



Burt. sc.

*J. C. Fremont*

CHAPTER VIII.

LITTLE ADALIDA.—COL. FREMONT'S BATALION.—SANTIAGO IN LOVE.—  
SENTIMENTS OF AN OLD CALIFORNIAN.—THE FORT JULIA.—PAHDANGO.—  
WINTER CLIMATE.—PATRON SAINT OF CALIFORNIA.—HABITS OF THE NA-  
TIVES.—INSURRECTION IN THE NORTH.—CALERA IN A CRUACH.—POSITION  
OF COL. STODOLSKY.

SATURDAY, DEC. 12. Our paper the only one pub-  
lished in California, made its *bi-weekly* appearance  
again to-day. It is a little paper, but is half filled or  
more with original matter. A paper is much like an  
infant: the smaller it is, the more anxious the atten-  
tions which it requires. My partner promised to  
stick by me, but has been the greater part of the time  
since its commencement on the bay of San Fran-  
cisco. He went there to locate a city, but if rumor  
speaks truly, has gone off in quest of his Aphrodite  
before he builds her shrine. I suppose he thinks there  
is but little use in a cage without a bird, but there is  
still less in a bird without a cage. Birds, however,  
always pair before they rear their nests. So that my  
partner is after all in nature's great line, however  
wide it may run from the columns of the Californian.

SUNDAY, DEC. 13. I miss very much the light step  
and laughing eye of my little friend Adelaida, the  
infant daughter of our consul, Mr. Larkin. She was  
a sweet child, and beguiled with her gladness, many

a moment that had else passed less lightly. But a change came over her brightness, an eclipse whose shadow passes not. We watched its dim veil, and idly dreamed it might still pass, when its faint, inwoven light was lost in spreading darkness. She passed away like a bird from its clouded bower; and though her flight lay over dark waters, she now sings in the purple land of the blest. There no shadows fall, and death has no trophies. One eternal spring, with its sparkling founts and fragrant blossoms, reigns through the vernal year. The soft airs as they stir, wake the strings of invisible lyres; and the tender leaves whisper in music. There walk the pure; there survive the meek who wept with us here. They wait to welcome our flight to their joys and sinless repose. O that I had wings like the dove that I might fly away and be at rest!

MONDAY, DEC. 14. It is now two weeks since Col. Fremont broke up his encampment in the vicinity of San Juan, and commenced his march south. His progress has been retarded by a succession of heavy rains, and it is feared that some of the rivers which he must cross, swollen by torrents from the mountains, have been rendered impassable. His horses may perhaps swim them, but his artillery and ammunition must be floated over on rafts. The construction of these, especially where the material is not at hand, will occasion long and impatient detentions. The condition of the roads, soaked as they are with rain,

will still further delay his progress; still, with all these drawbacks, we believe he will reach his destination.

He moves upon no idle or vague object. The great body of the Californians now in arms are at the capital of the southern department, waiting his hostile arrival. They intend to give him battle, and redeem, if possible, some of the laurels which they lost in their precipitate retreat before Com. Stockton. Their forces outnumber his two or three to one; they excel them as horsemen, but fall far short of them in the dexterous use of the rifle. They want that coolness, deliberation, self-reliance, and resolute firmness which appertain to the character of the Americans. We wait the issue of the encounter with a profound interest. Com. Stockton may, perhaps, march from San Pedro and capture Los Angeles, as he has done once before; but with the country around in the possession of the enemy, and the cattle driven off upon distant plains, and the wheat and flour removed into the gorges of the mountains, he could not subsist his forces. So at least it would seem; but we shall see. It was the prospect of famine that drove Napoleon from Moscow.

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 16. An old Californian, much respected for his intelligence and patriotic virtues, sent, a few days since, a communication to our paper, written in good, vigorous Castilian, and which will find an echo in the heart of all the considerate por-

tion of the community. He opens his article in these words:—

“The political aspirants in California have inflicted upon her since 1836, only a continued succession of evils. They have seized all the national property and all the missions, as though they were their own patrimony. These riches they have distributed with a prodigal hand among their satellites; a multitude of officers were created, for whom there was no employment; and military grades established more abundantly than in Paraguay, though with this difference in the result. Doctor Francia, when he died, left eight millions of dollars in the public coffers; while the military chieftains in this country, at the close of their brief career, have left the country overwhelmed in debt. And now, to gratify their infatuated ambition, and secure further plunder, have again hoisted the Mexican flag, which they have long hated and cursed. The rash step taken by these men at the town of the Angeles has only compromised their brethren, and ruined many families. The wealth of this country consists in cattle and agriculture; to maintain the one and carry on the other, horses are indispensable; but these frantic men have driven off the horses and cattle to meet the exigencies of war. They have given their afflicted country her death-stroke, merely because they are not permitted to retain those offices which they are not capable of filling. And such outrageous ambition is called by them, love of country! If there ever existed a spark of patriotism

in their hearts, they would never have attempted the slightest revolutionary act. They would have seen and felt that it could end only in general disaster and ruin.”

