

CHAPTER VI.

WE were aroused one morning at peep of day by the heavy, booming report of a gun from the frigate, and on tearing open our eyelids, saw the chequered cornet flying at the fore, the signal of sailing. Anathematizing ships and seas, we shook fleas and dust from our heels, and repaired forthwith on board. Breakfast over, the shrill whistles of boatswain and mates called up anchor; much easier said than done, that ponderous instrument being loth to leave his bed. And it was not until after a tremendous amount of cursing and heaving had been expended, that it deigned to be roused out at all; even then, the ship under topsails, with a fresh breeze, and forty fathoms water, the strain was enormous—when by a sudden surge, owing to a number of nonsensical contrivances of iron teeth biting the breathing cable, they let go their gripe, and out flew the chain, making the whole vessel tremble from its quivering jar and whirl. When its fury was a little exhausted, the brawny compresses were drawn, and the unruly gentleman brought to a stand. Then great apprehensions were felt for the seamen in the chain lockers. They were pulled out alive, with only a broken leg, and a multitude of painful contusions. How they escaped being torn into atoms, in a confined box, six feet square, during the frightful contortions

and vibrations of the immense iron snake, was little less than a miracle.

At noon we were clear of the harbor, and as the sun went down, he gave us a last glimpse of the Bell of Quillota, and his tall companion, Tupongati. The wind was fair, we murmured that beautiful saline sentiment, "The ship that goes, the wind that blows, and lass that loves a sailor." I sighed adieu to Carmencita, ordered my valet of the bedchamber, Giacomo, to arrange my four poster of a hammock, and then in dreams forgot the past.

The fourth day out we passed near to a cluster of desolate, uninhabited islands—St. Ambrose and Felix—the first about two miles in length, and rising abruptly from the ocean, to the height of fifteen hundred feet. Numbers of queer-shaped, pointed, rocky islets, white with guano, were grouped along the base of the island, and through one was cut, by some action of the water, a well-defined arch, open to the sea, like a telescope.

Pursuing an undeviating track, with glorious seas, skies and winds, on the last day of the year we crossed the equator, in a longitude of 110° . During this period there were two deaths; one a good old man from Deutschland, named Jerry Wilson. On being asked an hour before he expired, how he felt—"First rate," said Jerry, and no doubt he is now, if not then. The other was a youth named Tilden, caused by a spasmodic affection of the throat, so as to prevent swallowing food, until he absolutely starved to death. He made his last plunge as the sun went down. The stately frigate, careless of all, went flying with wide-stretched pinions, towards her destination, at a speed of Jack the Giant-killer's boots. On the 20th of January, land ho! Alta California! For forty-eight hours, we sailed lightly

along the base of a compact ridge of mountains that rose like a sea wall, seamed into ten thousand furrows, the summits fringed with lofty forest trees, and not a cloud visible in high heaven, then appeared a green, shelving point, of waving pines and verdure, terminated by a reef of fearful, black rocks. Giving this a wide berth, we shortly entered a wide, sweeping indentation of the coast, in shape of a fish hook, with the barb at the southern end, furled our sails, and moored ship in the Bay of Monterey, forty days from Valparaiso.

CHAPTER VII.

BEFORE resuming the thread of this narrative, it may be as well to give a brief summary of events that had transpired previously to our arrival.

Pending disturbances between the United States and Mexico, when the quarrel had not reached an open rupture, much excitement prevailed in Upper California, through the agency of a few foreigners, who wished to revolutionize the country. At this epoch, Mr. Fremont, of the U. S. Topographical Engineers, was in the heart of California, engaged upon scientific explorations, ostensibly in relation to the practicability of the best route for emigration to Oregon. There is reason to believe, also, that he was instructed to feel the geographical pulse of the natives, as well as the mountain passes. Be this as it may, Mr. Fremont was encamped near Monterey, with sixty followers, when José Castro, a Mexican officer in command of the province, issued a proclamation, ordering Fremont to leave the territory immediately, and at the same time threatened to drive every foreigner away also. Fremont and his party, after holding Castro's bombast in contempt, and his troops at bay, at last began to march, quite leisurely, towards the northern route for Oregon: these occurrences happened early in the spring of 1846. On the 13th of

