

After my removal to San Francisco, he too was transferred to the metropolis, and assigned to duty in connection with the Jesuit church and college, on Market Street. Here again I found his tracks wherever I went among the poor and the miserable. Whether it was a dying foreigner in the sand hills, a young man without money hunting for work, a poor widow bewildered and helpless in her grief, a woman with a drunken husband and a house full of hungry children, a prisoner in the jail, or a sick man in the hospital—Father Acolti's hand was sure to be found in any scheme of relief. Meeting him on the street, you would catch a glow from his kind face and friendly voice, and in most instances leave him with a smile at some little pleasantry that rippled forth as he stood with his hand resting familiarly on your shoulder. He loved his little joke, but it was never at the expense of any human being, and his merriment never went farther than a smile that brightened all over his broad face. There was that about him that repelled the idea of boisterous mirth. The shadow of a great sorrow still lay in the background of his consciousness, shading and softening his sky, but not obscuring its light. As his step grew feebler, and it became evident that his strength was failing, this shadow seemed to deepen. There was a wistful look in his eyes that spoke of a longing for Italy, for his buried love, or for heaven. There were tears in his eyes when we parted in the street for the last time, as he silently pressed my hand and walked slowly away. I was not surprised when the news reached me soon after that he was dead. I trust that our next meeting will be where no shadow shall dim the light that shines on us both.

## CALIFORNIA WEDDINGS.

IF the histories connected with the California weddings that I have attended could be written out in full, what tragedies, comedies, and farces would excite the tears and smiles of the susceptible reader! Orange blossoms and pistols are mingled in the matrimonial retrospect. The sound of merry wedding bells, the wails of heart-broken grief, and the imprecations of desperate hate echo in the ear of memory as I begin this chapter on "California Weddings." Nothing else could give a better picture of the vanishing phases of the social life of California. But prudence and good taste restrain my pencil. Too many of the parties are still living, and the subject is too delicate to allow entire freedom of delineation. A guarded glance is all that may be allowed. No real names will be called.

Mounted on "Old Frank" one clear, bracing morning in 1856, I was galloping along the highway between Peppermint Gulch and Sonora, when I overtook a lawyer named G—, who was noted for his irascible temper and too ready disposition to fight, but whose talents and energy had won for him a leading position at the bar. It was an exhilarating ride as we dashed on at a swinging pace, the cool breeze kissing our faces, the blue sky above, the surrounding hills softened by shadows at their bases and glowing with sunshine on their tops. The reader who has never had a gallop among the foothills of California in clear weather has missed one of life's supremest pleas-

ures. The air is electric, every nerve tingles, the blood seems turned to ether. You feel as you do when you fly in dreaming. It is not merely pleasure; it is ecstasy.

But little was said by us. The pace was too rapid for conversation, and neither of us was in the mood for commonplaces. My fellow-horseman's face, usually wearing half a sneer and half a frown, bore an expression I had never seen on it before. It was an expression of gentleness and thoughtfulness, and it became him so well that I found myself frequently turning to look at him. Suddenly reining in his horse, he cried to me: "Stop, parson; I have something to say to you."

Checking "Old Frank," I waited for him to come up with me.

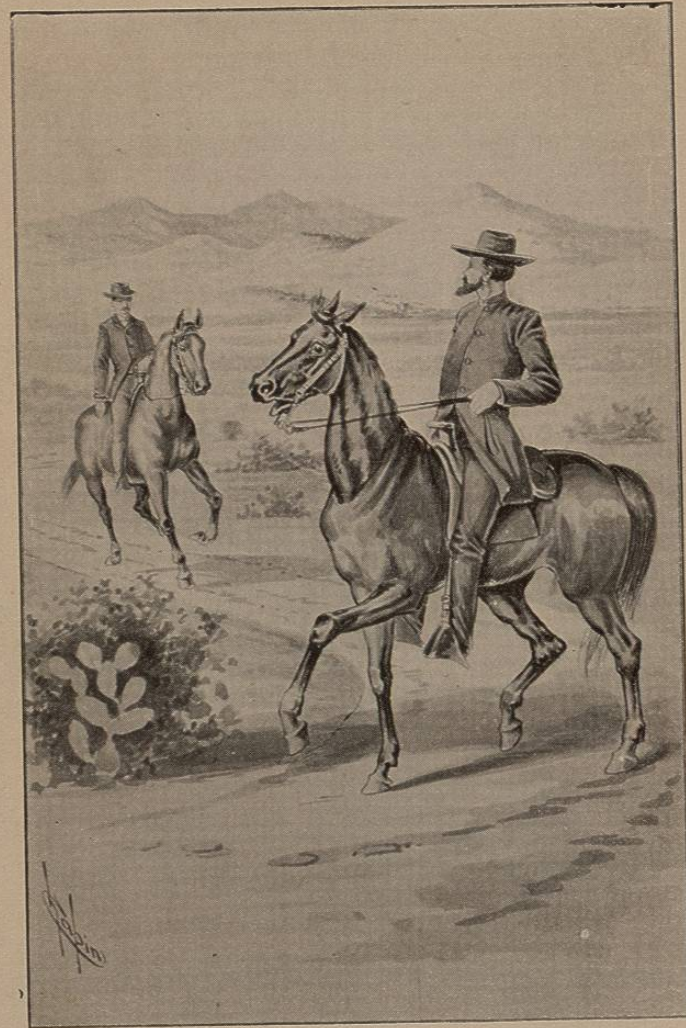
"Will you be at home to-morrow?"

