

CHAPTER XVI.

A CALIFORNIAN JEALOUS OF HIS WIFE.—HOSPITALITY OF THE NATIVES.—
HONORS TO GUADALUPE.—APPLICATION FROM A LOTHARIO FOR A DI-
VORCE.—CAPTURE OF MAZATLAN.—LARCENY OF CANTON SHAWLS.—
AN EMIGRANT'S WIFE CLAIMING TO HAVE TAKEN THE COUNTRY.—A
WILD BULLOCK IN MAIN-STREET.

SATURDAY, NOV. 20. I was tumbled out of my dreams last night by a succession of rapid and heavy knocks at my office door. Unbarring it, I found Giuseppe, a townsman, who stated, under an excitement that almost choked his voice, that he had just returned from the Salinas; that on entering his house he had discovered, through the window in the door leading to his bedroom, by the clear light of the moon, which shone into the apartment, a man reposing on his pillow by the side of his faithless spouse, and desired me to come and arrest him. I had understood that the sposa had not the reputation of the "iciele that hung on Dian's temple," and had no great confidence in Giuseppe's domestic virtues either; but that was no valid reason why he should be so unceremoniously ousted of his domestic claims. I therefore ordered the constable, whom this midnight noise had now awoken, to go with him and bring the culprit before me.

Off they started, well armed with batons and re-

volvers. On reaching the premises the house was carefully reconnoitred, and every egress from the building securely bolted. They were now inside, and had conducted their operations so silently they were unsuspected. The door leading to the bedroom was at the other end of the hall; they crept over the floor with steps so low and soft, each heard his heart beat, and the clock seemed to strike instead of ticking its seconds. Giuseppe's thoughts ran—

"I'll see before I doubt; when I doubt, prove;
And, on the proof, there is no more but this."

Through the panes of glass which relieved the panels of the door, they saw in the faint moonlight, which fell through the opposite window, the dark locks of the guilty intruder flowing over the husband's pillow. "I have a mind," whispered Giuseppe, "to rush in and plunge my knife at once to his cursed heart." "No, no;" returned my faithful constable, "we are here to execute the orders of the alcalde, and if you are going to take the law into your own hands I will leave you. Hush! hark! he stirs! No; it was the shadow of the tree that frecks the moonlight." All was still and waveless again. The door was on the jar, and drawing one good long relieving breath, in they rushed, and seized—what? A muff! The husband could not believe his own eyes, and mussed the muff up, jerking it this way and that, as if to ascertain if there was not a man inside of it. "You return late, Giuseppe," murmured his wife, scarce yet

awake. "Oh, yes, yes, my dear, late, late," stammered the husband. "You have a friend with you," continued the unsuspecting sposa. "Yes, my darling; a friend from the Salinas, whom I have invited to take a night's lodging," replied Giuseppe. "Well, you will find a bed for him in the opposite room, and a candle and matches on the table," rejoined the sposa. So the twain went out, and having disturbed the bed assigned the friend sufficiently to give it the appearance of having been slept in, my constable slipped out and came home, denouncing all jealous husbands and ladies' muffs. This fluster cost me two hours' sleep, and Giuseppe a fee of three dollars to the constable. He would have paid forty times that sum to get free of the joke. Nothing so completely confounds a Californian as to find himself the dupe of his suspicions. It is more vexatious than the wrong which his mistaken anger sought to avenge. Mutual confidence is the basis of all domestic endearment, and the cause which is allowed to disturb it, should be as weighty as the happiness it wrecks. So reads my homily.

TUESDAY, DEC. 7. There are no people that I have ever been among who enjoy life so thoroughly as the Californians. Their habits are simple; their wants few; nature rolls almost every thing spontaneously into their lap. Their cattle, horses, and sheep roam at large—not a blade of grass is cut, and none is required. The harvest waves wherever the plough and

harrow have been; and the grain which the wind scatters this year, serves as seed for the next. The slight labor required is more a diversion than a toil; and even this is shared by the Indian. They attach no value to money, except as it administers to their pleasures. A fortune, without the facilities of enjoying it, is with them no object of emulation or envy. Their happiness flows from a fount that has very little connection with their outward circumstances.

There is hardly a shanty among them which does not contain more true contentment, more genuine gladness of the heart, than you will meet with in the most princely palace. Their hospitality knows no bounds; they are always glad to see you, come when you may; take a pleasure in entertaining you while you remain; and only regret that your business calls you away. If you are sick, there is nothing which sympathy and care can devise or perform which is not done for you. No sister ever hung over the throbbing brain or fluttering pulse of a brother with more tenderness and fidelity. This is as true of the lady whose hand has only figured her embroidery or swept her guitar, as of the cottage-girl wringing from her laundry the foam of the mountain stream; and all this from the *heart!* If I must be cast in sickness or destitution on the care of the stranger, let it be in California; but let it be before American avarice has hardened the heart and made a god of gold.

MONDAY, DEC. 13. A Californian, who had been

absent some two years in Mexico, where he had led a gay irregular life, finding or fancying on his return grounds for suspecting the regularity of his wife, applied to me for a decree of divorce, *a vinculo matrimonii*. I told him that it was necessary, that on so grave a subject, he should come into court with clean hands; that if he would swear on the Cross, at the peril of his soul, that he had been faithful himself during his long absence, I would then see what could be done with his wife. He wanted to know if that was United States law; I told him it was the law by which I was governed—the law of the Bible—and a good law, too—let him that is without sin cast the first stone. “Then I cannot cast any stone at all, sir,” was the candid reply. “Then go and live with your wife; she is as good as you are, and you cannot require her to be any better.” He took my advice, is now living with his wife, and difficulties seem to have ceased. Nothing disarms a man like the conscious guilt of the offence for which he would arraign another.