June the first movement began, on the river Sacramento, near Sutter's Fort, and one of the tributaries to the head waters of San Francisco. This attack was composed of a few lawless vagabonds, who, carrying a banner of white, with a red border and grizzly bear, styled themselves the "Bear Party:" they were of all nations, though claiming citizenship in the United States. After stealing a drove of horses, belonging to the Californians, their numbers were increased by other marauding gentry to forty, when moving rapidly around the northern shores of the Bay of San Pablo, they surprised and captured the little garrison of Sonoma, under charge of General Guadalupe Valléjo. Then they committed excesses, without the slightest recognized authority, but purely, it appears, from love of a little independent fighting and thieving on their own private accounts. Meanwhile a large naval force had been hovering on the Mexican coast for a year previously, awaiting the first blow to be dealt on the other side. Intelligence of the battles on the Rio Grande reached Mazatlan in June, and Commodore Sloat, who was there at the time, sailed for Monterey with the squadron, arrived in July, and on the 7th hoisted the American flag, and took formal and legitimate possession of the territory. The same course was pursued at San Francisco. A week afterwards the frigate Congress arrived, and Sloat, transferring his pennant to Commodore Stockton, returned home. The new Commander-in-Chief then sailed for San Pedro, three hundred miles down the coast; where disembarking a force of three hundred seamen and marines, he marched towards the capital of Upper California, Pueblo de los Angeles, a town some thirty miles inland. On the route, he found a body of five hundred men, under Pico, and Castro, the military governor of the territory. The Californians broke up their

camp and dispersed, before getting a glance of the sailors' bayonets. Stockton occupied Los Angeles, received the submission of the native authorities and citizens, placed a small garrison, returned to San Pedro, where he re-embarked for San Francisco; in the interim the settlements of the valleys of Santa Clara and Sonoma were occupied by American forces.

Fremont overtaken on his way through Oregon by Lieut. Gillespie, retraced his steps to California, and learning the U. S. flag had been hoisted in Monterey, proceeded with a battalion of settlers to the lower country, where they were duly enrolled. At San Francisco news reached Stockton that the natives, six hundred strong, had risen after his departure. The Savannah sailed to aid the small garrison, which, however, had been obliged to capitulate, and Captain Mervine, with three hundred men, was beaten by a much smaller force.

The Commodore sailed again in the beginning of November, and landed at San Diego with about 500 men. While at this place, General Kearny with 100 dragoons arrived from a toilsome march of nearly three months from Santa Fé. At the Pass of San Pascual, he fell in with a Californian force under Andreas Pico, and after a severe skirmish, beat them off, though with great loss to himself—eighteen of his saddles were emptied, including three officers, and as many more badly wounded. Forming a junction with Commodore Stockton, they left San Diego for San Angelos. After a toilsome march of 150 miles, through a broken and mountainous country, on the 8th and 9th of January, their passage was opposed by Governor Pico and Castro, at the river San Gabriel and plains of La Mesa, heading a body of 500 cavalry and four field guns; after an obstinate resistance, the Californians were put to flight. Subsequently, they fell back upon

Colonel Fremont, who, with the volunteers, were en route to unite with the naval forces from San Diego. The Californian leaders again capitulated and signed an armistice. This was the position of affairs on our arrival at Monterey—a few days later General Kearny arrived, after his difficulties with Commodore Stockton and Fremont, in relation to the governorship of the territory.

