt in the mountains being too small to afford comfortable winter quarters.

Our new house, as it should properly be called, was of nearly the same dimensions as that we had occupied the preceding winter; but instead of being set up in the usual manner, the canvass walls and roof were stretched over a slender frame of posts and boards four inches wide. We were occupied nearly a week in building the house and bedsteads, and arranging the other furniture to our satisfaction. We knocked in the head of our hogshead, and transporting its contents, one by one, up the river to our new domicile, disposed them in the same relative position they had formerly occupied. When we commenced moving our provisions, we were suddenly put to flight by a storm of yellow-jackets that had invaded our sugar bags, and did not seem inclined to give them up without a struggle. In the contest that ensued I received several severe stings, but the enemy were finally routed with a loss of five or six thousand that we decoyed into an ambush in the shape of a large pickle jar. They had carried off, before we interrupted their depredations, several pounds of sugar; but this loss was trifling compared with the annoyance they inflicted upon us at dinner, when lured by the smell of fresh meat, as vultures are by carrion, they hung around us in countless throngs, buzzed in our soups or molasses, and levied contributions on every morsel as we conveyed it to our mouth. There were other insect plagues yet more familiar, but the subject is a sore one, and I forbear.

[Pg 233]

The new year commenced with a considerable improvement in our style of living. Since our first arrival in the mines our table expenses had not varied materially from a dollar a day; but prices had so far diminished that we were now enabled to indulge freely in certain aristocratic luxuries that we had then tasted not oftener than once a week. We had butter in plenty at only 70 cents a pound, and sweet and Irish potatoes at only twenty dollars a bushel. A regular meat market had been established in the village, where we could obtain tolerably good beef at only twenty-five cents a pound. The wild cattle of the country were driven in in large numbers by men armed with lassoes, and shut up in a kraal or pound formed by planting stout posts close together.

[Pg 234]

They often manifested the greatest unwillingness to enter the kraal, and the most amusing scenes were then presented. An ox would start suddenly off, pursued by half a dozen horsemen at full gallop, and after baffling them for a long time would turn fiercely upon his enemies; but the horses were well trained, and apparently entered into the contest with as much spirit as their riders, so that accidents seldom happened. On one occasion, a horse hard pushed by the infuriated animal, suddenly gathered himself up, and as his antagonist came within reach, dealt him such a kick between the eyes as fairly stretched him on the ground.

Not far from the kraal there dwelt a little Dutch shoemaker of those fair proportions doubtless intended by the illustrious Knickerbocker, when he compared one of his progenitors to a

robustious beer-barrel mounted on skids. This little Dutchman was sitting one evening in the door of his tent, tranquilly smoking his pipe, and watching the horseman ineffectually striving to drive an unusually vicious animal into the pound, when the fierce beast suddenly made a dash in his direction. There was no safety but in flight, so hastily starting up, he rushed into his tent, hoping thus to elude the attack; but the ox, too cunning to be deceived so easily, or unable to check his headlong career, dashed in after him, and the next moment burst madly down the hill, carrying the tent on his horns. It was at first thought that the unlucky shoemaker had shared the same fate; but when the bystanders came up, half dead with laughter, to the place where the tent had stood, they found him stuck fast in the chimney, where he had finally taken refuge, while his dumpy legs, the only part of him that was visible, were feebly beating the ashes below.

On being extricated from his awkward position he exclaimed, looking distractedly about him, "Dis ish von tam country vish I never did see. I vash schmoked myself mit a pipe, and tinking I vished I vash at home, and Hans, I say, you ish von great fool; why you don't go home? ven all to vunst, I see te pull put ish head in his tail, and come like von vat you call him? von shteam locofoco; and I run and get into mine chimney, and ven I tries to get up, den, mein himmel! I vash not able to get town; and ven I tries to get town, I vasht not able to get up; and ven dey pull me town, de teufel ish in mein tent, and meinsel and mein chimney ish out of te doors."

[Pg 235]

Being now snugly settled in our winter quarters, with an abundant supply of provisions for several months, we began to cast about in our thoughts for some foolish easy way of getting at the treasures locked up in the bank above us. The most natural and direct way would have been to put the earth in buckets, carry it down to the river, and wash it there in small rockers as we had done before. But we were tired of small rockers. We never could see a full-grown man sitting on a wet stone as if hatching his one solitary egg by the side of one of those ridiculous machines, his body bent forward at an angle of twenty-five degrees, and his knees as high as his chin, without a strong indication to laugh. The Long Tom demanded no such fruitless incubation, and was in other respects especially fitted for the plan we now adopted.

Our bank ran back from the river some two hundred yards with an almost level surface, then rose abruptly in irregular spurs or promontories. The gulleys between these had been the preceding winter the channels of small streams, that would together have furnished an abundant supply of water for a Long Tom. By building a dam at the foot of one of these gullies, a small pond would be formed from which as a reservoir we could bring the water in a canal to the middle of our claim, and thus avoid the necessity of carrying the earth to the river. If this expedient should be successful, five or six cents to the bucket would enable us to make half an ounce a day; and as the quantity of earth was almost unlimited, five hundred to a thousand dollars apiece seemed no very extravagant estimate for our winter's work. As the rainy season, however, would not probably set in for several weeks, we deferred the execution of our design till the last moment.

[Pg 236]

October 8th, I walked with St. John to Sacramento, in hopes of obtaining letters, as we had not heard from home for several months. The reader will, doubtless, suppose that I must have been very miserable, indeed, when he remembers the prancing hopes on which I had bounded over the same road only one short year before. But this is a great mistake. True, I had no horse, as I had so fondly imagined; but, then, I was a very clumsy rider, nor was I encumbered with those awkward saddle-bags. Besides, the day was most delightful and exhilarating. The air, the trees, the dull earth seemed drenched, through and through saturated with the transparent light. When we had gone about three miles, we met a man gnawing a biscuit. "How far is it to Willow Spring?" said St. John. The man held out his biscuit, that we might see how much he had eaten. "I bought this at the house," said he, "so you can see it is not very far." In about a quarter of a biscuit, we came to the Spring; the little green slope was still there, but not quite so green as it was before, and I showed St. John just where we had slept, and the little circle of ashes where we had boiled our coffee, and the half-burnt stones. Heigho! how very funny it seemed.

But the road was no longer so lonely; many new inns or ranches had been built in the edge of the forest, with such enticing names as "Missouri House," "New England Hotel," &c., besides two or three half-way houses—a most inhospitable sound, as if nobody ever thought of stopping, but was perpetually hurried on to some mysterious somewhere beyond.

Presently we came to one, the air of which at once attracted our attention. A little room had been built out at one side, with a veranda in front. A rocking-chair stood in the veranda, and through the open door and window we saw a bit of carpet and the snowy sheets of a four-poster. "Women and children!" cried St. John.

[Pg 237]

"Women—yes; but where are the children?"

"There; don't you see?"

Under a noble oak that shaded one side of the house was suspended a lofty swing, with its polished, shining bit of board.

"Children, to be sure, God bless 'em! but who'd have thought of ever seeing a swing in California?"

We met several little troops of dusty miners going up into the country to take possession, with their everlasting frying-pans, shovels, and tin kettles. On such occasions, not to lose entirely the pleasurable emotions of being an object of envy, we would assume a lofty and swelling demeanour, and stalked by them with a conscious air, all which, I noticed, had a great effect.

We got a lift on a wagon the last five or six miles, and arrived at Sacramento about four o'clock. On entering this famous city, I could hardly credit my senses at sight of the changes effected in a single year. We rode for a mile through Jay street; and every where there was the same crush of carts and wagons, the same endless variety of goods, and the same emulous activity. A tall Chinese, mounted on a high wagon, gaped upon us as we approached, as if he thought all who were moving in an opposite direction must needs pass down his throat. He was the first Celestial I had seen, and his portentous ugliness was altogether beyond any thing indigenous to the western hemisphere.

We took supper at one of the eating-houses, that, next to the gambling saloons, were the most striking feature in Sacramento, and slept on the counter of a store kept by one of our acquaintance by day, and an innumerable host of rats by night. These animals are not—so I was told—native to the country, but have, in a few years, increased so rapidly, that probably no place in the world except the slaughter-houses of Paris could send forth an equal army. I was actually afraid to walk after dark along the sidewalk, where there were piles of flour and similar articles—the whole space being apparently alive with rats, and the pattering of their feet sounding like a gentle shower. The great freshet at Sacramento drove them back into the country; and it was said that they then, for the first time, made their appearance in the mines.

[Pg 238]

The gambling-houses at Sacramento were on the same magnificent scale as those already described at San Francisco, but a new and important attraction had been added. Bands of skilful musicians were employed to play at intervals during the evening, the expense being defrayed by the keepers of the bar and of the different tables. Gaming, however, seemed to have lost much of its reckless character, and thousands were now seldom lost and gained by the turn of a single card.

We obtained only one letter, but were gratified by meeting some old acquaintances, one of whom gave us several papers published in our native city, which we read through, word by word, and with peculiar relish. The second day we set out on our return to Natoma, where we arrived, long after dark, and in a very exhausted condition.

All the month of October, we waited diligently for rain, as we had before waited for spring, and then for summer. November having arrived, and the rainy season being, as we supposed, near at hand, we thought it time to commence operations on our canal. By means of a straight-edged board and a plumb-line, we found that the deepest cut would have to be about four feet; the extreme length was five hundred feet; and nearly the whole was dug through the stiffest and most impracticable rubble. The dam was forty feet long, ten feet high in the middle, and built precisely on the same plan as a beaver's, with one addition, suggested by the purpose for which the dam was intended, a sluice or gateway at bottom, that we could open and shut at pleasure.

Our task was lightened by the delightfulness of the season, and by the pleasing hope that we had at last hit upon a plan that would render us superior to fortune. When, after a day's toil, we returned to our tent, in which, from its protected situation, we could hear the wind without feeling its effects—when the candle was lighted, the coffee-pot simmered on the stove, and we had exchanged our heavy boots for comfortable slippers,—we gratefully acknowledged that even this life had its peculiar charms. An interesting book would sometimes keep us up till nine, but seven was our usual hour—long practice and attention having bestowed an extraordinary facility in sleeping. Our conversation had now become astonishingly sententious and idiomatic. It was condensed into a kind of shorthand or phonography. We had become so familiar with each other's modes of thought—like those unfortunates confined for years in the same dungeon—that a single word was often enough to fire the whole train. Certain sentences were now so oppressed and pregnant with meaning, that they seemed fairly to stagger under the weight. In five years, I am persuaded that we should have refined away all articulate language, and nothing more would have been required for the most abstract conversation than the vowels' sounds, accompanied by almost imperceptible shrugs and winks.

[Pg 239]

I had once the pleasure of listening to a very interesting dialogue between two savans, with whom I was but slightly acquainted, but whose proficiency in this difficult art excited my unqualified admiration. The accent is here all-important.

"You save?" says the first.

"Yes, me save; do *you* save?"

"Oh, *yes!* I save."

Now, to any one—even if he had mastered Spanish without a master—who was unacquainted with the mode of speaking here employed, these brief sentences would seem an unintelligible jargon; and, before the least glimmer of light could reach his understanding, it would be necessary to dilute or translate them into at least as many pages of modern English. Yet, not only those who took part in the dialogue, but I myself, and all who listened to it, were in the highest degree edified and delighted at this instance of unequalled condensation, which I would respectfully commend to the consideration of all windy orators.

[Pg 240]

It was not till the 19th of November that the rainy season apparently commenced. During the night it rained moderately, and the wind blew with tremendous violence. The great pine overhead wrestled fearfully with the tempest, with its long-twisted arms, and occasionally sent down upon the tight drum-head of our canvass roof a shower of cones as big as a pineapple, that fell on our startled ears with the burst of a bombshell. We found it impossible to sleep, and, having roused

the drowsy candle, huddled round the stove and amused ourselves with cracking pinenuts, of which we had, at different times, collected a plentiful supply. These nuts grow in the cones just mentioned, closely resemble in size and shape the meat of the almond, and are of a peculiarly rich and oily flavour.

Early the next morning, before we had finished breakfast, the heavy tramp of armed men, and a number of voices, called us hastily to the door. A large party were already assembled on the bank above us; and, through the tall hemlock that covered the hill towards the village, we saw all along the narrow winding path the glitter of polished pick and shovel. Hardly more sudden was the apparition of Clan Alpine's warriors on the side of Benledi.

Instant, through copse and heath, arose
Bonnetts, and spears, and bended bows;
On right, on left, above, below,
Sprung up at once the lurking foe.
From shingles gray these lances start;
The bracken bush sends forth the dart;
The rushes and the willow wand
Are bristling into axe and brand;
And every tuft of broom gives life
To plaided warrior armed for strife.

[Pg 241]

Our visitors, however, were bound on a more peaceful errand. Some wag had started a wonderful story about the rich diggings in the Red Bank, which had produced just such an excitement in Natoma as the California fever in the Eastern States—all were anxious to obtain a share, and in a short time the whole bank, three or four hundred feet long, was staked off among the different claimants. The various disputes that arose were all amicably adjusted by arbitration, in which we as the earliest settlers were allowed the highest authority. Our decisions were marked by the strictest impartiality, and even indifference, for we believed the whole bank to be absolutely worthless; but after the leads were fairly opened, we discovered, to our infinite surprise and mortification, that several of them were far more valuable than our own. For months we had been lying idle, encamped in the very midst of riches; and now these new comers, aliens and foreigners to the bank, had taken them, as it were, out of our hands. Our folly, however, will appear more excusable when it is known that the whole place had already been prospected again and again, and even worked for weeks in two distinct locations by successive parties who had one after another given up in despair. We had ourselves made several trials in front of what afterwards proved to be the richest claim, and finding nothing, concluded, according to what was then considered the universal laws in such cases, that the bank would yield less and less the farther it receded from the river. An entirely new feature, however, was now introduced—instead of growing poorer, the bank became richer as the miners advanced, till they came in some instances to earth paying nearly a dollar to the bucket, when the lead gradually failed. This rich streak ran diagonally across the bank, so that, while at the upper end it was very near the front, it was found by those working at the lower extremity fifty or a hundred feet farther back. The value of all these claims was greatly diminished by the depth to which they ran, a superstratum of earth varying from five to fifteen feet in thickness having to be thrown off before they came to that containing the gold.

[Pg 242]

Our quiet camp now became the centre of a bustling neighbourhood—a road was laid out through the ravine close by our door for the purpose of carting earth to the river, and huge piles of earth and stones rose around us on every side. A party of slaves and free blacks, at work for an extensive landed proprietor who claimed a front of sixty feet, kept up an incessant laughing and chattering which would have shamed a monkey or a yahoo.

There was no longer any pleasure in being idle, and we determined to go to work with the rest without waiting any longer for rain. We made almost nothing in the morning, and I began really to doubt if we should ever succeed in earning enough to get home with; but the afternoon's work was much more encouraging. Our schemes were now all exhausted; we had nothing more to rely upon but patient, unremitting toil, and we determined henceforth to lose no more time in idle dreaming, but to work as long and hard as we could wherever we could make four dollars a day. We continued to mine in the immediate vicinity of our tent for the next two months, sometimes in our bank, and at others in the wide sandy slope between it and the river; and at the end of that time, besides paying all our debts, we found ourselves worth in dust nearly one hundred dollars apiece.

Though our harvest had not been very plentiful, we were unwilling to let Thanksgiving pass unnoticed. Number Four took dinner with us, and we did our best, as usual on such occasions, to provoke appetite to the utmost and yet give it an overwhelming defeat. Our first course consisted of roast beef nicely baked under a cheese box, potatoes, onions, and apple-sauce ad libitum. This was succeeded by a regular old-fashioned Christmas pudding, the crowning glory of the occasion, wanting nothing but eggs and milk, flanked on either side by a molasses pie, and a dish of tarts well stuffed with delectable currant jelly, and bravely supported by a dessert of raisins and English walnuts.

[Pg 243]

The pies would hardly have passed muster with Aunt Chloe; "they were pies sartin, but then what kind o' crust?" but perhaps that renowned "perfectioner" would have experienced some difficulty

in making her "rale flecky paste" if she had had to roll it out with a bottle on the under side of a three-legged stool.

Christmas, Number Four returned the compliment and invited us to take supper at his tent, when China furnished her choicest teas and chouchou or preserves of infinite variety. We had promised ourselves the agreeable addition of Dr. Browne to our little circle, but he did not make his appearance till the next afternoon. A dam at Ford's Bar, in which he had invested all his earnings, had proved a failure, owing to nearly the same causes that had disappointed our own expectations; he had abandoned mining and was now on his way to the Sandwich Islands. In spite of his reverses he was still full of ardour as ever, and urged us strongly not to leave that part of the world at present. It was impossible not to be somewhat infected by his enthusiasm, and we found in our own dreams an additional reason for resting in the same conclusion. Whenever we dreamed of being at home, which we did repeatedly, our regret and vexation were so extreme that the remembrance of what we had suffered on waking was sufficient to quiet our homesick impatience for weeks.

The last of January, our old claim no longer yielding over four dollars a day, we moved a quarter of a mile up the river to a bar not far above the American Dam. The next day Number Four came up to bring us some letters, accompanied by two of his fine city or village acquaintance.

[Pg 244]

Dr. Ripsome was a notable instance of what may be accomplished by care and industry even under the most unfavourable circumstances. It would be difficult to find even in our most fashionable cities a more nicely dressed gentleman. His elegance was a perpetual wonder, a continued miracle. His ruffled shirt-bosom was without a spot, and his collar seemed made of enamelled tin, so boldly did it rise on either side of his carefully trimmed jet whiskers. Not a speck could be detected on his immaculate trowsers, nor on those boots that looked as if they belonged to a blacking bottle; indeed, dust and he seemed to have no affinity, but to be rather in a constant state of repulsion. He carefully dusted a smooth stone with his cambric handkerchief and sat down while we read our letters.

They contained various interesting items, all suggestive of the length of our absence from home. S. had got married—Tom had got whiskers and was become a great ladies' man—and little St. Johnny had begun to talk and was stoutly demanding when his California uncles would get home. Ah lo que es el mundo! why couldn't they have waited a little longer?—by the time we do get home, everything will be over, and nothing left to happen. This is the worst part of going away from home,—if one could only seal up what he left behind him with a certainty of finding everything undisturbed on his return, or if, like the sun in Ajalon or a clock whose pendulum has ceased its vibrations, home would stand still waiting his touch to set it again in motion, a long journey would no longer be such an ugly gap in existence, but like a break in an electric current, throw its light over our whole path.

CHAPTER XX.

[Pg 245]

The first of February we again changed the scene of our labours, and commenced working on American Bar within a few rods of our dam. This bar had been originally extremely rich, but having been already dug over by three or four successive parties, nothing now remained but the bare granite and numerous piles of paving-stones with a little sand sifted among them. Nevertheless, we worked here for three weeks, and in that time took out about three hundred dollars; almost all of which we found embedded from one to six inches in the soft granite. Here follow a few extracts from my most meagre journal.

Monday, Feb. 10. Worked all the last week without knowing one day where to go the next; yet our earnings, one hundred dollars, exceeded those of any other week this season. The last three days have been unusually delightful,—there has been a something in the air like the first warm summer days at home, when the earth dries, as it were, all at once, and the boys hurry to the ball-ground.

Wednesday, 12. Came home in the middle of the afternoon with only six dollars—found a man who had been buried under a mass of earth in the red bank laid on one of our beds. After he had sufficiently recovered he informed us that when he found himself unable to move, his only anxiety was to tell his wife where to look for his life policy, and the next moment he fell asleep.

Thursday, 13. In a fit of desperation I went to work on our bank—Tertium prospected, and St. John went to try his fortune once more on American Bar. He did so well that I joined him in the afternoon.

[Pg 246]

Friday. All worked on the bar—made fourteen dollars and a-half.

Monday, Feb. 17. Dr. Ecosais sold his claim in the red bank, together with his tools, for eight hundred and fifty dollars, to a Captain Sampson, who has just come in from the southern mines.

Tuesday. Sold our claim to Dr. Ecosais for fifty dollars. I worked on the bar alone—St. John and Tertium prospected—in vain.

Wednesday. Rain sent us home at ninety buckets. We begin to hope to make something out of our dam, and St. John and I think of remaining till fall. Thus the time for our return continually flies

from us.

Friday. A melancholy, lugubrious, opaque morning—rain at a hundred and twenty buckets, and an undecided afternoon.

This it so happened, though we had no such expectation at the time, was our last bank mining in California.

We had sold our claim as above mentioned, not because we believed it to be entirely exhausted, but chiefly from want of patience to contend longer with such a stubborn foe. What the result would have been if the same quantity of rain had fallen as in the preceding winter I can only conjecture, but have no doubt our engineering operation would have been highly profitable. The two seasons, however, were in this respect widely different—the first year it rained according to our observation fully one third of the time from the 1st November to the end of March; while during the second there was hardly as much rain as commonly falls in a New England summer. The weather was also cooler—hoar frosts were frequent—and several mornings we found the ground frozen to the depth of three or four inches.

