

and as it drops into the hands of the widow or orphan, prove that—

“The secret pleasure of a generous act  
Is the great mind's great bribe.”

But evening is returning, and with it the gold-diggers from their pursuit of the new deposit. Their jokes, as they clatter down the slopes of the ravine, are sufficient evidence that they have been on a wild-goose chase. Disappointment will make a single man sober, but when it falls on a multitude, is often converted into a source of railery and fun. There is something extremely consoling in having the company of others, when we have been duped through our vanity or exaggerated hopes. This comfort was deeply felt by the diggers this evening. All had lost a day, and with it the most enchanting visions of wealth. All had returned hungry as a wolf on a desert; or a recluse listening in his last penance to the sound of his cross-bones, shaken by the wind.

## CHAPTER XXII.

VISIT TO THE SONORANIAN CAMP.—FESTIVITIES AND GAMBLING.—THE DOCTOR AND TEAMSTER.—AN ALCALDE TURNED COOK.—THE MINER'S TATTOO.—THE LITTLE DUTCHMAN.—NEW DEPOSITS DISCOVERED.—A WOMAN KEEPING A MONTÉ TABLE.—UP TO THE KNEE AND NINE-PENCE.—THE VOLCANOES AND GOLD.—ARRIVAL OF A BARREL OF RUM.

FRIDAY, OCT. 20. I threw myself into my saddle at an early hour this morning, and started for a cañada, about ten miles distant. The foot-trail which I followed, lay over several sharp ridges to the quick waves of the Stanislaus, and then up a steep mountain spur. I was obliged to dismount, draw myself up by the bushes, and trust to the fidelity of my horse to follow. At last we gained the summit, but it was only to gaze down a wild precipitous descent, where the cliffs hung in toppling terror. A vein of white quartz run along the ridge, like a line of unmelted snow, with here and there spangles of gold glittering in the sun. I had no implement with me but my hunting-knife, and vainly broke the point of that. I tried one of my pistols; the bullet knocked out the gold-drop, but jewel and lead went over the steep verge together. I let myself down by the bushes, blessing every lythe limb and steadfast root, while my horse, more sagacious, fetched a circuit, and reached the plain before me.

Ascending another ridge, the ravine, which had induced this adventure, lay in jagged wildness beneath. It was in uproarious life; an elk had been shot; and the miners were feasting on its fat ribs. The repast was hardly over, when the *monté* table, with its piles of gold, glimmered in the shade. It was the great camp of the Sonorians, and hundreds were crowding around to reach the bank, and deposit their treasures on the turn of a card. They seemed to play for the excitement, and often doubled their stakes whether they won or lost. They apparently connect no moral obliquity with the game; one of them, who sleeps near my camping-tree, will kneel by the half hour on the sharp rock in his Ave Marias, while the keen night-wind cuts his scarce clad frame, then rise and stake his last dollar at *monté*. At the break of day he is on his knees again, and his prayer trembles up with the first trill of the waking birds. It was in this ravine that a few weeks since the largest lump of gold found in California was discovered. It weighs twenty-three pounds, is nearly pure, and cubic in its form. Its discovery shook the whole mines; the shout of the *eureka* swelled on the wind like the cheer of seamen when the pharos breaks through a stormy night. I waved my adieu to the miners, and fetching a bold circuit to the east, reached at night-fall my camping-tree.

SATURDAY, OCT. 21. Extravagant charges here are often made as offsets. A doctor of my acquaintance,

wishing to remove to another cañada a few miles off, tost his machine into an empty wagon, bound in that direction, and on arriving, asked the teamster what he was to pay; the reply was a hundred dollars! which was planked down without a word. Soon after this the teamster had a grip of the cholic, from which he sought relief in two or three of the doctor's pills. The relieved patient now asked what *he* was to pay; the doctor, after a few moment's abstraction, in which he seemed to be rummaging his memory more than his medicines, replied, "The charge is exactly one hundred dollars!" "Ah," said the wagoner, "I knew that cradle would yet rock thunder at me." But he paid the fee, and squared the account.

I have been out for several hours this morning scouring a conical hill crowned with quartz. I took with me the sailor, who knocked his cup of gold out of sight by an accidental glance of his pick. We searched the hill from top to bottom, shivered the quartz on its summit, and rummaged among the fragments of the same, which the storms of ages had swept to its base, but we found no gold. Following one of the slopes which terminated in a glen, overhung with willows, and where a current had flowed, we struck into a confined basin, where we found, among the pebbles, a deposit of gold, and gathered, in the course of the day, about two ounces; with beautiful trophies we returned to camp.