The news we received was by no means inspiring, nor even the perspective view of matters becoming better. Among minor details, the wreck of the schooner *Shark*, at Columbia river—the drowning of a launch load of sailors and two officers, in San Francisco, and a host of more trivial misfortunes. The vessels of the squadron were dispersed up and down the coast, necessarily scattering men and officers at different posts, for the purpose of retaining and subjugating the country; but of course rendering the ships generally inefficient, from the great diminution of their complements. The natives had been confounded and bewildered by speeches and proclamations—relays of fresh commanders-in-chief, who, amid their own official bickerings, never ceased forming new governments, organizing armies, appointing officers, civil and military—but what served in a great degree to urge matters to a crisis, was the banding together of a few mongrel bodies of volunteers, who enhanced the pleasure of their otherwise agreeable society, by pillaging the natives of horses, cattle, saddles, household utensils, and the like, in quite a marauding, buccaneering, independent way; all of course under the apparent legal sanction of the United States' government, and not a doubt but demanded by the imperative necessity of their patriotic plunderers themselves. The result was easily foretold. These miserable Californians, who at first were not averse to subscribe to our laws, and

to come under the flag peacefully and properly, were soon screwed up to such a maze of fear, uncertainty, and excitement, as to make all future arrangements an affair of exceeding difficulty. Besides, another important obstacle intervened; they were to be convinced that the Americans really intended to hold permanent possession of their country, and not to make another revoke, as could be reasonably inferred from the invasion of a few years previous, when we so quickly resigned the conquest—a tergiverse proceeding, which they, as well as more enlightened nations, were somewhat at a loss to comprehend. Thus judging from experience of the past, they had no desire to make themselves obnoxious to their Mexican rulers, in case a like event should occur again; and consequently, in the absence of a sufficiency of those convincing arguments done up in military jackets and trousers, with muskets by their sides, to overawe even a thin population over so great an extent of territory, the natives, even those at first most favorably disposed, seized the lance, took a decided stand, and with the prospect of doing more fighting than was originally contracted for.

These were the causes principally instrumental in bringing about the last outbreak. But the Californians, without organization, arms, or competent leaders, though with all the elements to prolong the contest, seeing fresh arrivals of ships and troops appear on their coast, were induced to throw by the lance for the lasso, and agree to an honorable capitulation. Milder influences prevailed; steps were taken to tranquilize people's minds by a spirit of conciliation dictated by good sense. Useless and annoying restrictions were abolished, property of every description was returned or liberally paid for, prisoners discharged, paroles annulled, the blue jackets, playing soldiers on shore, were ordered to

their respective ships, and the volunteers disbanded. All this tended in a great measure to reassure the natives of an amicable endeavor on our part to make the new yoke rest as lightly as possible on their shoulders.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE rain came down in a steady drizzle, as we anchored in our new haven, but as the falling water thinned, and rolled partially along the land, we discerned an endless succession of green gentle slopes and valleys, with heights of just a medium between hills and mountains, rising gradually from the shores of the bay, clothed and crowned with magnificent vegetation. We did not call to mind any land naturally so picturesque and beautiful. Afterwards, when our excursions had extended for many leagues in all directions, we were ever amazed to perceive on every side the loveliness of plain, hill, and valley still the same. Indeed, for leagues in some directions it presented the appearance of extensive artificial parks, decked and brilliant with a carpeting of rich grasses and flowers, shaded by noble clusters of wide-spreading oaks, all entirely free from undergrowth.

The town of Monterey, if it could be dignified by the title, we found a mean, irregular collection of mud huts, and long, low, adobie dwellings, strewn promiscuously over an easy slope, down to the water's edge. The most conspicuous was the *duana*—Custom House—a spacious frame building near the landing, which unquestionably had in times past been the means of yielding immense revenues to the Mexican exchequer, but now its roomy store-houses were empty and silent. Neither men nor merchan

