

CHAPTER IV.

FUNERAL CEREMONIES.—ELECTED ALCALDE.—FLIGHT OF GEN. CASTRO.—
LOS ANGELES TAKEN.—OVEN-BATH.—GROG IN A CHIMNEY.—THE FLEA.—
FIRST RAIN.—RISING OF THE CALIFORNIANS.—MEASURES OF COM. STOCK-
TON.—MORMONS.

SUNDAY, SEPT. 13. Officiated to-day on board the Savannah, and called on my way to see a sick child, whose mother seems at a loss whether to grieve or rejoice in prospect of its death. If it dies, she says it will at once become a little angel: if it lives, it will be subject to sorrow and sin. She desires, for her sake, that it may live; but, for its own, that it may die. This balancing between life and death, is common here among mothers. Their full persuasion of an infant's future bliss, forbids that they should mourn its loss. They therefore put on no weeds, and utter no lamentations. The child, when its pure spirit has fled, is dressed in white, and stainless roses are strewn upon its little shroud. It is borne to the grave as if it were to be laid at the open portal of heaven, and few are the tears which fall on that threshold of immortal bliss.

MONDAY, SEPT. 14. A letter from the Sacramento, received to-day, informs me of the arrival of two thousand emigrants from the United States. They are under the guidance of experienced men, and have

been but a little over four months on the way. The Mormons are selecting the site of their city, which they intend shall be the paradise of the west.

TUESDAY, SEPT. 15. The citizens of Monterey elected me to-day alcalde, or chief magistrate of this jurisdiction—a situation which I have been filling for two months past, under a military commission. It has now been restored to its civil character and functions. Their election is undoubtedly the highest compliment which they can confer; but this token of confidence brings with it a great deal of labor and responsibility. It devolves upon me duties similar to those of mayor of one of our cities, without any of those judicial aids which he enjoys. It involves every breach of the peace, every case of crime, every business obligation, and every disputed land-title within a space of three hundred miles. From every other alcalde's court in this jurisdiction there is an appeal to this, and none from this to any higher tribunal. Such an absolute disposal of questions affecting property and personal liberty, never ought to be confided to one man. There is not a judge on any bench in England or the United States, whose power is so absolute as that of the alcalde of Monterey.

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 16. The Congress, bearing the broad pennant of Com. Stockton, returned last evening from her trip to the south. She has captured, during her absence, Santa Barbara, San Pedro, and

the Pueblo de los Angeles. Over these the American flag is now flying.

Gen. Castro had taken up his position just outside the Pueblo, on an elevation which commands the town and adjacent country. He was well supplied with field-pieces, and had a force of seven hundred men. Com. Stockton landed at San Pedro with three hundred seamen and marines from the Congress, and marched against him. His route, which extended some thirty miles, lay through several narrow passes, which Gen. Castro might easily have defended against a much superior force. But the general kept in his entrenched camp; and informed the commodore by a courier, that if he marched upon the town he would find it the grave of his men. "Then," said the commodore, "tell the general to have the bells ready to toll in the morning at eight o'clock, as I shall be there at that time." He was there; but Castro, in the mean time, had broken up his camp, mounted with an armed band, and fled towards Sonora, in Mexico. The town was taken, the American flag hoisted and cheered.

THURSDAY, SEPT. 17. The U. S. ship Cyane, under Commander Du Pont, proceeded from this port to San Diego, took that important place, and landed Col. Fremont, with his riflemen, who hastened to cut off the retreat of Castro. He would have done it could he have anticipated his route; but to overtake him was impossible, as the general had taken the pre-

caution to send on in advance relays of fresh horses, sufficient to take him and his band beyond the reach of any pursuit.

FRIDAY, SEPT. 18. A bearer of dispatches from Commodore Stockton to our government is to leave to-morrow morning in the Erie, and we are all busy in writing letters home by him. The Erie is to take the dispatch-bearer to Panama, and then proceed to the Sandwich Islands. We have not received any letters from home since we sailed from Callao; the year has rolled from the buds of spring into the sear leaf of autumn since any intelligence has reached us from those we love. Death may have stricken them into the grave, but the sad tidings is yet a melancholy secret. We ought to have a regular mail between the United States and California. We seem remarkably eager to possess ourselves of foreign territory, and then leave the wild geese to convey all intelligence. If the land is only ours, and those at home can hear from it once in fifty or a hundred years, that will do; a more frequent communication would be quite superfluous. Had we possessed Egypt in the days of Cheops, all information would still be considered seasonable which should come when his pyramid had crumbled.

