



## THREE YEARS IN CALIFORNIA.

### CHAPTER I.

THE FLAG.—MEETING OF CITIZENS.—DISPOSITION OF FORCES.—COL. FREMONT'S BAND.—ALCALDE OF MONTEREY.—INDIAN MOTHER.—MILITARY LEADERS.—A CALIFORNIA FARM.

A FEW words will place within the clear comprehension of the reader, the posture of public affairs in California at the time my journal opens. The U. S. flag was raised at Monterey and San Francisco on the 10th of July, 1846. This event was wholly unexpected by the Californians, and struck the public heart with the deepest surprise; other causes of alarm and apprehension faded into shadow in the presence of this decisive measure; they were the admonitory vibrations, but here was the earthquake itself. The people were more astounded than indignant, and quite as intent over problems of preservation as measures of resistance.

At a public meeting held at Monterey, in which the patriotism, talents, and sagacity of the country were largely represented, the question of throwing the territory under the protection of England, through

the naval forces commanded by Admiral Seymour, who was on the coast at the time, was excitingly discussed. But this proposition received its quietus under the successful railery of Don Raphael, of Monterey. "Our object," said this witty counsellor, "is to preserve our country; but she is gone,—California is lost to us: and this proposal to invoke the protection of England, is only to seek another *owner*. The redress is worthy of the market-woman: a dog had robbed her hamper of a leg of mutton, and she sent another dog more powerful after him to get it away; when asked what good that would do her, she replied, it would be some satisfaction to see the *first* dog deprived of the stolen leg. And so it is with us; the mutton is gone, and a choice of the dog only remains: others may prefer the bull-dog, but I prefer the regular hound; he has outstripped the other in the chase, and so let him have the game." The convention broke up without adopting any decisive measures; leaving each one to act as his impulses or convictions of duty suggested.

The military forces of the country were at this time under the command of Gen. José Castro, an officer of high pretensions, but utterly deficient in strength and steadiness of purpose, and that capacity which can work out important results with slender and inapposite means. His followers had gathered to him with as little discipline, sobriety, and order, as would characterize a bear-hunt. Their prime impulse lay in the excitement which the camp present-

ed. It was the same thing to them whether their weapon was a rifle or a guitar,—whether they were going to a skirmish or a fandango. With six or eight hundred of these waltzing warriors Gen. Castro was now on his march into the southern department, with the evident purpose of taking up his position near the Pueblo de los Angeles.

Such was the posture of affairs when Com. Stockton resolved to rest in no half-way measures. The wave had been set in motion and must roll on, or its returning force might sweep him and his temporary garrisons into the Pacific. And yet aggressive measures in the present condition of the squadron seemed to border on rashness. The Portsmouth, under Commander Montgomery, must be left at San Francisco to garrison the posts occupied by the flag; the Savannah, commanded by Capt. Mervin, must remain here to hold Monterey; the Warren, under Commander Hull, was at Mazatlan; only the Congress, Lieut. Livingston commanding, and the Cyane, under Commander Du Pont, remained. With the crews of these, and a hundred and sixty men under Col. Fremont, California was to be conquered and held, and this too in the presence or defeat of a military force that had the entire resources of the country at their command. But a gallant purpose will often achieve what a questioning prudence would relinquish. The mountain torrent, with its impetuosity, sweeps away the barrier which effectually obstructs the level stream.

MONDAY, JULY 27. The bustle of preparation is active in the squadron. Commander Du Pont received orders last evening to have the *Cyane* ready for sea in twenty-four hours. She has tripped this afternoon, and is off for San Diego, though it has been given out on shore that she is bound elsewhere, but this is a war stratagem. She has on board Col. Fremont and a hundred and fifty of his riflemen. The wind is fresh, and they are by this time cleverly sea-sick, and lying about the deck in a spirit of resignation that would satisfy the non-resistant principles of a Quaker. Two or three resolute old women might tumble the whole of them into the sea. But they will rally before they reach their port, and see that their rifles spring true to their trust.

