



CHAPTER XXVIII.

RIDE OF COL. FREMONT FROM LOS ANGELES TO MONTEREY AND BACK.—THE PARTY.—THE RELAYS.—CHARACTER OF THE COUNTRY.—THE RINCON.—SKELETONS OF DEAD HORSES.—A STAMPEDE.—GRAY BEARS.—RECEPTION AT MONTEREY.—THE RETURN.—THE TWO HORSES RODE BY COL. FREMONT.—AN EXPERIMENT.—THE RESULT.—CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CALIFORNIA HORSE.—FOSSIL REMAINS.—THE TWO CLASSES OF EMIGRANTS.—LIFE IN CALIFORNIA.—HEADS AGAINST TAILS.

THE ride of Col. Fremont in March, 1847, from the ciudad de los Angeles to Monterey in Alta California—a distance of four hundred and twenty miles—and back, exhibits in a strong light the iron nerve of the rider, and the capacities of the California horse. The party on this occasion, consisted of the colonel, his friend Don Jesús Pico, and his servant Jacob Dodson. Each had three horses, nine in all, to take their turn under the saddle, and relieve each other every twenty miles; while the six loose horses galloped ahead, requiring constant vigilance and action to keep them on the path. The relays were brought under the saddle by the lasso, thrown by Don Jesús or Jacob, who, though born and raised in Washington, in his long expeditions with Col. Fremont, had become expert as a Mexican with the lasso, sure as a mountaineer with the rifle, equal to either on horse or foot, and always a lad of courage and fidelity.

The party left Los Angeles on the morning of the 22d, at daybreak, though the call which took the colonel to Monterey, had reached him only the evening before. Their path lay through the wild mountains of San Fernando, where the steep ridge and precipitous glen follow each other like the deep hollows and crested waves of ocean, under the driving force of the storm. It was a relief when a rough ravine opened its winding gallery on the line of their path. They reached at length the maritime defile of El Rincon, or Punto Gordo, where a mountain bluff shoulders its way boldly to the sea, leaving for fifteen miles only a narrow line of broken coast, lashed at high tide, and in the gale, by the foaming surf. The sun was on the wave of the Pacific, when they issued from the Rincon; and twilight still lingered when they reached the hospitable rancho of Don Thomas Robbins—one hundred and twenty-five miles from Los Angeles. The only limb in the company which seemed to complain of fatigue was the right arm of Jacob, incessantly exercised in lashing the loose horses to the track, and lassoing the relays. None of the horses were shod—an iron contrivance unknown here, except among a few Americans. The gait through the day had been a hand-gallop, relieved at short intervals by a light trot. Here the party rested for the night, while the horses gathered their food from the young grass which spread its tender verdure on the field.

Another morning had thrown its splendors on the

forest when the party waved their adieu to their hospitable host, and were under way. Their path lay over the spurs of the Santa Barbara mountains; and close to that steep ridge, where the California battalion, under Col. Fremont, encountered on the 25th Dec., 1846, a blinding storm, which still throws its sleet and hail through the dreams of those hardy men. Such was its overpowering force, that more than a hundred of their horses dropped down under their saddles. Their bleaching bones still glimmering in the gorges, and hanging on the cliffs, are the ghastly memorials of its terrific violence. None but they, who were of their number, can tell what that battalion suffered. The object of that campaign accomplished, and the conquest of California secured, the colonel, with his friend and servant, was now on his brief return. Their path continued over the flukes and around the bluffs of the coast mountains, relieved at intervals by the less rugged slopes and more level lines of the cañada. The hand-gallop and light trot of their spirited animals brought them, at set of sun, to the rancho of their friend, Capt. Dana, where they supped, and then proceeding on to San Luis Obispo, reached the house of Don Jesús, the colonel's companion, at nine o'clock in the evening—one hundred and thirty-five miles from the place where they broke camp in the morning!