SATURDAY, SEPT. 19. I encountered to-day a company of Californians on horseback, bound to a picnic, each with his lady love on the saddle before him.

He, as in duty bound, rides behind, throws his feet forward into the stirrups, his left hand holds the reins, his right encircles and sustains her, and there she rides safe as a robin in its nest; sprigs of evergreen, with wild flowers, wave in her little hat, and larger clusters in his; both are gayly attired, and smiles of light and love kindle in their dark expressive eyes. Away they gallop over hill and valley, wakening the wild echoes of the wood. One of my hunting dogs glanced at them for a while, and seemed so tickled, he had to plunge into the bushes to get rid of his mirth.

SUNDAY, SEPT. 20. At the invitation of Captain Richardson, I preached this afternoon on board the Brooklyn. The crew assembled in the cabin, which the captain had converted for the occasion into a chapel. None attended by compulsion, but all were present of their free will. The good order and respectful attention which prevailed showed the spirit which pervaded the ship, and conveyed a testimony of the wise and Christian conduct of the captain which none could mistake. I have never met with a ship where a greater degree of harmony and alacrity in duty were observable; all this, too, without any resort to physical force; such is the result of moral influence when brought into full play. Give us more of this in the navy.

MONDAY, SEPT. 21. A Californian mother came to me to-day to plead her son out of prison. He had

driven off a herd of cattle which had another owner, and sold them, and I had sentenced him to the public works for a year. She felt as a good mother must feel for her son, and plead for his liberation with a pathos that half shook my resolution. Nothing but an iron sense of duty kept me firm. There is something in a mother's tears which is almost irresistible; she wept and trembled, and would have kneeled, but I would not let her. I lifted her to her feet, and told her I once had a mother, and knew what her sorrows were. I told her I would liberate her son if I could, but it was impossible; law and justice were against it. But if he behaved well, I would take off a few months from the close of the year; and in the mean time she might see him as often as she desired. She thanked me, lingered as if she would plead again, and departed. What depths there are in a mother's soul!

TUESDAY, SEPT. 22. The frigate Savannah sailed this morning for San Francisco. She left her berth, where she has lain since our flag was raised here, and with her royals set, glided gracefully out of the bay. The Congress gave her three cheers as she passed,—still she goes with a heavy heart. The time of her crew is out; they are almost half the circuit of the globe from their home, and have now, seemingly, as little prospect of reaching it as they had a year since. Com. Stockton went on board a few days since and addressed them, but even with his happy tact in inspiring enthusiasm, it was difficult to arouse their

despondency, and make them cheerful in a resignation to their lot. The war being against a power unarmed at sea, is with them a mere bubble. To chase or capture a privateer is a game not worth the candle. Were an English or French squadron in this ocean, in declared hostility, they would not murmur while a tattered sail could be set, or a shot be found in the locker.

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 23. I was waked this morning by sounds of merriment in the street. Day had only begun to glimmer, and its beam was contending with the glare of rockets, flashing over the lingering shadows of night. The child which I had visited a few evenings since had died, and this was its attendant ceremony to the grave. It had become, in the apprehension of those who formed the procession, a little angel—and they were expressing their joy over the transformation. The disruption of ties which bound it here—its untimely blight—and the darkness of the grave—were all forgotten. Its little coffin was draped in white, and garlanded with flowers; and voices of gladness, ringing out from childhood and youth, heralded its flight to a better world.

