CHAPTER VII.

THE OLD AND THE NEW.

THE FIRST SETTLER.

SOMETHING has been said in a former chapter of the personality of the Franciscan brethren in connection with what they did or were apt to do, and they have been alluded to not only as examples of missionary zeal, fortitude and success, but as notably correct in their judgment of the proper and necessary surroundings of such success.

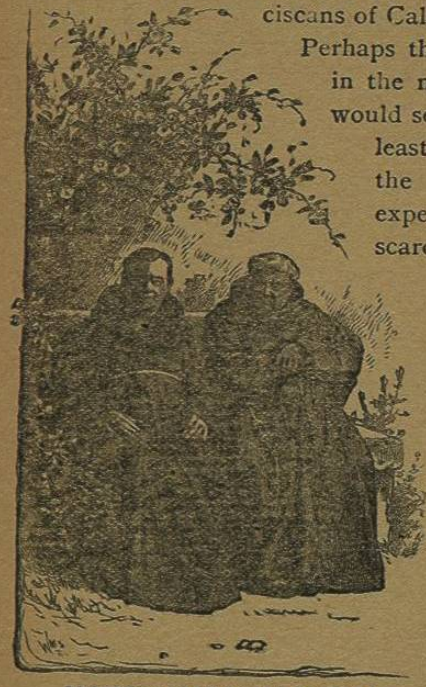
Without any study of the record or particular knowledge of the past of California, and seeing their country with themselves left out, the only glimpse one catches of the Padres now might fairly lead to almost opposite conclusions. For there is but one of the twenty-one missions they founded that is now their own, and that is no longer a mission, but a monastery. In the brightness of the sunshine, looking down on the blueness of the sea, surrounded by a town that has had a "boom," amid the continual comings and goings of total strangers not alone to them, but to the community, confronted by change and newness and all things anti-monastic, worldly, beautiful, they live the secluded life, and observe the rules of St. Francis, and are apart in the ways not only of this life, but in the path to that life which is to come.

Considering the church alone, the mission of Santa Barbara is perhaps the best-preserved of all the establishments of the original Franciscans. Seven or eight of the brethren are gathered here, not as relics or remainders of the toilsome and eventful past, but simply as friars of their order, pursuing their own way to the final exchange from brown to white, content and uncomplaining, let us suppose, with the temporal fate that has befallen their order in these days, with no Indians to convert, no holy joy to experience in the acquisition of souls or lands, no difficulties to overcome but those that arise in the inner man, no sacrifices to make but those that lie within their vows.

The inevitable first impression in visiting the place of these good men must be one produced by

the sense of contrast and incongruity. They perhaps do not know or care as much about the story of their great order in California as the visitor does. They were not left behind in the sorrowful exodus of the sequestration, and are as indifferent to the influences and meanings of the unparalleled conquest of their brethren as are the pages upon which these words are printed. Nor are they in the least affected by the fact that the results of that conquest have gone by with the fact, or that the end, from the view-point they must naturally assme, is more sorrowful than the beginning was discouraging. Mendicants by rule, as naturally insecure in their expectancies as a faith-hospital, they must here support themselves in a largely Protestant community, and must do it without any of the opportunities their brethren had, and even without those of other men. The vineyard and the tannery, the mill and the tallow-cauldron, are no longer theirs. Their strange idea of what a holy life consists in is essentially a mediæval one, without sympathy in these times. They are no longer left even the boon of silence. Business, the prevailing idea of the century, surrounds them. They can not avoid it. The grocer's man brings them patent-roller flour in a rattling wagon, and comes away and bangs the ancient door behind him, and at the end of the month the bill doubtless reads like any other householder's; so much for so much. In the old days at San Diego they once so far lapsed as to sometimes ride in the huge and shrieking carts to and from the fields, and thereupon the carts were burned and the forgetful did penance. In Santa Barbara they ride

in the street cars. Thus has the genius of modern common sense conspired against a holiness that is of the past, and thus does evolution militate against rule, and this is the end, the sloping and attenuated end, of the days and accomplishments of the Franciscans of California.



FRANCISCANS OF SANTA BARBARA.