Thus writes an old Californian, with the frosts of seventy winters on his head. He understands the condition of this country, and the character of her military chieftains, and has the moral courage to tell the world what he thinks.

THURSDAY, DEC. 17. The United States brig Julia, a prize to the Cyane, left our harbor this morning for the southern coast. She is a beautiful vessel, rides the water like a duck, and sails with the speed of the wind. Her masts rake to an angle that might almost startle a Baltimore clipper. She is commanded by Lieut. Selden, an officer to whose professional attainments she may be safely confided. She goes south to communicate with Col. Fremont at the Rincon, a narrow pass below Santa Barbara. The colonel's route will lead him through this pass, which lies hemmed in between the bluff of a mountain range and the dashing surge of the sea. A small force can defend it against immense odds. Its advantages are well known to the Californians. They have often in their previous revolutions made a stand here, though they have never made it quite a Thermopylæ. Should they post themselves in this pass, the well-trained gun of the Julia may dislodge them, or, at least, act in concert with Col. Fremont on his arri-

val. A man wants the eyes of Argus in this California war.

FRIDAY, DEC. 18. The ladies of Monterey have so many relatives, near and remote, involved in the issue of the war, that they have had but little heart for their customary amusements. But time, which assuages grief, has slowly quelled a sense of peril, and they are gradually coming back into their more gay and social element. The lively tones of their guitars salute you from their corridors, and often the fandango shakes its light slipper in the saloon. It has been customary here for a person giving a dance to apply to the alcalde for a permit, which was never refused, and which always brought to the purse of this functionary three dollars in the shape of a fee. A similar application was made to me a few days since. To grant it would be to sanction the fandango; to refuse it would be an arbitrary exercise of power. Tack which way I would, I must run on a rock, so I determined not to tack at all, and told the applicant I had nothing to do with his fiddles, fandangoes, or fees, so long as the public peace was not disturbed.

SATURDAY, DEC. 19. The season is now verging towards mid-winter, and we have not yet experienced the first wrinkling frost. The hills and valleys, since the recent rains, are mantled with fresh verdure, and here and there the violet opens its purple eye to the

sun. The children are out at play, as in June; their glancing feet are unshod, and their muslin slips but half conceal their pulsing limbs. Even the old men, from whom the ethereal fires have escaped, are abroad in the same garments which covered them in mid-summer. Such is the climate of a California winter, or, at least, its interludes, and these will continue to visit us like sunbows between the showering clouds.

MONDAY, DEC. 21. The house of the humbler Californian has often but one apartment, and is without fireplace or floor. Here a family of ten or fifteen tumble in and sleep on the ground. If they have guests, which is often the case, they turn in among the rest. The thicker they lie, of course the less covering they need. The walls of this promiscuous dormitory are formed of rough piles, driven in the ground, just sufficiently to support a roof that is thatched with flag. Through the chinked piles the night-wind whistles in gusty glee; through the roof the star-light falls in broken flakes. The shower-cloud often pauses over it, and, as if in wanton mischief, empties its floating cistern. But little heed the sleepers these freaks of the elements: they have been familiar with them from their birth. The only beings that seem at all disturbed are the fleas; but they still manage to dodge the shower-drops and secure their nocturnal repast. Those on whom they commit their depredations spring no rattle, raise no cry of alarm. The thief is there, but they know it not. Habit has

exempted them from even a perception of their wrongs. Happy flea of California!

When night-birds fill with waking numbers  
The star-lit pauses in the storm,  
He deftly springs where Beauty slumbers,  
And feasts on her seraphic form.

She little knows who shares her pallet,  
Has heard no lover lift the latch,  
And, waking, only hears the ballet  
Danced by rain-drops on her thatch.

Were all our ills which others tell us,  
And all that darken fancy's dream,  
Confined to those we knew befell us,  
How few our real woes would seem.

TUESDAY, DEC. 22. A courier arrived last evening from the north, with the startling intelligence that forty or fifty mounted Californians had sallied from the hills in the vicinity of San Francisco, and captured several Americans; among them Mr. Bartlett, chief magistrate of that jurisdiction. Capt. Weber, as soon as the news reached him on his station at San José, started with fifty mounted volunteers in pursuit; and fifty more have left Monterey this morning under the command of Capt. Maddox. One party is to come down upon them from the north, and the other is to cut off their retreat to the south. The plan is well laid, and we shall know in a few days if it has been executed with any decisive results.

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 23. It becomes us to keep a

pretty sharp look-out here, or another hostile party may take advantage of the absence of the forces under Capt. Maddox, and pay us a flying visit. No one here can tell when these visits are to be expected; when you feel most secure, they are, perhaps, nearest the door. In all other lands, war bears on its front such a flaring banner that you see its terrific insignia long before you feel its presence; but here, it comes like the descent of the eagle from his mountain eyrie—you hear not his pinions till they beat the air in his reascending: you look for the milk-white lamb that frolicked in your flock, and it is gone. Peril here, like death, borrows half its terrors from the secrecy in which it wraps its footsteps.