The colonel is a man of small stature, of slender but wiry formation, and with a countenance indicative of decision and firmness. This is the fifth time he has crossed the continent in connection with his scientific purposes. His enterprises are full of hardship, peril, and the wildest romance. To sleep under the open heaven, and depend on one's rifle for food, is coming about as near the primitive state of the hunter as a civilized man can well get; and yet this life, in his case, is adorned with the triumphs of science. The colonel and his band are to land at San Diego, secure horses, and advance upon the position of Gen. Castro, at los Angeles.

"War's great events lie so in Fortune's scale,  
That oft a feather's weight may kick the beam."

TUESDAY, JULY 28. Com. Stockton informed me to-day that I had been appointed Alcalde of Monterey and its jurisdiction. I had dreamed in the course of my life, as most people have, of the thousand things I might become, but it never entered my visions that I should succeed to the dignity of a Spanish alcalde. I much preferred my berth on board the Congress, and that the judicial functions in question should continue to be discharged by the two intelligent gentlemen, Purser R. M. Price and Dr. Edward Gilchrist, upon whom they had been devolved. But the services of these officers were deemed indispensable to the efficiency of the ships to which they were attached. This left me no alternative; my trunks were packed, my books boxed, and in an hour I was on shore, a guest in the house of our consul, T. O. Larkin, Esq., whose munificent hospitalities reach every officer of the squadron, and every functionary in the interest of the flag. This is the more appreciated from the fact that there is not a public table or hotel in all California. High and low, rich and poor, are thrown together on the private liberality of the citizens. Though a quasi war exists, all the amenities and courtesies of life are preserved; your person, life, and liberty, are as sacred at the hearth of the Californian as they would be at your own fireside. He will never betray you; the rights of hospitality, in his generous judgment, require him to peril his own life in defence of yours. He may fight you on the field, but in his family, you

may dance with his daughters, and he will himself wake the waltzing string.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 29. The sloop-of-war *Levant*, under Commander Page, sailed to-day, with Com. Sloat on board, for the United States. We gave the commodore a parting salute. He has rendered the squadron under his command efficient, and preserved harmony among the officers. The expediency of his measures in California will be canvassed elsewhere. He acted on the light and intelligence within his reach. If war has been declared, the laurel awaits him.

The *Levant* takes home in her my friend, Lieut. T——: he has resigned his commission in the navy, and takes orders in the church. He is a pretty good classical scholar, and has made himself familiar with the principles of biblical exegesis. All this has been accomplished during those few leisure hours which the duties of a watch-officer leave one at sea. It is seemingly reversing the order of things for the navy to supply the church with spiritual teachers. But few, however, have left the deck for the pulpit; a much larger number have reached it from the diagrams and drills of West Point. Among them are some of our most eloquent and impressive preachers. Of this class is the present Bishop of Ohio.

We have all been busy in writing letters home, and shall make up a pretty large mail, filled with tender recollections, and overflowing with the California

news. How the intelligence of our proceedings here will strike our friends and the country at large, is mere matter of conjecture. We are acting, however, not only in view of the alleged collision between the American and Mexican forces on the Rio Grande, but in reference to the anarchy and confusion into which this country has been thrown by a revolution which did not originate with us.

THURSDAY, JULY 30. To-day I entered on the duties of my office as alcalde of Monterey: my jurisdiction extends over an immense extent of territory, and over a most heterogeneous population. Almost every nation has, in some emigrant, a representative here—a representative of its peculiar habits, virtues, and vices. Here is the reckless Californian, the half-wild Indian, the roving trapper of the West, the lawless Mexican, the licentious Spaniard, the scolding Englishman, the absconding Frenchman, the luckless Irishman, the plodding German, the adventurous Russian, and the discontented Mormon. All have come here with the expectation of finding but little work and less law. Through this discordant mass I am to maintain order, punish crime, and redress injuries.

FRIDAY, JULY 31. Nearly all the houses in Monterey are of one story, with a corridor. The walls are built of adobes, or sun-baked brick, with tiled roofs. The centre is occupied by a large hall, to

which the dining-room and sleeping apartments seem mere appurtenances. Every thing is in subordination to the hall, and this is designed and used for dancing. It has a wood floor, and springs nightly to the step of those who are often greeted in the whirl of their amusements, by the risen sun. The dance and a dashing horse are the two objects which overpower all others in interest with the Californians. The fiddle has been silent since our flag went up, from the fact that many of the gentlemen have left to join Gen. Castro. But if they return, though covered with disaster, the fiddle will be called upon to resume its fantastic functions. You might as well attempt to extinguish a love of air in a life-preserver as the dancing propensity in this people.