THURSDAY, SEPT. 24. An Englishman called at the court to-day, and desired me to issue a warrant for the apprehension of his mistress, who he said had run away and carried off a rich shawl and diamond breastpin which did not belong to her. I told him,

when he entered into a criminal compact of that kind with a person, he might expect just such results as he had experienced,—and as for a warrant, I should issue none, and would not if she had carried off every thing in his house, and him too; for I should consider the community quit of two persons who could in no way benefit its morals. He looked not a little surprised at this decision, shrugged his shoulders, and departed. The first thing a foreigner does here is to provide himself with a horse; the second, with a mistress; the third, with a pack of cards. These, with a bottle of aguardiente, are his capital for this world and the next. This is true of many, but not all; there are some high and honorable exceptions.

FRIDAY, SEPT. 25. The Congress left her moorings last evening, and held her course majestically out of the bay for San Francisco. Com. Stockton proposes, while there, to construct batteries which can command the entrance to the harbor, and afford protection to our merchantmen in the absence of our squadron. The new city will probably be located before his return. It is the point towards which all eyes are now turned. The tide of emigration is setting there with as much steadiness and strength as the rivers which roll into its capacious bosom. The day is coming when the spires of a great city will be mirrored in its waters.

SATURDAY, SEPT. 26. The Indians here are prac-

tical Thomsonians or Hydropathists; they sweat for every kind of disease. Their bath is a large ground-oven, to which you descend by a flight of narrow steps, and which has a small aperture at the top for the escape of the smoke. In the centre of this they build a fire, close the entrance, and shut themselves in till the temperature reaches an elevation which throws them into a profuse perspiration. They then rush out and plunge themselves into a stream of cold water. This is repeated every day till the disease leaves or death comes.

But many, without any ailment, resort to this bath as a luxury. They will stay in the oven till they are hardly able to crawl out and reach the stream. It is great fun for the more sturdy ones to lift out the exhausted and dash them in the flood. You hardly expect to see them rise again, but up they come, and regain the earth full of life and vigor. The reaction is instantaneous, and the effect, I have no doubt, in many cases beneficial. It, at least, gives them a good washing, which they would hardly get without, and which they too often need. The Indian also takes to the water to quench the flames of rum. His poor mortal tenement is often wrapped in such a conflagration. It would be a good thing if all the rum-drinkers could be marched once a week under the falls of Niagara.

SUNDAY, SEPT. 27. There is no day in the week in which my feelings run homeward so strongly as on

the Sabbath. That day makes me feel indeed as an exile. A vast moral desolation spreads around me: only here and there a speck of verdure sprinkles the mighty waste. All else is bleak and barren. You turn your eyes to the hills where you were born, the church where you were baptized, and would rush back to them on the steep wave of time.

MONDAY, SEPT. 28. When Monterey was taken by our squadron, an order was issued by the commander-in-chief that all the grog-shops should be closed. The object of this was to prevent disorder among the populace and among the sailors, whose duties as a patrol confined them to the shore. It was with great difficulty that this order could be enforced. All moderate fines failed to secure its observance. The price of aguardiente rose to four and five dollars the bottle, more than ten times its original cost: for such a premium the shopkeeper would run the hazard of the penalty.

We searched for it as for hid treasures, but only in one instance found its hiding-place. This was in a chimney, hanging about midway from the top. When discovered, the shopkeeper laughed as loudly as they who made the search. He was fined, not for having grog in his chimney, for that is a very good place for it, but for retailing it at his counter. An offer of four or five dollars from a customer never failed to bring down a bottle. He paid his fine of twenty-five dollars, but begged hard for the liquor. I took it into

my custody, and told him to call for it when the last American man-of-war had left port.

TUESDAY, SEPT. 29. A brother and sister of a Mexican family applied to me to-day for permission to leave their mother. On inquiring the cause of this singular request, they stated that their father was dead, and that their mother by her immoralities had brought sore discredit on their house. I ascertained from other sources the truth of their statement, and then gave them permission to rent another dwelling. They were both modest and genteel in their appearance, but jealousy of a sister's fair reputation had prevailed with the brother over filial affection. And yet when he spoke of his mother his eyes filled with tears.

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 30. An express arrived last night from the Pueblo below, bringing the startling intelligence that the populace had risen upon the small American force left there under command of Capt. Gillespie—that the insurgents had entire possession of the town—that the Americans were closely besieged in their quarters, and it was doubtful if they would be able to hold out much longer. The express stated that he left the town under a volley of musketry, which he narrowly escaped, but which took such deadly effect on his horse, that he dropped under him about two leagues out.