"Yes, I shall be at home."

"Then come to this address at one o'clock, prepared to perform a marriage ceremony."

Penciling the address on a slip of paper, he handed it to me, and we rode on, resuming the rapid gallop which was the only gait known to the early Californians.

The next day I was punctual to the appointment. In the parlor of one of the coziest little cottages in the lower part of the city I found a number of lawyers and other well-known citizens, with several women. The room was tastefully decorated with flowers of exquisite odor. A beautiful little girl about four years old came into the apartment. Richly and tastefully dressed, perfectly formed, elastic and graceful in her movements, with dark eyes, brilliant and large, and cheeks glowing with health, she was a sweet picture of fresh and innocent childhood. She looked around upon the guests, shyly declining the caresses that



"I waited for him to come up."

were offered her. Taking a seat by one of the women, she sat silent and wondering.

"Isn't she a perfect beauty!" said Dr. A—, whose own subsequent marriage made a strange chapter in the social annals of the place.

"Yes; she is a little queen. And I am glad for her sake that this affair is to come off," said another.

In a few minutes G— entered the room with a woman on his arm. She was fair and slender, with a weak mouth and nervous manner. Traces of tears were on her cheeks, but she was smiling. The company rose as I advanced to meet them, and remained standing while the solemn ceremony was being pronounced which made them husband and wife. When the last words were said they kissed each other, and then G—, yielding to a sudden impulse, caught up the little girl in his arms and almost smothered her with passionate kisses. Not a word was spoken, but many eyes were wet.

The guests were soon led into another room, in which a sumptuous repast was spread, and when I left champagne corks were popping, and it was evident that the lately silent company had found their tongues. Toasts, songs, and speeches were said and sung in honor of the joyful event just consummated—the marriage of this couple which ought to have taken place five years sooner. A little child had led the sinners back into the path from which, through passion and weakness, they had strayed.

It was after nine o'clock one night in the fall of the same year that, hearing a knock at the door, I opened it, and found that my visitor was Edward C—, a young man who was working a mining claim on Dragoon Gulch, near town.

"Annie B— and I intend to get married to-night, and we want you to perform the ceremony," he said, not waiting for ordinary salutations.

"Isn't this a strange and sudden affair?"

"Yes; it's a runaway match. Annie is under age, and her guardian will not give his consent."

"If that is the case, you will have to go to somebody else. The law is plain, and I cannot violate it."

"When you know all the facts you will think differently."

He then proceeded to give me the facts in the case, which, briefly told, were these: He and Annie B— loved each other, and had been engaged for several months, with the understanding that they were to be married when she should come of age. Annie had a few thousand dollars in the hands of her brother-in-law, who was also her legal guardian. This brother-in-law had a brother, a drunken, gambling, worthless fellow, whom he wished Annie to marry. She loathed him, and repelled the proposition with indignation and scorn. The brother and brother-in-law persisted in urging the hateful suit, having, it was thought, fixed a covetous eye on Annie's convenient little patrimony. Force had even been used, and Annie was deprived of her liberty and locked in her room. Her repugnance to the fellow increased the more he tried to make himself agreeable to her. A stormy scene had taken place that day.

"I will never marry him—never! I will die first!" Annie had exclaimed in a burst of passion, at the close of a long altercation.

"You are a foolish, undutiful girl, and will be made to do it," was the angry reply of the brother-in-law, as he turned the key in the door and closed the interview.

Late that afternoon Annie was on the street with her sister; and meeting her lover, they arranged to be married at once. She went to the house of a friendly family, while he undertook to get a minister and make other preparations for the event.

"This is the situation," said the expectant bridegroom. "The only way by which I can get the right to protect Annie is to marry her. If you will not perform the ceremony, we'll get a justice of the peace to do it. Annie shall never go back to that house. We intend to be married this night, come what may!"