TUESDAY, DEC. 21. The old church bell has been ringing out all the morning in honor of Guadalupe, the patron saint of California. Her festivities commenced last evening in illuminated windows, bonfires, the flight of rockets, and the loud mirth of children. I wonder if Guadalupe knows or cares much about these exhibitions of devotional glee. Can the shout of boyhood around the crackling bonfire reach to her celestial pavillion? can the flambeau

throw its tremulous ray so far? will she bend her ear from the golden lyres of heaven to catch the sound of a torpedo vibrating up over the cloud-cataracts which thunder between? If Guadalupe be in heaven, where I hope she is, she has done with the crackers and bonfires of earth, and heeds them as little as the glow-worm that glimmers on her grave. But let the old bell peal on; it matters but little whether it be for this saint or that; it is only a metallic hosanna to either. There is more true homage in one silent prayer, breathed from the depths of a meek confiding heart, than in all the peals ever rung from cathedral towers. The only worship which approaches that of a resigned heart is the hymn of the forest, as its leaves in the fading twilight softly tremble to rest. He who can listen unmoved to these vesper melodies, can have no sensibility in his soul, and no God in his creed. When this fevered being shall sink to rest, let me be laid beneath some green tree, whose vernal leaves shall whisper their music over my sleep. And yet it would be lonely were there none beloved in life to linger there in death.

When the bright sun upon that spot is shining
 With purest ray,
 And the small shrubs their buds and blossoms twining,
 Burst through that clay,
 Will there be one still on that spot refining
 Lost hopes away?

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 22. We are now carrying the

war into the enemy's camp; the Pacific squadron, under the broad pennant of Com. Shubrick, is in front of Mazatlan. That important position was captured on the twelfth ult., and is now garrisoned by three hundred and fifty seamen and marines. Capt. Lavelette, well qualified by his intelligence, urbanity, and moral firmness for the post, is governor of the town. The country around, and all the great avenues leading through it, are in the hands of the enemy, who can, at any moment, bring two thousand horsemen into the field. They only want a leader of sufficient resolution, and they might force our garrison upon the last resource of their courage and strength. But Gen. Telles is weak and vacillating, and has not the confidence even of the troops which he commands; while many of the citizens, who have property at issue, prefer the protection extended to them under the flag, to the anarchy and confusion into which they might be thrown by the success of their own arms. It was a bold and decisive movement on the part of our commodore, and executed with a vigor that has impressed itself on the apprehensions of Mexico. Our flag now waves from ocean to ocean, through the plains and mountain fastnesses of that dismayed country.

FRIDAY, JAN. 7. The captain of a merchant ship complained to me this morning, that one of his crew had taken a package of rich Canton shawls on shore, and clandestinely disposed of them. I had the sailor

before me, and wormed out of him the name of every person, as he alleged, with whom he had communicated; but he omitted the name of one suspicious character. I took the constable, and went immediately to her house, and demanded the shawls: she seemed shocked, and denied all knowledge of them. Her manner half staggered me; but I told the constable to take her to prison, not intending, however, to put her in without some evidence of her guilt; but she had not gone many steps from her door before her resolution, which had been as firm as adamant, broke down, and she told where the shawls might be found. They were secreted in the mattress of her bed; and the whole fifteen were recovered. Had the sailor mentioned her name among the rest, I should have been extremely puzzled. A seeming frankness is often the deepest disguise.

SATURDAY, JAN. 8. An assistant alcalde, residing at San Juan, in reporting a case that came before him, states that one of the witnesses, not having a good reputation for veracity, he thought it best to swear him pretty strongly; so he swore him on the Bible, on the cross, by the holy angels, by the blessed Virgin, and on the *twelve* Evangelists. I have written him for some information about eight of his evangelists, as I have no recollection of having met with but four in my biblical readings.

MONDAY, JAN. 10. A woman, from our western

border, who had drifted into California over the mountains, and looking as if she had well survived the hardships of the way, walked into my office this morning, and rather demanded, than invoked, a decree, that her husband might cut timber on the lands of Señor M——. I asked her if her husband had rented the land. "No." If he had any contract or agreement with the owner. "No." "Why then, my woman, do you claim the right of cutting the timber?" "Right, sir!" she exclaimed; "why, have we not taken the country?" I told her it was true, we had taken the country; but we had not taken the private land titles with it: she seemed to think that was a distinction without a difference. This anecdote will furnish a clue to the spirit with which the patient Californians have had to contend.

TUESDAY, JAN. 18. Main-street was thrown into confusion this morning by a wild bullock, who had broken the lasso of his keeper. He plunged down the peopled avenue in foaming fury, clothed with all the terrors of the Apocalyptic beast: men, women, and children fled in every direction. I was standing at the moment in the portico of our Navy Agent, and before I could clear it, he swept through a corner, dashing to the earth a huge stanchion. His next encounter was with the high paling which protected a shade-tree, and which he carried off as Samson the gates of Gaza. Something attracted his flashing eyes to the door of a small dwelling; in an instant it

flew into fragments before his impetuous strength; fortunately it contained no tenant except the wild monster himself, who soon issued from the door, and seemed for a moment lost in his phrensy. A caballero, mounted on a spirited horse, and with his lasso whirling high in air, now rushed up; I expected for a moment to see a desperate plunge from the beast at the courser's side, but the rider and his steed understood their occupation too well; the lasso fell over his horn, and in an instant he was tumbling in the sand. He recovered himself, but it was only to be thrown again, till a second lasso secured his flying heels, and the knife of the Indian finished the rest. A wave of lava let loose from its crater, an avalanche that has slipped from its Alpine steep, and a wild bull that has broken his lasso, are among the most terrific objects that dash on human vision.