This scarcity of rain, however, though it interfered so materially with the plan of our winter operations, was full of promise for the approaching summer. The rivers would probably be unusually low; and it was this circumstance that led us, in spite of our former disappointment, to turn once more a favourable eye upon our unlucky dam. As early as the 5th of January I had put up a notice signifying my intention to work the claim the next summer, which Cameron, our bonny Scot, no sooner discovered than he scrawled his own name beneath, and by this characteristic stroke of policy made at once two hundred and fifty dollars. The other members of the company having destroyed their constitution and dispersed in different directions, we anticipated no trouble from that quarter; but we regarded with considerable uneasiness the movements of another party who, seeing the claim abandoned, had also put up a notice, and of an earlier date than my own. As they were already in possession, however, of another claim a mile below the island, and as my having been a member of the Washington Company gave us, in spite of my long neglect, no slight advantage, we determined to maintain our ground, and tore down their notices without further ceremony. Still more to strengthen our hands, we now proposed to form an alliance with two of the principal miners in the red bank, whose numerous retainers would enable us, if need were, to repel force by force. The first, whom we have already mentioned by the name of Capt. Sampson, was a New York Texan, who had patched the cautious calculation of his native State with the sudden enterprise of the frontier. The two tempers had not united—there was the iron and the carbon, but not the steel. He made money and he lost it with equal facility.

[Pg 247]

Dr. Ecossais was the other, whom we, or rather Capt. Sampson, proposed as a partner in our new enterprise. He had also made money, by keeping a tavern in the village; and he had also lost all he had made, by speculating in dams. He was one of the first to settle on the red bank, where he was now in a fair way to retrieve his losses.

[Pg 248]

While this important negotiation was still in progress, I went down to San Francisco to attend to certain matters which required our attention. I left Natoma on foot, hoping soon to fall in with a wagon that would carry me to Sacramento, but none overtook me till I had walked more than half the distance. We arrived at Sacramento about noon, and at two I started in the steamer Confidence for San Francisco. An exciting race with the Senator made the first half-hour pass pleasantly enough, but when we at length yielded the palm, and I had gone through the boat and sufficiently admired the fine engravings in the saloon, I became impatient even of twenty miles an hour. My only companion was Dr. Ripsome, with his enamelled dickey, who, having tried both doctoring and digging in vain, was now going to practise his profession at San Francisco. We reached that city about nine, and my companion led me blunderingly to a hotel at the head of Sansome street, where, for the first time since leaving home, I crept in between the snow-white sheets, with an awkwardness that seemed to say that I had no right in such dainty lodgings. An alarm of fire during the night—the ringing of the bells and the hoarse cries of the boys—made me believe myself for a moment at home, but a glance at the bare rafters of my narrow cell soon dispelled that illusion.

San Francisco had not changed so much as Sacramento. The most striking feature was the old hulks lying in the very heart of the city, with streets and houses all about them, and suggesting vague and puzzling analogies to the ark on Mount Ararat.

I saw here a number of my fellow-passengers in the Leucothea, and having obtained a large supply of books and papers, the first of which I bought at the stalls that were to be found at every corner, I returned in the Senator to Sacramento, and the next day to Natoma. I had very unadvisedly taken my blankets with me, and I had now, in addition to this burden, two thick coats, the eighth volume of the Spectator, the first volume of Macaulay's History—both large octavos—and five small volumes of Gil Blas, besides a bundle of papers. I was very glad on reaching Willow Spring to throw my pack into a wagon, and thus lightened I made the rest of my way with tolerable facility.

[Pg 249]

During my brief absence river stock had rapidly risen, and the prospect for the summer was more favourable than ever. Cameron had agreed to sell his half of the Washington Dam for two hundred and fifty dollars, and my brothers had then disposed of it to Sampson and Ecossais at a slight advance. The next day, however, they refused to complete the purchase, for fear of trouble from some members of the Washington Company, who had at this late hour set up a claim. We

walked two or three miles up the river to the place where these unreasonables were at work, to hold a palaver, and if possible effect a compromise; but finding them fixed in their resolution of working on the dam the next summer, we told them they shouldn't, and came home very much discouraged.

Tuesday, March 11, we went to work on the race in order to get the start of our numerous competitors. Cameron at first refused to join us. "You'll lose your share then," said St. John. "I'll chance it," he cried, but finally consented and went. We worked several hours clearing out the canal, which was in many places almost obliterated by the rubbish that had been thrown into it. In the afternoon St. John had a long talk with Capt. Sampson, and represented our superior claims so strongly that he agreed to make the proposed arrangement if Dr. Ecosais would join him.

"We are all inclined to buy out Cameron at all events, but the risk is almost too great. Four P. M., Sampson changes his mind once more and concludes to buy—while we are talking about it, Cameron comes in in his usual hurry—after a little haggling sells for two hundred and fifty dollars—then runs a mile up the river to communicate the intelligence to another party with whom he had about completed a bargain."

[Pg 250]

Wednesday, we sold one of our remaining shares to a young Missourian for two hundred dollars, and the next day went to work with eight men. The party below having heard of our operations now sent out a small detachment to reconnoitre the ground, and if possible reason us out of the claim. Possession in California is more than nine points of the law, and we paid little heed to their arguments. They had one effect, however, which at the time was rather disheartening—the young Missourian, not having yet paid for his share, was frightened at the first appearance of a storm, and at night quietly removed his tools without saying a word to any one, and we did not discover his defection till the following morning. A few days after, our rivals made us a second visit in larger numbers, accompanied by a famous orator, who endeavoured to persuade us to settle the matter by arbitration. We held a meeting in the evening, and having chosen Capt. Sampson president, and framed a constitution and by-laws, determined unanimously, in our corporate capacity, to make no such concession. The whole red bank was ready to take up arms in our defence, which strengthened our stomachs mightily, but we had no further trouble from any quarter. We continued our labour in the raceway for nearly a week, when a succession of violent rains, that raised the river higher than it had been during the whole winter, interrupted our work, and we were not able to resume it till the last of June.

The 25th of March we left our snug quarters under the bank, our tent interfering with the operations of a New York lawyer behind us, and removed to a point farther up the river and directly opposite the centre of our claim. The place we had now selected was the most delightful and picturesque we occupied in California. Our tent was pitched on the brow of a steep hill that descended at two bounds to the river a hundred feet below. On the south we were protected by a small but leafy oak springing from the base of a huge isolated rock, whose perpendicular sides rose higher than the roof. A numerous and contented family of squirrels had dug their winding burrow under its friendly walls—and we often saw the father or mother scampering over the grass, and the young ones playing before the door. Behind and around us spread the open parklike forest, and in front an immense extent of elevated table land stretching away over to the North Fork. Our river claim, which was very large, comprised three distinct hollows—the upper nearly hidden from sight by a projecting buttress of the hillside, while the second and smallest lay as round as a cup and deep as a well directly at our feet. The river here turning at right angles plunged into this little basin over a fall formed by a bar of the wildest and most cunningly balanced rocks, producing a pleasing murmur, and imparting an air of coolness to the landscape that was indescribably refreshing in the torrid heats of midsummer. On the opposite side of the river was American Island, about a thousand feet in length, with our canal winding round it and occasionally betraying its course by the flashing foam on its surface. With the assistance of some of our neighbours we moved our tent almost bodily to this new location, and at the end of the second day everything was finally arranged to our satisfaction; though a peevish rain that continued the whole week rendered this undertaking anything but agreeable.

[Pg 251]

A few nights after our removal we were far more seriously annoyed. A violent storm of wind and rain, after keeping us awake for several hours, had at last lulled us to sleep by its ceaseless beating, when we were all at once roused by the lively warning of a rattlesnake in some part of our tent. Communicating our fears to each other by one of those expressive grunts supposed to be characteristic of the North American Indian, but which our experience had shown to be the natural language of all who have lived a long time in the same limited and therefore close communion, we at length succeeded in lighting a candle without venturing on to the floor, and then arming ourselves with long sticks, we took up an advantageous position on bags and boxes and began industriously to stir up the enemy. A small pile of firewood lay near the stove, and in this the unwelcome guest had taken up his abode for the night, and was now apparently busy in warming his toes and fingers. Suddenly his ugly head was thrust waggishly out of a small opening as if to inquire the reason of his being disturbed at such an unseasonable hour—the next moment, being provoked by an ineffectual blow, he made a wide-awake spring that tumbled us all backward upon our beds. Mutually confirming each other's resolution we speedily returned to the attack, and having disabled our antagonist by a lucky thrust we despatched him by repeated blows. He measured nearly five feet in length—was as big as a man's arm—and had eleven rattles. I afterwards while hunting in the neighbourhood encountered and shot two others, neither of them, however, so large as the first. Snakes of a different species, and apparently

[Pg 252]

harmless, were far more numerous—the big rock that overhung our tent was their favourite resort, and I often saw them gliding among the crevices or lying motionless in watch for some unlucky lizard.

The 1st of May, Tertium left us to return home. We had already sold two of our shares to miners on the red bank, reserving only one apiece; and as his could be worked to almost equal advantage by hired labour, and nothing could be done at present, he could no longer resist the temptation to anticipate the time fixed upon for our return. The prospect was at this time far from encouraging. The rain, which had kept off all winter, had now come in earnest, so that the time of commencing our operations seemed farther off than ever. Furthermore, our claim was considered by nearly all the miners in the neighbourhood absolutely worthless, and we were made the laughing-stock of the whole river. Yet under all these adverse circumstances the price of shares had steadily advanced, and our hopes were insensibly borne onward by the swelling tide. When we had first put up our notice signifying our intention to rebuild the dam, we had offered the whole concern for three hundred dollars. A month afterwards, we would gladly have sold for fifty dollars a share. Even so late as March, Number Four, to whom we proposed a partnership, was unwilling to give one hundred dollars, but now a share could not be bought for less than four hundred.

[Pg 253]

In the mean time our days passed pleasantly in reading the books I had brought from San Francisco, and in roaming at will through those fresh and untamed solitudes. Every morning after breakfast, says my journal of May 24, we take our guns, both double-barrelled—St. John hangs a dirty game bag round his neck—we fasten the tent with an ingenious catch of T.'s invention, and away into the woods. If game is scarce, there is a fine opportunity for reverie and castle building, or from the top of one of the many hills we enjoy a vast and dreamy prospect. Sometimes we get separated from each other and imagine all kinds of accidents. After our return, while enjoying, with a hunter's relish, the quail and pigeons or hares and squirrels we have conquered, we recount all the incidents of our morning's sport, the stratagems we have employed, and the mishaps we have met with.

There is perhaps no country in the world more delightful for such rambles than that part of California. There is such a pleasing variety of hill and valley—the trees are arranged with such perfection of art that one is continually led on from one point to another without knowing when to stop; while the absence of all natural or artificial obstructions, such as fences or tangled underbrush, communicates a feeling of most entire liberty and independence. I have wandered thus for miles without encountering any human thing, except, now and then, a deserted roofless cabin standing in some lonely ravine, or the white tents seen miles away among the woods.

[Pg 254]

Often, especially in misty weather, I climbed to the summit of a lofty hill several miles from our camp, and, resting upon a projecting crag, seemed for a while to lose myself in the great soul of the universe. "The grandeur, the astonishing melancholy of that picture, cannot be expressed in human language. In vain in our cultivated fields the imagination seeks to extend itself—it encounters on all sides the habitations of men; but in those wild countries the soul delights to plunge itself into an ocean of forests; to alight on the mysterious summits of the distant mountains; and, so to speak, to find itself alone with God."

The game that we found in greatest abundance was the quail that were now leading forth exultingly their timid young. Their flesh, however, was dry and tasteless compared with that of the pigeon, which was as juicy as the nicest steak. Besides the moaning dove already mentioned, and which was no bigger than a lark, there were three distinct varieties of pigeon, the largest of which was fully equal in size to the crow. The squirrels also attained an unusual size, one that we shot measuring twenty-seven inches from the end of his nose to the tip of his tail, and their flesh furnished us with many a savoury stew.

Our attention was one day attracted by a great commotion in a little thicket near which we were passing. On coming nearer to ascertain the cause, we discovered an owl that had tarried too long at the night's banquet, and was now surrounded by a crowd of noisy chatterers, like the unfeeling persecutors that hedge the way of the luckless toper who has continued all night over his cups. Anxious, if possible, to secure him alive, I advanced slowly till within about thirty yards, and fired. He fluttered feebly a few feet to a log on which he was compelled to alight, when I ran up and hastily extinguished him with my hat. On taking him out I found, to my amazement, that he had shrunk from the size of a hen to be no bigger than a pigeon, the downy texture of his feathers and his immense wings having caused the illusion. He seemed at first quite unwell, but recovered soon after my reaching home, and having tied a stout cord round his leg, I placed him on the ground to observe him more carefully. He was very gaily drest in bright yellow and ash, and, as if to display his attractions to the utmost, again swelled out his feathers, and expanding his wings stood looking us straight in the face, and teetering slowly from one foot to the other in a manner evidently intended to be in the highest degree dignified and imposing. His beauty, however, was somewhat marred by large yellow eyes that resembled those of the cat, and had moreover a most uncompromising squint. Two small tufts of feathers on the top of his head, shaped like the ears of a cat, completed the resemblance, and added still more to the grotesque of what Dr. Browne would have called his tootin cymbal; so that it may be doubted if a more purely comic character ever existed. I kept him a week, but as he firmly refused to eat during all that time, and I was ignorant of the art of stuffing, I felt constrained to give him his liberty. He floated away on his ash-coloured wings, as large as those of a goose, without any apparent effort, like a gossamer or soap-bubble, and we saw him several hours after again surrounded by his officious satellites.

[Pg 255]

We sometimes in our rambles encountered less agreeable objects. St. John was wandering one dull drizzly day, with his gun on his shoulder, on the further side of a distant mountain, when he suddenly became aware of a pair of eyes as bright as burning glasses glaring upon him from behind a tall gray bush. He at first thought some wild animal lay there in ambush, but looking lower he detected beneath the eyes a pair of naked copper legs that could belong to no animal in the world except an Indian; and at the same moment he felt with his eyes the sharp point of a flint-headed arrow projecting through an opening between the branches.

[Pg 256]

Wisely concluding that to run would be useless, he banished all appearance of uneasiness, and advanced boldly towards the treacherous bush, when the eyes, and copper legs, and flint-headed arrow, and three other Indians he had not observed, stepped out and confronted him. They were ill-looking fellows as one would wish to meet alone and miles from any habitation, and all carried in their hands villainous bows and arrows, which the string of birds and squirrels hanging at their backs showed that they knew full well how to use. Their monstrous heads, covered with a thick thatch of long black hair, and mounted on dwarfish bodies and distorted limbs, gave them a peculiarly inhuman and impish aspect, which their threatening demeanour was in no wise calculated to diminish. Crowding round St. John they assailed him with an unintelligible gibberish of Indian and Spanish, intermingled with a few words of English, that, together with their signs, gave him to understand that he must surrender his gun or they would make a prickly porcupine of him quicker than he could say Jack Robinson. Such spinous honors, however, were anything but agreeable, and making a sudden spring backward he presented his rifle at the foremost and biggest, ordering them all with a stern countenance to keep a proper distance. They understood the action if not the words, and instantly huddling together sought to screen themselves behind each other, while St. John, slowly retiring backward and still keeping his eye and his rifle upon the enemy, reached at length a large rock, behind which he cunningly withdrew, and then taking to his heels he never stopt running till he came in sight of a tent on our side of the mountain. I am inclined, however, to the opinion that the copper rascals only wanted to make game of him, not in the way above hinted at, but in a more innocent fashion, inasmuch as there was no instance of any outrage committed by them in those parts, where the numerous settlements imposed upon them a salutary dread.

CHAPTER XXI.

[Pg 257]

Tuesday, June 10. Considerable rain fell during the morning. The thermometer thus far has averaged ten to twenty degrees lower at noon than during the same time last year. We are at times anxious about our summer's work, as the river has fallen very little.

Thursday, 12. Took a long tramp in pursuit of game, got lost, and walked about twelve miles. Our table expenses at present are about fifty cents apiece a day.

Wednesday, 25. Stopped the water at the head of our race on Saturday, and Monday began again the work which the rain interrupted two months ago.

Sunday afternoon, a quail led her young brood just before our door. We had been long desirous to secure some of these birds, in hopes of taming them; but though we had spent part of every day for weeks in rambling over the country, and had seen innumerable flocks, they had always eluded our pursuit. Now that our hunting days were over, and we had given up all hopes of accomplishing our object, it was a very agreeable surprise to see our prey thus throw itself into our hands. We made a sudden and impetuous sweep, and in a moment caught eight of these pretty creatures, no bigger than an English walnut, and covered with the same soft down that renders the chickens of our barnyards so engaging. We carried them into the tent, and having secured them in a small raisin box, I set about constructing what Reaumer calls an artificial mother, to keep them warm in the cold nights. This was nothing more than a low shed with a sloping roof of flannel—an old shirt supplied the material—and here I doubted not my young family would soon find themselves at home. But hardly had I got into bed when a faint peep from the raisin box, followed by another and another till the whole brood were in full chorus, called me to their side. There was no resisting that plaintive importunity; I put my hand into the box, like a scooching father-long-legs, and presently the tender nurselings crept under this warm shelter. I felt their little checkerberry hearts beating against my fingers, while they quietly composed themselves to sleep. My heart warmed to them amazingly on their giving me this proof of confidence, and I began to think seriously of sitting up all night, rather than disturb their slumbers; but fearful lest I should fall into a drowse, and perhaps squeeze them harder than might be convenient, I put them all safely back under the artificial mother, and left them with anxious concern.

[Pg 258]

The next morning they all lay apparently dead in the bottom of the box, but by warming them in our hands with our hot breath, we recovered all but one, and if we had known how to feed them, we should undoubtedly have succeeded in preserving their lives. We tried everything we could think of, and were almost in despair, when Jimmy, one of our company, who had been gamekeeper to an English nobleman, told us that they fed them on "hants' heggs" in his country. "Hants'" nests were plenty in our neighbourhood; we lost no time in digging one open, and soon presented our young starvelings with abundance of "heggs." They eat a few, but their strength was too far gone to be restored, and the second morning not one was left alive.

Our canal on which we were now working had been in great part excavated through a ledge of the hardest granite—it varied from twelve to twenty feet in width, and from five to ten in depth.—Half of these dimensions would have been sufficient if its course had been even moderately straight; but the frequent and sudden curves checked too much the rapidity of the current. As a little labor here would save a great deal on the dam, we bent our backs to the work with less reluctance, though nothing that we had yet done in California could be compared to it for a moment. If there is any thing in this world deserving the contempt of a rational being, it is a big stone. A pig is certainly as obstinate, but then he can be wheedled into going the way you wish. A fool is perhaps as stupid, but he can be beaten into reason. But a stone, especially if large enough to fancy itself a rock, is worse than a tortoise. It draws itself up into its shell deaf to all argument or entreaty, and insensible to blows. If we had only had Amphion's lyre; but we had not even a fiddle, only crowbars and gunpowder, and our poor fingers. And there was no wind to disturb the stagnant air—the sun streamed down into our granite prison till it became as hot as a Sandwich Island oven.

[Pg 259]

But at length the work was completed—the digging, the blasting, the rolling of stones, and piling them up into a firm smooth wall, were all over—the dike at the mouth of the canal was removed—the parched and thirsty channel seemed to swallow eagerly the inrushing river, and we entered upon the far more agreeable task of repairing the dam. A large flatboat had been already built by a ship carpenter belonging to our company, and the various operations of the preceding year were soon under full headway.

The 4th of July came hot and scorching as the breath of the Sirocco. We had celebrated it the year before at Ford's Bar by firing guns and drinking lemonade; but we now slightly varied these amusements. Above our dam, and formed by the backing up of the water, lay a swelling pond winding away a mile among the hills. Every day, as we penned in the water, it stole noiselessly farther and farther up the shore, drowning one after another the little islands and blades of grass that vainly standing on tiptoe stretched their heads above the surface. Embarked in our flatboat with only one companion, a pleasant young fellow from Philadelphia, we paddled softly up this newborn lakelet to a point on the farther shore, where another party had already accumulated a pile of earth supposed to contain a slight admixture of clay, which it was our duty to transport to the head of the canal. Here it was taken by a third set of workmen, and carried two hundred yards in handbarrows, over a most difficult path, to a part of the canal where the island was so low that a short dike was necessary to prevent the water from finding its way back into the river. After making several trips, we yielded our situation to two of the unfortunates on the bank, and took their place in digging and carrying. The hillside where they had been excavating was several hundred feet from the water, and the earth must be carried down to the shore on handbarrows, of all inventions the most ingeniously fatiguing. Clouds of dust rose from the parched ground, covering us from head to foot in an undistinguishable suit of reddish grey. The whole company were thus occupied a week in constructing a low wall not more than twenty feet in length, and this being finished, again returned to work on the dam, which we pushed forward with the fiercest energy.

[Pg 260]

We had now to settle a very important question, how we should drain the hollows or ponds that would remain after the river had been entirely diverted from its channel. Man-power, horse-power, and water-power were all proposed; but the first was altogether inefficient, and the other two well nigh impracticable. Nothing then seemed left but steam. We were all of us at first rather frightened at the thought of employing so powerful an auxiliary, but it soon became familiar, and now our only anxiety was lest we should be unable to obtain an engine of suitable qualifications. Capt. Sampson was despatched to San Francisco on this errand, and in the mean time our work went on as usual.

Walking one morning along the dam, now presenting a level path for half its length. I found in the middle where the water still rushed through, a large salmon, who had leaped the fall, but being jammed in among the stones was unable to overcome the force of the current. Another was found soon after in the same predicament—the eyes of both were gone—their noses worn off, and their bodies gashed with frightful wounds. This is the condition to which nearly all are reduced before reaching the sources of those rapid rivers; and perhaps nothing else can show so clearly the force of what may here at least be fairly termed a blind instinct.