dise disturbed its quiet precincts. Notwithstanding the rain, numbers of us resolved to dare the moisture, and I, for one, would wade about on land, up to my neck in water, at any time to get quit of a ship after forty days aquatic recreation; but here there was no resisting the gratefully green appearance of the shores around us: we were soon stowed in a boat—the oars dipped smart and strong in the water, and we went merrily towards the land. Indeed I have invariably observed that men-of-war's men are wont to use their arms with much vigor, on first pulling on shore in a strange port; a physical characteristic which I am led to attribute to a desire on their part to test the virtues of any liquid compounds to be met with in the abodes of hospitable publicans. The anchorage was barely half a mile from the shore, and in a few minutes we disembarked at a little pier, that only partially served to check the rolling swell from seaward; but what's a wet foot in a fit of enthusiasm, or a heavy shower! Nothing, certainly, so we scrambled up the slimy steps, and while on the point of giving a yell of delight, to announce our arrival in California, my pedal extremities flew upwards and down I sank, making a full length *intaglio* in the yielding mud—this was my first impression, but after getting decently scraped by Jack's knives, I became less excitable, and took intense delight during the course of the afternoon, in beholding my companions going through precisely the same performances. By cautious navigation we reached the main street, then our progress was dreadfully slow and laborious. The mud—a sticky, red pigment, lay six good inches on the driest level, and at every step our feet were disengaged by a powerful jerk, and a deep, guttural noise from the slippery holes; occasionally, too, we were forced to climb ungainly barricades of timber, with here and there a piece

of ordnance gazing ferociously out into the surrounding country. Although a casual observer might naturally have supposed that the mud would have offered a sufficient barrier to all the armies ever raised, still, as trouble had been brewing, and most of the garrison withdrawn for an expedition into the interior, these precautions were quite an imposing display, which was, no doubt, all intended. At last, by dint of perseverance, we attained a firm foothold in the barracks, and then had breath and leisure to look around.

Monterey, before the war, contained about five hundred people, but on our advent there was scarcely a native to be seen: all the men had gone to join their belligerent friends in the southern provinces, leaving their property and dwellings to be guarded by their wives and dogs; even their ladies bore us no good will, and our salutations were returned by a surly *adios*, extorted from closed teeth and scowling faces. The dogs were more civil, and even when showing their fangs, were sagacious enough to keep beyond the chastening reach of Yankee arms. There were a goodly number of sentinels on the alert, prowling about, with heavy knives in their girdles, and the locks of their rifles carefully sheltered from the rain; and at night it became a matter of some bodily danger for an indifferent person to come suddenly in view of one of these vigilant gentlemen, for with but a tolerable ear for music he might detect the sharp click of a rifle, and the hoarse caution of "Look out, thar, stranger;" when if the individual addressed did not speedily shout his name and calling, he stood the merest chance of having another eyelet-hole drilled through his skull.

All this at the first rapid glance gave us no very bright anticipations; everything looked triste and cheerless. Upon inquiring, too

we were shocked to learn there was nothing eatable to be had, nor what was yet more melancholy, naught drinkable nor smokable: everybody was so much occupied in making war, as to have entirely lost sight of their appetites. We began to indulge the faintest suspicions that somehow or other we had gotten into the wrong place, and that California was not so charming a spot as we had been led to believe; however, there was no appeal, and fortunately for our health and spirits, as we were leaning listlessly over the piazza of the barracks, staring night and main at the little church in the distance, we beheld a body of horsemen coming slowly over the verdant plains, and soon after they drew bridles, and dismounted before us. The *cavallada* of spare horses were driven into the corral near by, and we were presented in due form to the riders. It was the most impressive little band I ever beheld; they numbered sixty, and, without exception, had gaunt bony frames like steel, dressed in skins, with heavy beards and unshorn faces, with each man his solid American rifle, and huge knife by the hip. With all their wildness and ferocious appearance they had quite simple manners, and were perfectly frank and respectful in bearing. Their language and phraseology were certainly difficult for a stranger to comprehend, for many of them had passed the greater portion of their lives as trappers and hunters among the Rocky Mountains; but there was an air of indomitable courage hovering about them, with powers to endure any amount of toil or privation—men who wouldn't stick at scalping an Indian or a dinner of mule meat;—and you felt assured in regarding them, that with a score of such staunch fellows at your side you would sleep soundly, even though the forests were alive with an an atmosphere of Camanche yells. They were the woodsmen of our far west, who on hearing

of the disturbances in California enrolled themselves for service in the Volunteer Battalion—more by way of recreation, I imagine, than for glory or patriotism. In truth, the natives had good reason to regard them with terror.

