

CHAPTER XVIII.

FIRST DISCOVERY OF GOLD.—PRISON GUARD.—INCREDULITY ABOUT THE GOLD.—SANTIAGO GETTING MARRIED.—ANOTHER LUMP OF GOLD.—EFFECTS OF THE GOLD FEVER.—THE COURT OF AN ALCALDE.—MOSQUITOES AS CONSTABLES.—BOB AND HIS BAG OF GOLD.—RETURN OF CITIZENS FROM THE MINES.—A MAN WITH THE GOLD CHOLIC.—THE MINES ON INDIVIDUAL CREDIT.

MONDAY, MAY 29. Our town was startled out of its quiet dreams to-day, by the announcement that gold had been discovered on the American Fork. The men wondered and talked, and the women too; but neither believed. The sibyls were less skeptical; they said the moon had, for several nights, appeared not more than a cable's length from the earth; that a white raven had been seen playing with an infant; and that an owl had rung the church bells.

SATURDAY, JUNE 3. The most faithful and reliable guard that I have ever had over the prisoners, is himself a prisoner. He had been a lieutenant in the Mexican army, and was sentenced, for a flagrant breach of the peace, to the public works for the term of one year. Being hard up for funds, I determined to make an experiment with this lieutenant; had him brought before me; ordered the ball and chain to be taken from his leg, and placed a double-barrelled gun,

loaded and primed, in his hands. "Take that musket, and proceed with the prisoners to the stone quarry; return them to their cells before sunset, and report to me." "Your order, Señor Alcalde, shall be faithfully obeyed," was the reply. I then ordered one of the constables, well mounted and armed, to reconnoitre the quarry, and, unseen by the prisoners or guard, ascertain how things went on. He returned, and reported well of their regularity. At sunset, the lieutenant entered the office, and reported the prisoners in their cells, and all safe. "Very well, José; now make yourself safe, and that will do." He accordingly returned to his prison, and from that day to this, has been my most faithful and reliable guard.

MONDAY, JUNE 5. Another report reached us this morning from the American Fork. The rumor ran, that several workmen, while excavating for a mill-race, had thrown up little shining scales of a yellow ore, that proved to be gold; that an old Sonoranian, who had spent his life in gold mines, pronounced it the genuine thing. Still the public incredulity remained, save here and there a glimmer of faith, like the flash of a fire-fly at night. One good old lady, however, declared that she had been dreaming of gold every night for several weeks, and that it had so frustrated her simple household economy, that she had relieved her conscience, by confessing to her priest—

"Absolve me, father, of that sinful dream."

TUESDAY, JUNE 6. Being troubled with the golden dream almost as much as the good lady, I determined to put an end to the suspense, and dispatched a messenger this morning to the American Fork. He will have to ride, going and returning, some four hundred miles, but his report will be reliable. We shall then know whether this gold is a fact or a fiction—a tangible reality on the earth, or a fanciful treasure at the base of some rainbow, retreating over hill and waterfall, to lure pursuit and disappoint hope.

SATURDAY, JUNE 10. My boy Santiago has taken it into his head to get married; and being a Protestant, finds it extremely difficult to get through the ecclesiastical hopper. Were the person whom he wishes to wed of the same faith with himself, there would be but little impediment; but as she is a Roman Catholic, it is necessary that he should become one too. He has been to the presiding priest to see if he could not get his permission to retain a few articles of his own religion, just enough to save his conscience. But his reverence told him he must give it up in toto, renounce it as a heresy, and come without a scruple into the mother church. Iago is not much of a theologian, but has sense enough to know that conscientious scruples are not things of which a man can free himself at will. His love, none the less deep and sincere for his humble condition, urges him to a compliance with the canonical requirement, but these very scruples hold him back. How he will extricate

One of the "upper ten" in the diggings, and a California savan—"My charge for examination is exactly one pound of gold. Science is extremely rare in these parts, and I have the only spy-glass."



himself I know not. He will probably compound the matter with his conscience by some mental reservations, as Galileo did when awed into the indignant confession that the earth was flat. Verily, if a man cannot marry in this world without becoming a hypocrite or apostate from the faith of his fathers, the sooner Miller's conflagrating dream becomes a reality the better. Perhaps some shape of flame might emerge from its drifting embers, that would dare glimmer towards heaven without the leave of a pragmatic priest. I wonder if Adam asked Eve if she were a Roman Catholic before they celebrated their nuptials. This is an important question, and ought to be looked into, though now rather late in the day. I commend it to my venerable friend, the Bishop of New York, who has recently issued an edict that no Protestant shall marry a Roman Catholic without first passing his children, prospectively, through his baptismal font.