The arrival of Col. Fremont having got wind, the rancheros of San Luis were on an early stir, determined to detain him. All crowded to his quarters

with their congratulations, and the tender of a splendid entertainment, but his time was too pressing: still escape was impossible, till a sumptuous breakfast had been served, and popular enthusiasm had expressed its warm regard. This gratitude and esteem were the result of that humane construction of military law, which had spared the forfeited lives of the leaders in the recent insurrectionary war. It was eleven o'clock in the morning before the colonel and his attendants were in the saddle. Their tired horses had been left, and eight fresh ones taken in their places, while their party had been increased by the addition of a California boy, in the capacity of vaquero. Their path still lay through a wild broken country, where primeval forests frowned, and the mountain torrent dashed the tide of its strength. At eight in the evening they reached the gloomy base of the steep range which guards the head waters of the Salinas or Benaventura, seventy miles from San Luis. Here Don Jesús, who had been up the greater part of the night previous, with his family and friends, proposed a few hours rest. As the place was the favorite haunt of marauding Indians, the party for safety during their repose, turned off the track, which ran nearer the coast than the usual rout, and issuing through a cañada into a thick wood, rolled down in their serapes, with their saddles for their pillows, while their horses were put to grass at a short distance, with the Spanish boy in the saddle to keep watch. Sleep once commenced, was too sweet to be

easily given up; midnight had passed when the party were roused from their slumbers by an *estampedo* among their horses, and the loud calls of the watch boy. The cause of the alarm proved not to be Indians, but gray bears, which infest this wild pass. It was here that Col. Fremont with thirty-five of his men, in the summer preceding, fell in with several large bands of these ferocious fellows, who appeared to have posted themselves here to dispute the path. An attack was ordered, and thirteen of their grim file were left dead on the field. Such is their acknowledged strength and towering rage, when assaulted, the bravest hunters, when outnumbered, generally give them a wide berth. When it was discovered that they had occasioned this midnight stampede, the first impulse was to attack them; but Don Jesús, who understood their habits and weak points, discouraged the idea, stating that "people *gente* can scare bears," and with that gave a succession of loud halloos, at which the bears commenced their retreat. The horses by good fortune were recovered, a fire kindled, and by break of day, the party had finished their breakfast, and were again in the saddle. Their path, issuing from the gloomy forests of the Soledad, skirted the coast range, and crossed the plain of the Salinas to Monterey, where they arrived three hours to set of sun, and ninety miles from their last camping-tree.

The principal citizens of Monterey, as soon as the arrival of Col. Fremont was announced, assembled at

the office of the alcalde, and passed resolutions inviting him to a public dinner; but the urgency of his immediate return obliged him to forego the proffered honor. At four o'clock in the afternoon of the day succeeding that of their arrival, the party were ready to start on their return. The two horses rode by the colonel from San Luis Obispo, were a present to him from Don Jesús, who now desired him to make an experiment with the abilities of one of them. They were brothers, one a year younger than the other, both the same color—cinnamon—and hence called *el canelo*, or *los canelos*. The elder was taken for the trial, and lead off gallantly as the party struck the plain which stretches towards the Salinas. A more graceful horse, and one more deftly mounted, I have never seen. The eyes of the gathered crowd followed them till they disappeared in the shadows of the distant hills. Forty miles on the hand-gallop, and they camped for the night. Another day dawned, and the elder canelo was again under the saddle of Col. Fremont, and for ninety miles carried him without change, and without apparent fatigue. It was still thirty miles to San Luis, where they were to pass the night, and Don Jesús insisted that canelo could easily perform it, and so said the horse in his spirited look and action. But the colonel would not put him to the trial; and shifting the saddle to the younger brother, the elder was turned loose to run the remaining thirty miles without a rider. He immediately took the lead, and kept it the whole distance, entering

San Luis on a sweeping gallop, and neighing with exultation on his return to his native pastures. His younger brother, with equal spirit, kept the lead of the horses under the saddle, bearing on his bit, and requiring the constant check of his rider. The whole eight horses made their one hundred and twenty miles each in this day's ride, after having performed forty the evening before. The elder cinnamon, who had taken his rider through the forty, carried him ninety miles further to-day, and would undoubtedly have taken him through the remaining thirty miles had Col. Fremont continued him under the saddle.

After a detention of half a day at San Luis Obispo by a rain-storm, the party resumed the horses they had left there, and which took them back to Los Angeles in the same time they had brought them up. Thus making their five hundred miles each in four days, with the interval of repose occupied in the ride from San Luis to Monterey and back. In this whole journey from Los Angeles to Monterey and back—making eight hundred and forty miles—the party had actually but one relay of fresh horses; the time on the road was about seventy-six hours. The path through the entire route lies through a wild broken country, over ridges, down gorges, around bluffs, and through gloomy defiles, where a traveller, unused to these mountains, would often deem even the slow trot impracticable. The only food which the horses had, except a few quarts of barley at Monterey, was the grass on the road; though the trained and do-

mesticated horses, like the canelos, will eat or drink almost every thing which their master uses. They will take from his caressing hand bread, fruits, sugar, coffee; and, like the Persian horse, will not refuse a bumper of wine. They obey with gentlest docility his slightest intimation; a swing of his hand, or a tap of his whip on the saddle, will spring them into instant action, while the check of a thread-rein on the Spanish bit will bring them to a dead stand; and yet in these sudden stops, when rushing at the top of their speed, they manage not to jostle their rider, or throw him forward. They go where their master directs, whether it be a leap on the foe, up a flight of stairs, or over a chasm. But this is true only of the conduct and behavior of those horses trained like the canelos, who vindicate, in the mountain glens of California, their Arabian origin. They are all grace, fleetness, muscle, and fire; gentle as the lamb, lively as the antelope, and fearless as the lion.