[Pg 261]

Capt. Sampson returned in less than a week, bringing with him a small steam-engine, and a heavy pump of cast-iron, of a very peculiar construction, without valves or boxes, and working by centrifugal force alone. The whole apparatus weighed about four thousand pounds, and cost fifteen hundred dollars.

In the mean time, our dam had rapidly advanced to completion. We had nothing better than partially decomposed granite to stop the leaks, and were obliged to pick the whole of that from the solid ledge; yet it answered the purpose so admirably that all the water that found its way through a dam two hundred and fifty feet long and ten feet high, could easily be carried in a canvass hose six inches in diameter. A sudden rise in the river, occasioned by rain in the mountains, filled us with uneasiness lest it should overflow our dam, but by making great exertions we raised a small mound five or six inches high along the whole extent, and this slight embankment was sufficient to avert the threatened calamity. The next day the river had again fallen, and after that continued steadily to abate, till the top of the dam was nearly three feet above the surface.

It was the close of the third week in July that our patient perseverance at length prevailed over

the waters. The next day, being Sunday, we saw from our elevated eyrie different members of the company with pan and shovel wandering about in the bed of the river, stopping here and there to dig and wash a small quantity of earth and then shaking their heads in a very dolorous and unaccountable manner. This process was several times repeated, and on every occasion the head-shaking grew more decidedly melancholy. Monday morning, on going to work as usual, we found the whole company, from Capt. Sampson down to the merest halfshare of them all, in a state closely bordering on distraction, and radiating the blues as fast as ever a redhot cannon ball radiated caloric. "Well, Mr. Raven," said Jimmy almost ready to cry, "our work's all lost. I'd sell my share for a hundred dollars and glad o' the chance;" and with this the said radiators glowed colder than ever. On requesting an explanation of this extraordinary conduct, we learned that they had dug ever so many holes the day before and had found nothing—so they had at once concluded that there was nothing to find. As we had been the principal movers and originators of the whole undertaking, they regarded us as in some sort the authors of their misfortunes, and hence we had to bear not only our own share of the common disappointment, but also their ill-concealed displeasure. Our situation was indeed deplorable—most of us had expended not only our labour but the greater part of our previous earnings in purchasing the engine and other matters, and if the dam should prove a failure we were utterly ruined. But would it prove a failure? We did not believe it would. In the whole party there was hardly one who knew any more about prospecting, at least in the river, than a hen of average intelligence. Most of them had passed their apprenticeship in the southern mines, and not one had ever had any thing to do with damming. We ourselves had been very slow to learn the nicer mysteries of our craft, but we knew enough to satisfy us that a claim like that could not be explored in a day. We squeezed the gloom out of our companions like water out of a sponge, and the next morning went to work prospecting in earnest. St. John sunk the first hole between a snug family of rocks just on the edge of our upper hollow—the earth paid from twenty cents to ten dollars a bucket, and in two hours he took out with my assistance sixty dollars. There was no more grumbling that day—Jimmy raised his price from one hundred to ten thousand dollars, and doubted whether he would sell even for that.

[Pg 262]

[Pg 263]

Hose was still wanting to convey the water that leaked through the dam quite across the upper hollow, so that it might not increase too much the labours of the engine,—and Wednesday I rode in a wagon to Sacramento to obtain canvass sufficient for this purpose. On my return the next day by stage I found that my companions had already moved the engine and pump across the river by means of rollers, and had set them up on a stout frame at the foot of the upper hollow. A short trough was constructed to lead the water from the pump directly into the round deep pool below, and we were all ready to begin.

Our affairs were now in a highly prosperous condition,—a half share was sold before the engine had made a stroke, for nearly a thousand dollars, and every day members of other companies, none of which had "got into the river," came to look, and admire, and wonder they had not bought shares when they could have done it so easily. The American Damming stock was now among the best in the market, and was quoted in the Sacramento papers at ten thousand dollars a share.

All this could not but be highly gratifying even to men of that meek and modest temper for which, I do not say our whole company, but some of us were remarkable. In the pride of our heart we could not help glorying a little over our neighbours, as if our good fortune had been entirely owing to our superior sagacity—and I noticed that one or two who had been led into the scheme almost against their wills, were now the loudest in this self-laudation. We met, however, with almost innumerable delays—the wood was wet, or the boiler leaked, or the belt slipt from the whirling drums. It was some time, too, before we discovered the secret of the pump—after working finely several hours, and lowering the water as many feet, the stream suddenly ceased to flow. We took the pump to pieces, and spent nearly all the rest of the day in trying to detect the cause of this interruption, but gained no more by our scrutiny than the child who cut open the bellows to find where the wind came from. After puzzling over it all night, we resumed our examination in the morning, but with no better success, and were all ready to despair, when suddenly the Captain and St. John both cried out at once, "Suppose we put the pump nearer the water, and see how that will work." Sure enough, it flashed upon us all in a moment that it was not a suction but a force pump—we accordingly lowered the frame on which it rested, and in this position found that it would drain the hole in six hours.

[Pg 264]

The harvest had now commenced that was to repay us for months of toil—we had thrust aside with strong arm the guardian river, and its treasures only waited our touch to be laid open to the light. We hastened to secure them with trembling hand. Rocks were torn from their deep foundations, and the thick-skinned granite scraped even to its quivering nerves. The bed where the old South Fork had lain, reposing in quiet, or restlessly tossing, so many generations, was now to be well shaken and made up afresh. Parties set to work at different points, and everywhere the short puff of the engine and droning hum of the pump mingled with the harsher tones of the rocker and the cheerful sound of pick and shovel. Our gains were all put into one common receptacle, and every evening we assembled at the Captain's tent to see them weighed and divided.

There was a peculiar charm about those evening parties that is often wanting in more elegant assemblies. The scene thus presented would have made a fine subject for Hogarth. The flickering light of the fire burning in the huge chimney shone on a group of men with coarse woollen shirts and unshorn faces, leaning on their elbows round the rude table, and fixing their eyes with eager interest on the paunchy bags that lay before the Captain, and the gold which he was nicely

[Pg 265]

adjusting in the scales by means of his forefinger and thumb, as if it had been so much genuine Irish Blackguard. A crowd of spectators stand looking on, either men hired by the company, or miners in the red bank. Hairy rheumatic Bill, the Captain's cook, with ladle in hand, alternates from the table to the fire, divided between a fierce avaricious love of his half share and a more tender solicitude for the soup simmering in the corner. "Well, Capting, how much has us got to-night?" says Jimmy, and "How much to a sheer?" cries a Missourian sitting on the lower end of the long table, and craning his neck and goggling his eyes after a most alarming fashion. Our three shares, as being the largest undivided portion, were first weighed out, and received in a wide-mouthed vial. Then the Captain, with peculiar satisfaction, set aside a double portion for himself—then as much more for Jimmy. The half shares, of which at one time there were six, came last. All that was scattered on the table was magnanimously left for old Bill. The same jokes were repeated regularly every evening, and never failed of a favourable reception. "Well, Mr. Raven, your bottle isn't full yet," says Jimmy, with a chuckle. The Captain laments the necessity of taking care of so much of the plaguey stuff; when instantly half a dozen disinterested individuals offer to relieve him of the trouble, to which his only reply is an abstracted laugh. The largest sum divided on these occasions was fourteen hundred dollars, or one hundred and forty to a share, which in those days was considered very tolerable mining.

Nor was the labour itself entirely devoid of excitement. Whenever a remarkably rich spot was discovered, or there was an unusual "show" in any of the rockers, nothing would do but all must come and see it. "Well, boys! I say, just look a here;" and presently half a score of eager heads are thrust together over the cradle, or down into some crevice among the rocks lighted up with a right fairy splendour with spangles of pure gold. When all other epithets have been exhausted, some one exclaims, "Well! that's real lousy! that is!" a most felicitous comparison, at least to the ears of a Californian.

[Pg 266]

But in the mean time trouble was brewing in a direction where none of us looked for it. Ours was the first of a long series of claims extending in unbroken succession some distance below Mormon Island. A gap had remained in this chain for several weeks, the second company below us not having finished their flume so soon as the others, and in the mean time a second dam had been erected by the South Fork company still farther down the river. But when the company first mentioned had completed their preparations, they insisted upon the removal of this dam, as it backed the water into their claim; and threatened, if their request were not complied with, to tear it down with their own hands. The South Fork finally yielded the point, and now our dam answered for a dozen companies, covering an extent of nearly two miles. The river ran for this distance sometimes in wooden flumes, and sometimes, as with us, in canals; and as considerable water escaped from these artificial channels, and as there were, besides, hollows of different dimensions requiring to be drained in every claim, it was necessary for the success of the whole that this water should all be pumped back into the flumes and not suffered to flow into those below. There were several reasons why we should not be required to enter into this arrangement. In the first place, our company being older than those next below, we had the undisputed right, according to the universal law of the mines, to work in the way most suited to our convenience. Furthermore, as only one of the other companies had built a dam, and that was a very slight affair, while we had laboured for weeks for the common advantage, we thought they could not reasonably object to so slight a leakage, especially as, if they had built one, they would still have had at least an equal quantity of water to contend with. But it is in vain to expect reason from envy and disappointed avarice. One day about the middle of August, Captain Sampson having been down to the village, returned in great excitement with the information that a large party of miners, consisting of members of the lower companies, were already on their march to destroy our engine. We heard no more of it, however, at that time, and members of the companies with whom we were acquainted assuring us that they had no such design, we hoped the storm had blown over. But less than a week after, a large party came upon us while we were at work in the river, "to make us," as they said, "take care of our leak water." Not one of them seemed to know exactly what he had to complain of—they had not yet succeeded according to their expectations, and in some way we were to blame. They evidently had an idea that a vast body of water was sent down upon them from our claim, either made by the engine or from some other mysterious source; but more than all, though we did not learn this till afterwards, they hated Captain Sampson and those Ravens, they were so stuck up. Still we had no fears they would proceed to actual violence, since one of our company could, by toppling a few stones into our race, raise the river sufficiently to flow over the top of our dam, when it would have been instantly washed away, and the whole accumulated flood precipitated bodily upon all below, involving them in one common destruction. After a long farrago of words, which it would be in vain to dignify by the name of argument, they proposed building a dam at the foot of our claim to catch the water then flowing from our engine. To this we made no objection, as our upper hollow would be exhausted in a few days, and we had already agreed with the company immediately below to pump the water from the lower one into their flume on condition of their providing a trough long enough for the purpose. Though this difficulty was thus disposed of, yet the impression it produced was so deep and lasting, and the idea of continuing in such a state of warfare was so repugnant to our feelings that we determined to hasten our departure as much as possible.

[Pg 267]

[Pg 268]

To avoid the troublesome task of moving the engine we drained the second hole, which was quite small, by means of an immense wooden pump requiring three men to work it. They were relieved every half hour by a second set, and thus the work went on day and night, till the water was low enough to admit of a thorough exploration, and we found there was hardly gold enough to pay us for the expense of pumping.

The lowest, and by far the largest, hollow still remained, and to this we now directed all our energies. As there was no place on the bank sufficiently level to set up our engine, and as we had already experienced the inconvenience of a stationary support, we determined to build a flatboat large enough to contain the engine, pump, and all its appendages. The boat was christened by Capt. Sampson the Hoosier or Who za? and was, I believe, the first steamboat ever built on the American River, if not in California. It answered the purpose admirably, falling with the water and thus keeping the pump always level with the surface. We had need of every advantage, for besides the great extent of the hole, we were obliged, in order to comply with our agreement, to raise the water some fifteen feet above its average level; and it was nearly a week before we were able to resume our mining operations. The untiring engine was kept at work day and night; but as our engineer, though a very clever fellow, was not made of the same material, it was necessary to provide him with an assistant.

I occupied this responsible situation for a few hours, and must confess I felt no slight degree of elation at my preferment. I always had an infinite respect for one of your mammoth steam-engines, which seem to me to furnish the best instance of magnanimity that can anywhere be found; and our little spitfire, though it could claim no such distinction, yet attracted me by its patient indefatigable industry and honesty of purpose, so that I fairly loved it as if a man's heart were beating under its closely-buttoned iron jacket.

[Pg 269]

It is the fashion to talk of the present century as in the highest degree unromantic and prosaic; yet there is more real romance and poetry in the engines of the Baltic than in all the barbaric pomp of the middle ages. While I was not occupied in attending to the simple wants of my humble work-fellow, I amused myself with watching the dragon-flies riding tandem over the water, or balancing with wonderful rigidity on the little twigs that rose above the surface. In the evening the funnel sent forth a swarm of ephemera that returned no more to the parent hive, but went dancing away over the black water till they disappeared beneath it. They seemed like a wedding troop of fairies in torchlight procession, escorting one of their number to espouse a spirit of the wave. As they approached the water, a second troop appeared coming to meet them; and each in turn, some with a sudden plunge, others with a coquettish, sidling motion, rushed into the arms of their partners, blowing out their torches at the moment of their embrace to hide their burning blushes.

While I indulged in these idle fancies, the homely little engine by my side still worked on, though wondering perhaps at my long silence; twelve o'clock soon came, and with it the one who was to relieve me. I picked my way darkling across the rocky channel—ran rapidly up the river, and in a few minutes was fast asleep.

Wednesday, Sept. 3. Our claim being by this time nearly worked out, St. John sold his share for a few hundred dollars, and the next day I disposed of mine for the same price. Soon after we struck a rich streak, and I was extremely vexed at having sold. The purchaser, on learning that the company was in debt to a trifling amount, felt equally indisposed to the bargain, and the share returned into my possession.

[Pg 270]

Two o'clock, P. M. St. John sorry he sold—evening cloudy, night, a slight shower—Friday morning, more rain—very dismal—sorry I did not sell. The man who bought St. John's share comes to our tent in positive agony, and offers fifty dollars to be released from his bargain. Eleven A. M. brighter—ten P. M. water low—shares high—rich dirt—offered the same for my share as yesterday—refused.

It again rained during the night, and I had ample time to repent my indiscretion, but the next day the sun shone with unusual brilliancy, and I finally disposed of my share for the same price as before.

We had now nothing to keep us any longer in California—we sold our tent with all its furniture for fifty dollars, and then began the most successful mining we had yet had any thing to do with. We closed the door of our tent, still ours until we had left it, and commenced digging in the floor in places whose position we discovered by certain marks upon the wooden framework of the walls. I first brought to light a mustard bottle, now full, however, of a far brighter and more pungent dust—St. John at the same moment displayed an ancient vinegar cruet without a neck, so that it gave up all the more readily its precious contents. I then produced from a third place of deposit a vial that once contained, as the words blown into its sides declared, a vegetable elixir of wonderful virtues; but few, I believe, who would not have found the mineral panacea far more agreeable, unless indeed administered on homœopathic principles. In no long time a whole apothecary's shop was arrayed on our little table, every vial, however different in shape, containing the same grand catholicon, that if it cannot cure all, will cure as many of the ills that flesh is heir to as all others put together.

We emptied the contents of these vials into The New York Tribune, and having transferred the shining heap into sundry leathern bags and belts, we carried our well-filled trunk, containing a variety of curiosities, out on to the bank before the tent,—came back to look once more at the table, the beds, the stove, that had so wrought themselves into our being—then softly closing the door for the last time, walked swiftly down the well known path, not daring to look behind us, and with a feeling of melancholy it was impossible to resist.

[Pg 271]

We slept that night at Number Four's, and the next morning started in a wagon for Sacramento, not without a sensation of regret at our final abandonment of a life that with all its hardships had yet yielded us so much enjoyment. We arrived at Sacramento only a few minutes before the boat

started, and at 2 P. M. bid that city a final farewell, precisely two years to a day, and almost to an hour, since I first landed from the Patuxent. The contrast between the diminutive schooner and the spacious decks of the Senator was hardly greater than that between the squalid miners huddled together like a flock of sheep in the one, and the well dressed crowd of comfortable tradesmen in the other; and but for a single incident I might have supposed myself in one of the floating palaces of the Hudson. A handsome young man, who came out of the saloon while we were sitting on the quarter deck, attracted my attention by what I set down as the most ridiculous affectation. He was drest in the height of the fashion, with a superabundance of jewelry, and a pair of the very smallest boots, which I thought partially accounted for his peculiar mincing gait. I had begun to regard him with even painful aversion, when some one whispered to me that it was a woman, and my feelings underwent a sudden change. Whatever I might think of her moral character, I could no longer accuse her of inconsistency or affectation—her mincing gait became a swimming walk—her love of ornament, her little simpering ways, her downcast lids, were her hereditary, inalienable right, with which I had no more reason nor inclination to find fault than with her slight figure and delicate complexion. She promenaded the deck for hours in all the independence of her masculine assumed attire; but when the bell rang for supper, she slunk down with the petticoats, thus adroitly, like other apostles of woman's rights, reserving her own peculiar privileges while insisting upon her claim to ours.

[Pg 272]

On arriving at San Francisco we took lodgings at a hotel, where we remained until the sailing of the next steamer, in which we hastened to secure a passage. We spent the time pleasantly enough in walking about the city, visiting the various places of public amusement, and the magnificent clippers lying at the wharves, among which the Flying Cloud, lately arrived from the quickest passage on record, most attracted our attention.

Being now about to leave the shores of California, I wished to signalize the event by some deed of high emprise, or, in the words of the great captain, finish the campaign by a clap of thunder. My acquaintance in the city were constantly making fortunes by lucky speculations, and I saw no reason why I should not follow their example. Opportunities were not wanting—nearly every other building in San Francisco was occupied as a commission and auction store, where the most incredible bargains were offered every day and every hour.

I entered one of the largest of these establishments just as the auctioneer was bidding off some kind of under garment; and as he whirled them dexterously around, I observed that they had sleeves, and asked to know no more. Here was the opportunity for which I had panted. I pressed forward among the bidders, and the next moment, such was the rapidity of my conclusion and the prompt energy of my action, I found myself the happy owner of eight dozen ladies' undershirts. "What name?" says the auctioneer. "Mr. Cash." "Please step into the back part of the store, Mr. Cash, and receive your goods." While I stood, like Atlas or Teneriffe, unremoved, and the whole crowd of wondering bidders stared at me as who should say, "What under the canopy do *you* want of eight dozen ladies' undershirts?" St. John, who had hitherto stood a silent and bewildered spectator of the scene, the suddenness of the whole proceeding having given him no time to interfere, now recovered from his torpor, and taking me all unresisting by the arm he quietly led me to the back of the shop, and then, making a skilful detour round a counter, out into the street, where we never once stopped to look behind us till we had left the danger far behind, and I was able to thank St. John for my deliverance. When in answer to his very natural inquiries I gave him an explanation of what he had just witnessed, though he highly approved of my design, that is of making a fortune, he thought the manner in which I set about the execution of it hardly justified any very sanguine notions of success, and discouraged me to that degree that I had no heart for any farther experiment; and thus ended my first and last speculation. I have been since inclined to regret this result when I have considered that Wellington was defeated in his first battle, and that Frederick the Great even fled from the field; and in the same manner I, though my first essay terminated so disastrously, might have come in time to be the greatest merchant since Jacob Astor. But whatever business talent I possessed was then and there crushed in the bud—I have ever since shrunk from the sight of an auctioneer as a thief from the sight of an officer, and the merest glimpse of a lady's undershirt is enough to disturb my equanimity for a whole day—while I regard the mention of such an article in my hearing as an offence beyond the reach of forgiveness.

[Pg 273]

CHAPTER XXII.

[Pg 274]

Saturday, the 13th of September, 1851, at five o'clock in the evening, we went on board the Carolina, then lying at the wharf, and all ready for sea. She was a propeller of six hundred tons, built as a two-decker, but had afterwards been raised by her present proprietors, who, in their disinterested anxiety to promote the comfort of their passengers, would gladly have gone on adding story to story till she was as high as the Astor House or the Tower of Babel, if they could only have devised a plan for making her as firm as either of those centres of wealth and fashion. She seemed now as crowded as a well filled pincushion; but it is a curious though well authenticated fact, and one of which the various steamboat companies have not failed to take advantage, that five hundred passengers returning from California occupy little more room than half that number from the Atlantic States; either because the disappointment that most of them meet with operates like the prick of a pin on an inflated bladder, or because, and this I apprehend is after all the true reason, the hot and arid temperature of that country so dries up

the fluids and juices of the body that it gradually wizzles away till it is reduced to the same condition as a mummy or dried apple.

Be this as it may, on looking round among my fellow passengers I saw many who seemed to feel as if they could easily creep into a rat-hole; and, for my own part, if it had not been for the belt round my waist, I have no doubt I could have squeezed through a crack or into a bottle without the slightest inconvenience. But gaunt, and wizzled, and woe-begone as was the appearance of our company, it was nothing to what was brought about by a few weeks' confinement on shipboard; so that if the voyage had been long enough, a good sized pea-pod would have furnished a craft amply sufficient for our shrunken mortality.