Perhaps they do not care, for in the nature of the case it would seem that a monk, at least one deprived of the stimulus of some expected result, would scarcely care for anything. They must suppose that some others must be saved besides themselves, else they could not be missionaries, and if so, the iron rule of monasticism is not essential. But for all forgetfulness of men, and entire obliteration of their own records, they have duly provided. All the generations of them who have lived at Santa Barbara sleep indiscriminately together, unmarked and unlamented, in a crypt beneath the church-floor. When it is full, if it should ever be, the bones that have lain longest are taken

away, and room is made for the latest clay. There are no records of any deeds: a monk can do no deeds. Junipero Serra himself, and even St. Francis his great father, obtained their posthumous appreciation at the hands of the people of the world. Serra is not even conceded to have been other than all his brethren were. His name is not in the calendar. He was mourned when he died, and his grave has perhaps been discovered at Monterey, and some of the children of this world have done him due reverence, and that is all.

These seven or eight Franciscans see every day, and possibly become accustomed to it, those things which cause the merest Protestant stranger to stop and think. The gray old building stands on a little knoll in the valley now covered at its seaward end by the town of Santa Barbara, and which extends with many a convolution back among the hills. The place is one of the most beautiful in the world, with a singular suggestion, but for the lack of snow-peaks, of a second Switzerland;—a tropical eidolon of what has been described in thousands of enthusiastic pages, and of what all the world has gone again and again to see. Just beyond the building, and unseen until one almost enters it, is a narrow valley full of trees, down which runs a stream. High up toward the source of this the Padres begun their first enterprise, and along the hill and down its slope lies the cement conduit which brought them water as cool and clear as a trout-stream. The reservoir in which they caught it is there still, as sound as when it

was made about 1786, and the iron pipe which now brings the water lies near the original one of the missionaries.

In the side of the reservoir, which has a look of solidity not possessed by any modern structure, there was a sliding wooden gate. Only the square opening is there now, out of which the water poured to turn the mill-wheel; the building and sluice for which, but not the wheel, are there yet. Interest in these sound and lasting mementos of ecclesiastical industry can hardly prevent reflection upon the economy and acuteness of the arrangement. This water was wanted for irrigation and domestic uses, but it did not hurt it any to turn a wheel first. Therefore a "turn" of water on the garden and fields made it also grinding day, saved the cost and labor of a dam, and the "going to mill" up the valley in an Indian country.

Buildings, some of which are so sound that they could be used again, are strewn thickly about on this little point of land. They are of even more than the usual solidity of mission constructions, and were certainly built without any premonition of the end of their uses after so brief a period as about fifty years. For there was much to do at Santa Barbara. There are said to have been some thirteen tribes about there, all of differing dialects and tribal customs and notions, and each to the other as the Jews were to the Samaritans. They assumed each for himself the distinction of a separate people, and must have had at first but faint idea of the unity that is in the Gospel. There are no tribes now; not

the semblance or traditions or remains of a single one. The mission water-works, the mission mill, the cracked mission bells and this group of Padres, who have only their own salvation to look after, and who knew them not, have outlasted them all.

Sometimes one sees in one of the characteristic publications of modern California a cut entitled "A Mission Garden," and thence one would infer that these bowers are common. There may be two or three, and one of them is here. Undoubtedly it is much abbreviated in modern times, being but a small square as compared with that at Capistrano or San Luis Rey, and of no importance save as compared with the beautiful wilderness which surrounded it when it was bigger. The wonder is that it is here at all. Tadmor is not, practically, more a ruin, or more forsaken, than three-fourths of the missions are. There is a sense in which all are so, for they are mementos of a past of only a hundred years ago, yet a past so unlike the now that the Athenian Acropolis is quite as recent.

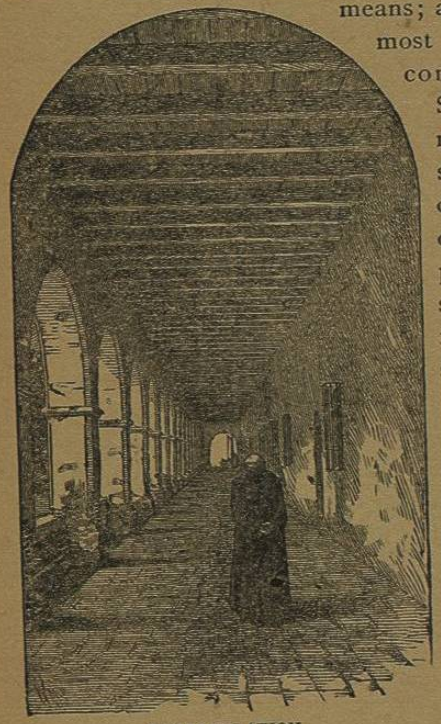
But this little mission garden, still blooming, has one peculiarity not common to gardens — a woman has never entered it, nor will she until still another past has gone upon the record, and the walls are like those of San Luis and Capistrano and Santa Ynez. The glimpse from the tower is the nearest approach, and that she may have and usually will not. For this monastic deprivation she has no satisfaction save that the opposite sex may not visit convents. Yet on this very day at Santa Barbara had she her feminine revenge. There must have been other visitors about