MONDAY, JUNE 12. A straggler came in to-day from the American Fork, bringing a piece of yellow ore weighing an ounce. The young dashed the dirt from their eyes, and the old from their spectacles. One brought a spyglass, another an iron ladle; some wanted to melt it, others to hammer it, and a few were satisfied with smelling it. All were full of tests; and many, who could not be gratified in making their experiments, declared it a humbug. One lady sent me a huge gold ring, in the hope of reach-

ing the truth by comparison; while a gentleman placed the specimen on the top of his gold-headed cane and held it up, challenging the sharpest eyes to detect a difference. But doubts still hovered on the minds of the great mass. They could not conceive that such a treasure could have lain there so long undiscovered. The idea seemed to convict them of stupidity. There is nothing of which a man is more tenacious than his claims to sagacity. He sticks to them like an old bachelor to the idea of his personal attractions, or a toper to the strength of his temperance ability, whenever he shall wish to call it into play.

THURSDAY, JUNE 15. Found an Indian to-day perfectly sober, who is generally drunk, and questioned him of the cause of his sobriety. He stated that he wished to marry an Indian girl, and she would not have him unless he would keep sober a month; that this was but his third day, and he should never be able to stand it unless I would put him beyond the reach of liquor. So I sentenced him to the public works for a month; this will pay off old scores, and help him to a wife, who may perhaps keep him sober, though I fear there is little hope of that.

TUESDAY, JUNE 20. My messenger sent to the mines, has returned with specimens of the gold; he dismounted in a sea of upturned faces. As he drew forth the yellow lumps from his pockets, and passed

them around among the eager crowd, the doubts, which had lingered till now, fled. All admitted they were gold, except one old man, who still persisted they were some Yankee invention, got up to reconcile the people to the change of flag. The excitement produced was intense; and many were soon busy in their hasty preparations for a departure to the mines. The family who had kept house for me caught the moving infection. Husband and wife were both packing up; the blacksmith dropped his hammer, the carpenter his plane, the mason his trowel, the farmer his sickle, the baker his loaf, and the tapster his bottle. All were off for the mines, some on horses, some on carts, and some on crutches, and one went in a litter. An American woman, who had recently established a boarding-house here, pulled up stakes, and was off before her lodgers had even time to pay their bills. Debtors ran, of course. I have only a community of women left, and a gang of prisoners, with here and there a soldier, who will give his captain the slip at the first chance. I don't blame the fellow a whit; seven dollars a month, while others are making two or three hundred a day! that is too much for human nature to stand.

SATURDAY, JULY 15. The gold fever has reached every servant in Monterey; none are to be trusted in their engagement beyond a week, and as for compulsion, it is like attempting to drive fish into a net with the ocean before them. Gen. Mason, Lieut.

Lanman, and myself, form a mess; we have a house, and all the table furniture and culinary apparatus requisite; but our servants have run, one after another, till we are almost in despair: even Sambo, who we thought would stick by from laziness, if no other cause, ran last night; and this morning, for the fortieth time, we had to take to the kitchen, and cook our own breakfast. A general of the United States Army, the commander of a man-of-war, and the Alcalde of Monterey, in a smoking kitchen, grinding coffee, toasting a herring, and peeling onions! These gold mines are going to upset all the domestic arrangements of society, turning the head to the tail, and the tail to the head. Well, it is an ill wind that blows nobody any good: the nabobs have had their time, and now comes that of the "niggers." We shall all live just as long, and be quite as fit to die.

TUESDAY, JULY 18. Another bag of gold from the mines, and another spasm in the community. It was brought down by a sailor from Yuba river, and contains a hundred and thirty-six ounces. It is the most beautiful gold that has appeared in the market; it looks like the yellow scales of the dolphin, passing through his rainbow hues at death. My carpenters, at work on the school-house, on seeing it, threw down their saws and planes, shouldered their picks, and are off for the Yuba. Three seamen ran from the Warren, forfeiting their four years' pay; and a whole platoon of soldiers from the fort left only their

colors behind. One old woman declared she would never again break an egg or kill a chicken, without examining yolk and gizzard.

