

The midnight moans, and phrensied groans,
Of miners near their last,
In tones that cursed the gold they nursed,
Came trembling on the blast.

While one apart, with gentler heart,
His still tears dashed aside,
That he might trace a pictured face,
At which he gazed, and died.

On steep and vale, in calm and gale,
Like music on the sea—
Sweet slumber stole, within my soul,
Beneath the camping-tree.

A low-voiced tone, the wind hath thrown
Upon my dreaming ear,
Of one, whose smiles, and gentle wiles,
Are still remembered here :—

Of one, whose tears—where each endears
The more the heart that wept—
From swimming lid in silence slid,
And on her bosom slept.

A blue-eyed child, with glee half wild,
In infant beauty's beams,
And lock that rolled, in waving gold,
Came glancing through my dreams.

Farewell to thee, my camping-tree ;
Till life's last visions gleam,
Thy leaves and limbs, and vesper hymns,
Shall float in memory's dream.

CHAPTER XXV.

CAUSE OF SICKNESS IN THE MINES.—THE QUICKSILVER MINES.—HEAT AND COLD IN THE MINES.—TRAITS IN THE SPANISH CHARACTER.—HEALTH OF CALIFORNIA LADIES.—A WORD TO MOTHERS.—THE PINGRASS AND BLACK-BIRD.—THE REDWOOD-TREE.—BATTLE OF THE EGGS.

SATURDAY, DEC. 2. I found Monterey, on my return from the mines, under the same quiet air in which her green hills had soared since I first beheld their waving shade. Many had predicted my precipitate return, from the hardships and baffled attempt of the tour ; but I persevered, taking it rough and tumble from the first, and have returned with improved health. I met with but very few cases of sickness in the mines, and these obviously resulting from excessive imprudence. What but maladies could be expected, where the miner stands by the hour in a cold mountain stream, with a broiling sun overhead, and then, perhaps, drinking every day a pint of New England rum? Why, the rum itself would shatter any constitution not lightning-proof. I wish those who send this fire-curse here were wrapped in its flames till the wave of repentance should baptize them into a better life.

I have missed but two things, since my return, from my goods and chattels—my walking-cane and my Bible ; both have been carried off during my absence.

I hope the latter will do the person who has taken it much good: I forgive the burglary for the sake of the benefit. Prometheus was chained to the Caucasian rock for having filched fire from heaven; but no such fearful retribution awaits him who has stolen my Bible, flooded though it be with a higher light than ever dawned on the eyes of the guilty Titan. May its spirit reach the offender's soul, and quicken thoughts that shall wander without rest till they light on the Cross, where hang the hopes of the world.

TUESDAY, DEC. 12. The quicksilver mines of California constitute one of the most important elements in her mineral wealth. Only one vein has as yet been fully developed; this lies a few miles from San José, and is owned by Hon. Alexander Forbes, British consul at Typé, in Mexico—a gentleman of vast means and enterprise—and who has a heart as full of generous impulses as his mine is of wealth. Many of our countrymen, in misfortune, have shared his munificent liberality. His mine, in the absence of suitable machinery, has been worked to great disadvantage; and yet, with two whaling-kettles for furnaces, he has driven off a hundred and fifty pounds a day of the pure metal. If this can be done with an apparatus intended only for trying blubber, a ton may be rolled from a capacious retort constructed for the purpose. The title of Mr. Forbes to this mine has excited some inquiry, but it will be found among the soundest in California.

Instead of attempting to shake this title, a more wise and profitable course will be to open a fresh vein. They lie in the contiguous spurs of the same mountain range, and only require a small outlay of labor and capital to develop their untold wealth. The metal need not travel from California to find a market; vast quantities will be required in the gold mines: the cradle and bowl must give place to more complicated machinery; the sands of the river pass through a more delicate process; and the quartz of the steep rock, crumbled under the stamper, surrender its gold to the embrace of quicksilver. This stupendous issue is close at hand; and they who anticipate it, will find the fruits of their sagacity and enterprise in sudden fortunes.