I confess that I liked his spirit, and my sympathies responded to the appeal made to them. He seemed to read as much in my face, for he added in an offhand way: "Get your hat and come along. They are all waiting for you at D——'s."

On reaching the house I found that quite a little company of intimate friends had been summoned, and the diminutive sitting room was crowded with men, women, and children. The bride was seated in the midst, a pretty, blue-eyed, fair-complexioned girl of seventeen. As I looked at her I could not blame her lover for risking something for such a prize. Women were then at a premium in the mines, and such lovely specimens as Annie would have been in demand anywhere. She blushed and smiled at the rather rough jokes of the good-natured company present, and when she stood up with C—— to take the vows that were to unite them for life they were a handsome and happy pair.

The ceremony finished, the congratulations were hearty, the blushing bride having to stand a regular osculatory fire, according to the custom. Refreshments were then distributed; and seated on the bed, on chairs, stools, and boxes, drafted

for the occasion, the delighted guests gave themselves up to social enjoyment.

"What is that?" exclaimed a dozen voices at once as the most terrific sounds burst forth all around the house, as if pandemonium had broken loose. The bride, whose nerves had already been under high tension all day, fainted, the women screamed, and the children yelled with fright.

"It's only a *charivari*" (*shivaree* Anglice), said the tall, red-haired head of the family, grinning. "I was afraid the boys would find out what was going on."

In the meantime the discord raged outside. It seemed as if everything that could make a particularly unpleasant sound had been brought into service—tin pans, cracked horns, crippled drums, squeaking whistles, fiddles out of tune, accordions not in accord, bagpipes that seemed to know that they must do their worst—the whole culminating in the notes of a single human voice, the most vile and discordant ever heard. It was equally impossible not to be angry, and not to laugh. The bridegroom, an excitable man of Celtic blood, taking the demonstration as an insult, threatened to shoot into the crowd of musicians, but was persuaded to adopt a milder course—namely, to treat. That was the law in the mines, and it was a bold man who would try to evade it. The only means of escape was utter secrecy, and somehow or other it is next to impossible to conceal an impending wedding. It is a sweet secret that the birds of the air will whisper, and it becomes the confidential possession of the entire community. Opening the door, C—— was greeted by a cheer, the music ceasing for a moment. "Come, boys, let's go to the Placer Hotel and take something," said he, forcing a cheerful tone.

Three cheers for the bridegroom and bride were proposed and given with a will, and the party filed away in the darkness, their various instruments of discord emitting desultory farewell notes, the last heard being the tootings of a horn that seemed to possess a sort of ventriloquial quality, sounding as if it were blown under ground.

The brother-in-law made no objection to the wedding. Public opinion was too clearly against him. All went smoothly with the young married couple. It was a love match, and they were content in their little one-roomed cottage at the foot of the hill. When I last heard from them they were living near the same spot, poor but happy, with a family of eleven children, ranging from a fair-haired girl of nineteen, the counterpart of Annie B— in 1856, to a chubby little Californian of three summers, who bears the image and takes the name of his father.

While busily engaged one day in mailing the weekly issue of the *Pacific Methodist*, at the office near the corner of Montgomery and Jackson Streets, San Francisco, a dusty, unshaved man with a slouch hat came into the room. His manner was sheepish and awkward, and my first impression was that he wanted to borrow money. There is a peculiar manner about habitual borrowers which is readily recognized after some experience with them. My visitor sat and toyed with his hat, making an occasional remark about the weather and other commonplaces. I answered affably, and kept on writing. At length, with a great effort, he said: "Do you know anybody about here that can marry folks?"

I answered in the affirmative.

"Maybe you *mought* do it?" he said inquiringly.

I told him I thought I "mought," being a minister of the gospel.

"Well, come right along with me. The woman is waiting at the hotel, and there's no time to lose. The boat leaves at two o'clock."

Seeing me making some adjustment of a disordered necktie, he said impatiently: "Don't wait to fix up. I tell you the boat leaves at two o'clock."

I followed him to the Tremont House, and as we entered the parlor he said, "Git up, old lady; that thing can be put through now," addressing a very stout, middle-aged woman with a frowsy head, sitting near a window.

The lady addressed in this offhand way rose to her feet and took her place by the side of the not very bridegroomish gentleman who had been my conductor.

"Do you not want any witnesses?" I asked.

"We haven't time to wait for witnesses; the boat will leave at two o'clock," said the man. "Go on with your ceremony."