the venerable premises, for in a very narrow place the friar who conducted us found one of those willow contrivances with wheels which is the property of the youngest member of every respectable family. He was forced to the unwonted task of trundling it out of the way, and as he did so she merely said, with a glance at the cowl and gown, but a face seraphic in its innocence, "It's the last place in the world I'd expect to find a baby-carriage in!"

He was an Irishman, and she his unknown countrywoman. If for a moment there came into his eye a twinkle of the days before he was a monk, it passed again, and an exchange of humanities was not continued. I trust I may be pardoned for the opinion that, to a son of Erin, *all* a monk's deprivations may not consist in an observance of the vows of his order. He is not so unnatural in his robe and cowl and shaven crown as not to wish sometimes to reply to a civil remark. Grace was given him on this occasion, and if he wanted to say, "It's only just the *wagon*, mum," as I thought he would have done, I trust he has found comfort in his conscience.

A pathetic mixture of the old and the new; of ancient quaintness with modern ideas, exists whenever a mission has been repaired. For nobody now can imitate the indescribable style in which everything in the old days seems to have been done. This, which is so alluded to for want of any better term, is not describable in words. There is an Indianesque suggestion in the most elaborate and the most substantial of it which declares it to be the European plan and direction, the intention of a taste that had

known the ideals of sacred architecture, and of the masonry that was old when Rome became the capital of Christianity, but built by the barbarian hand. Put back the fallen stones of this; repair it by modern means; and you have the most undesirable of combinations. At Santa Barbara a new reservoir stands beside the old and dry one of the Padres, practically in the same spot, and fed by the same source, and not greatly larger. Close by the church are handsome modern houses. There is a new ceiling, rather than which one would prefer to risk an occasional bit of falling mortar. Yet they have left it alone wherever possible, and time may partially heal again the scars of incongruous repair. There is no high pulpit now, the timbers that held it having crumbled in dry decay. Not so as yet the very practical and artistic emblems of mortality



CONTEMPLATION.

that adorn the outer frame of the door that opens into a cemetery that has been delved over and over. These are human skulls, with crossed thigh-bones beneath them, inserted in the stucco so that they seem to have been carved there in high relief. If not artistic they are most effective, and have long grinned there upon the sadness that comes to all, and with more effective meaning than all the urns and texts and weeping angels that beautify decay in a less realistic age.

Even the long tank upon whose sloping rim the Indians washed their clothes is there, and has been replastered too, and is full of water. The figure out of whose mouth the water pours looks precisely like the animal idea of the Pueblos, and is probably the savage notion of a bear, life-size. But no more Indians will ever come again to make lavish expenditure of the mission soap upon the sloping stucco, and it is but a monumental keepsake of the old times.

What infinite pains must have been expended in their day upon the mission bells. I do not know where the oldest are, or the sweetest, but one of these square towers is full of them, and one with edges thin and jagged, says, in a circular inscription whereof the name is not remembered, '—— —— made me in 1876." Another has a text in characters so jagged, and with Vs for Us, that it would require an antiquarian to read it. Among the necessary things sent to California by the first ships that came were seven church bells. They were things indispensable. They carried some of them whenever they went to establish a new mission, and hung them to

the low branches of live-oaks and awoke the barbaric silences with their clangor.*

Afterwards they came from time to time, until there were more than a hundred of them ringing at the various missions, always in groups, but without any regard to tune or tone. It was a long journey, and a slow one. Cadiz or Barcelona to Havana, Havana to Vera Cruz, Vera Cruz around the Horn to San Diego, and thence up the coast or across the country painfully. Doubtless the imperishable bronze of hundreds more of them rests in the ooze of the deep sea bottom, having gone down in the innumerable wrecks of those times. Yet Mexico is full of them, and the slow ox-teams of still slower times carried still more of them from Vera Cruz to Santa Fé, and to Taos and Tucson and El Paso, and all the villages of the Rio Grande. Even Texas had them, and they rang a *repique*, a mistaken one, when the slaughter of the Alamo condemned their chimes to foreign ears over a region greater than all Europe, and forever. With the crudest skill they hung them where they are ringing yet, and their tones are those of a requiem wherever heard.