MONDAY, DEC. 25. The multitudes who are in the mines, suffer in health and constitution from the extreme changes of temperature which follow day and night. In some of the ravines in which we camped, these variations vibrated through thirty and forty degrees. In mid-day we were driven into the shade to keep cool, and in the night into two or three blankets to keep warm. The heat is ascribable in part to the nature of the soil, its naked sandy features, its power of radiation, and the absence of circulation in the glens. But the cold comes with the visits of the night wind from the frosty slopes of the Sierra Nevada.

These extreme variations follow the miner through

the whole region in which his tempting scenes of labor lie, and require a degree of prudence seldom met with in that wild woodland life. The consequence is, a group of maladies under which the strongest constitution at length breaks down. But I am convinced from personal experience, that with proper precaution and suitable food, many, and most of these evils may be obviated. The southern mines are in elevations which exempt them from the maladies incident to the low lands which fringe the streams farther north. There are no stagnant waters, no decomposition of vegetable matter, no miasma drifting about in the fog, to shake and burn you with alternate chill and fever. I never enjoyed better health and spirits; and never encountered in a great moving mass, notwithstanding their irregularities, so few instances of disease traceable to local causes. I have seen more groaners and gruners in one metropolitan household, than in any swarming ravine in the southern mines

SUNDAY, JAN. 7. Lapses from virtue are not unfrequently associated, in the character of the Spanish female, with singular exhibitions of charity and self-denial. She is often at the couch of disease, unshrinkingly exposed to contagion, or in the hovel of destitution, administering to human necessity. She pities where others reproach, and succors where others forsake. The motive which prompts this unwearyed charity, is a secret within her own soul. It

may be as a poor expiation for conscious error, or the impulse of those kindly sentiments not yet extinct, or gratitude for that humanity which foregoes merited reprehension. Be the cause what it may, it justly retains her within the pale of Christian charity, and entitles her to that sympathy in her own misfortunes which she so largely bestows on the sorrows of others.

Denunciation never yet protected the innocent, confirmed the wavering, or recovered the fallen. That spirit of ferocity which breaks the bruised reed, partakes more of relentless pride than virtuous disapprobation. Many sever themselves from all sympathy with the erring, from the mistaken apprehension that the wider the chasm, the more advantageous the light in which *they* will appear. But that chasm which seems so wide to them, narrows to a faint line in the eye of Omniscience. Forgiveness is our duty; not that forgiveness which scorns and forsakes the object on which it is bestowed, but which seeks to reclaim the erring, and reinstate the fallen in merited confidence and esteem. When repentant guilt trembled and blushed in the presence of Him whose divine example is our guide, no frown darkened His brow, no malediction fell from His lips; His absolving injunction was—*go, and sin no more*. The brightest stars are they which have emerged from a horizon of darkness.

TUESDAY, JAN. 16. The climate on the seaboard

is remarkably equable; it varies at Monterey, the year round, but little from sixty. You never lay aside your woollen apparel, and always feel ready for a bear-hunt, or any other field-sport that may tempt your taste or skill. Till the Americans came here there was hardly a house in the town which contained a fireplace; even the cooking was done in a detached apartment, seemingly to avoid the straggling rays of its grate. The children ran about in the winter months without a shoe, and in their little cotton slippers, the perfect pictures of health. The girl of seventeen, the mother of forty, and the venerable lady, who had reached her threescore and ten, were never seen hovering around a fire: they were at their household affairs, in apartments where a coal had never been kindled; or in their gardens, where the last rain had revived their drooping plants; or out in the woods at pic-nics, where the very birds sung out in rivalry of their jocund mirth. Health spread its rose in the cheek, and elastic life thrilled in the bounding limb. The birth of a child was only a momentary pause in this scene of pleasurable activity, and more than compensated for its brief encroachment in a new bud of being, to be clustered among the rest—now blooming in fragrant life around the parent tree.