[Pg 275]

The Carolina went to sea with four hundred passengers, of whom nearly three-fourths were in the steerage. The accommodations provided for this class consisted of a large cabin on the lower deck, and a smaller one directly above it, both furnished with berths similar to those of a river steamboat, with this difference, that though scarcely any wider, they were intended to be occupied by two persons. In cold weather this would have been hardly tolerable, and the reader can imagine the delights of such intimate fellowship in the sultry sluggish air of the tropics. After one or two trials I gave up in despair, and spreading my blankets on deck, slept there every night during the remainder of the voyage. At least half of my companions had the same choice—we made the vast Pacific our bed-chamber, and strewed the lofty deck of our steamer thicker than leaves in Vallambrosa. By eight o'clock every spot was occupied, and it was then almost impossible to cross the deck, especially in rough weather, without tripping over some unlucky nose, or flattening it level with the astonished cheeks. The ship now became silent as the dawn of creation, except the hoarse coffee-mill grinding of the propeller, and the palpable stillness of the passing ripple. We could almost hear the stars twinkling in the sky, and the hum-top spin of the round-faced moon. This was delightful—delicious—enchancing—excessively fine—but several hours later, about the time that the milk-cart rattles o'er the stony street, and the fisherman's horn splits the dull ear of night—when the punctual plodding Phœbus, climbing his eastern ladder, streaks the wide horizon with his floating golden hair—a mimic deluge, commencing at the fore-castle, comes drowning out our little world. Onto the hencoops! up into the rigging! down into the steerage! every man for himself, and the long crawling hose, a veritable sea-serpent, take the hindmost! "Oh! preserve us!" cries some heavy dreamer, striking out as if to swim—"oh—ah—whooo! I thought the ship was sinking;" and now wide awake, "Bless us! if I don't wish she would."

[Pg 276]

This was pleasant weather, but sometimes it rained and blew. Then the labouring ship, making more angles with the horizon than Sir Isaac Newton ever dreamed of, rolled our loose disjointed bodies crunching over the oaken planks—the sullen soddening rain hung every bristle on our blankets with conglobing drops—or a phosphorescent wave drenched us to the skin, filling our eyes, our mouths, our pockets, with its briny flood. If all the resolutions made at such times should be kept, few would ever trust themselves again to the treacherous element.

The first four days of our voyage passed pleasantly enough. The sea was smooth, the sky was fair, a favouring breeze pushed us gently on our way, and we ran in that time nearly nine hundred miles. The thoughts of home with which all were occupied, though they produced a silence and reserve strangely in contrast with the noisy hilarity of the voyage out, at the same time disposed all to bear the hardships and annoyances incident to their situation with patience and good humour. We became by degrees, like a barrel of apples, shaken and jolted into our places until we were able to move about the deck without displacing another at every step. The prospect of a speedy run, and the hope of beating the Panama that was to start two days after us, heightened the general satisfaction.

But this scene was changed with the capricious suddenness of a play. The fifth night I had spread my blankets on a hencoop, and fell asleep with the stars burning undimmed in the firmament. I was awakened about midnight by a dismal uproar for which no place on land is big enough unless it be the desert of Sahara, or one of our western prairies. A sudden squall had sprung up from the south, directly in our teeth. The canvass awnings stretched across the deck twisted and writhed as if in torture. The sailors, at the hoarse cry of "all hands ahoy," came trampling along the deck, knocking down the stupid wakers who sat upright on their blankets like half animated right angles, and rubbed their sleepy eyes. Two hundred piles of bedding at one and the same moment seemed endowed with the power of locomotion, and began to walk, and creep, and tumble towards the steerage.

[Pg 277]

And now the mighty Pacific seemed bent on showing us what she could do with our cockle-shell of a boat. After the first angry burst, as if sounding the charge, she went to work with a coolness and deliberation well suited to her royalty and power. She tossed us from one hand to another with stunning violence. Her winds blew not wearily, but with that fierce energy as if they had just been let loose from their stalls. The sea went up, and the sky came down, as if, like the man in the iron cage, we were to be crushed between the walls of our dungeon. A sensation of sea-sickness—of stupidity—of utter loathing and yet desire of life—of wet clothes clinging heavily to the shrunken, shivering body—of breathing an atmosphere half air half water—a feeling as if one had fins and scales—a constant holding on to hats, or watching them with strange melancholy as they fly away in the distance—these things, together with a dreamy, ill-defined sublimity over all, make up a storm at sea.

But this was not the end. Our ship, after skilfully dodging for a long time the tremendous blows aimed at her by the furious waves, at length received such a punch in the breast as seemed fairly

to knock the breath out of her body. No outward injury was at first discovered, but she bled inwardly and had evidently sprung a dangerous leak. I was sitting like a perpendicular mummy on the deserted quarter-deck, about two o'clock in the morning, watching the dim billows that sent a constant flood of foam over the bows, when St. John came up, and steadying himself by my chair, informed me in a sepulchral whisper that there were ten feet of water in the hold, that the leak was gaining fast, and threatened to put out the fires. Instinctively I put my hand to the leathern belt around my waist, and groaned aloud. Was it for this that I had braved the hardships of a six months' voyage and the sickness and toil of two years in the mines? Was it for this that I had spoilt forever the beauty of my hands and the delicacy of my complexion? Had I stood day after day in those ice-cold rivers, like a man with his feet on the pole and his head under the equator—had I swallowed doses innumerable of oil and laudanum, of blue mass and quinine, only to feed the fishes at last? If I had got nothing, it would have been less matter; but as it was, how I hated the ugly shark who would gulp me at a single mouthful, the richest supper since Cleopatra's pearl. I got up, and unrolling myself from my blankets, walked forward and looked down the hatchway above the furnaces. A red and angry glare from the crevices around the doors showed a mass of water black as pitch rolling and swashing with the motion of the vessel within a foot of the fires. It was Phlegethon shedding its baleful light on the dark and melancholy Styx. A group of passengers stood leaning against the iron railing, watching with strange interest the firemen below standing knee deep in the inky flood, and still plying their task with sullen resolution. As they threw open the clanging doors, we caught glimpses of the fires burning with a fierceness of purpose that seemed to defy the ocean to put it out; but still the insidious element crept on, and we already heard the ominous hiss like the skirmishes before a great battle, as the foremost of the assailants dashed against the bars of the furnace.

[Pg 278]

If the waters prevailed, as they were sure to do in this unequal contest, our only hope of salvation was gone; for the pump attached to the engine, though sadly out of order, and able to work but about half the time, was still superior in effective service to the united strength of all in the ship. As long as that could be kept in operation there was no danger of the leak gaining upon us, and it was owing simply to its having partially failed, that the state of affairs now looked so threatening. One of the passengers, "a darned bluenose," as he was styled by the ungrateful Yankees whose lives he had volunteered to save at the risk of his own, had ventured out under the bowsprit and nailed some canvass over the principal leak; but there was another he could not reach, and the situation of which was not exactly known. One declared it was under the engine—another, with equal confidence, asserted that it was somewhere about the bows. It was now discovered that the ship was known to be leaky when we sailed; the first mate had said that they had been obliged to keep the pumps going even while she lay at the wharf—the engineer confirmed this story, and added, moreover, that the engine was in an equally unsafe condition. It had in some way broken loose from its fastenings and threatened to knock a hole through the ship's bottom, but by tying it up with ropes they were enabled to maintain a sufficient weight of steam to keep the ship's head to the wind; and in this situation we lay for several days without making a single mile.

[Pg 279]

Still the services of the engine were indispensable to our safety, and it was necessary under such a pressing emergency to take immediate measures for its relief. Two of the passengers descended into the hold and took their station by the side of the firemen. Others were ranged at convenient intervals on the slender iron ladders that led to the upper decks—a large number of buckets were provided, and the work commenced. The undertaking was greatly impeded by the rolling and pitching of the ship that rendered it at times extremely difficult to maintain a footing upon the ladders, and now and then threw half a bucket of water, that had nearly reached the top, down onto the heads of those below.

[Pg 280]

But now the anxious question arose, would they be able to lower the water in the hold or even to prevent its rising higher. For a long time the scale hung in doubtful balance, but at last the cheerful news was shouted up to us that the water was lowered about an inch. It was now suggested to draw the supply for the boilers from within the ship instead of taking that without. The pump used for this purpose was accordingly set in operation, and by the united powers of men and steam all fear of immediate danger was at length removed. The storm had spent its violence, the sea became smooth, and in a few days we arrived at Acapulco, where the Panama had gone in just before us. Like her we will also improve the opportunity, and gladly escaping from these boisterous scenes of alarm and confusion, take refuge in the quiet haven of more serene and peaceful meditations. Wars and battles, though occupying so large a space in history, are after all far less deserving of our sober study than the more domestic narrative of private firesides; and I trust the reader will turn with equal satisfaction from storm and shipwreck to the individual interests of our little community.

I take it for granted that all will agree with me in considering the subject on which we are about entering, of paramount importance; and this conviction, while it inflames my desire, at the same time heightens my sense of my inability to do justice to a question of such universality of interest.

The clerk of whom we bought our tickets was a remarkably handsome man, and when he assured us with an air of sincerity an angel might have envied, that the steerage passengers would have the same fare as that provided for the cabin, though in a little different shape, I was simple enough to believe that it was at least one-half true. This was the more inexcusable, as I had already been once deceived in a similar manner, and had had the lesson, one would suppose, pretty effectually ground into my stomach during our never-to-be-forgotten voyage in the Leucothea. But as some one, I think it is the amiable Pecksniff, feelingly observes, it is my nature to be deceived, and a hundred voyages would probably have had no more effect. However, when

[Pg 281]

the handsome clerk had received our money, and had turned us over to the tender mercies of a captain who knew nothing, and a parcel of blacks who cared nothing what the steerage had to eat, we found that the agent, who was probably a pleasant fellow, or a philosopher, had, to say the least, indulged in a figure of speech when he made use of the expression quoted above.

Chemically and philosophically he was undoubtedly correct, and a chemist or a philosopher might have understood him; but a common man, or any one taking his words in their every day meaning, would have been wofully deceived. The cabin fare took the shape of roast beef, and pork, and chickens—of pies and puddings—of soft tack and butter—of nuts and fruit. By the time it reached the steerage, the fresh had become salt—the soft tack had grown hard as the heart of its owners—the puddings had degenerated into boiled rice, sometimes raw, sometimes burnt, often both at once—while the pies and other articles of the dessert were not there at all, either in their own shape or any other.

There was another sense however in which the agent, who I never will believe wilfully intended to deceive us, might have expected his promise to be interpreted. All these various luxuries were prepared in a single galley half sunk below the level of the deck and covered by a grating and an open skylight. Around this grating the steerage passengers were permitted to assemble, and snuff up as much of the fragrant odours as mixed with other and less inviting exhalations, found their way into the upper air. Sometimes, if one waited long enough and humbled himself sufficiently, one of the black cooks would extend to him graciously the royal favour, and bestow upon him a pickle or a bit of bread, or even leave to him the superfluity of his own repast. In addition to this inestimable privilege we dwellers in the middle of the ship, half way between the aristocracy of the cabin and the democracy of the forecastle, were allowed to feast our eyes on the savoury messes carried past our quarters in tin pans of vast circumference, and even to look on at a respectful distance while the different watches ate and drank with the most sublime indifference. The scene constantly reminded me of a huge mastiff gnawing a bone, while a troop of curs and puppies walk about him, wistfully eyeing the fragments as they disappear one after another in his capacious jaws, and after he has finished carefully lick up every particle too small for his magnanimous appetite.

[Pg 282]

But it would be necessary to descend still lower in the scale of creation to find a fit illustration of the manner in which our meals were conducted. Two narrow tables were suspended from the ceiling in the upper cabin, capable of seating about seventy persons. As there were nearly three hundred passengers, of course only one-fourth could be accommodated at once, and the tables had to be set four times in succession; so that each meal commonly occupied several hours. Out of these three hundred at least two hundred and fifty were possessed with an insane desire to sit down at the first table; either because they fancied there would be a greater abundance, or from that abhorrence of being last, which has come to be considered an American characteristic.

Long before the usual hour, a little knot of the more hungry, or more determined sort, had collected round the hatch opening into the steerage. At the same time various symptoms began to show that all were in expectation of some important event. The readers shut up their books and put them into their pockets—the card players swept up their cards from the deck—the talkers stopped talking and pricked up their ears—every thing foretold the impending dinner. The crowd around the hatchway has grown larger and denser, and only waits the steward's signal to precipitate itself almost bodily into the steerage below. Those in the centre sit with their legs dangling down the hatch, and from this elevated position eye the sluggish movements of the waiters with ravenous impatience.

[Pg 283]

"What they got for dinner?" cries some unfortunate on the skirts of the throng vainly striving to look over the shoulders of the circle.

"Roast turkey and plum pudding," answer half a dozen voices, "don't you wish you could get some?" and this well-worn jest never fails to be received with shouts of laughter. At last all the preparations are completed—the step ladder is reared against the deck, and in an instant eighty hungry bipeds drop, like apples from a tree when violently shaken, down into the steerage. But at the same moment a second party, who have lain all the while perdu in their berths, suddenly emerge from their hiding-places and appropriate without ceremony all the seats on one side of the tables, and half of the eighty are obliged to return grumbling and swearing to the deck.

And now begins a scene of confusion such as fortunately is witnessed nowhere except at sea. Half-a-dozen hands are at once stretched out for the salt beef, but the dish is of tin and will bear hard pulling. The one who prevails in the contest cuts off the choicest bit for himself, and pushes the dish to his next neighbour. "Hand along them pertaters"—"pass up that bread"—"here waiter! steward! the soup is all gone"—"can't help it; it's all there is"—"give me a mug, I say"—"what the d— do you call this?"—"I haven't had a potato these three days"—"faugh! the rice's burnt again"—"that feller's got 'em all"—"let me out o' this, I say"—such are the cries that, larded with a plentiful sprinkling of oaths, go to make up the conversation at this elegant repast.

But luckily it is of no long duration; in fifteen or twenty minutes the last straggler has disappeared up the hatch, and the tables are put in order for the second division. The excitement is now even greater than before, and the same scenes as those last described are repeated in a still more aggravated form on each successive occasion. The last comers were sometimes too impatient to wait till the dishes could be washed, and filled up the benches as fast as they were vacated by their predecessors. Thus the same plate might be kept in constant service, and the successive strata of beef and mustard, rice and molasses, that had accumulated on its surface, would afford a very accurate index of the number of times it had been employed.

[Pg 284]

To obviate as far as possible the evils arising from this state of confusion, the passengers voluntarily divided into four sections, and determined by lot the order of precedence. This order was to continue until we reached Acapulco, when it was to be reversed, the first division becoming last, and the last first. This arrangement, however, was never carried into effect, inasmuch as the first and second divisions suddenly discovered that it would not be for their advantage to fulfil the contract; and accordingly all things returned to their original chaos.

In hopes of obtaining a little improvement in our bill of fare we also agreed to have but two meals a day, but this hope proving utterly fallacious, this measure became extremely unpopular, and it was impossible to find a single passenger who would allow that he had voted in its favour. After various remonstrances made to the captain and other officers by different individuals, a mass meeting was held and a committee of three appointed to state our grievances to the captain and solicit his interference. The great man received them graciously, and promised after dinner to visit the steerage in person. Accordingly about the middle of the afternoon he was seen advancing towards our quarters. Attended by an eager crowd of followers he descended the ladder, and looked curiously round on the novel and interesting spectacle. A plate was presented to him containing a portion of hot water with a little grease floating on the surface, and dignified by the name of soup. With the flavour of roast chicken and plum pudding yet lingering about his palate it was hardly to be expected that he should find such a compound much to his liking; but it was no slight proof of condescension even to taste it at all, and manifested a freedom from vulgar prejudice and a willingness to be convinced worthy of the highest praise.

[Pg 285]

As many of the passengers as could find standing room had followed the captain down the ladder, and now stood peeping over each other's shoulders and watching his movements in respectful silence. The rest gathered round the hatch on deck, and as they could not see what was going on one of their number would from time to time inquire of those below, and then repeat the answer for the benefit of his companions.

"What's the cap'n doing?" says the telegraph on deck.

"He's lookin' round," returns the other in a loud whisper.

"An' what's he doing now?"

"He's tastin' the soup."

"An' what does he say?"

"He says it's first rate;" and at this a low murmur of disapprobation runs through the crowd. "Hang his old pictur! I wish he had to eat it," cries one, shrugging his shoulders.

"It's just what I expected," mutters another who looks as if he had a fancy to play the part of Catiline. "I tell you nothing'll ever do any good till we take the law into our own hands."

All those within hearing of these daring words instantly turn their eyes towards the speaker, some with sympathetic admiration, others to take his measure and see if his bearing corresponds with his utterance; while he, conscious of the scrutiny, straightens himself up and stares disdainfully into vacancy. Half-a-dozen of the same kidney then work their way up to him, and they all begin in a low tone to discuss the reasons why they should deprive the captain of his command, and, if he resisted, put him in irons or even tow him overboard for a mile or two. All seem greatly pleased with this last suggestion, for the idea of a steamboat captain bobbing up and down at the end of a long rope, and bubbling out his cries for help, and promises of amendment is, it must be confessed, very facetious and amusing. These arch conspirators thus mutually inflamed their noble rage, and proved so conclusively that they ought to take command of the ship, and the ease with which it could be done, that I never exactly understood why they didn't do it.

[Pg 286]

Captain W. having finished his inspection again mounted the ladder, and unconscious of the dangers by which he was surrounded walked calmly through the crowd that opened to give a passage. I expected at every step to see rude hands laid on his collar, and a revolver at each ear; but at this unlucky moment every one seemed seized with a sudden attack of modesty that disposed him to remain in the background and yield the post of honour to others. If it had not been for this unfortunate coincidence I have no doubt I should have been gratified by witnessing the entertaining spectacle suggested above; for the captain, having stopped but a moment at the galley to give some orders to the cooks, had no sooner passed the mainmast than his enemies all at once regained their usual confidence, and shook their fists at him behind his back with most alarming ferocity.

The result of this visit was the next day visible in a nondescript dish, consisting of junks of fresh pork stewed with corresponding junks of dough, and a large quantity of potatoes; after which favourable symptom there was a relapse of our old complaint.

Under these circumstances an invitation we received to dine with a select party in the lower steerage was naturally accepted with the same eagerness with which a starving author in those days when starving was the fashion would have hurried to dine with a noble lord. One of our entertainers had already made my mouth water by the rapturous terms in which he described the approaching banquet, and I waited impatiently for the appointed hour of four. He and his companions had in some way propitiated the sooty functionaries of the cabin, either by flattery or Panama brandy, and had thus succeeded in accumulating the materials for a repast of the most

[Pg 287]

elegant and *recherche* description. It would be in vain, however, to attempt to give a full and particular account; it will be sufficient to indicate to the reader a few of the principal dishes, leaving to his imagination the same work that we left to our own, that of supplying the various accessories.

The first course consisted of beef, pork, and chicken, roast, boiled, and stewed, served up with a soup of the most varied and exquisite flavour. There was a scanty allowance of soft bread, and a plentiful supply of fresh biscuit six months old. There were potatoes in abundance, onions enough to smell of, and if spice were wanting, salt and pepper were to be had for the asking.

Having thus set out my first course, I fancy the reader picturing to his mind's eye a large table groaning under the weight of a dozen or twenty dishes, and all the useless additions of an unnatural and sickly civilization. But this would be doing gross injustice to a feast whose most striking characteristic was a grand and massive simplicity. The whole of the luxuries I have enumerated were comprised in a single dish—a round tin pan of moderate circumference, resting on the middle of a sailor's chest belonging to our host. If any one should cavil at this explanation as being altogether monstrous and incredible, I would refer him for an illustration to the tent of the fairy Peribanon, which a sea-pie as our dish was denominated, doth most closely resemble: inasmuch as it may, and sometimes doth, consist of but a few articles, and at others affords comfortable lodgings to a mighty host. But certain it is that a naturalist, on examining the various bones that were exhumed from the bowels of our pasty, would have been sadly puzzled to determine the animal to which it had belonged, and would probably have astonished the world with a marvellous account of some prodigious monster belonging neither to the Saurians nor Ophidians, but more strange than either, with the head of a swine, the liver of an ox, and the legs and gizzard of a bird.

[Pg 288]

Our second course consisted of oranges; the third varied indefinitely according to the imaginative powers of the guests. A coffee-pot two-thirds full of brandy, sugar, and water, supplied the never-failing accompaniment. As chairs were wanting, as well as a place to put them, we sat on trunks and boxes, or insinuated as large a portion of our persons as was convenient into the berths on either side; a very favourable position for the eating of soup, as it brings the head almost down to the knees, and thus prevents those slips between the cup and the lip that are nowhere else so many as at sea. On the strength of this dinner I went as far as Acapulco; when, like that wary old campaigner, Sir Dugald Dalgetty, we laid in a store of provant sufficient to last for several days. The various hotels at this place, The United States, The American House, and others with less hospitable names, were at once invaded by a hungry swarm, and the eggs, the chickens, the bread and milk that had been accumulating since the departure of the last steamer, were stowed away with a celerity that excited the mingled delight and consternation of our entertainers. But we must leave this place for another chapter.

CHAPTER XXIII.

[Pg 289]

The little town and harbour of Acapulco resemble a wash bowl with a cup full of water in the bottom. On rounding the promontory that protected the entrance to the basin, we found ourselves in the arena of a vast amphitheatre formed by a range of lofty hills that shut us out on every side from the world we had left. At the foot of these hills, opposite the entrance, was a narrow strip of level ground affording room for a miniature city. Here are the coal depots of the Pacific Company, and here, on the arrival of every steamer, a brisk trade is carried on in eggs and poultry, bananas, oranges, and limes. I have already referred to the feats of gastronomy performed at our first landing. Though it was yet early in the morning, our first impulse, after a warm greeting between us and our mother earth, was to seek a convenient house of entertainment, where for the moderate charge of fifty cents we might eat an unlimited quantity of eggs and chicken.