We soon became quite sociable, and after a hearty supper of fried beef and biscuit, by some miraculous dispensation a five-gallon keg of whiskey was uncorked, and, after a thirty days' thirst, our new-found friends slaked away unremittingly. Many were the marvellous adventures narrated of huntings, fightings, freezings, snowings, and starvations; and one stalwart bronzed trapper beside me, finding an attentive listener, began,—“The last time, Captin, I cleared the Oregon trail, the Ingens fowt us amazin' hard. Pete,” said he, addressing a friend smoking a clay pipe by the fire, with a half pint of corn-juice in his hand, which served to moisten his own clay at intervals between every puff,—“Pete, do you notice how I dropped the red skin who pit the poisoned arrer in my moccasin! Snakes, Captin, the var-mints lay thick as leaves behind the rocks; and bless ye, the minit I let fall old Ginger from my jaw, up they springs, and lets fly their flint-headed arrers in amongst us, and one on 'em wiped me right through the leg. I tell yer what it is, hoss, I riled, I did, though we'd had tolerable luck in the forenoon—for I dropped two and a squaw and Pete got his good six—barrin' that the darned villians had hamstrung our mule, and we were bound to see the thing out. Well, Captin, as I tell ye, I'm not weak in the jints, but it's no joke to hold the heft of twenty-three pounds on a sight for above ten minits on a stretch; so Pete and me scrouched down, made a little smoke with some sticks, and then we moved off a few rods, whar we got a clar peep; for better than an hour we seed nothin', but on a suddin I

seed the chap—I know'd him by his paintin'—that driv the arrer in my hide; he was peerin' around quite bold, thinkin' we'd vamosed; I jist fetched old Ginger up and drawed a bee line on his cratch, and, stranger, I giv him sich a winch in the stomach that he dropped straight into his tracks; he did! in five jumps I riz his har, and Pete and me warn't troubled agin for a week." With such pleasant converse we beguiled the time until the night was somewhat advanced; when, finding a vacant corner near the blazing fire, with a saddle for pillow, I sank into profound slumber, and never awoke to consciousness until the band was again astir at sunrise.

CHAPTER IX.

THE time passed rapidly away. The rainy season had nearly ended,—we were only favored with occasional showers, and by the latter part of February, the early spring had burst forth, and nothing could exceed the loveliness of the rich, verdant landscape around us. After the treaty and capitulation had been signed by the Picos at Los Angeles, their partizans dispersed, and all who resided in Monterey shortly returned to their homes. Every day brought an addition to the place—great ox-cart caravans with hide bodies, and unwieldy wheels of hewn timber, came screaming slowly along the roads, filled with women and children, who had sought refuge in some secure retreat in the country. Cattle soon were seen grazing about the hills. The town itself began to look alive—doors were unlocked and windows thrown open—a café and billiards emerged—pulperias, with shelves filled with agua-diente appeared on every corner—the barricades were torn down—guns removed—and the Californians themselves rode blithely by, with heavy, jingling spurs, and smiling faces—the women, too, flashed their bright eyes less angrily upon their invaders—accepted pleasant compliments without a sneer, and even Doña Angustia Ximénes, who took a solemn oath upon her missal a few months before, never to dance again, until she could wear a necklace of Yankee ears, relented too, and not only

swept gracefully through waltz and contra dança, but when afterwards one of our young officers became ill with fever, she had him carried from the tent to her dwelling, watched him with all a woman's care and tenderness, as much as though she had been the mother that bore him, until he was carried to his last home. Yes, bella Señora, you may swear the same wicked oaths forever, and still be forgiven by all those who witnessed your disinterested devotion to poor Minor.