Think of this, ye mothers who cloister your daughters in air-tight parlors, with furnaces blowing in hot steam from below. It is no wonder they wither from their cradles, and that their bridal couch is often ashes. Your mistaken tenderness, vanity, and

pride have supplied death with trophies long enough. Look here to California; among all these mothers and daughters, there is not one where the canker-worm of that disease is at work which has spread sorrow and dismay around your hearths. The insidious disguises and sapping advances of the consumption are not known here; I have not yet met with the first instance where this disease, contracted here, has found a victim. It is your in-door habits, hot parlors, prunellas, and twisting corsets, that clothe this generation with weeds, and bequeath to the next constitutions that fall like grass under the scythe of death. If your daughters won't take out-door exercise from persuasion, then drive them forth as the guardian angel of Eden your erring progenitrix. It may have been that the development of her physical forces, as well as retributive justice, induced her expulsion from the luxurious roses, the balmy airs, and lulling streams of her first abode. But your Eves will come back again, and sparkling eyes, and buoyant spirits, and a vigorous pulse will commend your maternal wisdom; and when a man, worthy of your confidence and the affections of your daughters, wants a wife, his choice will not lie in a group of valetudinarians. He carries off a bird that floats a strong wing, and that can sing in concert with him as they build the nest out of which other harmonies are to charm the warbling grove; and then, too, the young fledglings will come back to you, all bright and beautiful, and touched with the spirit of gladness in

which their breezy cradle swung. Why, is not this enough to make a mother's soul leap to her laughing eyes!

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 24. Nature never leaves any portion of her troubled domain without a compensation. Here, where the hills and plains, under the long summer's drought, become so parched and dry that the grasshoppers cease to sing, she presents a pingrass, on which the cattle still thrive; and when this fails, it has already dropped a seed even more nutritious than the stem which sustained its bulbous cradle. For this, a California horse will leave the best bin of oats that ever waved in the harvest-moon. The first copious shower, which usually occurs in November, destroys it, but around its ruins another grass springs, to throw its green velvet, inwrought with millions of flowers, on the charmed eye. It is no wonder the birds here sing through the year, and forego those migrations to which they are subjected in other climes. The lay of the robin, the whistle of the quail, and the tender notes of the curlew, are always piping in the grove, or filling with melody the garden-tree.

Were the blackbird to migrate, and never come back, no farmer would regret his absence; for he is a mischievous bird, who has no respect for the rights of property. He squats by millions where he likes, and would rob a wheat-field of its last kernel with a thousand thunders rattling overhead. His legions

darken the heaven where they fly, and drown all other harmonies in the jargon of their obstreperous chatter. They are said to be good for a pot-pie; and there are enough of them here to plump a pie around which nations might sit and carve at will: and how much better to be carving a common pie than carving into each other's lands,—to be popping at blackbirds than shooting each other. There is not a blackbird but what laughs under his glossy wing when he sees a man levelling his gun at another, which the sable rogue knows ought to be levelled at him; and when the smoke-clouds loom up from the field of battle, he chatters in very glee, and even the eyes of the sedate raven are filled with unwonted light. Man makes himself a mournful tragedy and ludicrous comedy in the great creation of God.

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 7. There is one tree in California that is worthy of note, which is peculiar to the country, and as deserving a place on her coat-of-arms as her grizzly bear, and much more so, unless her people intend to overawe their neighbors with the terrors of their insignia. This tree is called the redwood, and closely resembles, in its texture, size, and antiseptic qualities, the giant cedars which have pinnacled, through the storms of a thousand years, the steeps of Lebanon. It is found on the table-lands between the coast range and the sea, and grows in distinct forests, like the savage tribes which once slumbered in its shadows. Its shaft rises straight and

free of limbs, till high over the wave of other trees it can spread its emerald sails to the wind, compact as the royals of a ship of the line. The wood is of a pale red hue, and easily yields to any shape under the implements of the carpenter, but is not sufficiently firm for the severer tests of cabinet work. It resists decay, whatever may be its exposure, and in the ground or on the roof is true to its trust. The same shingle which shook the rain from your grandsire, wards it from you; and the same board which pannelled his coffin, echoes to the rumbling sounds of yours as you go down to join him. In a grove of these trees, only a short ride from Monterey, stands one measuring sixty feet in circumference! Of its height I am not certain, as I had no means of measuring it—say three hundred feet—or at least as high as the steeple of that church, a warden of which, who had caught the spirit of its elevation, is reported to have said in reply to a proposition for the introduction of lamps and an evening service, “this line goes through by daylight.” Let those versed in moral mensuration determine the elevation of that warden’s spiritual pride, and they will have the height of my tree exactly.