MARINE REMAINS.

The hills around Monterey are full of marine shells. You can turn them out wherever you drive your spade into the ground. The Indians dig and burn them for lime, which is used in whitewashing the adobe walls of houses, and which makes them glimmer in the sun like banks of freshly-driven snow. It has not sufficient strength for the mason, but no other was in use when we landed at Monterey. The first regular lime-kiln was burnt by me for the town-hall.

I found the stone about ten miles from Monterey, and the lime it produced of a superior quality. When the lime, hair, lath, and sand were brought together, no little curiosity was awakened by the heterogeneous mass, and the admiration was equally apparent when each took its place and performed its part in the plaster and hard finish of the wall and ceiling. Thousands came to see the work; it was the lion of the day. But the curiosity of the geologist would turn from this to the fossil oyster-shells in the hills; and when he has exhausted those on the coast, let him turn inland, and he will find on the mountains, two hundred miles from the sea, and on elevations of a thousand feet, the same marine productions; and not only these, but the skeleton of a whale almost entire. How came that monster up there, high and dry, glimmering like the pale skeleton of a huge cloud between us and the moon? Did the central fire which threw up the mountain ridge, throw him up on its crest? How astonished he must have been to find himself up there, blowing off steam among volcanoes and comets! Now let our *savans* quit their cockle-shells and petrified herring, and tell us about that whale. They will find him near the rancho of Robert Livermore, on a mountain which overlooks the great valley of the San Joaquin. There he reposes in grim majesty, while the winds of ages pour through his bleaching bones their hollow dirge.

THE TWO CLASSES OF EMIGRANTS.

The emigrants to California are composed of two classes—those who come to live by their wits, and those who come to accumulate by their work. The wit capitalists will find dupes for a time—small fish in shallow waters—but a huge roller will soon heave them all high and dry! This is the last country to which a man should come, who is above or beneath the exercise of his muscles. Every object he meets addresses him in the admonitory language which gleams in the motto of the Arkansas bowie-knife—“root, hog, or die.” But then he has this encouragement: he can root almost anywhere, but *root* he must. They who come relying on their physical forces, and who are largely endowed with the organs of perseverance, will succeed. But if they stay too long in San Francisco, their enthusiasm will have an ague-fit, and their golden dream turn to sleet and hail. They should hasten through and dash at once into their scene of labor; nor should they expect success without corresponding efforts; if fortune favors them to-day, she will disappoint them to-morrow; her favors and frowns fall with marvellous caprice; the digger must be above the one and independent of the other; he must rely upon his own resources; and upon his fidelity to one unchanged and unchangeable purpose. He comes here to get gold, not in pounds or ounces, but in grains; his most instructive lesson will be by the side of the ant-hill. There he sees a

little industrious fellow, foregoing the pastimes of other insects, and bringing another grain to his heap; working on with right good heart through the day, and sometimes taking advantage of the moon, and plying his task through the luminous night. Let him watch that ant, and go and do likewise, if he would return from California with a fortune. I don't recommend him to come here and convert himself into a pismire for gold; but if he *will* come, the more he has of the habits of that little groundling the better.

CALIFORNIA ON CHARACTER.

Life in California impresses new features on old characters, as a fresh mintage on antiquated coins. The man whose prudence in the States never forsakes him, and whose practical maxim is, “a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush,” will *here* throw all his birds into the bushes, seemingly for the mere excitement of catching them again. He finds himself in an atmosphere so strongly stirred and stirring, that he must whirl with it, and soon enjoys the strong eddy almost as much as the still pool. He may hang perhaps a moment on the verge of a cataract, but if it spreads below to a tranquil lake, down he goes, and emerges from the boiling gulf calm and confident as if lord of the glittering trident. Or he may have been, while in the States, remarked for his parsimony, pinching every cent as it dropped into the contribution-box as if there was a spasm between his avarice and alms. But in California that cent so awfully