MONDAY, OCT. 23. It was now near noon, and

my day to cook the dinner ; so I hastened back to our camping-tree, and piling up the half-extinguished brands, soon raised a fire. Then taking a tin pan, which served alternately as a gold-washer and a bread-tray, I turned into it a few pounds of flour, a small solution of saleratus, and a few quarts of water, and then went to work in it with my hands, mixing it up and adding flour till I got it to the right consistency ; then shaping it into a loaf, raked open the embers, and rolled it in, covering it with the live coals. While this baking was going on, I placed in a stew-pan, after pounding it pretty well between two stones, a string of jerked-beef, with a small quantity of water, and lodged it on the fire. Then taking some coffee, which had been burnt the evening before, I tied it in the end of a napkin, and hammering it to pieces between two stones, turned it into a coffee-pot filled with water, and placed that, too, on the fire. In half an hour or so my bread was baked, my jerk-beef stewed, and my coffee boiled. I settled the latter by turning on it a pint of cold water. The bread was well done ; a little burnt on one side, and somewhat puffed up, like the expectations of the gold-digger in the morning, or the vanity of a stump-orator just after a cheer. My companions returned, and seating ourselves on the ground, each with a tin cup of coffee, a junk of bread, and a piece of the stewed jerky, our dinner was soon dispatched, and with a relish which the epicure never yet felt or fancied. The water here is slightly impregnated with iron and

sulphur ; the one acting as a tonic, the other as an aperient. And then this fine mountain air, some eight hundred feet above the level of the sea, all conduce to health and buoyancy of spirits. Among the hundred gold-diggers around, not one hypochondriac throws on rock or rill the shadow of a long countenance. Even they who hardly get out gold enough to pay their way, laugh at their bad luck, and hope for better success to-morrow. They have yet plenty of tickets in the lottery, and some of them may turn out prizes. At any rate, they are not going to despond while these glens contain an undisturbed bar, or these hills lift their cones of white rock in the sun.

TUESDAY, OCT. 24. The ravine in which we are camped runs nearly north and south, and is walled by lofty ranges of precipitous rock. It is near ten o'clock of the day before the rays of the sun strike its depths ; but when they do reach you, it is with a power that drives you at once into the shade. It is twilight in the glen, while the cliffs above still blaze in the radiance of the descending orb. As darkness comes on, the camp-fires of the diggers, kindled along the ravine, throw their light into every recess, where forms are seen, gathered in groups, or glancing about, while every now and then some merry tale or apt joke explodes in a roar of laughter. At eight o'clock every tin pan and brass kettle is put in requisition, and the thumpers beat a tattoo, which is concluded with the simultaneous discharge of several muskets.

The jargon is enough to frighten the wolf out of his cavern ; and yet no harmony that ever rolled from theatrical orchestra or cathedral choir, can charm you half as much. It is the music of the heart reeling itself off through tin pans in melodious numbers. But the musicians are now all sound asleep ; their camp-fires wane, and there is only heard the dirge of the pines, murmuring in the night-wind. Thousands who lie on beds of down, under canopies of silk, might envy the sleepers on these rocks their quiet repose. The stars gaze on no groups where slumber shakes from its wings such a refreshing dew.

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 25. A little Dutchman came to me this morning, and informed me, in whispers, that he and his companion had, unbeknown to the rest, stolen off to a glen about three miles distant, where they had found a rich deposit, and then invited me to come and share it with them. He took my pan, which had served as a bread-tray, and we wound over the hills to his glen. Here we found his red-haired companion, knee-deep in mud, which he was shovelling out to reach the bed of clay beneath. On this bed lay the gold in grains about the size of wheat-kernels. Every now and then the water, which was as cold as ice, would gather in the hole, and required to be bailed out or drained off. The chill of the water was enough for me ; I had tried that once before, and felt no disposition to repeat the experiment. The mud I could stand, for I was already dirty as a

pig just rolling out of his *siesta*. So I told my young friends to go to work, and I would poke about the edges. They urged me to jump in ; and truly the temptation was strong, and required some share of prudence to resist it, but I contented myself with working where I could keep my feet dry. But they several times called for my pan, and filled it with earth, scraped from the clay bed, which I washed out, and then found at the bottom fifteen or twenty dollars in gold. They obtained, as the result of their joint labors through the day, about a thousand dollars. Night was advancing, and I returned over the hills to our camping-tree.

THURSDAY, OCT. 26. Where is the little Dutchman and the red-haired Paddy ? ran in excited inquiry through the ravine this morning, for they had now been missed from the camp twenty-four hours, and no doubt existed on the minds of many that they had found a rich deposit somewhere, and were secretly working it out. I knew well where they were, but no one thought of questioning me on the subject, for I was looked upon as a sort of amateur gold-hunter, very much given to splitting rocks and digging in unproductive places ; and, indeed, this was not far from the truth, for my main object was information, and a specimen of wild mountain life.