As the American House seemed already full, we bent our steps towards the United States, where we were fortunate enough to secure a seat at the first table. For a few minutes nothing was heard but the cracking of eggshells, the mumbling of chicken bones, the sipping of coffee, interrupted by various inexpressible ejaculations of delight; but as one dish was emptied after another there arose a strange Babel of full-grown English and baby Spanish.

"Here muchacho!—muchacho! eggs—wavers—mas wavers—mas chickeen—cafe—mas milk—darn your eyes, don't you know your own language, see here;" and thus, words failing, they had recourse to signs. But after we had eaten a couple of chickens and nearly a dozen eggs apiece, with a corresponding supply of bread and coffee, neither words nor signs were any longer intelligible, and all our eloquence produced no other reply than the simple monosyllables, "no mas," or the more mysterious "poco tiempo." "Poker temper," cried a hungry voyager, "I've had poker temper long enough, I tell you, now I want some chicken." "Poco tiempo," returned the imperturbable host, and finishing our dinner with a hearty laugh, we sallied forth into the street.

[Pg 290]

Acapulco, in spite of its picturesque location, presents little that is attractive. The houses, though built of stone, appear mean and dilapidated, half way between a stable and a jail. To my eye, at least, the tangled, unbroken foliage of the tropics is slovenly and monotonous compared with the shaven fields and trim forests of New England. I missed that pleasant green that carpets all but our most barren hills. Nothing else, not even the architectural beauty of the cocoa palm with the

tinkling music that the softest breeze steals from its ivory leaves, can compensate for the nakedness of the soil. It reminds one of an Indian chief, terrible in his war paint and graceful with his nodding plumes, but otherwise as naked as the day he was born.

But my curiosity was abundantly gratified in studying the manners and habits of the people. They are so backward in all the arts of civilization that one cannot escape the impression that they are a degenerate race. It seems impossible that they should have built the houses they now occupy, and indeed, in all the towns through which we passed inhabited by a race of Spanish origin, I do not remember to have seen a single building in progress of erection or which did not seem to have been standing at least half a century. Every day a market was held in the open air on one side of the plaza, where, besides the articles already mentioned, there were exposed for sale fresh beef cut up into long strips, or rather rags, several kinds of vegetables, cheese, and tortillas.

[Pg 291]

Most of the trafficking was here done by women—they sat squat on the ground with thin rude baskets beside them—they used cakes of soap for the smaller currency, and fragments of stones for weights, breaking them in pieces till they balanced the article they were selling, and then, by some process of arithmetic I could not comprehend, arriving at the correct amount.

Near the sea-shore there was a fruit market held under the shade of some lofty trees. Here women and boys seated behind rude tables kept up an incessant cry to attract the attention of some loitering Californian, "Comprar oranges? comprar lemona? picayune a glass."

"Me no comprar—me no quiere," returns the other, taking it for granted, with delightful absurdity, that Mexicans as well as babies can understand bad English more readily than good, "me no comprar mas; me havvy all me wishy, here," stroking his stomach with most expressive complacency.

While we thus sauntered through the streets engaged in the innocent and laudable occupation of sucking oranges and eating what seemed to be withered slices of brown bread, but was really cocoanut and sugar, another part of our fellow-passengers were much more gravely employed. A meeting was held on the plaza, sundry speeches were made full of the most scorching sarcasm, and resolutions passed denouncing the conduct of the Company in the strongest terms. A collection was taken up for the purpose of instituting legal proceedings against the Carolina, and having her condemned as unseaworthy. Dark hints were given of burning her before she could leave the port. We were to get home from Acapulco the best way we could, and afterwards hold the Company responsible for all loss incurred by our detention.

It seemed for a time as if these agitators would succeed in accomplishing their purpose. A broken-down steamship belonging to the American consul was lying in the harbour, and it was natural to suppose that he would do all in his power to detain the Carolina, in order to obtain passengers for his own vessel. The first step was to order a survey to be made of the ship. The survey was made as a mere matter of form by three dignified officials within the steamer, and by as many naked Indians without. The divers, who seemed to understand their business much better than their superiors, reported that two strips of copper had been detached from the ship's bottom, and the seams were also open, thus causing the leak which had occasioned us so much uneasiness. On making this discovery the authorities delayed giving us a permit to go to sea, and the commandant of the fort above the town received orders to blow us out of water if we attempted to force a passage. Our captain declared he would go to sea in spite of them. The passengers entered into the dispute with ardour, and began to furbish up their revolvers and argue the feasibility of carrying the citadel by a coup-de-main.

[Pg 292]

In this state of affairs, when the doughty little town of Acapulco and the spiteful little steamer Carolina seemed about to come to loggerheads with each other, a compromise was proposed that satisfied the dignity of both the contending parties, and prevented that dreadful bloodshed that must otherwise have inevitably followed. The Indians, who had discovered the leak, were commissioned to stop it. For this purpose two strips of copper were provided to take the place of those that were lost, and lowered down to the divers, who instantly sunk with them beneath the surface, the white soles of their feet glancing curiously amid the dark water. What they did with the copper afterwards I cannot say. It did not rise again to the surface. But whether they really succeeded in nailing it on to its proper place, or whether it is now quietly reposing in the soft mud at the bottom of the little harbour, is a question about which I must decline giving an opinion.

This arrangement, however, had the desired effect; it healed the breach, if it did not stop the leak. Our captain received his permit, and in a few hours we were ready for sea. About one hundred of our company remained behind, unwilling to risk their lives further in the Carolina. Part of them went across the country on mules to the city of Mexico, and thence by wagons to Vera Cruz, and the remainder took passage in the worn-out steamer belonging to the consul, thus jumping out of the frying-pan into the fire. If any one wonders that we did not all follow the example of the first, an explanation is easily given. The land journey to Vera Cruz was long and toilsome—the rivers were already swollen by the winter rains, and it was doubtful if we should succeed in crossing them; and after reaching that city we might still have to wait a long time before we could obtain a passage to any port in the United States. Besides, the chief-engineer thought he had now succeeded in repairing the engine, so that we should have no further trouble on that score; but, more than all, the sun shone brightly, the touch of the earth had given us all new strength and spirits, and we no longer retained any very lively apprehensions of the dangers we had so recently encountered.

[Pg 293]

Behold us, then, four days after we entered the harbour of Acapulco, once more stealing out to sea. The caution with which we moved soon convinced us that, whatever repairs had been made during our stay, the engine was still in a very precarious condition. Slowly and painfully, like one just recovering from sickness, we crept along the smooth surface of the Pacific. We watched with the most intense solicitude all the signs of the weather, fearing lest some storm hovering near should spy us out and swoop down upon our feeble craft. What we feared was at length partially accomplished. A storm that swept across the ocean many miles from our course just brushed us, in passing, with its cloud-broad wings. The effect of this trifling blow showed us what we should have had to expect if we had encountered the main body of the tempest. The leak gained upon us with frightful rapidity, and we were obliged once more to have recourse to the buckets. We divided into several companies, that succeeded each other in this fatiguing labour, and were thus enabled to continue at work nearly the whole night. About three in the morning I left my station on the ladder for the last time, my clothes completely saturated with coal and water, and altogether my appearance so deplorable that a decent chimney-sweep would have been ashamed to be seen in my society. But the heat of the smoke-pipe round which I huddled soon dried my clothes, and as to my appearance, I consoled myself with the reflection that, bad as it was, our situation was ten times worse.

[Pg 294]

The result of this night's experience was to induce Captain W. to give up his design of reaching Panama, and turn the ship's head towards Realejo. The passengers had already strongly urged this change, but, with that jealousy natural to sea-captains and cookmaids, he had hitherto preserved the most impenetrable mystery as to his intentions.

Having after some difficulty found the entrance, we sailed up the river about a mile, and made the ship fast at a wharf where the steamers of Vanderbilt's line take on board their coal, and we were now at liberty to take a view of the surrounding country.

The town of Realejo was eight miles further up the river, and the only buildings near the wharf were two or three miserable shanties inhabited by an old Indian and half a dozen melancholy fowl. On the opposite side of the river, or perhaps I should rather say arm of the sea, here about a mile in width, a single house was visible peeping through the snarled and matted forest. An American bark and brig lay dozing over their anchors half a mile from our ship, seeming, so thick was the silence in which they were encrusted, to be stuck fast in that enchanted sea, like flies in a hogshhead of molasses.

With these exceptions every thing still remained in apparently the same state as when, six thousand years before, evening and morning were the fifth day. The "great horologe divine" of this lower creation was all complete—there were the springs, the weights, the wheels, but the maker's fingers had not yet put them in motion, and they still seemed waiting for that powerful touch. It was almost like sacrilege to venture into those sublimely silent waters, and arouse them from their long slumbers by our noisy and impertinent life.

[Pg 295]

The sea here seemed to have gained upon the land—the trees stood like the herds on a sultry summer's afternoon knee deep in the cooling flood. Beneath the low arching roof the shadows lay thickly woven and felted together. Birds of unknown plumage glided along the glassy pavement, among the slender stems, or unfolded their crimson and gold to the sun as they floated carelessly over our heads. Each little leaf hung silent on its perch—there was not even that whispering hum that, like the drone of a beehive or a country school-house, is forever heard from a waking forest.

But suddenly an almost imperceptible ripple came creeping round a distant headland, and the next moment a rude canoe shot out into the river. Others continually made their appearance in different directions, and in a few hours fifteen or twenty were drawn up on the beach. They contained large baskets of eggs, oranges of a finer flavour than any we had yet tasted, and a strange fruit resembling the quince in size and shape, but as yellow and almost as tasteless as a pumpkin. Parrots, macaws, and paroquets were also offered for sale, and some of them, we were told, talked the purest Castilian, but no one seemed disposed to try that method of instruction.

Having satiated our curiosity on the novel scenery around us, the question arose whether we should remain in the ship during her hazardous voyage to Panama, or tempt the more uncertain difficulties of a journey through Central America. A party that had gone up to Realejo to make inquiries, having brought back a favourable report, the greater part of the passengers abandoned the ship without reluctance. It was only at the last moment, however, that we could make up our minds to follow their example. The brief twilight of the equator was already closing around us when we took our seats in the only remaining canoe and pushed off from the ship in company with which we had braved so many perils. We crossed and recrossed the river several times to avoid the currents and shallows; sometimes we were in the middle of the stream, and again we glided like a shadow beneath the overhanging branches. It was the hour of vespers, and presently our boatmen, an Indian with his wife and daughter gaily dressed in their Sunday attire, began chanting in a low and rather plaintive tone the Evening Song to the Virgin. As the river grew narrower the trees on either hand bent their heads in listening silence. Closing our eyes, we seemed to be floating onward, as in a dream, independent of human agency, still farther and farther into the heart of a boundless, trackless forest. It was a dream to last forever, but suddenly the canoe struck with a wide-awake jar against the wharf at Realejo. Several huge canoes, as big as a railroad car and each dug out of a single mahogany, lay moored in the stream. Scrambling over two or three smaller ones that lay by our side, we mounted the wharf and looked round for the city. We could discover nothing in the darkness but half a dozen ill-looking natives, one of whom now came forward and offered with a vast deal of gesticulation to conduct us to a hotel

[Pg 296]

where there were muchos Americanos. Taking our trunk on his shoulders he led the way and we followed in silence. A short walk through streets silent as churchyard paths, and lined with doorless, windowless houses, brought us into a rather more cheerful neighbourhood, and to a hotel filled indeed with mucho Americano. All were busy in making arrangements for their journey, and a few rapid inquiries soon gave us all the needed information.

A contract had already been made with several wealthy proprietors to convey us across the country, one hundred and fifty miles, to Granada on Lake Nicaragua, where we should proceed by water to San Juan. Carts, drawn by oxen and capable of containing six persons, were to be provided for the moderate charge of eight dollars apiece.

[Pg 297]

The most prominent member of our little cartful was a sturdy buckeye blacksmith of the most royal generosity and good nature. But he never seemed to know when he was conferring a favour, and hence it lost much of its effect from the want of that accompanying smile and unconscious softening of the voice that so often please more than the gift itself. His hair and eyebrows were whitey brown, his features showed even in their coarseness his frank and dashing temper—and the words came sputtering out of his mouth like ale out of a bottle.

His companion, a quiet, smoothfaced lad from Wisconsin, who was wonderfully expert in the use of the rifle, had to my knowledge no other name than Si.

Texas, as we styled the third of our party, was an odd mixture of shrewdness and simplicity. He had a thousand oddities, the fancies of a young girl, the whims of an old bachelor, and the greenness—I use it for want of a better word—of a Southern plantation. We all made him our butt; he knew it and enjoyed it, for he knew too that he could put an end to it whenever he would.

Monday morning, the head of our train began its march out of the city, and the rest followed at long intervals. There were in all about forty carts, containing nearly two hundred and fifty passengers,—and, as we are now fairly under way, I will take the opportunity to give a description of one of these ingenious vehicles. The body of the cart, which was made of mahogany, was about seven feet in length and three and a half in width. Over it was erected a rude framework of slender sticks resembling the osier, and covered with raw hides to keep off the sun and rain. The wheels were formed of solid pieces of mahogany about four feet in diameter and six inches thick, with stout projections at the hub; and as they fitted very loosely to the axle, the whole fabric moved forward with that rolling, sidelong gait peculiar to sailors and elephants. Four oxen were yoked to this rude contrivance in the manner common I believe to all Spanish countries. A straight piece of wood about four inches square, slightly hollowed at the ends to fit the heads of the oxen, was bound firmly to their horns by long strips of hide. This yoke is much lighter and simpler than our own, but more time is required to make it secure, and its position on the head would probably be unfavourable to drawing heavy loads.

[Pg 298]

With this description of our equipage, the reader will be curious to know how seven persons could find room in it. If he could have taken a peep in at the back of the cart, he would have seen the hombre, as we styled our driver, and the brother of the author elevated in front on a trunk which had accompanied us to the mines and still clung to us in all our wanderings. In the interior he would have discovered the profiles of Ohio, Texas, and New York, who sat crosswise on the bottom with their backs against one side, their feet against the other, and presented a lively resemblance to the letter C. As there was not room enough remaining to accommodate us in the same way, Si and myself were obliged to sit with our superfluous legs dangling behind. The obvious advantages of our position in enabling us to see so much more of what was passing than those within were counterbalanced by equal inconveniences. A fifth ox, that was intended to take the place of one of the others in case of any emergency, was tied to one corner of the cart; and, as he rolled along behind us, the malicious brute would set down his pestle hoofs with most unnecessary emphasis, making the soft oozy mud fly like cream in a churn, and spattering us from head to foot till we were enclosed in a complete suit of defensive armour.

Where the road was smooth, the cattle proceeded at a rapid rate, urged on by the relentless goad of our hombre. This instrument was as long and stout as a fishing-rod, and terminated in a formidable brad that brought blood at every blow. The hind quarters of the oxen were scarred as if by the smallpox from former applications of this cruel weapon. When our hombre desired to enliven the pair that were yoked to the pole, he was obliged to shorten his goad stick by thrusting it behind him into the cart, to the serious discomfiture of Texas and Ohio. To do him justice, however, he seldom resorted to this means of propulsion, except in the most difficult passages, contenting himself with yelling in the most approved fashion of his class, and belabouring his cattle with a storm of ringing Spanish curses, any one of which would easily have filled a balloon. If his unaided efforts proved ineffectual to extricate us from the slough, he was obliged to wait till the carts behind came up, when three or four drivers, levelling their goads all at once at the unlucky beasts, and raising a concert that would scare at least ten souls out of one weaver, would commence capering and grimacing in the most frantic manner. The naked Indian boys, one of whom followed every cart, would join in this exercise, while twenty or thirty bearded Saxons looked on with supreme contempt. When this species of incantation did not succeed, the only resource was to attach a third yoke of oxen, which never failed to extricate us from our difficulty.

[Pg 299]

The first part of our journey was as bad as a road through a level country could possibly be. The dark fat soil had been churned into an almost uniform mass of the softest mud, into which the wheels sunk up to the hub. Where the ground was firmer, the road had been worn into deep ruts and holes, which would bring the cart down upon its axis with stunning violence. It was the duty of the one in front to give us timely warning of these dangerous breakers.

"Hard a-starboard," he would suddenly cry, and instantly Texas and Ohio would brace themselves more firmly, in anticipation of the coming shock, while Si and myself drew in our pendulum legs with emulous celerity. Down goes the right wheel as suddenly as if it had rolled off the roof of a house, settling Texas' head an inch between his shoulders, and jamming Ohio's inextricably between his knees. The next moment their positions are reversed, the cart slowly recovers its balance and plunges down a precipice on the left. It is in vain that they cling like bats to the framework behind them, or brace their legs like pillars against the opposite side, the next jolt upsets all their calculations and throws them into a state of helpless bewilderment, from which they do not fully recover till the cart reaches more level ground, when a volley of "darns" and "gollies," and such like exclamations, seems to operate as a wonderful sedative.

[Pg 300]

But it must not be supposed that we remained constantly in such contracted quarters. Ohio's bustling activity was continually driving him out to stretch his legs, Si was anxious to try his new revolver, and we all felt a natural curiosity to see as much of the country as possible. It was unsafe, however, to loiter long behind. The oxen moved commonly as fast as a man could walk, and if they ever got out of sight it was no easy matter to overtake them. We each of us found ourselves at different times in this awkward predicament; and the state of exhaustion in which we at length rejoined our company, and the ill-concealed derision with which we were greeted, made us firmly resolve never again to be guilty of a similar blunder. Yet the boy of ten or twelve years who accompanied us, performed nearly the whole journey on foot, and without exhibiting any signs of fatigue. When we first left Realejo he marched before, in the middle of the road, and the cattle followed close behind as if he had been their pilot. But after we were once fairly started, he was no longer needed in that capacity, and I wondered why he continued to follow us. Presently I saw him seize a large knife, resembling a butcher's cleaver, that lay in the back of the cart, and run into the woods. In ten or fifteen minutes he reappeared, carrying a large bundle of strips of bark about a foot in length. While I was in an agony of curiosity to know what he would do next, he advanced to the side of the cart and thrust several of the mysterious strips in between the axle and the wheel, which had been for some time creaking in the most distressing manner. A few turns relieved the difficulty. The bark, ground against the heated axle, yielded a small supply of lubricating sap that furnished an indifferent substitute for grease. This lasted perhaps an hour, when another application became necessary. In spite, however, of this ingenious artifice, we wore out two axles four inches in diameter in performing a journey of one hundred and fifty miles. Several times the axle began to smoke, when the cry of "Acqui, muchacho! muchacho! rota, fuego!" brought our indefatigable satellite to our assistance. When not thus occupied, he commonly walked behind the cart, with a grave and erect demeanour that set off the hat, the only article of clothing he had on, to infinite advantage.

[Pg 301]

The wardrobe of our hombre was rather more extensive. He had, besides a hat, a shirt and pair of pantaloons; and, in that climate, nothing more was required. The children of both sexes seldom wear a rag of clothing till they are four years old, and the boys often go entirely naked ten years longer. As we were passing one day through a village, the name of which I have forgotten, my attention was attracted by a little girl not more than three years old, standing before the door of a house, with no other protection than a cigar and the cloud of smoke that she breathed from her nostrils with all the practiced *nonchalance* of an ancient Dutchman. A dispute, however, arose as to the sex of this young ancient, one of my companions stoutly maintaining that it was a boy; but then, as a lady to whom I related the incident ingeniously remarked, the children dress so much alike in that country that such a mistake might easily occur.

[Pg 302]

We went the first day only seven miles, and stopped for the night at Chanandaigua, a large town, and much more attractive than Realejo, though the style of building, as in all the cities of Central America, is to a stranger naturally gloomy and repulsive. The houses are mostly of one story, built of stone or brick, and plastered with cement. There are few windows looking towards the street, and these are often guarded by iron gratings or heavy shutters. The principal hotels and larger dwelling-houses somewhat resemble an Eastern caravanserai. They consist of a range of apartments surrounding an open square, and connected by a broad verandah. On this verandah the most important affairs of the family are conducted. It is often used as a kitchen, and almost always as a dining-room and bed-chamber. Hammocks slung between the posts and the walls of the house furnish a favourite lounge by day and bed by night. But little furniture is required, and that of the plainest description. A few chairs, a rough table, and a number of cot-bedsteads comprised the entire contents of the best hotel we found during our journey, and in Leon, a city of forty thousand inhabitants, we were obliged to sleep on the floor.

At Chanandaigua we fared sumptuously on boiled chicken, eggs, and wheaten bread resembling what we call French rolls. The flour used in the country is mostly imported from the United States, and the lower classes subsist almost entirely on corn and fruit. Our hombre grew fat on a diet we thought fit only for hogs. When we left Realejo, he threw into the cart a bag containing a lump of something twice as big as his hand, and of most alarming ponderosity. On stopping for dinner, he opened the bag, and displayed to our wondering eyes what seemed the half of a huge cheese, but on closer inspection proved to be a loaf of meal and water of a degree of density that argued immense pressure. With a huge wedge of this in one hand and a small wedge of rude cheese resembling curd in the other, he munched and nibbled alternately, with the most evident satisfaction. Before we reached the end of our journey, the bread had become so sour as to impregnate the whole atmosphere of our cart; yet the appetite of the hombre appeared in no wise diminished, and he and the muchacho probably finished the cake between them on their homeward route.