As to these, there is no other reason why they should be heard. The worshipers are few or none, and the masses are said to walls, and the Stations of the Cross, and the echoing floors. No scene can more vividly recall the recollection of former days than the Sunday vespers, when there is not an Indian

* There are California artists of no mean ability. Why does not some one of them turn his genius to "The Ringing of the Bells," and give the world an artist's vision of the sunny wilderness, the surprised barbarian and the heroic Padre of a hundred years ago?

face where once were hundreds. All the church has now, after her great success, are in the cemetery asleep. Yet as changelessly imperturbable as the ages through which she has passed she goes right on. Time and the world, and death, and change, do not affect her, and she stands alone in her capacity for patient waiting till her time shall come again, and all men shall be gathered unto her. Here at Santa Barbara, Virgin and Martyr, the blue clouds of incense have risen for more than a hundred years about her image. The hearts she was made to impress are dust. A town, an American city, has grown up around her shrine and bears her name. All things that were not intended have come, and all that were hoped for are gone. A handful of monks, strangers to her sponsors, and anachronisms, still hover about her and will sleep beneath her feet at last. They are mementos of a time so far upon the verge that not a thing on earth, and not a thought, is as it was when the little Italian town sent forth their founder and his followers. Yet those are not further off, nor more incongruous, than the more recent ones whose hopes and prayers were centered here. One may perchance visit a ruin merely, and then forget it, but one does not forget the living reminders of a ruin that is not alone of chapels, or mission-lands, or sequestration, but of an era.

CHAPTER VIII.

A CONNECTING LINK.

"THERE are days when everything goes wrong." The beldame who made this remark to me, among a rambling assortment of others, gave me the impression of being what I have taken the liberty of calling her not so much from actual senility as from intention. But she was old enough to be at entire liberty to use any form of speech she chose to a stranger whom she had never before seen, and whom she must travel far to ever see again. I was at the moment inclined to her belief in the matter of common philosophy she was an advocate of, for various petty reasons, one of which was that I was bored.

For the sun shone with Californian fervor on the hills lying about San Diego, and upon them all there was not a tree where one could remove his relentless hat, and sit upon a dusty boulder, and gratify himself with a demonstration of the axiom that in California the sun is always hot and the shade is always cool. The light brown dust, fine as wheaten flour, covered my shoes and seemed to have penetrated to the inside. It had not rained much ever, and here not at all since the end of the season locally known as Winter, and all the innumerable stones, and the gravelly concrete on which they rested — that deceptive Macadam which needs only to be wet to become as fruitful as the Delta of the Nile — gave me the

impression of containing not a drop of moisture down to the center of the earth. The brown lizards my footsteps startled glared at me with ridiculous malignity, with beady, lidless eyes, and glided away. The dusty green bushes caught at me as I passed; big enough to walk around, small enough to be absolutely shadowless. A lazy little tepid wind blew from the South, fanning nothing into coolness, and deceptive in intention. Below me lay the long, shining scythe which I knew was the Bay, and beside it, thick and metropolitan in the center, and dwindling away into flecks and patches on the hillsides, lay the town. Beyond all was the shining silver endlessness of the Pacific, asleep under a covering of haze, ending without horizon in a gray-blue sky.