Gradually these good people became aware that the Yankees were not such a vile pack of demonios as they first believed, and thus whenever guitars were tinkling at the fandangos, or meals laid upon the board, we were kindly welcomed, with the privilege of making as much love, and devouring as many *frijoles* as may have been polite or palatable. Upon visiting the residences of the townspeople, true to the old Spanish character there was no attempt made in show or ostentation—that is always reserved for the street or alameda, but a stranger is received with cordiality, and a certain ease and propriety to which they seem to the “manner born.” With the denizens of Monterey, even the wealthiest, cleanliness was an acquirement very little appreciated or practised, and I should presume the commodity of soap to be an article “more honored in the breach than the observance.” For being given to cold water as a principle of lady-like existence I was something shocked on one occasion, to find a nice little Señorita, to whom I had been playing the agreeable the night previous, with a chemisette of a chocolate hue peeping through a slit in her sleeve; her soft, dimpled hands, too, made me speculate mentally upon the appearance of her little feet, and I forthwith resolved, in the event of becoming so deeply infatuated as to in-

duce her papa to permit a change of estate, to exact a change of raiment in the marriage contract.

The occasion of inspecting the arcana of this young woman's vestments was during a visit to her portly mamma, and I may as well, by way of example, describe my reception. The dwelling was a low, one story pile of adobies, retaining the color of the primitive mud, and forming a large parallelogram; it enclosed a huge pen, or corral, for cattle, over which guard was carefully mounted by crowds of *gallinazos*. There were divers collections of Indian families coiled and huddled about beneath the porticoes and doorways, each member thereof rejoicing in great masses of wiry shocks of hair, quite coarse enough to weave into bird cages on an emergency; there were some bee-hive shaped ovens also, from the apertures of which I remarked a number of filthy individuals immersed neck deep, taking, no doubt, balmy slumber, with the rain doing what they never had the energy to perform themselves—washing their faces. This much for externals—men and beasts included, merely premising that the whole affair was situated in a quiet detachment by itself, a few hundred yards in rear of the village. My guide, though a good pilot, and retaining a clear perception of the road, was unable to convoy me safely to the house, without getting stalled several times in the mire; however, I reached terra firma, thankful to have escaped with my boots overflowing with mud, and then we marched boldly into the domicile. We entered a large, white-washed *sala*, when, after clapping hands, a concourse of small children approached with a lighted tallow link, and in reply to our inquiries, without further ceremony, ushered us by another apartment into the presence of the mistress of the mansion. She was sitting *a la grand Turque*, on the chief ornamental structure that graced the cham-

ber—namely, the bed, upon which were sportively engaged three diminutive brats, with a mouse-trap—paper cigarritos—dirty feet, and other juvenile and diverting toys. The Doña herself was swallowing and puffing clouds of smoke alternately—but I must paint her as she sat, through the haze. “Juana,” said she, calling to a short, squat Indian girl, “*lumbrecita por el Señor*,”—a light for the gentleman—and in a moment I was likewise pouring forth volumes of smoke. She wore her hair, which was black and glossy, in natural folds straight down the neck and shoulders, dark complexion, lighted by deep, black, intelligent eyes, well-shaped features, and brilliant, white teeth. I saw but little of her figure, as she was almost entirely enveloped in shawls and bed clothes; the arms, however, were visible, very large, round and symmetrical, which of themselves induced me to resign all pretensions to becoming her son-in-law. She excused herself on the plea of indisposition for not rising, and it being one I surmised she was a martyr to every year or so, I very readily coincided in opinion, but in truth I found the Señora Mariqueta sensible, good-humored, and what was far more notable, the mother of fourteen male and five female children—making nineteen the sum of boys and girls total, as she informed me herself, without putting me to the trouble of counting the brood; and yet she numbered but seven and thirty years, in the very prime of life, with the appearance of being again able to perform equally astonishing exploits for the future. She named many of her friends and relatives who had done wonders, but none who had surpassed her in these infantile races. In Spain she would receive a pension, be exempted from taxes and the militia. On being told this she laughed heartily, and gave her full assent to any schemes undertaken in California for the amelioration of the sex. Her husband,

who chanced to be absent, was a foreigner, but the whole family were highly respectable, and universally esteemed by their fellow citizens. After an hour's pleasant chat we took leave, with the promise on my part of teaching the eldest daughter, Teresa, the Polka, for which I needed no incentive, as she was extremely graceful and pretty.