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LATE MAJOR OF ARTILLERY; AUTHOR OF "DECK AND PORT,"
ETC., ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.



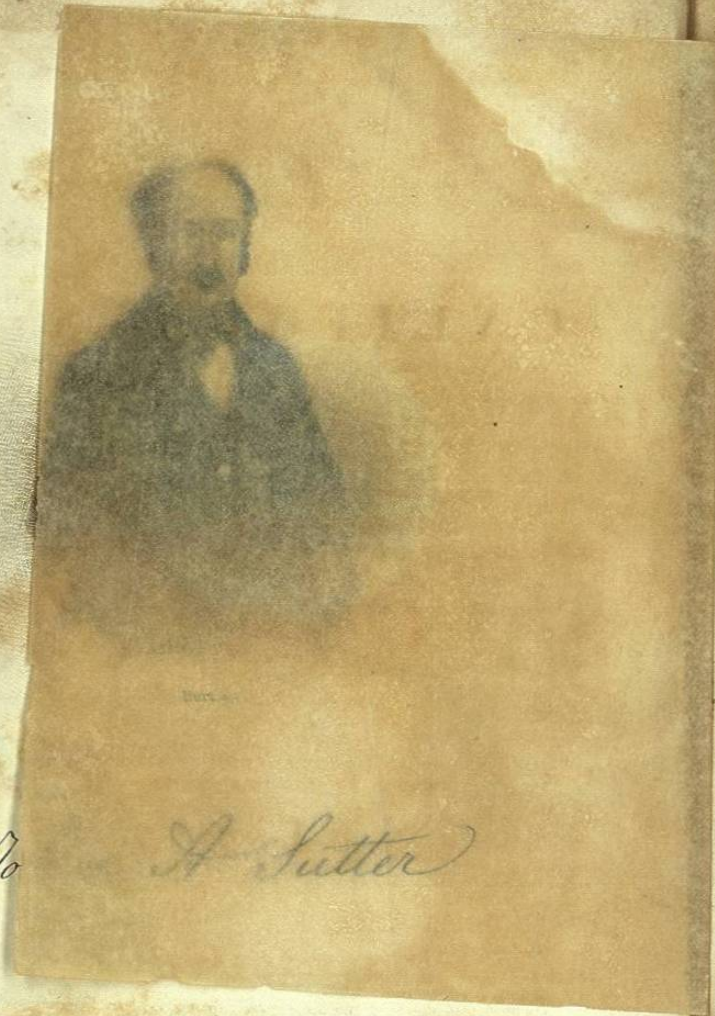
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To A. Sutter

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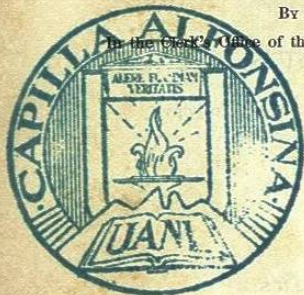
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BY HIS FRIEND

THE AUTHOR.



PREFACE.

MANY events of moment occurred in California during my residence of three years in that country, and which were sketched in a journal kept by me at the time. They are interspersed with anecdotes and incidents of a less general concern, but which may not be without some interest with the reader, as affording a clue to the leading features of society, and traits of individual character. The circle of engaging objects in a community, just emerging into the refinements of civilization, is never broad; but every phase in the great change going on possesses an intense individuality, and leaves its ineffaceable impression, like a ship sweeping a solitary sea, or a bird scaling a sunset cloud. California will be no more what she has been: the events of a few years have carried her through the progressive changes of a century. She has sprung at once from the shackles of colonial servitude to all the advantages and dignities of a sovereign state.

Her emigrants are rushing from every continent and isle; they crest every mountain, they cover every sea; they sweep in like a cloud from the Pacific, they roll down like a torrent from the slopes of the Sierra Nevada. They crowd to her bosom to gather gold; their hammers and drills, their mattocks and spades divert the deep stream, and are echoed from a thousand caverned hills; the level plain, the soaring cliff and wombed mountain, give up their glowing treasures. But the gifts of nature here are not confined to her sparkling sands and veined rocks, they extend to the productive forces of her soil; they lie along her water-courses, through her verdant valleys, and wave in her golden grain; they reel in her vintage, they blush in her fruits, while her soft zephyrs, as they float the landscape, scatter perfume from their odorous wings.

But with all these gifts disease is here with its pale victims, and sorrow with its willow-wove shrine. There is no land less



relieved by the smiles and soothing cares of woman. If Eden with its ambrosial fruits and guiltless joys was still sad till the voice of woman mingled with its melodies, California, with all her treasured hills and streams, must be cheerless till she feels the presence of the same enchantress. It is woman alone that can make a home for the human heart, and evoke from the recesses of nature the bright and beautiful: where her footsteps light, the freshest flowers spring; where her voice swells, the softest echoes wake: her smiles garland the domestic hearth; her sympathy melts through the deepest folds of grief; her love clothes the earth with light. When night invests the heaven, when the soft pleiads in their storm-rocked cradle sleep, and the sentinel stars on their watch-towers wane dim, her vigil flame still pours its faithful beam, still struggles with the encroaching darkness till the day-spring and the shadows flee away. Of all these sources of solace and hope multitudes in California are now bereft; but the ties of kindred, the quick-winged ship, and the steed of flame, on his iron-paved track, will soon secure them these priceless gifts. The miner, returning from his toil, will yet half forget the labors of the day in the greetings of his home:

“ At length his lonely cot appears in view,
 Beneath the shelter of an aged tree;
 Th’ expectant *see things*, toddlin’, stacher thro’
 To meet their dad, wi’ fichterin noise an’ glee.
 His wee bit ingle, blinkin’ bonnily,
 His clean hearth-stane, his thriftie *wife’s* smile,
 The lispin infant prattlin’ on his knee,
 Does a’ his weary carking cares beguile,
 An’ makes him quite forget his labor an’ his toil.”

PHILADELPHIA, July, 1850.

W. C.

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