[Pg 303]

We left Chanandaigua early in the morning, for we had a long march before us, and desired to avoid the intense heat of midday as far as possible. The road led most of the way through an almost unbroken forest, interrupted at long intervals by a patch of corn or sugar-cane, with a footpath winding off to some invisible and isolated farmhouse. Except in the towns and villages, I do not remember seeing more than one building during our whole march;—the country seemed uninhabited, and the fat and fertile soil suffered for want of hands to trim its waste luxuriance. Among the strange trees of the forest, the mahogany seemed like an old acquaintance. Those that we saw were about the size of our largest oaks, and closely resembled them in the size and formation of the branches.

We passed this day through one or two small towns, the inhabitants of which came running to the doors to feast their eyes on so unusual a spectacle. Everywhere we were received with shouts of welcome;—even the little children joining in the cry of "los buenos Americanos!" Yet it must be confessed that our appearance was by no means prepossessing;—we looked more like a band of robbers or ragamuffins than the peaceful representatives of the greatest country in the known world, and perhaps owed more to our reals and revolvers than our vanity would have been willing to allow. But whatever may have been the reason, we had no cause to complain of incivility, and the only serious annoyance was the everlasting "poco tiempo." In the mouth of a Spaniard or an Indian these words possess the most perplexing significance. They are a sufficient answer to all complaint or expostulation. They are expected to feed the hungry, to quiet the impatient, and to satisfy the inquisitive. They afford the best possible refuge for indolence and stupidity, and there is reason to fear that as long as the Spaniard retains these words in his vocabulary he will continue to be distinguished for both those vices.

[Pg 305]

It was by a strange misnomer that we called our driver hombre. He had, to be sure, the outward semblance of a man, but he had no right to such a distinctive title. Curiosity, not that of the monkey, but of the philosopher, is man's most striking characteristic. Instead of defining him as a laughing animal or a cooking animal, I would define him as a curious animal. From this definition our hombre would certainly have been excluded. Of curiosity of any sort he had not, apparently, a single particle, and his intelligence was of the most contracted order. This was just the character for poco tiempo. He understood the uses of the phrase to perfection. If he delayed starting in the morning long after the last of our companions had disappeared, poco tiempo was his ready answer. If he loitered on the road without any assignable reason, when twilight was already stealing upon us, it was still poco tiempo. There was no use in getting into a passion,—in the first place he did not understand English, and if he had he would only have shrugged his shoulders a little more expressively, without losing a jot of his abiding complacency. We at length gave up the contest in despair, and submitted to a fate we could not resist, consoling ourselves with the reflection that an animal, who lived on cheese and sour Indian bread of the consistency of a bullet, must needs be of a very heavy, phlegmatic temper.

At several places by the roadside we found women and children with little tables covered with oranges, coarse brown sugar, lemonade, and bottles of milk. As bottles were apparently difficult to obtain, they were seldom willing to part with them; but rather than lose the sale of the milk, they would follow the cart a long distance, eagerly watching the bottle the whole time, as it rose from a horizontal to an upright position, as if fearful that that too would be swallowed by the voracious Americano. In spite of the intense heat we drank but little water on our journey, preferring to quench our thirst with oranges, of which I sometimes ate, or rather drank, twenty in a single day. They were not only far superior to any ever seen in the States, but surpassed, in almost the same degree, those we had eaten at Rio and Havana, the intensest heat of the tropics being required to bring this fruit to perfection. Of the pineapples I can only say, they seemed more fit to be the food of angels than of men; and if, as some suppose, our character be really affected by the nature of our food, then those who live on the pineapples of the equator must be of all men the most subtilized and ethereal. I am quite satisfied in my own mind the amiable Elia must, some time in his life, have visited Central America, or he never could have written with such feeling and unction on a subject that can be appreciated only by those who have been fortunate enough to enjoy similar opportunities. We travelled this day thirty-six miles, and came late in the evening to Leon. Our clumsy caravan, that seemed sufficiently rude and primitive in the depths of the forest, harmonized still less with the paved streets of a great and splendid city. It was like the relic of a barbarous age, and I could not help thinking that the inhabitants of Leon would regard it with as much curiosity as I had done myself. Yet it produced no greater sensation than a market wagon in Boston or New York,—our hombre drove carelessly along, past long blocks of lofty houses, and under magnificent cathedrals, without a thought of the ludicrous contrast we presented. He stopped at length before a hotel, where a crowd of our companions were already assembled. Some of them had been here several hours; they had eaten their supper, and were now grumbling in good set terms at the imposition that had been practised upon them. In the first place the supper was detestable, and in the second place there was not half enough of it. Putting these two together, and sagely concluding that the case could not be much worse, we determined to try our fortunes in another direction. An American, who had been residing several months in Leon, directed us to a private house, where he said we should be sure to obtain an excellent supper.

[Pg 306]

[Pg 307]

This house stood on one corner of the plaza, directly opposite the great cathedral. It presented

the same appearance of squalid magnificence to which I have already alluded;—the walls were of stone, and the apartments lofty and spacious, but there were no carpets, no sofas, no mirrors, and no sign of comfort except a netted hammock of twisted grass swung between the corners of what must be called the parlour.

After a long delay, which Ohio bore with provoking good nature, supper was brought in by a fat señora, assisted by a peeping señorita, and displayed upon the rickety little table. The plates were of different patterns,—the cups were without saucers,—the knives without forks,—and, for want of a more convenient seat, Texas was fain to trust himself to the hammock;—but, as Ohio declared, with his mouth full of chicken, and eggs, and frijoles, it was a supper fit for a king; but then, unfortunately, we were no king, but four half-starved Californians. When our chicken, who had doubtless been the lean and hungry Cassius to some Cæsar of the dunghill, had disappeared almost bodily down our throats,—and when the eggs and beans had followed, without at all diminishing our ardour,—we, all at once, turned upon our hostess a look of inquiry mingled with the utmost complacency and benevolence. It was as much as to say, "So far good,—you have made, my dear señora! a very tolerable commencement,—after this little skirmish, we feel ready for the more important engagement that is to follow."

But the señora, looking coldly and ungratefully upon our enthusiasm, replies, that what we have just eaten is really and absolutely our supper, that there is, in fact, not another morsel of food in the house. Slowly and reluctantly we dropped our four reals into the skinny hands of the withered old beldame, and walked back to our hotel a sadder and wiser man. [Pg 308]

Having slept very comfortably on the dirty floor of the dining-room, we walked out next morning to see the city. There can hardly be a greater contrast than that between the towns and cities of Central America and those of our own country. The latter are emphatically of to-day,—they have nothing to do with the past, and hardly any thing more to do with the future. If our buildings do not tumble down in the progress of erection, they are almost sure to be removed in a few years to give place to others. But the buildings of Leon seemed to have locked up in them the story of a thousand years, and as if they might live to tell of a thousand years to come. There are no unfinished houses, no piles of stone or lumber blocking up the streets, no sound of the saw, or pleasant tinkling of the mason's hammer. These things may have been some centuries ago, but one would rather suppose the whole city had suddenly sprung from the ground, like Minerva full grown from the head of Jupiter. Yet it has nothing of the warmth, and brilliancy, and fantastic variety of tropical vegetation;—instead of the gaudy kiosk and slender minaret, like bundles of sunbeams converted into stone, which harmonize so well with the glowing regions of the sun, there is nothing but a heavy, cubic monotony, better suited to the snows of Siberia, or Dickens' London fog.

The cathedral is a vast, ungainly structure, built entirely of stone, and with no pretensions to beauty; but being advantageously situated on one side of the great square, with several massive towers, it presents a very imposing and commanding appearance. Ascending to the top by a narrow, winding stairway, in the thickness of the wall, we obtained a grand and extensive prospect. From this elevated island of brick, and stone, and mortar, we overlooked an immense sea of foliage which closed around us on every side, dotted, here and there, with smaller islands, and watched over by the cloud-girdled, pyramidal mountain we had seen in ascending the Realejo, seemingly thrown forward, like a solitary sentinel, in advance of the mighty host behind. We stood on a building, and in the midst of a city belonging to the civilization of the old world, while all around lay the untamed barbarism of the new. The inhabitants of Leon are not Americans, but Europeans, and such as Europe saw two hundred years ago. They have gained nothing of new life and vigour by being transplanted on to this virgin soil, but seem rather to have lost what little they possessed. This country has not proved to them the harsh stepmother that New England was to our Puritan ancestors; but, like a foolish grandam, has spoilt them by her foolish indulgence. The result is that they can do nothing for themselves,—England supplies them with manufactures, and the United States furnish their flour. Their cities, without good roads to connect them with the country and with each other, languish and go out like scattered embers. [Pg 309]

Yet the country is rich almost beyond compare. The forests abound in the most valuable timber, the soil is of inexhaustible fertility, and the year is a constant harvest. The sugar-cane, which in our Southern States requires to be renewed every three years, here continues to yield a sufficient return for ten, growing fifteen or twenty feet high, and as thick as a man's arm. Native labour can be obtained for a real a day. As far as our experience extends, the climate is extremely healthy. We were three weeks in the country, at the commencement of the rainy season, and especially liable to sickness from our long confinement, yet we lost only one man by disease, and he was attacked before we left the ship. Government holds out great inducement to actual settlers, and the finest land in the world can be obtained at a merely nominal value. [Pg 310]

While we were at Leon, an offer was made to Ohio of so liberal a nature as almost induced him to stop short on his homeward journey, and forego the anticipated pleasure of seeing his wife and children for another year. He was to receive one hundred dollars a month, besides board and lodging; a shop and tools were promised at the expense of Government, and the privilege of working a third of the time on his own account was superadded.

Other artisans were also eagerly sought after. Thousands of muskets lay useless in the armories, because not a workman could be found who understood the mysteries of a lock—not the permutation, combination lock of Brahmah or Hobbs, but a simple gun-lock, the construction of

which is known to every boy of twelve in the United States. But it is time to leave Leon and its helpless inhabitants. They reminded me constantly of the snail in the shell of a lobster, and of a little boy dressed in his father's clothes, and playing that he was a man.

We passed through Central America at the time of the civil war, and many of the streets of Leon were barricaded and guarded with mounted cannon. After leaving that city, we were told that we should enter the territory occupied by the hostile faction; and, to avoid all danger of ill-treatment, we were advised to keep as close together as possible. But nothing occurred to justify these apprehensions, or even to show that any war was raging. We met one day, in the thickest part of the wood, a dozen or twenty scarecrows, mounted on sorry horses, and armed with light lances and muskets; but, if these were a fair specimen of the Granadian chivalry, we should have had little to fear from their whole array. However, we were all of us desirous to avoid a collision, for it would certainly seem very ridiculous, after spending one or two years in earning perhaps as many thousands, to get killed just as we were ready to enjoy the fruits of our labour. This feeling, I have no doubt, moderated the ardour of more than one of our number who might otherwise have had no objection to the excitement of a skirmish, or to take up arms in one or the other of the contending parties.

[Pg 311]

We left Leon about the 10th, A. M., and making only a short journey, stopped for the night at a little Indian village called Nigaroti—I am not responsible for the spelling—the population of which could not much have exceeded the number of our own caravan. It consisted of a small collection of houses or huts built of rude basket-work, daubed in some cases with clay, and covered with a shaggy thatch. Each house stood in an enclosure, formed by a hedge of most magnificent proportions. A species of cactus, planted in a single row, furnished a green marble wall of lofty columns, standing so close together that no animal larger than a squirrel could pass between. These walls were now in a dilapidated condition, reminding the spectator of the ruins of an ancient temple. Some of the columns were at least thirty feet in height, while others had been broken off at a few feet from the ground, and the fragments were still lying where they had fallen. They were all about eight inches in diameter from top to bottom, with small rings at regular intervals resembling the joints of the cane.

As there was no hotel, we quartered ourselves upon the inhabitants, who received us with the warmest demonstrations of friendship, and instantly set to work to prepare for us the best supper their limited means would allow. I here first witnessed the operation of making the tortilla, the favourite, and, as far as I could learn, the only form in which bread is eaten by the lower classes. At Acapulco and other cities we had seen them offered for sale in piles six inches high, and presenting a very tempting appearance. The natives ate them with great apparent relish, rolling them up into a cylinder, and plugging the opening with a small stopper of cheese. As we had hitherto, however, been able to obtain wheat bread, I had only just tasted them out of curiosity, when I found they were far from being as good as they looked. But in this little village flour was, perhaps, never heard of, and in every house one or more occupants were now busy in preparing the hot and almost crispy tortilla. I watched the movements of our dusky maiden with great interest. She first crushed the corn, previously softened by boiling, into a uniform paste, by means of a common rolling-pin, then with great dexterity formed it into round balls or biscuits, one of which she placed on the bottom of a shallow earthen pan resting on a few embers. With the back of her clenched hand she spread it out over the dish, till it assumed the form of a buckwheat cake, though instead of the dimples that come and go on the surface of the latter, it was all over indented with the print of her knuckles. When one side was browned the cake was turned, and as the whole process required but a few minutes we soon had a high tower of tortillas smoking on our little table. There was the usual accompaniment of fried eggs and chicken. The tortillas served for plates as well as napkins, and the whole family stood ready to wait on us, and watching our every movement with the most ludicrous interest and delight.

[Pg 312]

There was the grandfather, still hale and vigorous; the young mother, with her infant in her arms, and half a dozen others scarce big enough to go alone. When we asked about her family, she laughed and blushed and pouted with true feminine coquetry, and quite vanquished the stout heart of our gallant Ohio. Perceiving that I had some difficulty in dissecting the joints of the chicken, she took up a fragment, and tearing it to pieces with her fingers, laid them before me, one after another, with an approving smile, and an exclamation of *bueno* at every mouthful. I had no doubt, from this proof of her hospitality, that she would have fed me with her fingers if I had desired. And, presently, another incident showed still more strongly her lofty disregard of what we, in our self-complacent wisdom, have styled the laws of decorum. As there was a want of plates, one of our party had cunningly appropriated to his own use that containing our scanty supply of eggs. Snatching the dish from his hands, the young *señora*, with the end of her forefinger, and with most amazing dexterity, divided the only remaining egg in the middle, and slid half of it on to Ohio's empty tortilla. "*Bueno, bueno!*" she exclaimed; and "*Bueno!*" faintly echoed Ohio, as he fell back on his seat, and surveyed with admiration the egg that had been so ruthlessly dissevered. The simple, unsophisticated beings around us mistook the nature of the mirth that followed this performance, and supposing it to arise from the satisfaction produced by so good a supper, joined in it with hearty good-will. But we had not yet learned all those uses of fingers which nature designed, but which civilization has discarded. A favourite beverage, with us as well as with the natives, was lemonade. To sweeten this delectable compound, they used the coarse black sugar of the country, which, to avoid the necessity of weighing, is commonly cast in small oblong cakes, as maple-sugar is often seen at home. Biting off a lump of the proper size, our hostess dropped it from her mouth into one of the little gourds that served for tumblers, and having stirred it with her finger, presented it to me with a simple grace that Hebe might

[Pg 313]

have tried in vain to equal. After the scenes I had witnessed in the mines, and the far more disgusting exhibitions of life at sea, I must plead guilty of affectation in refusing anything from the hand of a woman. I courteously passed the gourd to my next neighbour, who, either not having witnessed the mode of preparation or proud of such an opportunity of displaying his gallantry, swallowed the whole at a single draught.

We rose from table in high good humour with ourselves and our entertainers, but our enthusiasm was not a little dampened by the eagerness they manifested to obtain immediate possession of our money. "Quatro reales," cried the grandfather, holding out his hand; "Quatro reales," simpered the young mother; "Quatro reales," screamed all the children in concert, and standing on tiptoe; while the sucking baby, on its mother's breast, almost threw itself into convulsions in trying to master the mysterious syllables.

[Pg 314]

As we intended to lodge and take breakfast with them, this impatience might seem to imply some doubt of our honesty. We attributed it, however, to a natural curiosity to feast their eyes on a larger sum of money than they had probably ever possessed. Though they had all their simple wants required, and might have been considered wealthy by their poorer neighbours, yet I have no doubt that fifty dollars would have been an ample equivalent for all their worldly possessions. A single glance showed us the inventory of all their household goods. Under a small open shed in one corner of the enclosure stood a rude forge—our entertainer was the village smith—with a few clumsy tools scattered around it. Their whole supply of crockery was displayed upon our little table. Gourds, of different sizes, served them for tea-cups, for coffee-pots, and for milk-pails. Their simple cookery was performed in a few vessels of earthenware. A few steps from the blacksmith's shop, stood the huge wicker basket containing their sleeping apartments. This consisted of two rooms, the first of which would undoubtedly have been the very smallest room in the world, if the second had not been still smaller. The larger one contained a rude bedstead, and a hammock was slung cornerwise across the other. There was no other furniture, and no window, but the open door and numerous cracks in the walls admitted sufficient light. As it was evident that, under ordinary circumstances, the greater part of the family would have to sleep out of doors, we had no hesitation in taking undivided possession.

We were roused by the old man two hours before day; and, going out into the yard, found the table set for breakfast, and the whole family eagerly awaiting our appearance. Secretly envying the hens and turkeys that were just settling themselves for their morning nap upon the branches of the high tree above, we sat down to breakfast by the light of the stars and an envious tallow candle. In addition to what we had for supper, they had, according to promise, provided each of us with a small gourd containing half a pint of milk—a luxury we seldom succeeded in obtaining except in the morning, either because, as Texas suggested, the heat of the day dried up the cows, or because the natives were too indolent to take the trouble.

[Pg 315]

After breakfast, the same scene was repeated as on the previous evening. Having obtained their quatro reales, and a medio apiece for lodging, we saw them huddling together round the forge, and counting their gains with an immense deal of jabbering and gesticulation. All of our companions were aroused at the same unseasonable hour, and, like ourselves, devoured with curiosity to learn the cause of so strange a phenomenon, but our ignorance of Spanish defeated all our efforts, and the subject yet remains in all its original obscurity.

CHAPTER XXV.

[Pg 316]

We stopped the fourth night at a town called San Pablo, containing many substantial buildings and several thousand inhabitants. We were obliged, however, to throw ourselves, as before, upon the hospitality of private families. Our search for some time proved unsuccessful,—the citizens were wealthier and more aristocratic, and were not always disposed to receive such a set of ragamuffins into their houses. But, at length, one of the principal storekeepers consented to provide us with supper and lodging, and then the following conversation took place:

"Have you any eggs—huevos?"

"Si, Señor! huevos."—"Gallina?" "Si, Señor! gallina."—"Pan?" "Si, pan."—"Milk?" (here our Spanish was at fault.) "Si, mañana."—"Frijoles?" "Si, Señor! frijoles." "Bueno! quantos reales?" "Quantos reales?"—and at this important question he hesitated, while he consulted with his wife by signs—"Cinco reales."—"Cinco reales por uno?" "Si, Señor! bueno?" "Si! bueno! quantos horas?"

This question completely staggered him, as well it might; but we at length succeeded in making him comprehend that we wished to know at what hour we could have supper; and, this being satisfactorily arranged, he again ran over our bill of fare:—"Huevos, gallina, pan, frijoles, cinco reales, esta bueno?"

"Si, Señor," we replied, "esta bueno," and set out on a stroll through the town in search of a Panama hat Ohio was anxious to obtain. We failed to find any sufficiently large, but going into what seemed a shop, we found a fat padre swinging in his hammock, with one foot lazily patting the floor, and an expression of entire complacency in his little twinkling eyes and broad, good-humoured countenance. His library was arranged on one or two small shelves, and consisted

[Pg 317]

mostly of ancient Latin folios written, probably, some hundreds of years ago. The padre received us with the utmost courtesy; and, in spite of his sluggish temper, really looked as if he would have liked to converse with us if he could. But signs and single words, though they sometimes answered a very good purpose in enabling us to make a bargain for supper, or something equally simple, were of little service in carrying on an abstract conversation; we therefore soon made our adios, the padre returned to his hammock to meditate over his dinner, and we continued our walk.

After an excellent supper, which, besides the dishes included in our bill of fare, contained several that were entirely new to us, we threw ourselves into the hammocks that were slung in the little shop and composed ourselves to sleep. But the fumes of garlic and aguadiente, the glancing of lights before my half-shut eyes,—I have the misfortune to sleep, like the weasel, with one eye half open,—and an interrupted note of preparation buzzing in my ears, kept all my senses on the alert. At two in the morning we were summoned to breakfast, and this time with a reason; for a long march was before us, and our hombres desired to make an early start. The breakfast exceeded in variety and abundance anything that had been set before us for months; and, if our entertainers had understood English, they would have been highly amused by our involuntary exclamations of delight.

The language of inarticulate sounds, however, is pretty much the same the world over; and Dr. Johnson over his leg of mutton, and Sidney Smith's South Sea islander over his slice of broiled missionary, would have had no difficulty in responding to each other's emotions. When our repast was ended, our host, with an enlarged and comprehensive liberality, of which we had hitherto found no specimen among his countrymen, insisted upon our drinking his health in a glass of his own aguadiente; and we parted from him, his wife, and daughter, with expressions of mutual good-will, which lasted on our part as long as the smack of his hospitality still lingered on our palate.