He had a permit from the American alcalde to press horses wherever found. He rode the whole

distance—four hundred and sixty miles—in fifty-two hours, during which time he had not slept. His intelligence was for Com. Stockton, and in the nature of the case was not committed to paper, except a few words over the signature of the alcalde, rolled in a cigar, which was fastened in his hair. But the commodore had sailed for San Francisco, and it was necessary he should go on a hundred and forty miles further. He was quite exhausted; I ordered him a bowl of strong coffee, which revived him, and a hearty supper, which he eagerly devoured. He was allowed to sleep three hours: in the mean time I procured fresh horses, and penned a permit for him to press others when these should begin to flag. Before the day glimmered he was up and away.

THURSDAY, OCT. 1. Com. Stockton, before the departure of the Congress, appointed T. H. Green, Esq., collector of customs at this port. Mr. G. is a native of Pennsylvania, has resided in this country several years, and enjoys a wide reputation for business habits, and sterling integrity of character. Mr. Hartwell, an Englishman by birth, has been appointed inspector and translator. He is familiar with all the languages spoken in California, and filled the same office under the Mexican government to which he has been appointed under this. But we are gratified with his appointment for another reason. He has some twenty children of his own, and in addition to these, five adopted orphans.

FRIDAY, OCT. 2. A Spaniard of some note and noise here, and consul of her Christian Majesty, attempted in court to-day to flourish down the claim of an humble Californian to whom he was indebted some eight hundred dollars. He said this creditor was once his servant, that he could neither read nor write, and that he felt quite indignant that he should have the assurance to bring him into court. I told him the first question was, whether he really owed the man the amount claimed: this being settled, we could very easily dispose of the belles-lettres part of the matter. He at first recollected nothing, except that the man had once been his servant; but on being shown the account, reluctantly admitted that it might be correct. I told him, if correct, and he had the means, he must pay it, though the creditor were fresh from Congo. Finding that we had in our court only a horizontal justice, holding its level line alike over kings and slaves, he signed an obligation for the payment in six months, and gave the security required. So much for attempting to liquidate a debt by an hidalgo flourish. Law which fails to protect the humble, disgraces the name which it bears.

SATURDAY, OCT. 3. A heavy mist hung over the landscape this morning till the sun was high in the heavens, and many began to predict rain, a phenomenon which I have not yet witnessed in California. But towards noon the mist departed like a shadow dissolved in light. The scorched hills lifted their

naked summits, and the deep ravines revealed their irregular lines of lingering verdure. In these the cattle still graze, though the streams which once poured their waters through them exist now only in little motionless pools, hardly sufficient to drift a duck. A stranger looking at these hills might be excused if he inquired the distance to Sodom. It would never enter his most vagrant dreams that he had reached that land towards which the tide of emigration was rolling over the cliffs of the Rocky Mountains.

SUNDAY, OCT. 4. The presiding priest of this jurisdiction applied to me a few days since to protect the property of the San Antonio Mission. A Spaniard, it seems, who owns a neighboring rancho, had, under color of some authority of the late administration, extended his claims over the grounds and buildings, and was appropriating the whole to his private purposes. I summoned the Spaniard before me, and asked for the evidence of his right and title to the establishment. He had no document to exhibit. His sole claim evidently rested in some vague permission, in which the lines of moral justice were wholly omitted, or too faintly drawn to be seen.

I therefore ordered that the mission buildings and grounds should be delivered back to the presiding priest, and that the fixtures, which had been removed, should at once be restored. The order was forthwith carried into effect. This decision is of some moment, as it will serve as a precedent in reference to other

missions. These sacred domains are the patrimonial inheritance of the Indian, and they once embraced the wealth of California. But they have fallen a prey to state exigencies and private rapacity. They ought at once to be restored to their primitive objects, or converted into a school-fund.