SATURDAY, AUG. 1. The Congress has sailed to-day, with all her marines and full complement of men, for San Pedro. Com. Stockton intends to land there with a force of some three hundred, march to the Pueblo de los Angeles, capture that important place, and fall upon Gen. Castro, who, it is now understood, has posted himself, with some eight hundred soldiers, in a pass a few miles below. The general will find his southern retreat cut off by Col. Fremont's riflemen and the sailors of the Cyane, his western route obstructed by the Colorado, while the forces of the Congress will bear down upon him from the north. He has seemingly no escape, and must fight or capitulate. But his sagacity, his thorough

knowledge of the country, and his fleet horses, may extricate him. We shall know in a few days; the interest felt here in the result is most intense. Many mothers have sons and many wives husbands involved in the issue.

SUNDAY, AUG. 2. I officiated to-day on board the Savannah. It is much to the credit of the officers of this ship that though without a chaplain, they have had, during a three years' cruise, their religious services regularly on the Sabbath. Four of their number, two lieutenants, the surgeon, and master, are professors of religion, and exert a deep influence through their consistent piety. Their Sabbath exercise has consisted in reading prayers, selections from the Scriptures, and a brief, pertinent sermon. They have had, also, their Sabbath-school. Such facts as these will win for the navy a larger share of public confidence than the capture of forty barbaric fortresses. The American people love valor, but they love religion also. They will confer their highest honors only on him who combines them both.

MONDAY, AUG. 3. An Indian woman of good appearance came to our office to-day, stating that she had been for two years past a domestic in a Mexican family near Monterey; that she had, during this time, lost her husband, and now wished to marry again; but wished, before she did this, to recover her child, which was forcibly detained in the family in which

she had served. It appeared that the father of this family had baptized her child, and claimed, according to custom here, a sort of guardianship over it, as well as a right to a portion of its services.

I asked her if her child would be kindly treated where it now was: she said she thought so; but added, she was a mother, and wanted it with her. We told her as she was going to marry again, she had better perhaps leave the child for the present; and if she found her husband to be a good, industrious man, and disposed to furnish her with a comfortable home, she might call again at our office, and we would get her child. She went away with that mild look of contentment which is as near a smile as any expression which lights an Indian's face.

TUESDAY, AUG. 4. The military chieftains, who have successively usurped the government of California, have arbitrarily imposed such duties on foreign imports as their avarice or exigency suggested. A few examples will be sufficient to show the spirit and character of these imposts. Unbleached cottons, which cost in the United States six cents the yard, cost here fifty, and shirtings cost seventy-five. Plain knives and forks cost ten dollars the dozen; coarse cowhide shoes three dollars the pair; the cheapest tea three dollars the pound; and a pair of common truck-wheels seventy-five dollars. The duty alone on the coarsest hat, even if made of straw, is three dollars.

The revenues derived from these enormous imposts have passed into the pockets of a few individuals, who have placed themselves, by violence or fraud, at the head of the government, and have never reached the public in any beneficial form. These exactions, enforced by an irresponsible tyranny, have kept California poor, have crushed all enterprise, and have rolled back the tide of emigration from her soil as the resisting rock the rushing stream. But the barriers are now broken, and broken forever. California is free,—free of Mexican rule and all domestic usurpers.

WEDNESDAY, AUG. 5. We have in one apartment of our prison two Californians, confined for having robbed a United States courier, on his way from Monterey to San Francisco, with public dispatches. They have not yet been tried. Yesterday they applied to me for permission to have their guitars. They stated that their situation was very lonely, and they wanted something to cheer it. Their request was complied with; and last evening, when the streets were still, and the soft moonlight melted through the grates of their prison, their music streamed out upon the quiet air with wonderful sweetness and power. Their voices were in rich harmony with their instruments, and their melodies had a wild and melancholy tone. They were singing, for aught they knew, their own requiem.