I began the ceremony, she looking triumphant and defiant, and he subdued and despondent. There were two children in the room, a freckle-faced boy and a girl, the boy minus an eye, and their peculiar behavior attracted my attention. They kept circling around the bridal party, eying me curiously and resentfully, the one eye of the boy giving him a look both comic and sinister. The woman's responses were loud and strong, the man's feeble and low. Evidently he did not enjoy the occasion—he was marrying under inward protest. (The landlord's explanation accounted for that, but it is withheld here.)

"What do you charge for that?" said the bridegroom as I concluded the ceremony.

I made some conventional remark about "the pleasure of the occasion being an ample compensation," or words to that effect. In the meantime he had with some difficulty untied a well-worn buckskin purse, from which he took a ten-dollar gold piece, which he tendered me with the remark: "Will that do?"

I took it. It would not have been respectful to decline.

"You may go now," said the newly married man. "The boat will start at two o'clock, and we must be off."

The whole transaction did not take more than ten minutes. I trust the bridal party did not miss that boat. The one-eyed boy gave me a malevolent look as I started down the stairs.

One day in 1869 a well-known public man came to my office and asked a private interview. Taking him into the rear room and closing the door, I invited him to unfold his errand.

"There is trouble between my wife and me. The fact is, I have done wrong, and she has found it out. She is a good woman, but very peculiar, and if something is not done speedily I fear she will become deranged. I am uneasy about her now. She says that nothing will satisfy her but for me to solemnly repeat, in the presence of a minister of the gospel, the marriage vows I have violated. I am willing to do anything I can to satisfy her. Will you name an hour for us to call at your office for the purpose of being remarried?"

"The suggestion is such a strange one that I must have a little time to consider it. Come back at four this afternoon, and I will give you an answer."

I laid the case before a shrewd lawyer of my

acquaintance, and asked his advice as to the legal effect.

"Marry them, of course," said he at once. "The ceremony has no legal quality whatever, but it is the business of a clergyman to minister to a mind diseased, and it is your duty to comply with the unhappy woman's wish."

The gentleman returned at four, and I told him to come at ten the next morning, promising to perform the wished-for ceremony.

They came, punctual to the minute. Excluding a number of visitors, I locked my office door on the inside, and gave my attention to the strange business before me. They both began to weep as I began solemnly to read the marriage service. What tender recollections of earlier and happier days crowded upon their minds I know not. Their emotion increased, and they were sobbing in each other's arms when I had finished. She was radiant through her tears, and he looked like a repenting sinner who had received absolution. The form for the celebration of the office of holy matrimony as laid down in the ritual of my Church never sounded so exquisitely beautiful nor seemed so impressive before; and when he put a twenty-dollar gold piece in my hand and departed, I thought remarriage might be wise and proper under some circumstances.

I had the pleasure of officiating at the nuptials of a goodly number of my colored friends in San Francisco from about 1857 to 1861. One of these occasions impressed me particularly. A venerable black man, who was a deacon in the colored Baptist Church on Dupont Street, called at my office with a message requesting me to visit a certain number on Sacramento Street at a given hour for the purpose of uniting his brother and a

colored lady in marriage. Remembering the crude old English couplet which says that

When a wedding's in the case  
All else must give place,

I did not fail to be on time. The company were assembled in the large basement room of a substantial brick house. A dozen or fifteen colored people were present, and several white ladies had gathered in the hall to witness the important ceremony. When the bridegroom and bride presented themselves I was struck with their appearance. The bridegroom was a little old negro, not less than seventy years old, with very crooked legs, short forehead, and eyes scarcely larger than a pea, with a weird, "varmintlike" face, showing that it would not take many removes to trace his pedigree back to Guinea. The bride was a tall, well-formed young black woman, scarcely twenty years old, whose hair (or wool) was elaborately carded and arranged, and who wore a white dress with a large red rose in her bosom. The aged bridegroom scarcely reached her shoulders as she stood by him in gorgeous array. They made a ludicrous couple, and I observed a smile on the faces of the intelligent colored people standing around. He was the queerest bridegroom I had ever met, as he stood there peering about him with those curious little eyes. The bride herself seemed to take in the comic element of the occasion, for her fat face wore a broad grin. I began the ceremony, keeping down any tendency to unseemly levity by throwing extra emphasis and solemnity into my voice. This is a device to which others have resorted under similar circumstances. Mastering my risibles, I was proceeding with elevated voice and special emphasis, when the bridegroom, looking up at me with those

little beads of eyes, broke in with this remark, chuckling as he spoke: "I ain't scared. *I's been 'long here befo'.*"

It was the first time that I ever broke down in a serious service. We all laughed, the bridegroom and bride joining in heartily, and the tittering did not subside until the ceremony was ended. Evidently the old sinner had a history. How often he had been married—after a fashion—it would have been hazardous to guess. No doubt he had been there before.