MONDAY, OCT. 5. A courier arrived to-day from San Francisco, bringing the intelligence that the Savannah had sailed for San Pedro. They will there land a large force, which will march at once to the Pueblo de los Angeles, and, if possible, bring the insurgents to an engagement. But the probability is, that they will instantly disband and fly to the forests. If they declined battle, with Gen. Castro and his regular troops at their head, they will undoubtedly do it when left to themselves, unless frantic passion has entirely overcome inherent fickleness.

TUESDAY, OCT. 6. The usual rate of interest for money loaned here on good security, is twenty-four per cent. This is sufficient evidence of its scarcity, and yet it is almost valueless when you come to the question of labor. A foreigner may be induced to work for money, but not a Californian, so long as he has a pound of beef or a pint of beans left. Nor is it much better with the Indian: take from him the inducements to labor which rum and gambling present, and he will refuse to work for you. The blanket, which he wore last year, will answer for this; his

shirt and pants can easily be repaired; his food is in every field and forest, and he seems to have as little scruple in taking it from the one as the other.

Hunger is unknown here; the man who has not a foot of land seems about as independent as he who has his ten-league farm, and has vastly less trouble and vexation. It is true he will now and then kill a bullock that is not his, but the fact that there are vast herds roaming about which never had an owner, seems, in his estimation, greatly to diminish the private trespass which he commits. It is with him only as if he had taken a pickerel from a pond instead of the ocean.

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 7. The great Mormon company, who came out in the Brooklyn, have had a split. The volcano, it seems, has been rumbling for some time, and has at last broke forth in flame. The explosion will undoubtedly throw them into different parts of California, and defeat any attempts at a distinct political community. The difficulty lay in the assumptions of the leader. He has all the ambition of their lost prophet, without any of his affected meekness. He attempted the iron rod, without first having persuaded those who were to feel its force that it had been put in his hands by a higher power.

THURSDAY, OCT. 8. One of the rooms in the house which I have rented, has been occupied by some of the goods and chattels of the previous tenant. To-

day they were called for, and I observed among them a large basket filled with egg-shells. They had been perforated at both ends, and their contents blown out. But to what use could any one put these empty shells? They had been prepared, it seems, for the festivities of the carnival. On this occasion they are to be filled with scented water or tinsel, the apertures closed with wax, and then broken, in merriment, over the heads of guests. This liberty with caps and wigs is warranted only where some intimacy exists between the parties. Where this is found, the eggs fall thick as hail. The young and old float in lavender and cologne. This expensive frolic is often indulged in by those who, perhaps, have hardly money enough left to purchase one of the forty hens that laid the eggs.

FRIDAY, OCT. 9. The trouble of young and old here is the flea. The native who is thoroughly inured to his habits may little heed him, but he keeps the stranger in a constant nettle. One would suppose, from his indiscriminate and unmitigated hostility, he considered himself the proprietor of all California. Indeed, he does seem to be the genuine owner of the soil, instead of a tenant at will. It is true he may construct no dwellings, but he will plant himself in every nook and corner of the one which you may construct. He jumps into your cradle, jumps with you all along through life, and well would it be for those who remain if he jumped with you out of it.

But no, he remains still; and grief for your loss will half forget its bereavement in parrying his assaults.

SATURDAY, OCT. 10. We are waiting with some anxiety for news from the Pueblo de los Angeles. A rumor reached here yesterday, that the small American force there would not be able to hold out much longer against the overwhelming odds of the insurgents. But the Savannah must by this time have reached San Pedro, and her crew be on their march to the scene of action. They are a body of brave, unflinching men, and are commanded by officers of great firmness and force. A sailor on land never thinks of running more than he would at sea. He is trained to stand to his post, and will do so on the field as well as the deck. The last man who left the ground in that disreputable retreat from Bladensburg was a sailor. When the rest were far out of sight he remained at his gun, and was wadding home to give the enemy another shot. In the fight of the Essex many threw themselves out of the ports, determined to drown sooner than surrender.

SUNDAY, OCT. 11. Another bright and beautiful Sabbath has dawned; but there is little here to remind one of its sacredness. A few of the larger stores are closed, but the smaller shops are all open. More liquors are retailed on this day than any other three. I have the power to close these shops, and shall do it.