FRIDAY, FEB. 16. Mr. Larkin has closed the amusements of the carnival with a splendid entertainment, graced with all the beauty and bravery of Monterey. As no egg could be broken after midnight, without trenching on the solemnities of Lent,

each went equipped with these weapons, ready for an early contest. Several small volleys opened the engagement between some of the parties; while the fandango engrossed the attention of others. In this oval war the ladies are always the antagonists of the gentlemen, and, generally, through their dexterity, and larger supply of ammunition, bear off the palm. They will sometimes carry two or three dozen rounds each, and as snugly stowed away as cartridges in the box of a new recruit. Still both parties will fight it out—

“With blow for blow, disputing inch by inch,
Where one will not retreat, nor t’other flinch.”

But there were two shot in the company, in the shape of goose eggs, well filled with cologne, to which an unusual interest attached. One of them had been brought by Gen. M——, the other by Donna J——, and each was only watching an opportunity for a crash on the head of the other. Both were endowed with physical force, dexterity, and firmness, and a heart in which pity relaxed none of these energies. Neither turned an eye but for a moment from the other; but in that moment the donna dashed to the side of the general, and would have crashed her egg on his head, had not the blow been instantly parried. The assailed now became the assailant, and both were in for the last tests of skill—

“While none who saw them could divine
To which side conquest would incline.”

The donna changed her tactics, stood on the defensive and parried, and in one of these dexterous foils dashed her egg on the head of her antagonist, who, in the same instant, brought his down plump on hers. Both were drenched in cologne; both victors in defeat: a shout followed, which shook the rafters of the old tenement. The engagement now became general; each had his antagonist, and must "do or die;" the battle swayed this way and that—sometimes in single combat, and at others in vollied platoons; and then along the whole blazing line: each recoil was recovered by a more vigorous assault; each retreat in rallied thunder, more than redeemed; while first and foremost, where wavered or withstood the foe—

"The *donna* cheered her band."

But, in this most critical crisis of the field, the fire began to slacken along the line of the men; their ammunition was giving out; only a few rounds here and there remained; the heroines perceived this, and opened with double round and grape on their foes—

"Who form—unite—charge—waver—all is lost!"

The bell tolled the hour of midnight, and Lent came in with her ashes to bury the dead! They may trifle who will with this field; but there was more in it worthy of a good man's remembrance than half the fields fought from Homer's day to this. If this be treason to the bullet and blood chivalry—make the most of it.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE PUBLIC DOMAIN.—SCENERY AROUND MONTEREY.—VINEYARDS OF LOS ANGELES.—BEAUTY OF SAN DIEGO.—THE CULFRIT HALL.—THE RUSH FOR GOLD.—LAND TITLES.—THE INDIAN DOCTRINE.—TUFTED PARTRIDGE.—DEATH OF COM. BIDDLE.

SATURDAY, FEB. 24. All the land grants in California are blindly defined; a mountain bluff, lagoon, river, or ravine serve as boundaries; and these not unfrequently comprehend double the leagues or acres contemplated in the instrument. No accurate surveys have been made; and the only legal restrictions falling within these vague limits, is in the shape of a provision that the excess shall revert to the public domain. This provision, which is inserted in most of the grants, will throw into the market, under an accurate survey, some of the best tracts in California. These will be seized upon by capitalists and speculators, and held at prices beyond the means of emigrants, unless some legislative provision shall extend peculiar privileges to actual settlers.

The lands which lie through the gold region are uninvaded by any private grants, except one on the Maraposa, owned by Col. Fremont; one on the Cosumes, owned by W. E. P. Hartnell, and the limited claims of Johnson on Bear river, and Capt. Sutter on the Americano. All the other lands stretching from Feather river on the north, to the river Reys