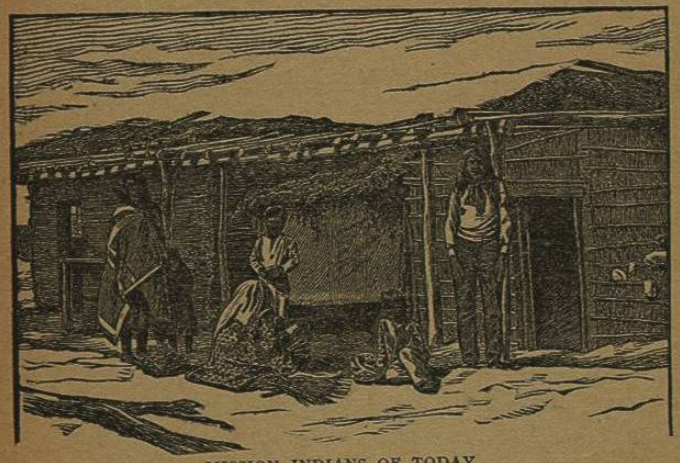
Why I had come there I do not precisely know. I was not looking for lot investment. It is a poor country that will not afford the privilege of a stroll without exacting a repentance. Others had been there before me, for long furrows had been ploughed on some of the slopes, and earth had been removed with a scraper, and posts and boards announced that this was Such-and-Such an Avenue. At other places stood the pine business cards of the firms who dealt in real estate, and at still others "Snap Bargains" were announced. Before me, erected so that all might know, was an announcement in large letters that "This Tract, —— by —— feet, is RESERVED for the erection of the FINEST HOTEL in Southern California." So it was; there was no disputing it, and I passed on.

The antipode of all this I encountered in the old woman whom I have mentioned, and who uttered the bit of ancient philosophy I have quoted, and in mongrel Spanish which helped to allay the saltness of its flavor. I asked for a little water, and she said "*Ah, no hay agua aqui ninguno,*" and I abandoned the unreasonable desire, satisfied if I opened a flow of conversation instead, which I did.

The place of her habitation had attracted me from a considerable distance by its air of abject wretchedness. I knew what I should find there; the gypsyish semi-civilized Indians who are the brethren of those who were in the missions, who wander hither from that long, dry, prickly tongue which is the peninsula of California, and who know not why they come. I call this tattered abode of barbarian poverty a place for convenience, and a habitation for no better reason. It was at the end of a little steep ravine which opened into a still wider one, and it had been rudely curtained with dilapidated gunny-sacks fastened upon sticks. The crone sat upon the ground, stirring some heterogeneousness with one hand in a battered pan, while the other lay listless across her knee. A little fire smoked lazily in a hole. A boy of twelve sat in the shadow and blinked at me. They slept in the sand, and ate upon it, and breathed it, and mingled with a little water they must have drank it for most of their lives. They were like all their forefathers of the earth.

She did not invite me to enter, or bid me be seated, for obvious reasons, and I availed myself of a little ragged shade and seated myself on the

ground, and her natural suspicion was doubtless disarmed somewhat at the sound of such Spanish as I knew. For all these Indians, so far as I know, speak that tongue, and are inheritors of the influence of that people. Even these were not entirely Indians. They wore, after a ragged and cast-off fashion, the garments of civilization, and had the general



MISSION INDIANS OF TODAY.

demeanor of those who have tasted improvement without having fully partaken of it.

I asked her if she was inclined to think it warm, and she answered that it was rather so; not very.

"Where did you come from?"

"*Abajo;*—below.

"Are you alone?"

Then she broke forth into lamentations. The *burro* was gone; her man was hunting for him; he had been gone two days; and looking sorrowfully upon

the ground from beneath raised eyebrows, and shaking her head slowly from side to side as people do who submit patiently to unmeasured affliction which is not deserved, she made the remark I have mentioned: "*Hay dias en que ninguna cosa sale bien.*"

In various forms, meaning the same thing, it is undoubtedly a Spanish proverb, and not an Indian idea. Therefore, I inquired when she had learned the tongue. Her answer was to hold her hand, palm downward, about a foot from the ground, as everybody does when it becomes necessary to say "ever since I was so high," or words to that effect.

"Have you been here always?"

She answered that she had always been in the country, in various places.

"And how old are you?"

She did not know, "but I was here when the Americanos came. I was like that boy;" pointing to the youth, who had never removed his eyes from me since my advent.

"Well, who came?"

She answered that there were ships, and soldiers, "*alla abajo,*" pointing to the bay, "*y alla tambien en el cerce'yo,*" pointing toward the distant hill where lies the old earthwork called Fort Stockton.

This was ancient history too modern. She was not beginning at my beginnings, and, meaning no harm, I wished her something like a hundred and ten years old. Musing upon the question of how to begin to find out if she could tell me anything of a still earlier time, she took her innings by suddenly asking me:

"*Es Usted Padre?*"

So she imagined that I, too, might be a missionary, and necessarily a clergyman. I do not know how many things I may have been taken for in the course of my life and wanderings, but the idea of being in holy orders was at least new to me.