[Pg 318]

The length of this day's journey was rendered more fatiguing by the various delays that we encountered. Among the other ingenious novelties in the construction of our conveyance, we found that the axle, now worn almost in two, was secured to the body simply by strips of hide. These gradually loosened by the alternations of wet and dry, and the violent strain to which they were subjected, till at length the axle turned completely over, and thus brought so large a portion of the load on to the heads of the oxen as fairly forced their noses into the dirt. But our hombre proved himself equal to the emergency; and, unyoking the oxen, he stationed Ohio at the pole to hold it as high as possible, while he slipt under the cart and went to work in restoring the axle to its proper place with a readiness and dexterity for which we had not given him credit.

This nice and difficult operation was at length completed, but our hombre still showed no inclination to set forward. We questioned,—we bribed,—we expostulated in vain. Ohio bitterly lamented his ignorance of Spanish; which prevented him from cursing the fellow in his own vocabulary, but belaboured him with all the sturdy English oaths he could muster, which fell on his imperturbable stupidity like drops of rain on the hide of a rhinoceros. In the midst of the shower he took from the cart an axe no bigger than a hatchet, with a handle four feet long, and disappeared in the woods, leaving us sitting on a rotten log and hardly knowing whether to laugh or cry.

[Pg 319]

Si examined his revolver and walked on ahead, under the pleasing illusion that he should find some game; the others soon followed, leaving us in charge of the cart. The wheezing sounds of the hombre's axe were the only sounds that disturbed the immense silence; except, now and then, we heard the far-off halloo of some half frantic driver urging on his weary cattle. These gradually died away in the distance, and we were left entirely alone. But such hours are often the most delightful periods of a journey like ours. We forgot the cities we had past, and the road by which we had come so far; our connection with the world seemed broken, and we felt like a man who had climbed to the moon and then thrown down the ladder by which he had ascended. Robinson Crusoe in his desert island,—a frog at the bottom of his well,—hardly a toad in his lump of granite, could be enclosed in a profounder solitude. I tried to image to myself the great cities, the mighty empires, that had once an existence in my brain; but the feverish pulsation of their hearts, and the hum and stir of their ceaseless bustle, were neither felt in the ground nor visible in the sleeping leaves.

But our hombre now returned, and put to flight my agreeable fancies. Like Robinson Crusoe's man Friday, his appearance on the scene at once dispelled the delightful illusion—there was another man in the world, and if one, why not a thousand? He carried on his shoulder a rough stick some six feet long, which we at once conjectured to be designed for an axle. Our fears were now excited lest he intended to finish it before proceeding any farther, but he speedily put an end to our apprehensions by stowing it in the cart; and, then, reyoking his oxen, we once more found ourselves in motion.

The road, since leaving Realejo, had been remarkably level. We had not met with a single hill worthy of the name, and were not a little surprised, on leaving the forest, to find ourselves on the very edge of a lofty and precipitous elevation and overlooking an immense extent of country. As far as we could see, the surface of the ground was broken into black irregular ridges, as if it had been occupied, for ages, by successive generations of charcoal burners, or had been turned up

[Pg 320]

into huge furrows by the careless ploughing of some clumsy Brobdingnagian boor. The road under our feet was almost as hard as iron, and seemed macadamized with scoria from a blacksmith's forge. At a little distance on the left we discovered what seemed, at first sight, the ruins of an oven or forge. The arch yet remained nearly entire, resting on a pile of fragments; and it required no great effort of the imagination to suppose that I was surveying the ruins of a vast and magnificent city, that, by some fearful convulsion of nature, had been reduced to this state of utter desolation. This fancy was partly true. At some period, apparently not very remote, the volcanoes that stood around the horizon had combined to lay waste the beautiful plain at their feet. In place of the cool green forest, a mass of black, naked lava now presented itself, that seemed hardly to want the touch of the match to burst again into a mighty conflagration. The arch that we had seen, was formed by the lava cooling round the prostrate trunk of a huge tree, that had perished in its embrace like Semele in the arms of Jove.

The road now suddenly descended by a long irregular flight of stairs worn in the crumbling stone. There was no possibility of riding even if we had been willing to lose the strange novelty of the scenery—the wheels fell with the regularity, and almost with the force, of trip-hammers, and with a decided, uncompromising jolt that threatened the immediate dislocation of the axle. Near the bottom, the path had been worn, as if by a winter torrent, into a deep and narrow channel, just wide enough for a single cart;—caves had been hollowed in the sides, and we involuntarily quickened our pace, lest we should be crushed beneath the overhanging banks. Having thus reached the foot of the lofty table land on which we had been travelling, we found ourselves on the edge of a wide valley that held the lakes Leon and Nicaragua in its lap, and stretched one arm, by the San Juan river, away to the Atlantic. Little of the country, however, was now visible, for in addition to the thickening twilight, a thunder cloud was coming rapidly up from the horizon, and soon filled the whole heavens. The first big drops began to fall. Ohio, Texas, and New York hastily scrambled into the cart and, as Si and myself followed, a flash of lightning gave the signal for the contest to commence, and was instantly extinguished in the flood itself had created. The rain, the thunder, and the lightning that now followed hard after us, were such as are met with only in the tropics;—the road soon became a river in earnest, and as the lightning flashed on the swollen and turbid waters, and the cart rocked and pitched with even more than its usual violence, it required but a slight exercise of imagination to feel that we were in a storm at sea. But the cloud having given us this taste of its quality, swept away, and the stars came out, old and young, in their pleasant family circles. There was yet no sign of human habitation. "Quantos ligos a Managua?" we had demanded twenty times, of a few chance travellers, and of our own invaluable hombre. One replied that Managua was four leagues off; and, after travelling steadily for half an hour, we met another who told us it was six.

[Pg 321]

At length we discovered the lights of a village, and Ohio, in his eagerness, walked on before. But our hombre, instead of stopping, as we expected, held straight on his course, and to our impatient inquiries, "What place is this? Where is Managua?" as curtly answered, "Marteiris,—Managua,—cuatro ligos." Another hour we dragged on, and finally crossed the plaza at Managua just as the moon had climbed to the topmost tower of the cathedral.

Managua is a pleasant city of ten or fifteen thousand inhabitants. The great cathedral is situated, like that at Leon, on one side of the plaza, but is far inferior in extent and magnificence. Our hotel also stood on the plaza; but lest the reader should form from this a too exalted notion of its appearance, I would add that it contained but two apartments, of moderate dimensions, one of which was occupied by the family, while the other served as a store-room and poultry house. There was, however, in the rear, a broad and spacious verandah where we ate our supper—after which we spread our blankets in a corner of the poultry house with a hen and brood of chickens in my right ear, and a duck quacking softly in my left.

[Pg 322]

At this place a part of our fellow-passengers becoming impatient of the slow rate at which we travelled, and fearful lest they should not reach San Juan in season, hired horses for the remainder of the journey—New York and Texas were among the number; but we were encumbered with too much baggage to follow their example, and Ohio had bought a whole regiment of parrots and paroquets that required his constant supervision, besides costing him a fortune in cages and bananas, which they ate with apparently equal relish.

Our hombre was occupied several hours the next morning in making a new axle. For want of an auger, the use of which simple instrument seemed unknown to him, he was obliged to cut the holes for the linchpins with a chisel; and this, in his hands, was a long and tedious operation. It was some satisfaction, however, to reflect that the work would not require to be done over again until he reached Granada, and might even last through the whole of his homeward journey.

Our road led to-day for several miles along the shore of Lake Leon. This is a large body of water resembling an inland sea; and some of our party, deceived by its extent, supposed it, at first, to be an arm of the ocean. A general halt was here ordered, and our hombres and muchachos, throwing off their light garments, were soon disporting themselves in the shallow water. They enjoyed this exercise so keenly, that it was with great difficulty we persuaded them to resume their march.

[Pg 323]

We stopped this night at Marsawa, a city of about the same size as Managua; and the next afternoon made our entry into Granada. It was Sunday, and the inhabitants, dressed in their best, were sitting in the open doors of their houses, exhibiting marks of greater opulence and refinement than we had yet witnessed. The grace and beauty of the women especially attracted our attention,—we seemed suddenly brought near to home, and to have been, all at once, set

down in the midst of the nineteenth century, after so long travelling in mediæval darkness.

Granada, as already stated, is situated on Lake Nicaragua, and connected by the San Juan river with the Atlantic. It has thus become the great inland market for that part of Central America. The various goods imported into the country are brought up the river and across the lake in huge canoes, or in boats of the heaviest and most awkward construction. There were also three small schooners on the lake about the size of a common pleasure-boat, and capable of carrying thirty men apiece; but not one of these was at that time at Granada, though they had been sent for at the first intimation of our approach, and were expected to arrive in one or two days.

In the mean time a number of our companions, impatient of the delay, and deceived by the statements of interested parties, who assured them that that mode of conveyance was much to be preferred, embarked in one of the canoes for a voyage of ninety miles across a body of water famed for its sudden and capricious temper. We were strongly tempted to follow their example, but finally concluded to remain at Granada until the arrival of the schooners, which were now expected to arrive every hour. The hotel where we had taken lodgings was very spacious and commodious. It would not indeed equal the St. Nicholas in either of these particulars, but may well deserve that distinction when compared with the others we had visited during our route. There was not only a dining-room capable of accommodating one hundred guests, but there were several sleeping apartments of like generous proportions, and furnished with cot bedsteads, a luxury to which we had been lately wholly unaccustomed. Except at the little village of Nigarote, we had slept on nothing softer than the floor for weeks, and we at first felt some alarm at the thought of such an unnatural elevation. All these apartments were on the ground floor, and, with the kitchen and outhouses, entirely surrounded an open court about a hundred feet square.

[Pg 324]

The price of board at this hotel was one dollar a day, and for this we had an abundance of tough beef cooked with garlic, beans, French rolls, coffee and milk. We had also, by way of variety, a few eggs and chickens, and a very limited supply of butter.

Granada presents little attraction to the stranger—on one side was the deep forest through which we had travelled—on the other a burning plain, with a few scattered houses, stretching two miles away to the lake. Owing to the intense heat, we remained most of the time at our hotel, lounging in the hammocks slung under the veranda, or watching from the steps of the dining-room the lazy groups of the natives, or our own more fiery Saxons, as they hurried hither and thither on some important trifle.

No exhibition of passion is perhaps more amusing than that of a dispute between two Spaniards. Such volubility of utterance, such nervous flexibility of feature, such jerking spitefulness of emphasis, can nowhere find a parallel, except in the nocturnal colloquy of half a dozen enamoured grimalkins. A quarrel, the merits of which we could not determine, arose one day between our landlord and another of the same gunpowder fraternity. One of Hoe's eight-cylinder printing presses could hardly have kept pace with the impetuous torrent of words that streamed quivering from their lips—our sluggish consonants, compared with their nimble vowels, are like the mailed crusader opposed to the lithe and supple Saracen, when the greatest danger arises from the rapidity of the onset. After keeping up a continuous fire of words, like a rolling discharge of musketry or a redhot poker sizzling in a pail of water, for some ten minutes, our landlord suddenly seized a gun that stood in one corner of the bar, and levelled it with an expression of most determined ferocity at his vapouring antagonist. The admiring Californians, instantly opening to right and left, displayed a narrow lane, at the end of which was discovered the cunning Spaniard prostrate on all fours, and warily exposing to the fire of the enemy that part of his person which instinct, or perhaps experience, had taught him was best calculated to meet the assault. The next moment, by a skilful side movement, he precipitated himself down the steps into the street.—Our landlord, with a grim smile of satisfaction, restored the gun to its place, and the storm cleared away as rapidly as it commenced.

[Pg 325]

CHAPTER XXVI.

[Pg 326]

Tuesday, one of the schooners arrived, and sailed again, the same evening, with a full complement of passengers. Another arrived the next day, and all of our party succeeded, with some difficulty, in obtaining tickets. After crossing the lake to the village of San Carlos, situated at the head of the San Juan river, we were to be transferred to canoes which would take us to San Juan, where we hoped to obtain a passage home in one of Vanderbilt's steamers. The fare for the whole voyage was sixteen dollars apiece, and we were obliged to furnish our own provisions. As under unfavourable circumstances the trip might occupy a week, we laid in a store of bread and cheese, sugar, and cocoanuts, sufficient to guard against all danger of starvation, and Wednesday evening, followed by several natives, carrying our luggage, we walked down to the lake.

In order to take advantage of the breeze that usually sprung up at nightfall, it was intended to set sail at once, but one delay after another interfered to prevent. The little bread-trough which was to transport us to the schooner had made only three trips, carrying two passengers each time, when there burst upon us such a sudden squall of wind and rain as at once put a stop to our embarkation. In a few minutes the lake exhibited all the phenomena of a miniature storm. The bread-trough was capsized and flung bottom upwards on the beach. Even our long experience on

two oceans was not sufficient to deprive the scene entirely of its terrors. The little schooner tossed frantically at its anchor, and we could plainly see one unfortunate already paying to this humbler deity that tribute which we had hitherto considered the indefeasible right of Neptune himself.

[Pg 327]

As it was just as impossible for those on board to return to land as it was for us to reach the schooner, we were obliged to leave them to their fate, and make the best of our way back to the hotel. The landlord, so far from manifesting any pleasure at our unexpected return, received us with that sublime indifference that characterizes the keeper of a Spanish hotel, and seems almost the only remnant of Castilian pride now to be found in this their adopted country.

The next morning the sky was more propitious, and we set sail about ten with a gentle breeze that pushed us slowly out into the lake. Besides the crew, which consisted of only the captain and one man, who was mate, foremast hand, and cook, there were thirty passengers, each provided with his bag of provisions. Nearly one half of the number contrived to find room in the little cabin, which was about the size of a New York omnibus, like that miraculous invention was never full, and possessed of the same unaccountable propensity to knock two heads together, to the infinite detriment of their hats and their good temper. I remained all the time on deck, exposed to the scorching sun, by turns, and the pelting rain.

Towards evening the breeze freshened, and I began to feel all the symptoms of genuine sea-sickness. In spite of all my efforts, I could not disguise from myself the mortifying infirmity. It is really worth while to be sea-sick at sea, and when one is just starting on a long voyage. One feels so much better after it, and as if he had thus purchased an exemption from all further molestation, and had a perfect right to eat, drink, and be merry. Besides, there is a consonancy in the ideas as in the very words—this sort of ordeal through which we are required to pass before being initiated into the Neptunian mysteries is like those fearful preliminary tests which the aspirant after masonic honours is obliged to undergo.

[Pg 328]

It is well worthy the greatness and majesty of the sea. It is a price worth paying for the immunity it confers. No one who is bound on a voyage of four or five months can reasonably complain because his probation extends over as many days or even weeks. What though he is subjected to a constant process of subtraction—to a continual drain of life and energy—has he not all the rest of the voyage to repair his losses and replace his sickly, effeminate habit with that health and robustness which salt junk and pilot bread are so especially fitted to impart?

But on a little bit of fresh water the case is widely different. In the first place, there is no time to be sick, with any sort of decency or satisfaction. These things demand careful preparation, and that kind of dexterity that can only be acquired by long habit. But here one no sooner gets thoroughly into the midst of a fit of sickness, and begins to feel as if he were used to it, and to discover those little ameliorations that naturally suggest themselves, than the keel grates on the gravel, and no less harshly on his ears, and there is an end. All that you have suffered goes for nothing. You have been exposed to all this shame and ignominy, without any of the consolatory dignity that was to follow. You have been displaying all the helpless peevishness of a child, and have lost the opportunity of retrieving your character by a convalescent philosophy. You are like an unlucky knight who has had the worst in a duel, but is just about to regain the advantage, when the umpire throws down his staff and puts an end to the combat.

Among the pleasant hills of classic Berkshire there dwelt whilom two sturdy mountaineers, known far and wide by the honoured names of Lije Harris and Hial Dowd. Both were renowned champions in the noble and ancient art of wrestling, which, I am sorry to say, is no longer regarded in these degenerate days with that honour awarded to it by our more chivalrous ancestors.

[Pg 329]

But the fame of Hial Dowd was greater than the fame of Lije Harris—if one was Ajax, the other was Achilles. In many encounters between them Hial had established his superiority; and, henceforth holding himself superior to all his former competitors, he waited until another should arise more worthy of his arm.

But, as generally happens in such cases, the defeated party was not so easily satisfied. He felt that he was quite as good as Hial Dowd, and in fact a little better, and only wanted an opportunity to retrieve his lost honour. On a certain militia muster, when the young men from the adjacent villages were occupied, as usual, in various athletic sports, the magnanimous Lije, inly grieving at his disgrace, proposed to Zeke Brown, Ajax the less, a stratagem to draw out the Achilles of the playground from his long inactivity. Lije was to wrestle with Zeke three times in succession, and at the first encounter permit himself to be thrown. He would then prove victorious in the two remaining trials, and the acclamations that would be seen to proclaim his triumph could hardly fail to arouse the envy of his great rival.

Zeke readily acceded to this proposal, and Lije, according to their preconcerted arrangement, was soon brought to the ground, to the infinite amusement of all the beholders. But quickly he regained his feet, and was about to renew the combat, with victory already in his eye, when the perfidious Zeke, with unparalleled turpitude, coolly observed, "Wall, I guess that 'ill do for to-day; I'll wait till somebody better comes along."

The horror and confusion of the unhappy Lijah can be better imagined than described. Equally to be pitied is the unlucky wretch who presumes to wrestle with a two-days' lake—he is sure to be vanquished in the first encounter, and will seldom have an opportunity for a second.

Besides, it is so ridiculous to be sea-sick, with land visible on every side—so irrelevant and illogical. Then is the firm ground only a few miles away—the merest touch of which would effect as great a marvel as for Antæus in his famous wrestling match with Hercules (Hercules no doubt impersonating the sea); it seems so easy to get to it, and the motive is so strong, that one lies filled with uneasy wonder that he does not make the attempt. It is as absurd for this little puddle to usurp the prerogative of the ocean, as for a homœopath to claim the dignity of an allopathic physician. I have no more right to be sick in the one case than to be cured in the other. It is a positive insult to my good sense to presume such a thing.

[Pg 330]

Full of these reflections I rolled myself in my blankets, and, stretched on my back in the stern of our little craft, determined, at all events, not to be sick until I saw a chance of doing it with some credit and respectability. The night passed heavily. Several times a huge wave rolling after would overtop the low bulwarks and come surging in upon us, almost floating me from my resting place, and putting to flight my uneasy slumbers. I caught at such times brief glimpses of lofty, cone-shaped mountains—of short, chopping waves, white with foam—of our bellying sails, and of certain grotesque forms lying on the little deck outstretched and motionless.

The morning's sun dried our clothes, and lighting up mountain and promontory, one after another, we began to look about us to see if we could discover any signs of our place of destination. We had been running all night with a favourable breeze, and San Carlos could not be far distant. Great then were our surprise and indignation to find that our captain, instead of taking advantage of the wind, had acted on nearly the same principle as our early Dutch navigators before mentioned, and, fearful of running down a continent in the dark, had done nothing but tack back and forth all night. It was a still more aggravating discovery that he was entirely ignorant of his course—having, as he said in excuse, sailed this way only three times before. Though we could not admit the validity of this plea, as the shores of the lake were of the most marked and striking character, so that once seen they ought never to be forgotten, yet we were obliged to submit ourselves to circumstances, and accede to his proposition to lie to opposite a house we saw not far from the shore and obtain the necessary information of the inhabitants.

[Pg 331]

After hallooing till we were hoarse, we had the satisfaction of seeing a party of natives come down to the shore and push off into the lake. By dint of violent and long-continued rowing they at length brought their clumsy canoe alongside, and then a few words sufficed to tell the whole story. We were to round a certain headland they pointed out to us, and afterwards hold a straight course to San Carlos.

Having bought a few oranges they had thrown into their boat, we left them to make the best of their way back to the shore; and once more filling our sails, we rounded the intervening headland, and just at dark run our schooner up within a few yards of the beach at San Carlos. A large open shed, or rather roof of palm-leaf, supported by tall naked posts, seemed to have waded rather timidly out into the lake. While we regarded with dismay the waves rolling with considerable violence up into this building, and wondered how we were to get to land, a party of natives darted out into the surf, and for the moderate sum of one real offered to carry us ashore on their shoulders. One of the riders, heavier or not so well mounted as the rest, was precipitated headlong into the lake, to our unmingled delight and approbation; but the unlucky native, who had been the cause and partner of his mishap, no sooner regained his feet than he fled up into the town without once stopping to look behind him.

We all followed at our leisure, in anxious search for supper and lodging. It was long before we succeeded in finding either, and then they were not at all to our satisfaction; but as we had a suspicion, in spite of the darkness, that San Carlos was anything but a city of palaces, we resolved to make the best of what we had lest we might go farther and fare worse.

[Pg 332]

We slept on the floor—that is, on the bare ground—in the kitchen or living room of the family; while in an adjoining apartment, separated from ours only by a slight partition of bamboo hardly as high as our heads, a woman lay dying of the yellow fever. In the morning we had an opportunity of surveying the town to better advantage. It consists of a small collection of hovels, with two decent houses, clustered irregularly together at the base and on the side of a low steep hill. The damp and unwholesome vegetation—the water oozing out of the ground at every step—the filthy streets and doorways—are not calculated to give the stranger a very favourable impression of the beauty or salubrity of San Carlos; and I am persuaded that the longer he remained, the more eager he would be to depart. On the hill above the town stands the important fortress of San Carlos, as I have since seen it denominated by some of our sage political writers at home. This important fortress consists of an almost obliterated rampart, defended by a single rusty cannon, which would be far more dangerous to its friends than its enemies.