THURSDAY, AUG. 6. It sounds strange to an Ameri-

can, and much more so to an Englishman, to hear Californians talk of farms. They never speak of acres, or even miles; they deal only in leagues. A farm of four or five leagues is considered quite small. It is not so large, in the conception of this people, as was the one-acre farm of Horace in the estimation of the Romans. Capt. Sutter's farm, in the valley of the Sacramento, is sixty miles long. The Californians speak in the same way of the stock on their farms. Two thousand horses, fifteen thousand head of cattle, and twenty thousand sheep, are only what a thrifty farmer should have before he thinks of killing or selling. They are to be his productive stock, on which he should not encroach, except in an emergency. Only fancy a farm covering sixty miles in length! Why, a man would want a railroad through it for his own private use. Get out of the way, ye landlords of England and patroons of Amsterdam, with your boroughs and dykes, and give place to the Californian with his sixty mile sweep!

FRIDAY, AUG. 7. The Mormon ship Brooklyn, which we left at Honolulu, has arrived at San Francisco, and her passengers have debarked on the shores of that magnificent bay. They have not yet selected their lands. The natives hold them in great horror. They seem to think cannibalism among the least of their enormities. They consider the term Mormon the most branding epithet that can be applied to a man. A mother complained to me, a few

days since, that a gentleman in Monterey had struck her son and called him a Mormon. She dwelt with great earnestness on the opprobrious character of the epithet, and appeared to consider its application to her son a higher crime than that of his fist. I told her what sort of people these Mormons were; but it was to her as if I had represented Satan as an angel of light. I lectured the wrong-doer.

SATURDAY, AUG. 8. Capt. Fauntleroy, of the Savannah, and Maj. Snyder, with fifty mounted men under their command, occupy San Juan, which lies inland about thirty miles from Monterey. A report reached them a few days since, that a hundred wild Indians had descended upon the town of San José and driven off over two hundred horses. They started immediately with twenty men, well mounted, got upon their trail, and came up with them at a distance of sixty miles. The Indians finding themselves hotly pressed, left their horses and took to the bush, throwing back upon their pursuers the most wild and frantic imprecations. Three or four of their number only were killed. The denseness of the forest and the approach of night rendered further pursuit impracticable.

The horses were all recaptured and brought back to their owners, who received them with acclamations of surprise and gratitude. This was the first time, they said, that their property had been rescued from savages by the government, and they run up the

American flag. This prompt interference of Capt. Fauntleroy and Maj. Snyder will do more to win the confidence of the Californians than forty orations delivered in the most liquid Spanish that ever rolled from a Castilian tongue. There is something in action which the most simple can appreciate, and which the most crafty cannot gainsay.



SUNDAY, AUG. 9. I officiated to-day on board the Savannah. The weather was pleasant, and several gentlemen from the shore attended. There was no service in the Roman Catholic Church, owing to the absence of one of the priests and the infirmities of the other. But when there is service, only a few of the people attend. It is sometimes, however, forced upon them in the shape of penance. When a friend of mine here was married, it was necessary that he should confess. The penance imposed on him for his previous negligences and transgressions was, that he should attend church seven Sabbaths.

## CHAPTER II.

FECONDITY OF THE CALIFORNIANS.—FIRST INTELLIGENCE OF THE WAR.—  
WILD INDIANS ON BOARD SHIP.—THE CHIEF.—FIRST NEWSPAPER PUBLISHED IN CALIFORNIA.—RAISING THE MATERIALS.—THE RIVAL SUITORS.  
—FLIGHT OF GEN. CASTRO.—A CALIFORNIAN ON HORSEBACK.

MONDAY, AUG. 10. The fecundity of the Californians is remarkable, and must be attributed in no small degree to the effects of the climate. It is no uncommon sight to find from fourteen to eighteen children at the same table, with their mother at their head. There is a lady of some note in Monterey, who is the mother of twenty-two living children. The youngest is at the breast, and must soon, it is said, relinquish his place to a new-comer, who will, in all probability, be allowed only the same brevity of bliss.

There is a lady in the department below who has twenty-eight children, all living, in fine health, and who may share the "envied kiss" with others yet to come. What a family—what a wife—what a mother! I have more respect for the shadow of that woman than for the living presence of the mincing being who raises a whole village if she has one child, and then puts it to death with sugar-plums. A woman with one child is like a hen with one chicken; there is an eternal scratch about nothing.