But the subject was broached, and I asked her if she remembered the Padres of the old times. She said she only knew of them through her *parientes;* her relatives. These, she said, had not lived at the mission of San Diego, but had worked on a rancho of the mission; an outlying field or pasturage. This, to her mind, seemed to constitute a claim to distinction and consideration, and was a reminiscence that had dwelt with her during more than half a lifetime of wretchedness and squalor, though such wretchedness had been the natural condition of her race until the Franciscans came, and since their departure had again been as from the beginning. For an elderly Indian woman she might not have been hideous but for the intention they all seem to have of being so if possible. I had a vague idea that if she were elsewhere, and some one would wash her, and comb her hair, and give her a new cotton gown, and place her in a chair, I should like to hear her story.

I heard it anyhow, for it was a narrative. Indians, barbarians of all lands, seem to lack the power of personal reminiscence. If it is a tradition, a legend, a tribal history, it passes from tongue to tongue through dusky generations. It was told in a Spanish as bad as my own, and with a badness new to me. Some of her phrases I could not understand, and she had that

geographical nomenclature of the country doubtless current and exact with her people, but unknown to modern description. I give it as I got it, or, rather, as I concieve it to have been.

"Something very new happened to my great-grandmother," she said. "She was gathering acorns on the hillside, some one of these I suppose, when the ship of the Spaniards came into the bay and sailed into the shallow water up there;" and she pointed in the direction of what is called False Bay. "She fancied at first it was a big white goose; bigger than was ever seen; but there were men upon it, and she lay down amongst the bushes and waited to see what they had come to do. Presently a canoe came ashore with men in it, and she ran home to the hut."

"Then the Indians came and watched them from among the bushes, and they built a house there, and every night the smoke arose and the fire glowed. This was the beginning."

"Then some of the people crept nearer and nearer, and at last it became known that they were men, such as the very old ones said they had heard had been here before, and they had hurt nothing. My people could have killed them, but it was thought that they were not like us, and that they had powers that were far-reaching, and they waited for them to go away again."

"But time passed and they did not go. Another ship came, and also other men from the South, and the Indians grew more accustomed to them. They were but men, for they died and were buried, and when my people knew this they grew more familiar.

We did not know what they came for, but they talked, and were friendly, and were not any longer feared. Only the women did not go to them. They gathered acorns, and heard what others told, and staid at home."

"Time passed. Perhaps it was a year, or two years. It is long ago, and I never heard. But one day my great-grandmother was on the hill amongst the little oaks. By that time the bells rang every day, and these Spaniards went about over the country, and talked with the people, and asked them to come with them, and gave them things they had never seen before. You may think it strange, but up to that time the Indians had never seen so much as a knife to cut with. And while my relative was there among the acorn-bushes a man came, and when he saw her he stopped to look, and she ran away. But when on another day she was on the hills he came again, and again she ran, and this happened many times, he calling to her, and she running away. I know perfectly well now how it was. I think she wanted him to come there, though she ran, and at last she did not run so far."

And now came into the old woman's face a kind of reminiscent smile, and I knew she was thinking of the romance of her distant relative with the stranger from over the sea.

"Well?" I remarked, inviting her to go on.

"Then she did not run one day. I suppose she only walked, and this mission soldier followed her home, and when they came to the hut together, to the little place made of bushes where they lived, her

family were very angry, and drove the man away. And the tribe heard of it, and were all angry."

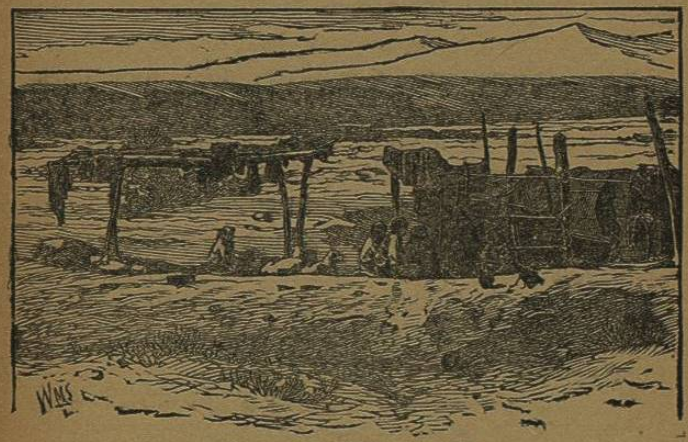
"And he did not get the girl?"