But to return to the little Dutchman. All knew him to be a shrewd gold-hunter, and determined to find him before he should exhaust his discovery. No

child lost in the woods ever awakened half the concern: some started in this direction, others in that, till all the cardinal points in the heaven, and all the glens between, had men travelling towards them. The most curious feature in this business is, that out of a regiment of gold-hunters, where the utmost apparent confusion prevails, the absence of two men should be noticed. But the motions of every man are watched. Even when he gathers up his traps, takes formal leave, and is professedly bound home, he is tracked for leagues. No disguise can avail him; the most successful war-stratagem would fail here.

FRIDAY, OCT. 27. I have just returned from another ravine, five miles distant, where there are eighty or a hundred gold-diggers. They are mostly Sonorians, and, like all their countrymen, passionately devoted to gambling. They were playing at *monté*; the keeper of the bank was a woman, and herself a Sonorian. There was no coin on the table; the bank consisted of a pile of gold, weighing, perhaps, a hundred pounds; and each of the players laid down his ounce or pound, as his means or courage permitted. The woman, on the whole, appeared to be the winner, though one man, in the course of half an hour, took ten pounds from her yellow pile. But such a loss was felt only for the moment, and only had the effect to stimulate others to lose what little they had left. A Sonorian digs out gold simply

and solely that he may have the wherewithal for gambling. This is the rallying thought which wakes with him in the morning, which accompanies him through the day, and which floats through his dreams at night. For this he labors, and cheerfully denies himself every comfort. All this is the result of habit. A Mussulman looks upon gambling as a species of larceny,—as a crime which deserves the *bastinado*. I saw a Turkish *cadi* at Smyrna sentence a man to thirty-nine lashes for having, as he termed it, *swindled* another out of fifty dollars at *faro*. Give me a Turk where there is a rogue to be caught or a crime punished. The flashings of the sword of justice follow the crime as light the shark in a phosphoric sea.

SATURDAY, OCT. 28. A portion of the party that went in quest of the little Dutchman have found him, and helped him to dig out his new deposit—a sort of assistance for which he can feel no very profound obligation. It was much like that rendered by Prince Hal in the division of the spoils secured by the knight of sack at Gad's hill. A successful gold-hunter is like the leader of hounds in the chase—the whole pack comes sweeping after, and are sure to be in at the death. No doubling hill, or covert, or stream throws them upon a false scent. I advise all fox-hunters to come here and train their hounds, and throw away their horns. Even his Grace of Wellington, who is still so hotly keen in the chase, that the snows of eighty winters fall from his locks unper-

ceived, might catch some valuable hints in the gold mines of California.

MONDAY, OCT. 30. I encountered to-day, in a ravine some three miles distant, among the gold-washers, a woman from San José. She was at work with a large wooden bowl, by the side of a stream. I asked her how long she had been there, and how much gold she averaged a day. She replied, "Three weeks and an ounce." Her reply reminded me of an anecdote of the late Judge B——, who met a girl returning from market, and asked her, "How deep did you find the stream? what did you get for your butter?" "Up to the knee and nine-pence," was the reply. Ah! said the judge to himself; she is the girl for me—no words lost there: turned back, proposed, was accepted, and married the next week; and a more happy couple the conjugal bonds never united: the nuptial lamp never waned; its ray was steady and clear to the last. Ye, who paddle off and on for seven years, and are at last perhaps capsized, take a lesson of the judge. That "up to the knee and nine-pence" is worth all the rose letters and melancholy rhymes ever penned. But I am wandering; I did intend to write this journal without an episode, but they will keep forcing themselves in, like the curiosity of the crowd in a family jar, or remembrances of wrong upon a guilty conscience. I know the interest of a journal depends much on the continuity of its thread; but it is the easiest thing in the world to

be continuously stupid, and *that* is my apology for these episodal breaks. If the reader don't like this reason, then let him look up a better; while I plunge into that o'ershadowed glen, and see if it contains any gold.

TUESDAY, OCT. 31. I have collected, since my arrival in the mines, several singular and beautiful specimens of the gold. One of the pieces resembles a pendulous ear-drop, and must have assumed that shape when the metal was in a state of fusion. That all the gold here has once been in that state is sufficiently evident from the forms in which it is found. I have a specimen, weighing several ounces, in which the characteristics of the slate rock are as palpable as if they had been engraved. I have another specimen, in which a clear crystal of quartz is set, with a finish of execution which no jeweller can rival. I have another specimen still, where the gold gleams up, in the shape of buck-shot, from a basis of sandstone; and another still, where it has taken the form of a paper-folder, and may be used to cut the leaves of a book, which have escaped the knife of the binder. A most interesting cabinet of curiosities might be gathered from the variety of combinations and forms which the gold in these mines has assumed. Nature never indulged in fancies more elegant and whimsical. If these are the works of the volcano, then jewellers, instead of looking to the laboratories of Paris, or Amsterdam, for models, should come and seat

themselves by the side of these craters. Here are laboratories, which no human power has constructed, and models, which no human skill can rival.