However, in a military point of view, this place may, for aught I know, be of the utmost importance; but to the travelling tourist, whether he goes in search of the picturesque, or only seeks to gratify his curiosity or appetite, it is of all the most uninviting. It is, in fact, a cross between barbarism and civilization, and the worst features of both the parents are plainly discernible in this mongrel offspring.

We were naturally desirous to leave a place of which we had formed so ill an opinion as soon as possible, but we were not allowed to govern our own movements. We were left to the mercy of a race of men to whom procrastination is a virtue, and haste a crime, if not a folly. Having cooked and eaten their breakfast—a mess of beef and plantains boiled together in a huge iron kettle—they were now busy—not busy either, but employed, though even that is too strong a word—in

[Pg 333]

preparing the boats that were to carry us down the river. These were rude canoes or dugouts, very long and narrow, and capable in smooth water of carrying ten men apiece with tolerable comfort and security. As we had one more than that number of passengers in the canoe that fell to our lot, and five native boatmen besides, we contemplated with no little uneasiness the prospect of a voyage of a hundred and fifty miles down a rapid river.

About ten o'clock all was in readiness, and we proceeded with the utmost caution and calculation to stow ourselves in the canoe. Four of the Indians, who were to act as rowers, sat in the head of the boat. Next to them was an equal number of our fellow-passengers, with whom we had no further acquaintance; the patron or pilot sat in the stern with an American who was residing in the country, and our own party occupied the middle. It was necessary to sit perfectly still, as the slightest motion caused the boat to roll, bringing the oars on one side down into the water, and calling forth an impatient exclamation from all the boatmen at once of "para bota," "trim boat." When this state of things was no longer tolerable, we all moved in concert the arm or leg that gave us the most uneasiness, and again settling into our places sat like breathing statues for another hour.

We moved slowly up the lake a short distance, and then rounding a narrow point of land found ourselves in the San Juan. Our boatmen rowed a few hundred yards till the canoe fairly felt the force of the rapid current, and then, raising their oars from the water, and fixing them in that position by fastening the ends to the opposite side, they produced a stock of plantains that was perfectly alarming, and began to eat as if they had not tasted anything for a week. As it was only two or three hours since they had devoured a hearty breakfast, and no one could see their naked bellies without thinking of Prince Hal's question, "How long is it, Jack, since thou hast seen thine own knees?" we naturally felt some impatience at this delay, but our remonstrances might as well have been addressed to the trees on the bank.

[Pg 334]

Having eaten enough for a dozen men, and being at length obliged to stop from sheer repletion, instead of returning to their duty, as we had fondly imagined, they simply varied their performances in a manner highly suggestive of the renowned Sancho Panza, from whom they were perhaps lineally descended. After an hour spent in these alternations they resumed their oars; our canoe, which had been drifting broadside to the current, was once more headed down the stream, and we glided along under these combined influences at a speed varying from five to eight miles an hour. Having by this time arranged ourselves in as comfortable a position as was attainable under the circumstances, we were at leisure to take note of what was passing. On either side a tangled and matted forest crowded close down to the river's brim. Vines of the utmost vigour and luxuriance hung in graceful folds from the tallest trees, or presented an almost solid wall of verdure as even as if it had been trained over an artificial trellise. The monotony of the banks was interrupted only by shady coves or inlets, just wide enough to admit a canoe, and, by their mysterious windings, offering a strange temptation to the curious imagination.

We met also one or two parties of natives slowly toiling up the stream, keeping close to the shore to avoid the current that swept us prosperously onward, and now and then resting from their labour by mooring their canoe to the overhanging branches. With these our boatmen never failed to exchange greetings and inquiries, somewhat in the fashion of two ships speaking each other at sea; and the novelty of their accent and intonation was nowhere else so striking.

[Pg 335]

Let the reader pronounce the word banana, placing very little stress on the first and last syllables, and commencing the second with a sudden expiration—then dying gradually away through all the notes of the gamut, from the highest to the lowest, and he will obtain a very correct idea of a Spanish hail or halloo. When three or four on each side were thus joining their voices in anything but concert, the effect, if not harmonious, was in the highest degree amusing.

It was long after sunset when we arrived at the upper rapids; and, as our pilot was unwilling to venture through them in the dark, we were obliged to lie to until morning. The place selected for this purpose had formerly been occupied as a trading establishment—the skeletons of two small buildings still stood near the bank in the middle of a narrow clearing, and half-a-dozen barrels scattered about plainly showed what had been the nature of the traffic. The ground was thoroughly soaked with the rain that was still falling, and every drop as it touched the earth seemed to hatch into a monstrous mosquito, and every mosquito seemed to say or sing, with true Spanish accent, that she did not get such a chance every day in the year, and meant to make the most of it. The woods crowded around us as close as they dared, and like a pack of wolves seemed only waiting till they could muster courage to make a sudden dash. At no great distance we heard the roaring of wild beasts, and could easily imagine we saw their eyes glaring at us out of the thick damp darkness. Never apparently had we been in such evil plight, at least on land; but in a short time we succeeded in effecting a wonderful transformation. After exhausting entreaty, we prevailed upon one of the natives by a bribe of half-a-dollar to strike a fire by means of the flint and tinder which they commonly carry about them. There was no want of fuel—a scrap of paper first received the divine fire, and communicated it in turn to splinters of the palm leaf that formed the thatch. We gently nursed the infant blaze with withered twigs till it had gained strength and confidence to grapple with the staves of the barrels, and lock them in its mortal embrace. A thick log, big enough to keep it burning all night, was then placed upon the top—the smoke soon banished the mosquitoes, and the most cheerful and benign light put to flight all our gloomy fancies. Bringing in huge armfuls of palm leaves from the fallen roof of one of the houses, we spread them thickly over the floor of that which was still standing; and with our feet to the fire, spikewise, as Eothen has it, one by one fell off to sleep.

[Pg 336]

Waking in the grey of the morning, we combed quantities of slimy snails out of our hair with our fingers, and again taking our stations in the canoe, were directly sucked into the rapids. Clinging nervously to the sides of the canoe, and peering out into the dim twilight, we saw nothing but whirling eddies, sunken rocks starting up to meet us, and waves white with foam. Suddenly a huge billow, that seemed to have been lurking in ambush near the shore, darted out directly upon our beam. For a moment my heart, as the saying is, was in my mouth,—the rowers also seemed paralyzed and stopped rowing. I thought of the weight I carried about me, and calculated how long I should probably be in getting to the bottom. But all was over in less time than it has taken to write a single line—nobody stirred, and the wave, after emptying a few pailfuls of water over the gunwale, sunk suddenly beneath the surface, and the next moment we entered the comparatively smooth water below.

The remaining rapids had nothing to excite any apprehensions, and we passed them with contemptuous indifference. All day long we slid down the glassy river. About nine in the evening our canoe drew up into a little stream, tributary to the San Juan, at a spot which had been selected by a German emigrant as suitable for a sugar plantation. He had been here only a short time, and every thing was yet in a rude, uncivilized state; but he gave us a most glowing account of the wealth of the soil and the favourable nature of the climate. His plantation consisted of several thousand acres, a very small proportion of which was under cultivation, but enough to show that no land in the world is better adapted to that purpose.

[Pg 337]

He gave us for supper a cup of tea and two slices of salt pork perhaps twice as big as a dollar; and as we furnished our own bread, he charged us only half-a-dollar apiece. The mosquitoes were as thick as, what shall I say? as thick as molasses; and as we crowded into the smoke of the fire under the shed that served him for a kitchen, to avoid their extortion, I made a rapid calculation of the probable number on his whole plantation, and came to the conclusion that if these creatures possessed any appreciable value, however small, our host must be by all odds the wealthiest proprietor in the whole world.

After resting here an hour, we were glad to return to the canoe, where they did not venture to follow us. A sip of brandy and the coolness of the night gave our boatmen fresh energy—their oars fell with more regular cadence, and early Sunday morning we entered the harbour of San Juan, two weeks after leaving the shores of the Pacific. The harbour is very shallow, and our boatmen were several times obliged to jump into the water to push us over the bars; but our canoe was at length drawn up safely on the beach, in the midst of a large number of others, all pointing to the town. Many of our companions had already arrived, and the rest made their appearance the next day, except the party already mentioned, who had been the first to leave Granada. Day after day passed without bringing any tidings, and we began to fear that they had been lost on the lake, when the following Sunday, a week after our arrival, they landed on the shore like a party of shipwrecked mariners—squalid, filthy, and attenuated. For thirteen days, and nearly as many nights, they had been crowded together in that open boat—the sun, and the rain, and the dew, had had full sway over them, and if it had not been for the constant effort required to keep the canoe from upsetting, they would certainly have run together like so many sticks of molasses candy.

[Pg 338]

They had carried sail across the lake, and owing to the tipsy nature of their craft, they had been obliged to preserve the centre of gravity by constantly shifting their position. When the wind blew freshly, they sat on the weather side of the boat to keep her steady; and when the wind lulled, they transferred their weight more to the centre. If the wind had been aft, they would have made the passage in twenty-four hours, or even less; but as it was directly contrary, and they could beat to windward but little better than a tub, they were more than a week in getting to San Carlos, having in that time sailed over nearly every square foot in the whole surface of the lake.

San Juan, where we passed a miserable week, is, even after seeing San Carlos, one of the most uninteresting places that can be imagined. The land is even flatter than the sea. It is a low sandy plain, just rising above the water, agreeably diversified with stagnant marshes, and hemmed in by unwholesome-looking forests. A few mushroom houses seem to have sprung up out of the sand, and among them three or four hotels, of the same board and shingle pattern that is so odious even in its native New England.

At one of the best or worst of these we secured board and lodgings for one dollar a day, until the steamer, which was now expected, should arrive, and again get ready to sail. Our impatience grew greater every hour. Home was now so near that we murmured at the least delay. We even turned our thoughts regretfully backward to the cool and quiet tent we had left standing among the breezy hills of Natoma, and to the comparatively luxurious life we had led there in our hermit solitude. Here we were in positive danger of famine. Provisions became every day more scarce, and every meal was worse than the one before it. To make matters worse, the Prometheus arrived on Wednesday, and a large proportion of her passengers, who had gone up the river intending to cross over to the Pacific, were obliged to return, after reaching the upper rapids, for want of provisions; so that the whole number of Americans now in town was at least four hundred, which was apparently quite equal to the permanent population.

[Pg 339]

There were plenty of liquors, however, for even a much larger increase; and drinking and card-playing filled up every hour. The Sunday after our arrival, a party were called from their game to attend a dying comrade. His death was extremely sudden, owing, as was supposed, to an excessive dose of morphine. But nobody cared, not even, so far as I could perceive, the party to which he belonged; indeed, Ohio, with his mechanical tenderness, manifested more pity than all

besides. But, as I had often had occasion to observe, a nomadic life is not favourable to the gentler virtues, and, of all virtues, the rarest is an abstract humanity. What often goes under that name is nothing but decency, and a selfish regard to the opinion of others, and both these motives lose almost their entire force when all are strangers, and expect soon to be separated forever.

At length it was announced that the Independence, the Pacific steamer, had arrived; and, her passengers being first provided for, a certain number of tickets were to be disposed of. Long before the appointed hour, an eager crowd had assembled round the office. The agent took his station at an open window about eight feet from the ground, with some rude steps placed against the building, so that a man standing at the top could rest his chin conveniently on the window-sill. Having been fortunate enough to obtain our own tickets early in the day, we had nothing to do but to watch, from our post of observation, the progress of the fight. Fifty aspirants were gathered round the little window, which they seemed about to enter in a body. They advanced against it in three different directions—from the right—from the left—and from the front. Each man pasted himself to the one before him, fearful lest any rival should dispossess him. They fitted together as closely as a bundle of spoons. But all these forces met at the centre, as in a focus. The man who at length succeeded in reaching the top was directly squeezed as flat as a pancake. He inserted both his arms into the window, not to maintain his position, but because there was no room for them anywhere else. He could by no possibility get his hand into his pocket, and must have his money all ready in his fist before he started on his perilous adventure. When at last the ticket was secured, the crowd was rent violently as by an earthquake, or the pains of travail. He came out, nobody could tell how nor where. He almost always lost his hat, and was fortunate if he met with no greater calamity.

[Pg 340]

A fierce struggle then succeeded to see who should obtain the post of honour. There were three next best men, the heads of their respective columns. But I noticed that it so happened that the one in front almost invariably gained the advantage. Whether it was that the other two parties neutralized each other, or that a straightforward course is always the best, the most the sidelings could do was to maintain their ground.

I was especially interested in the fate of one promising individual who made his approaches from the left. He had been for a long time the head of his party, and once or twice seemed on the very point of reaching the window. He even got one foot on to the topmost step, and with one hand grasped the window frame. His hat was gone—his face, by the violence of his exertions, had become nearly as red as his hair—his arm visibly lengthened, and I expected every instant to see his fingers starting from their sockets.

Still he clung to his hold with a tenacity that nothing could overcome. Once or twice, indeed, some one would get before him, and on such occasions it seemed absolutely impossible that any fingers, but of iron, should endure the strain. His head was pinned up flat against the side of the house, and he turned his face to the crowd with a look of mingled defiance and supplication, and a lurking consciousness of the ludicrousness of his situation, that were perfectly irresistible.

[Pg 341]

For nearly an hour he remained in this position, sometimes gaining an inch, and sometimes losing, till it seemed really dangerous to laugh any longer, and we were about to leave, when a sudden revolution brought him at last face to face with the agent.

"I'll take a ticket, if you please," he gasped, nervously holding out his money.

"No more tickets are to be sold to-day," returned the awful functionary, as if he had been the Iron Duke himself. "No more tickets."

This was the climax—the ridiculous had fairly reached the sublime—there was a completeness, a proportion in all its parts, that was beyond laughter—the mind could not sufficiently recover from its surprise and admiration to feel such a genial emotion. It was like a picture of Hogarth's, where our wonder at the painter's ingenuity interferes with our enjoyment of the scene itself—if it were not done so well, the first effect, at least, would be more striking.

But lest the tender-hearted reader should feel too lively a concern for the fate of this unfortunate Phœbus, and perhaps accuse me of hard-heartedness in the premises, I would hasten to inform her that all who wished, finally succeeded in obtaining tickets. Our apprehensions were, indeed, utterly groundless, for it is well known that there is no limit to the capacity of a California steamer.

Sunday morning, a week after our arrival, we went to sea. Nothing occurred during our voyage worthy of mention—we spent one day in Havana—had the usual proportion of storms and calms, and on the 9th of November entered the harbour of New York, nearly three years after my leaving home. Every object was greeted as warmly as if it had been an old acquaintance. There was Castle Garden where Jenny Lind won her earlier triumphs; and beyond lay the imperial city, every one of whose swarming thousands seemed to me like a brother. As we drew near the wharves, I felt that we were the great object of attraction, and my heart swelled within me with conscious vanity, as I thought how one would point me out to another, and say, "There goes a Californian!"

[Pg 342]

I had no fears lest I should remain undetected and unnoticed among the great crowd of ragamuffins that thronged the streets. There was an unmistakable stamp of vagabondism about me that defied all rivalry and all imitation. It would be strange, indeed, if, with the advantages of three years' travel, I had not acquired a decided superiority over those who had had no such

opportunity of improving their natural capacity. I exulted at the thought of the despairing envy with which I should be regarded by all the tatterdemalions of the metropolis, and the futility of all their efforts to catch the secret of a shabbiness matured and perfected by a long course of severe and untiring study by land and sea. I should be the leader of the fashions for the Five Points, the Beau Brummel of beggars, the D'Orsay of the kennel.

But as the Broadway fop, though drest in the height of the fashion from top to toe, yet prides himself especially on his spotless beaver, so I, though it was hard to say that one part of my attire was less worthy of admiration than another, yet rested my claims to distinction principally on my hat. It had belonged originally to that species denominated the Californian, and bearing a strong resemblance to that patronized, under the cognomen of Kossuth, by the blacklegs of the metropolis and the shop-boys of our smaller cities; but when I landed in New York, it was a simple individual—the only one of its kind—and no longer susceptible of classification. For six weeks it had been my faithful companion. Through all that time it had been in constant use either as a drinking cup, a night-cap, a sun-shade, or an umbrella. But its spirit and vitality had forsaken it, and the glory of its brim had departed. It flapped over my ears, it flapped over my neck, it flapped, worst of all, over my eyes. Yet if a curve is the line of beauty, my hat must have been the most beautiful object in existence. It had as many curves as a ram's horn or a grape-vine, or any other, the most curvedest thing in nature.

[Pg 343]

"Where do you wish to go?" inquired the hack driver, with even more than characteristic politeness, and surveying us from head to foot with undisguised admiration.

"No. —, Avenue —."

The driver stared again, harder than ever, and a crowd of ragged boys—those observing beings—standing by, repeated the words in a tone of incredulous wonder. But away we went—the hack drew up before the house, and we walked up the steps with an air intended to show the driver that we were somebody. A servant answered our ring, but started back at sight of two such desperate villains, and was about to close the door in our faces, when, feeling that it was necessary to make a determined effort, we pushed past her into the house, and requested to see the lady. At that moment she appeared, summoned by the sound of voices, but stopt half way down the stairs, while two little children, half hidden in the folds of her dress, peeped timidly forth at the ugly strangers. After enjoying the scene a moment in silence, we pronounced the familiar name, and claimed the rights of our relationship.

"Why, Mrs. —!" whispered Bridget involuntarily, and holding up her hands, "are those awful looking men your brothers!!"

I was glad to hear the answer, for I had begun to doubt my own identity. But twenty-four hours wrought a wondrous revolution not only with us, but with the greater part of our fellow passengers. At the end of that time it was no longer possible to find in the streets of New York a solitary survivor of the three hundred scarecrows that had landed from the Prometheus the day before. There was a sudden accession of trade to the dealers in ready-made clothing. The rag merchants grew rich with unexampled rapidity, and began to think of enlarging their operations. Our long life of entire freedom and independence was at length over, and we hastened to resume the shackles of civilization. A single day sufficed to convert us from the careless, slouching Californian, into the precise and angular citizen. Our romance is ended—our little episode is complete—and we sink, like a drop of water in the ocean, into the flat monotony of our commonplace existence. Ah loque es el mundo.

[Pg 344]

THE END.

Transcriber's Notes

The cover image, created from the title page, is placed in the public domain.

The Table of [Contents](#) has been added and is not part of the original book.

Minor punctuation errors have been silently corrected.

Author's spelling preferences and creative words have been retained except for the following noted changes:

Pages [17](#) and [20](#): Changed three occurrences of "birth" to "berth."
(Orig: and soon slunk away to my birth, with a heart heavy)
(Orig: My birth was an upper one, and its already alarming)
(Orig: For three days and nights I lay in my birth, dressed)

Page [24](#): Retained possibly unneeded duplicate "as."
(Orig: ladies, considered simply as as an abstract idea,)

Page [37](#): Retained "Goliah;" possibly a typo for "Goliath."
(Orig: stolen from some thick-witted Goliah,)

Page [42](#): Changed "somtmes" to "sometimes."
(Orig: somtmes interrogatively, sometimes affirmatively,)

Page [44](#): Changed "diminitive" to "diminutive."
(Orig: galloping after him on diminutive horses,)

Page [53](#): Changed "enought" to "enough."
(Orig: before it was light enough to see)

Page [55](#): Changed "turkies" to "turkeys."
(Orig: beef, turkies, chickens, and pigeon pie;)

Page [60](#): Removed duplicate "the."
(Orig: hardly enough difficulty in the the work to make it pleasant)

Page [63](#): Changed "independant" to "independent."
(Orig: as independant as our unfavourable circumstances)

Page [71](#): Changed "acqaintance" to "acquaintance" and
"unmistakeable" to "unmistakable."
(Orig: Humboldt, our new acquaintance, was equally unmistakable.)

Page [75](#): Retained "past," meaning "passed."
(Orig: The time had past when a pinch of gold dust)

Page [84](#): Changed "Ater" to "After."
(Orig: Ater many unlooked for delays, a half-barrel)

Page [112](#): Changed "abadoned" to "abandoned."
(Orig: whole scheme was then and there abadoned.)

Page [116](#): Changed "CHAPTER XII" to "CHAPTER XI."

Page [127](#): Changed "mimlc" to "mimic."
(Orig: Colonel Oldbuck was an excellent mimlc)

Page [128](#): Changed "Brobdignags" to "Brobdingnags."
(Orig: Gulliver from among the Brobdignags)

Page [153](#): Changed "Colloma" to "Coloma."
(Orig: a violent snow storm soon after leaving Colloma)

Page [221](#): Retained "griping," meaning "gripping."
(Orig: with the other hand, griping fast the bushes.)

Page [224](#): Retained "gripe," meaning "grip."
(Orig: to gripe fast hold of the soil.)

Page [310](#): Retained "Brahmah;" probably typo for "Bramah."
(Orig: combination lock of Brahmah or Hobbs,)

Page [320](#): Changed "Brobdignagian" to "Brobdingnagian."
(Orig: some clumsy Brobdignagian boor.)

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK GOLDEN DREAMS AND LEADEN REALITIES

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