pinched soon takes the shape of a doubloon, and slides from his hand too easily to leave even the odor of its value behind. I have known five men, who never contributed a dollar in the States for the support of a clergyman, subscribe here five hundred dollars each per annum, merely to encourage, as they termed it, "a good sort of a thing in the community." I have seen a miser, who would have sold a hob-nail from his heel for old iron, in bartering off his saddle throw in the horse; and then exchange a lump of perfectly pure gold for one half quartz, merely because it struck his fancy! Such are some of the anomalies in character which a life in California produces. If you doubt it, make the experiment, and you will soon find your own heart, though gnarled as a knot, cracking open, and turning inside out like a kernel of parched corn.

HEADS AND TAILS.

My friend William Blackburn, alcalde of Santa Cruz, often hits upon a method of punishing a transgressor, which has some claims to originality as well as justice. A young man was brought before him, charged with having sheared, close to the stump, the sweeping tail of another's horse. The evidence of the nefarious act, and of the prisoner's guilt, was conclusive. The alcalde sent for a barber, ordered the offender to be seated, and directed the tonsor to shear and shave him clean of his dark flowing locks and curling moustache, in which his pride and vanity lay.

This was hardly done, when Mr. B, counsel for the prisoner entered, and moved an arrest of judgment. "Oh, yes," said the alcalde, "as the shears and razor have done their work, judgment may now rest." "And under what law," inquired the learned counsel, "has this penalty been inflicted?" "Under the Mosaic," replied the alcalde: "that good old rule—eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hair for hair." "But," said the biblical jurist, "*that* was the law of the Old Testament, which has been abrogated in the New." "But we are still living," returned the alcalde, "under the old dispensation, and must continue there till Congress shall sanction a new order of things." "Well, well," continued the counsel, "old dispensation or new, the penalty was too severe—a man's head against a horse's tail!" "That is not the question," rejoined the alcalde: "it is the hair on the one against the hair on the other; now as there are forty fiddles to one wig in California, the inference is just, that horse-hair of the two is in most demand, and that the greatest sufferer in this case is still the owner of the steed." "But, then," murmured the ingenious counsel, "you should consider the young man's pride." "Yes, yes," responded the alcalde, "I considered all that, and considered too the stump of that horse's tail, and the just pride of his owner. Your client will recover his crop much sooner than the other, and will manage, I hope, to keep it free of the barber's department in this court;" and with this, client and counsel were dismissed.

SPANISH COURTESIES.

The courtesies characteristic of the Spanish linger in California, and seem, as you encounter them amid the less observant habits of the emigration, like golden-tinted leaves of Autumn, still trembling on their stems in the rushing verdure of Spring. They exhibit themselves in every phase of society and every walk of life. You encounter them in the church, in the fandango, at the bridal altar, and the hearse: they adorn youth, and take from age its chilling severity. They are trifles in themselves, but they refine social intercourse, and soften its alienations. They may seem to verge upon extremes, but even then they carry some sentiment with them, some sign of deference to humanity. I received a cluster of wild-flowers from a lady, with a note in pure Castilian, and bearing in the subscription the initials of the words, which rudely translated mean, "I kiss your hand." One might have felt tempted to write her back—

Thou need'st not, lady, stoop so low
 To print the gentle kiss:
 Can hands return what lips bestow,
 Or blush to show their bliss?

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE TRAGEDY AT SAN MIGUEL.—COURT AND CULPRITS.—AGE AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF THOSE WHO SHOULD COME TO CALIFORNIA.—CONDITION OF THE PROFESSIONS.—THE WRONGS OF CALIFORNIA.—CLAIMS ON THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY.—JOURNALISTS.

RETRIBUTION follows fast on the heels of crime in California. Two persons, a Hessian and Irishman, whom I had met in the Stanislaus, left the mines for the seaboard. On their way to Stockton, they fell in with two miners asleep under a tree, whom they murdered and robbed of their gold; with this booty they hastened across the valley of the San Joaquin, and skirting the mountains to avoid all frequented paths, held their course south to La Solidar. Here they fell in with three deserters from the Pacific squadron, who joined them, and the whole party proceeded south to San Miguel, where they quartered themselves for the night on the hospitality of Mr. Reade, an English ranchero of respectability and wealth. In the morning they took their departure, but had proceeded only a short distance, when it was agreed they should return and rob their host. During the ensuing night they rose on the household, consisting of Mr. Reade, his wife, and three children, a kinswoman with four children, and two Indian do-