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 1. There are several persons among the gold-diggers here who rarely use any implement but their wooden bowls. Into these they scrape the dirt left by others, which they stir and whirl till the gold gradually works its way to the bottom. The earth, as these heavier particles descend, is thrown off by the hands, and the gold remains. This process is what they call dry washing: it is resorted to where there is no water in the vicinity, and will answer pretty well where the gold is found in coarse grains; but the finer particles, of course, escape. The Sonorians obviate this difficulty to some extent by calling their lungs into requisition. They rub the earth into their bowls, through their hands, detaching and throwing away all the pebbles, and then blow off the sand and dust, leaving the gold at the bottom. But on some of the streams, particularly the Yuba, the gold is too fine even for this process. It is amusing to see a group of Sonorians, seated around a deposit, blowing the earth out of their bowls. But for the dust they raise, you would think they were cooling hasty-pudding. Their cheeks swell out, like the chops of a squirrel, carrying half the beech-nuts on a tree to his hole. A more provident fellow he than his two-legged superior! He lays in his stores against the inclemency of

winter; while the Sonorian squanders his at the gambling-table. There is more practical wisdom in an ant-hill than is often found in a city. But I am digressing again—a propensity which I shall never get over.

THURSDAY, NOV. 2. Quite a sensation was produced among the gold-diggers this morning by the arrival of a wagon from Stockton, freighted with provisions and a barrel of liquor. The former had been getting scarce, and the latter had long since entirely given out. The prices of the first importation were—flour, two dollars a pound; sugar and coffee, four dollars; and the liquor, which was nothing more nor less than New England rum, was twenty dollars the quart. But few had bottles: every species of retainer was resorted to; some took their quart cups, some their coffee-pots, and others their sauce-pans; while one fellow, who had neither, offered ten dollars to let him suck with a straw from the bung. All were soon in every variety of excitement, from prattling exhilaration, to roaring inebriety. Some shouted, some danced, and some wrestled: a son of Erin poured out his soul on the beauties of the Emerald isle; a German sung the songs of his father-land; a Yankee apostrophized the mines, which swelled in the hills around; an Englishman challenged all the bears in the mountain glens to mortal combat; and a Spaniard, posted aloft on a beetling crag, addressed the universe. The multitudinous voices which rang

from every chasm and cove of the ravine, rivalled the roar that went up around the tower of Babel. But night has come; the camp-fires burn dim; and the revellers are at rest, save here and there one who strides about in his delirium, commanding silence among the wolves who bark from the hills. What exciting, elevating, and expanding powers there are in a barrel of New England rum! It makes one to-day monarch of peopled realms, and their riches; but leaves him to-morrow in rags, and with only ground enough in which to sink his pauper grave.

"Thou sparkling bowl! thou sparkling bowl!  
 Though lips of bards thy brim may press,  
 And eyes of beauty o'er thee roll,  
 And song and dance thy power confess—  
 I will not touch thee; for there clings  
 A scorpion to thy side that stings."

PIERPONT.

### CHAPTER XXIII.

NATURAL AMPHITHEATRE.—NO SCIENTIFIC CLUE TO THE DEPOSITS OF GOLD.—  
 SOIL OF THE MINES.—LIFE AMONG THE GOLD-DIGGERS.—LOSS OF OUR  
 CABALLADA.—THE OLD MAN AND ROCK.—DEPARTURE FROM THE MINES.—  
 TRAVELLING AMONG GORGES AND PINNACLES.—INSTINCTS OF THE MULE.—  
 A MOUNTAIN CABIN.

FRIDAY, NOV. 3. At the head of the ravine, where our camping-trees wave, stands an amphitheatre reared by nature, and unrivalled in the grandeur of its proportions, and the stateliness and strength of its architecture. It unrolls its wild magnificence on the eye with a more majestic power than even Rome's great wonder. From its ample arena, circling ranges of crags soar one over the other to the lofty sweep of the architrave, where sentinel-trees toss their branches against the sky. Had nature reared this theatre on the banks of the Tiber, the beauty and bravery of Rome would have flashed over the arena's gladiatorial tumult. But it was here in California, where even the Roman eagle, in its earth-embracing circuit, flew not.

A new deposit was discovered this morning near the falls of the Stanislaus, and in the crevices of the rocks over which the river pours its foaming sheet. An Irishman had gone there to bathe, and in throwing off his clothes, had dropped his jack-knife, which