THURSDAY, DEC. 24. As soon as the sun had gone down, and twilight had spread its sable shadows over the hills and habitations of Monterey, the festivities of Christmas Eve commenced. The bells rang out a merry chime; the windows were filled with streaming light; bonfires on plain and steep sent up their pyramids of flame; and the sky-rocket burst high over all in showering fire. Children shouted; the young were filled with smiles and gladness; and the aged looked as if some dark cloud had been lifted from the world.

While the bonfires still blazed high, the crowd moved towards the church; the ample nave was soon filled. Before the high altar bent the Virgin Mother, in wonder and love, over her new-born babe; a com-

pany of shepherds entered in flowing robes, with high wands garnished with silken streamers, in which floated all the colors of the rainbow, and surmounted with coronals of flowers. In their wake followed a hermit, with his long white beard, tattered missal, and his sin-chastising lash. Near him figured a wild hunter, in the skins of the forest, bearing a huge truncheon, surmounted by an iron rim, from which hung in jingling chime fragments of all sonorous metals. Then came, last of all, the Evil One, with horned frontlet, disguised hoof, and robe of crimson flame. The shepherds were led on by the angel Gabriel, in purple wings and garments of light. They approached the manger, and, kneeling, hymned their wonder and worship in a sweet chant, which was sustained by the rich tones of exulting harps. The hermit and hunter were not among them; they had been beguiled by the Tempter, and were lingering at a game of dice. The hermit seemed to suspect that all was not right, and read his missal vehemently in the pauses of the game; but the hunter was troubled by none of these scruples, staked his soul, and lost! Emboldened by his success, the Tempter shoved himself among the shepherds; but here he encountered Gabriel, who knew him of old. He quailed under the eye of that invincible angel, and fled his presence. The hermit and hunter, once more disenthralled, paid their penitential homage. The shepherds departed, singing their hosannas, while the voices of the whole assembly rose in the choral strain.

FRIDAY, DEC. 25. At our last advices, Com. Stockton was at San Diego; the Congress and Cyane had been warped into the harbor, and a large portion of the officers and crews were in camp near the town. The Californians were in possession of the country, and often presented a formidable force on the surrounding hills. They were well mounted, and had it in their power to dash down at night on the camp of the commodore. Still, it was of the utmost importance to maintain this position; but aggressive movements were deemed here impracticable. The idea has never been seriously entertained here, that the commander-in-chief could march a body of seamen and marines, drilled into an infantry, to Los Angeles, in the face of the flying-artillery of the Californians; and still less that he could subsist his forces there with all the resources of the country in the hands of the enemy. The war here is not on a great scale, but it impinges, at certain points, with terrific energy. It is not always the magnitude of the field and of the interests at issue, which test most severely the resources of the general. This California war has to be carried on by means which requires consummate tact, coolness, and courage. A few weeks more will decide the fate of the southern department, and with that, the whole tide of affairs here. That department lost in the pending engagement, our northern positions will be put in imminent peril. It is an idle dream to suppose the Californians will not fight; give them faithful and competent leaders, and they evince

a dashing bravery which lifts them immeasurably above contempt. He who presumes on their timidity will learn his error when it may be too late.

SATURDAY, DEC. 26. It is an old custom here for the shepherds, when they have performed their sacred drama in the church, to repeat it, during the holidays, in the residences of some of the citizens. One of the first personages to whom they pay their respects is the chief magistrate of the jurisdiction; I was accordingly saluted this evening with their festive compliment.

The large hall, occupying the centre of the building, was sufficiently ample to accommodate them, and some fifty gentlemen and ladies as spectators. They brought their own orchestral accompaniment, which consisted entirely of violins and guitars. Their prelude had so many sweet harmonies that the listener determined to listen on. The dialogue and chant of the shepherds would have awakened their appropriate associations, but for the obtrusions of the hermit, hunter, and devil, who now gave much freer scope to their characteristic peculiarities than they did in church. The hermit forgot that his lash was intended for himself, and began to use it on others. The hunter left off snaring birds, and commenced setting springes to catch Satan; but his intended victim not only managed to escape, but to decoy the hunter himself into his own net. The hermit tried to disenchant him through the power of his missal; but this

having no effect, he threatened to chastise the subtle author of the mischief, but wanted some one to seize and hold him, for fear his horn, hoof, or tail might come in conflict with the life-glass. During this side-acting, the dialogue and chant of the shepherds went on, though it would be difficult to conceive of any two things more wide asunder in their spirit and effect. The whole was concluded with the riata-dance, by the shepherds, who executed its airy movements with a lightness and precision of step that would have thrown enchantment on any occasion less sacred in its associations than the present.