SATURDAY, JULY 22. The laws by which an alcalde here is governed, in the administration of justice, are the Mexican code as compiled in Frebrero and Alvarez—works of remarkable comprehensiveness, clearness, and facility of application. They embody all the leading principles of the civil law, derived from the institutes of Justinian. The common law of England is hardly known here, though its rules and maxims have more or less influenced local legislation. But with all these legal provisions a vast many questions arise which have to be determined *ex cathedra*. In minor matters the alcalde is often himself the law; and the records of his court might reveal some very exquisite specimens of judicial prerogative; such as shaving a rogue's head—*lex talionis*—who had shaved the tail of his neighbor's horse; or making a busybody, who had slandered a worthy citizen, promenade the streets with a gag in his mouth; or obliging a man who had recklessly caused a premature birth, to compensate the bereaved father for the loss of that happiness which he might have derived from his embryo hope, had it budded into life. This last has rather too many contingencies about it; but the principle, which reaches it and meets the offender, does very well out here in California, and would not be misapplied in some of those

pill-shops which slope the path to crime in the United States.

THURSDAY, JULY 27. I never knew mosquitoes turned to any good account save in California; and here it seems they are sometimes ministers of justice. A rogue had stolen a bag of gold from a digger in the mines, and hid it. Neither threats nor persuasions could induce him to reveal the place of its concealment. He was at last sentenced to a hundred lashes, and then informed that he would be let off with thirty, provided he would tell what he had done with the gold; but he refused. The thirty lashes were inflicted, but he was still stubborn as a mule.

He was then stripped naked and tied to a tree. The mosquitoes with their long bills went at him, and in less than three hours he was covered with blood. Writhing and trembling from head to foot with exquisite torture, he exclaimed, "Untie me, untie me, and I will tell where it is." "Tell first," was the reply. So he told where it might be found. Some of the party then, with wisps, kept off the still hungry mosquitoes, while others went where the culprit had directed, and recovered the bag of gold. He was then untied, washed with cold water, and helped to his clothes, while he muttered, as if talking to himself, "I couldn't stand that anyhow."

FRIDAY, JULY 28. A little laughing girl tripped into the office to-day, and handed me a bunch of

flowers, which she said her mother sent me. "And who is your mother, my sweet one?" I inquired. She told me, and I then remembered that I had recovered for her a silver cup, which an Indian had stolen; and these flowers had now come as a memento.

"Fee me with flowers, they hold no sordid bribe."

SATURDAY, AUG. 12. My man Bob, who is of Irish extraction, and who had been in the mines about two months, returned to Monterey four weeks since, bringing with him over two thousand dollars, as the proceeds of his labor. Bob, while in my employ, required me to pay him every Saturday night, in gold, which he put into a little leather bag and sewed into the lining of his coat, after taking out just twelve and a half cents, his weekly allowance for tobacco. But now he took rooms and began to branch out; he had the best horses, the richest viands, and the choicest wines in the place. He never drank himself, but it filled him with delight to brim the sparkling goblet for others. I met Bob to-day, and asked him how he got on. "Oh, very well," he replied, "but I am off again for the mines." "How is that, Bob? you brought down with you over two thousand dollars; I hope you have not spent all that: you used to be very saving; twelve and a half cents a week for tobacco, and the rest you sewed into the lining of your coat." "Oh, yes," replied Bob, "and I have got *that* money yet; I worked hard for it; and the diel can't get it

away; but the two thousand dollars came asily by good luck, and has gone as asily as it came." Now Bob's story is only one of a thousand like it in California, and has a deeper philosophy in it than meets the eye. Multitudes here are none the richer for the mines. He who can shake chestnuts from an exhaustless tree, won't stickle about the quantity he roasts.

THURSDAY, AUG. 16. Four citizens of Monterey are just in from the gold mines on Feather River, where they worked in company with three others. They employed about thirty wild Indians, who are attached to the rancho owned by one of the party. They worked precisely seven weeks and three days, and have divided seventy-six thousand eight hundred and forty-four dollars,—nearly eleven thousand dollars to each. Make a dot there, and let me introduce a man, well known to me, who has worked on the Yuba river sixty-four days, and brought back, as the result of his individual labor, five thousand three hundred and fifty-six dollars. Make a dot there, and let me introduce another townsman, who has worked on the North Fork fifty-seven days, and brought back four thousand five hundred and thirty-four dollars. Make a dot there, and let me introduce a boy, fourteen years of age, who has worked on the Mokelumne fifty-four days, and brought back three thousand four hundred and sixty-seven dollars. Make another dot there, and let me introduce a woman, of Sonoranian birth, who

has worked in the dry diggings forty-six days, and brought back two thousand one hundred and twenty-five dollars. Is not this enough to make a man throw down his leger and shoulder a pick? But the deposits which yielded these harvests were now opened for the first time; they were the accumulation of ages; only the foot-prints of the elk and wild savage had passed over them. Their slumber was broken for the first time by the sturdy arms of the American emigrant.