"Ah, no. There was trouble in the hills, and some time after that the tribes attacked the mission, and pulled down the stones, and killed a Padre and two soldiers, and went back *abajo*."

I had heard of the one Indian attack which disturbed the days of that peaceful conquest, and was surprised to learn, for the first time, that the Gallic axiom "*Cherchez la Femme*," would apply to this difficulty also. What I was getting may not have been good history, but it had the unwonted merit of coming from the other side. To the modern Californian there may exist other very good reasons for not believing it, since the days for making a *casus belli* of the fate of a squaw are long since passed. But it is a fact that prior to the touch of civilization every Indian community, of every race and tribe, has had its most jealous care in the guardianship of its women. To their rule in this regard the Mosaic law was mild, and death did not wait for proof, but followed suspicion. Chastity was originally the one barbarian virtue alike of Apache and "Digger."

But it was not a pretty ending to an incipient romance. The old woman went on to say that that tribe never did come back, and that a long time; *muy largo tiempo;* passed before any of her people would have anything to do with the Franciscans or their missions. Many other tribes had similar feelings. It is an acknowledged fact that, at the time of the sequestration, there were thousands of dusky

wanderers among these hills whom the gospel had never reached, and for whom the missionaries had long ceased to care. They knew all about the new civilization, and had been accustomed to see it from a distance for more than a generation, but the ineradicable "Digger" remained in them. The shelter of rushes or boughs, the hole in the sand, the diet of horned-toads, bugs, snakes and gophers, and liberty, appeared



NO GOSPEL THEN OR NOW.

to them the better part to the last. This old woman, dwelling under her flapping shelter, utterly miserable to any civilized understanding, occupied a place between. She knew, yet had not tasted. In such a shelter was she born, and amid such surroundings had always lived. She was a California Indian. This was life to her, almost worse than the life of the old times, but the only one she knew. The doom of the heathen who reject had come to her in this life. The last remainder of a multitude, she was here amid

the gradings of inchoate avenues and the signs and inducements of the real-estate industry, a "Digger" still, and with all this she thought that some days were worse than others.

I asked her if she had not some other story to tell me; one that would end better; and she shook her head. "Where do you live when you are at home?" I inquired. She waved her hand and answered—"*En todas partes*"—everywhere.

"Have your people no place—no country?"

"No. Sometimes it is better here, sometimes there. There is here more clothing, and there more fish. I do not understand the Americans and their towns, or where they all come from, or why they come. Neither do I the others who came first—the Spaniards. Perhaps there was not enough in their country, and they came to find better. Perhaps it is so with you. You took this land away from them, they took it from us. Will somebody come and take it from you?"

For one moment the vision of a Mongolian seizure; of hordes and swarms of yellow faces; of serried battalions wearing pigtails, passed before my mind. Then I said, "No; no one is coming after us; no people can take anything from the Americans; they *always* stay."

And to this she answered, in the words and tone disagreeably familiar to every one who knows the tongue or the Spanish people, "*Quien sabe?*" When it comes to that classic remark there is no longer any use of discussing the question then in hand, whether it be of a transaction in horseflesh or of national

policy. This miserable semi-savage memento had her opinions, drawn from natural sources. The question was like that of a child, whom one can not convince against his conclusion that what has happened once will happen again.

Across the ravine from where we sat there was a yellow embankment, and a somewhat dilapidated railway track. I asked her if the trains passed there.

"Sometimes."

"What makes it go?"

"I don't know. Perhaps it is the white people's Devil."

"What is the wire for overhead?"

"I don't know. To catch birds?" inquiringly.

I was convinced then that this dusky prophetess was a subject for whom a more patient missionary than I would be necessary. It was Apache-like; the universal Indian; to see a miracle every day; perhaps to vaguely wonder; but never to enquire, never to try to understand. I changed the subject again to her own affairs, and asked her if her people had a chief.

"No."

"Then who governs?"

"The man;" meaning of course the universal masculine.

"What becomes of your sons?"

"Sometimes they work. When there is no work they sleep."

"Have you any house?"

"Yes,—this."

"And when it rains?"

"Then," laughing, "we are very wet. But it will not rain soon."

"What do you do with your daughters?"

"Well, they are like other women; just women; they go."

"What has become of all the Indians?"

"Some of us have gone to the desert. Most are dead."

"Of what?"

"Of a disease the Americans brought; this,"—and she showed with apparent satisfaction some ancient marks of small-pox on her wrist.

"And they died of that; all, and in so short a time?"

"*Mira hombre!*"—look here, man—she said, as her voice grew shriller; "One gets it; he can't see"—bringing her eyelids together with her thumb and finger—"He can't hear"—putting her fingers in her ears—"he is all sick"—making dots over her face and arms with her finger-end—"he don't know anything"—tapping her forehead. "There is no cure. He dies. One after the other goes. All who know him die. This year there are a hundred. Next year not one."

The crone was describing in a few words the fate of the California Indian. She conveyed to me the impression that she considered it the incurable curse brought by my people, and purposely. She understood no more of it, of its cause and cure, of all that we consider its history, than she did of why the railway track was laid, or the whispering wire was

stretched overhead. She classed it with those diabolical contrivances. It happened that during all the years of the missions there was no small-pox, or, if there was, the cases were isolated and the curse suppressed. Therefore, with all other mysterious things, we also brought this, and it wrought havoc amid these endless hills. Perhaps it matters very little what they may think, but it is the universal accusation against us in the helpless savage mind. They make no history, not even the history told by bones and piles of stone, but if they did, the story would go down to dusky posterity that we killed our predecessors with charms and a curse.

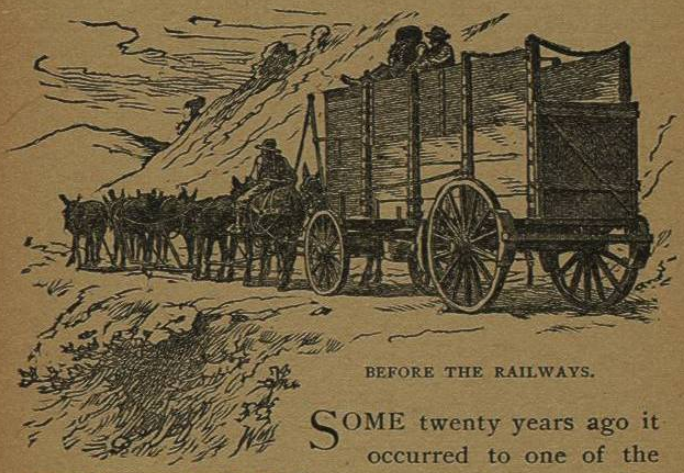
To understand the savage rightly it is necessary to know that he does not appreciate you. I was not making any impression upon this old woman. Had what she really knew been capable of being arranged in her own mind, she could have told me all I wished to know. I do not pretend to the reader that the sketch is worth making except to emphasize the fact that all that is good in civilization is bad to all but the civilized. I had here before me, seated on the ground and speaking a tongue I could understand, the three periods of the history of the coast: the Digger, the Franciscan and the American. The last-comer was I, face to face with the first, and, in a sense, with all that had gone between. Lacking the stolid face and the stupid stare, more than usually intelligent, perhaps, to her all the past was yet as a page torn out. The half-dollar I gave her opened a new era, and her day was perfect when a gray and shambling Indian made his appearance, not with a donkey, but

with an old gray horse. "*Ya ha benido,*" she said; "I knew something would happen when you came."

What had happened was more to her than all that was gone; a companion for the endless misery and squalor which she considered life; the pitiable beast of burden who shared the savage lot, and a silver half-dollar. When I arose to go I asked her if she thought this was really one of the days when everything went wrong. For the first time she laughed, and in the middle of her brown face, and between those uncomely lips, I saw the glistening rows of white and perfect teeth which are nature's almost only gift of comeliness to the aborigine of California.

CHAPTER IX.

SOME "ARGONAUTS."



BEFORE THE RAILWAYS.

SOME twenty years ago it occurred to one of the most brilliant and indolent geniuses this country has produced to bestow a generic title, a classic name, upon that remarkable body of men who were the first Americans to truly know California. Those were golden days, and their coming was not in vain. For then, and almost only then, did the placer yield for a body of hopeful adventurers a yellow store that could be known by sight as Gold. No capital was required; nothing but a pick, a shovel, a pan, a "cradle," "grub" and pluck. This last quality acquired among them the name of "sand," and they had it, and in many cases it was all they had. But