TUESDAY, AUG. 28. The gold mines have upset all social and domestic arrangements in Monterey; the master has become his own servant, and the servant his own lord. The millionaire is obliged to groom his own horse, and roll his wheelbarrow; and the hidalgo—in whose veins flows the blood of all the Cortes—to clean his own boots! Here is lady L—, who has lived here seventeen years, the pride and ornament of the place, with a broomstick in her jewelled hand! And here is lady B— with her daughter—all the way from "old Virginia," where they graced society with their varied accomplishments—now floating between the parlor and kitchen, and as much at home in the one as the other! And here is lady S—, whose cattle are on a thousand hills, lifting, like Rachel of old, her bucket of water from the deep well! And here is lady M. L—, whose honeymoon is still full of soft seraphic light, unhoueseling a potatoe, and hunting the hen that laid

the last egg. And here am I, who have been a man of some note in my day, loafing on the hospitality of the good citizens, and grateful for a meal, though in an Indian's wigwam. Why, is not this enough to make one wish the gold mines were in the earth's flaming centre, from which they sprung? Out on this yellow dust! it is worse than the cinders which buried Pompeii, for there, high and low shared the same fate!

SATURDAY, SEPT. 9. I met a Scotchman this morning bent half double, and evidently in pain. On inquiring the cause, he informed me that he had just seen a lump of gold from the Mokelumne as big as his double fist, and it had given him the cholic. The diagnosis of the complaint struck me as a new feature in human maladies, and one for which it would be difficult to find a suitable medicament in the therapeutics known to the profession; especially in the allopathic practice, which has stood still for three thousand years, except in the discovery of quinine for ague, and sulphur for itch. The gentlemen of this embalmed school must wake up; their antediluvian owl may do on an Egyptian obelisk, but we must have a more wide-awake bird in these days of progress. Here is a man bent double with a new and strange disease, taken from looking at gold: your bleeding, blistering, and purging won't free him of it. What is to be done? shall he be left to die, or be delivered over to the homœopathics? They have a

medicament that acts as a specific, on the principle that the hair of the dog is good for the bite. If you burn your hand, what do you do—clasp a piece of ice?—no, seize a warm poker; if you freeze your foot, do you put it to the fire?—no, dash it into the snow; and so if you take the gold-cholic, the remedy is, *aurum—similia similibus curantur.*

SATURDAY, SEPT. 16. The gold mines are producing one good result; every creditor who has gone there is paying his debts. Claims not deemed worth a farthing are now cashed on presentation at nature's great bank. This has rendered the credit of every man here good for almost any amount. Orders for merchandise are honored which six months ago would have been thrown into the fire. There is none so poor, who has two stout arms and a pickaxe left, but he can empty any store in Monterey. Nor has the first instance yet occurred, in which the creditor has suffered. All distinctions indicative of means have vanished; the only capital required is muscle and an honest purpose. I met a man to-day from the mines in patched buckskins, rough as a badger from his hole, who had fifteen thousand dollars in yellow dust, swung at his back. Talk to him of brooches, gold-headed canes, and Carpenter's coats! Why he can unpack a lump of gold that would throw all Chesnut-street into spasms. And there is more where this came from. *His* rights in the great domain are equal to yours, and his

prospects of getting it out vastly better. With these advantages, he bends the knee to no man, but strides along in his buckskins, a lord of earth by a higher prescriptive privilege than what emanates from the partiality of kings. His patent is medallioned with rivers which roll over golden sands; and embossed with mountains which have lifted for ages their golden coronets to heaven. Clear out of the way with your crests, and crowns, and pedigree trees, and let this democrat pass. Every drop of blood in his veins tells that it flows from a great heart, which God has made and which man shall never enslave. Such are the genuine sons of California; such may they live and die.

"They will not be the tyrant's slaves,
While heaven has light, or earth has graves."