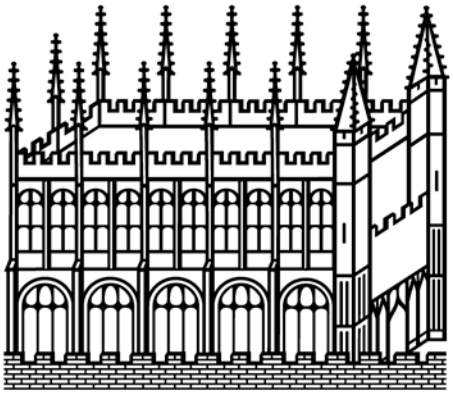

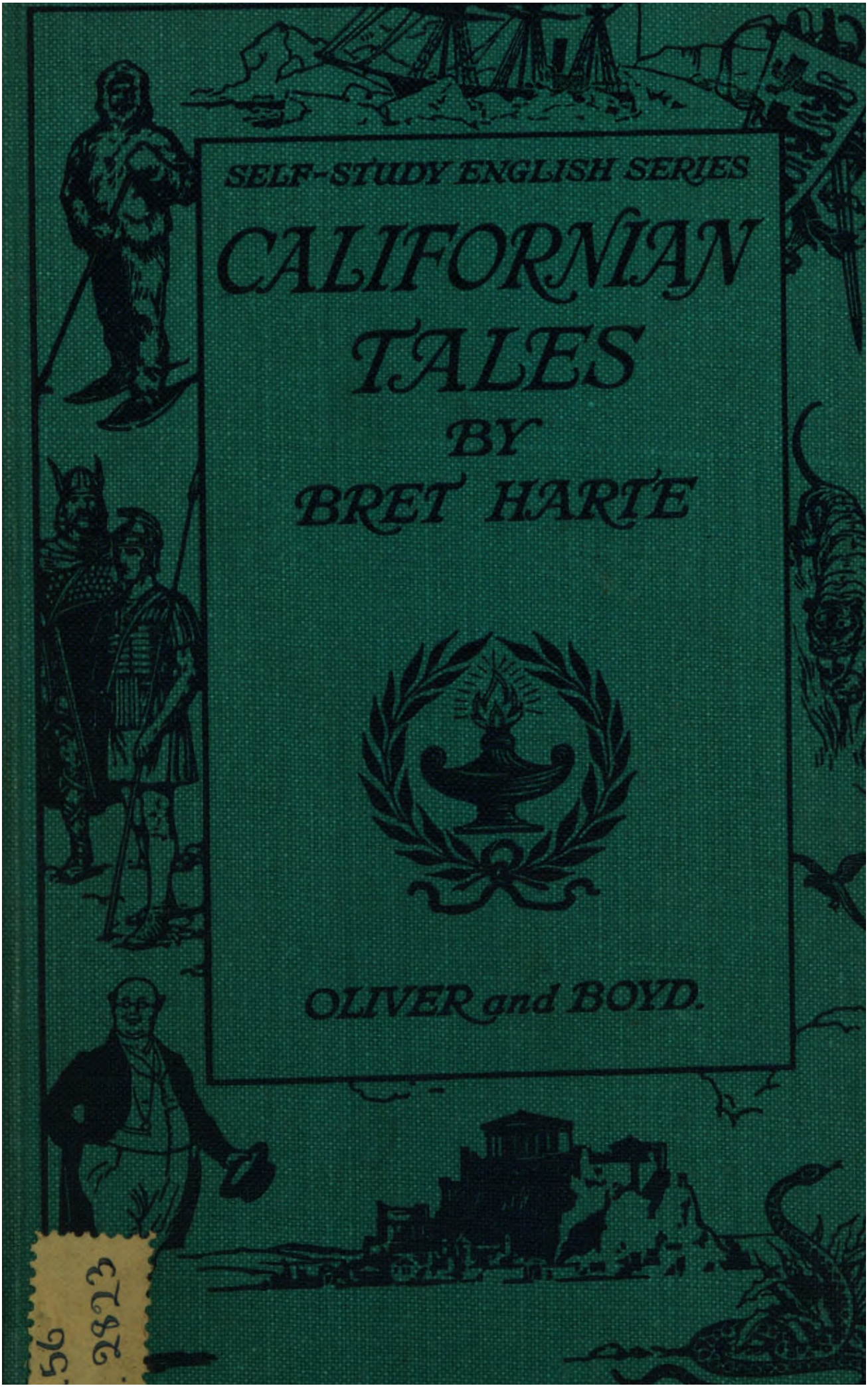
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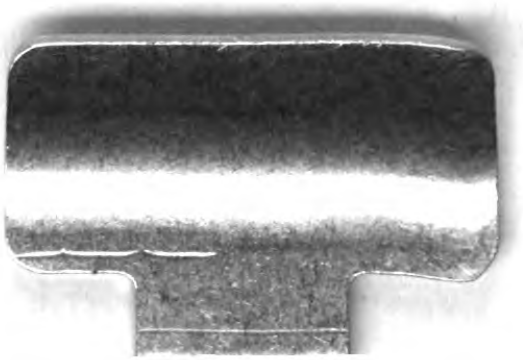

OLIVER & BOYD'S SELF-STUDY ENGLISH SERIES

CALIFORNIAN TALES

THE OUTCASTS OF POKER FLAT.

CALIFORNIAN TALES

BY

FRANCIS BRET HARTE

EDITED BY

ROBERT MACINTYRE

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INTRODUCTION

FRANCIS BRET HARTE was born in Albany, New York State, in 1839. As a child he was not very robust, and his schooling consequently suffered ; but he was early encouraged to read good books and became familiar in boyhood with the work of great writers, such as Washington Irving and Charles Dickens, who served him as models when, later, he himself began to write.

When Harte was fifteen, his father, a teacher of Greek, died, and the boy was forced to set to work for his own living. Before very long he made the voyage to California, at that time, owing to the discovery of gold there in 1849, the Mecca of all who were young, strong and needy. Failing to obtain suitable employment in San Francisco, he soon set out, afoot, for the gold diggings and made his way to Calaveras County, a district which he later made the setting of some of his best stories. There, as is often the way of immigrants in a new country, Harte made trial of many trades, acting in turn as schoolmaster, miner, compositor, editor, and express-messenger—the last a dangerous calling at that place and time. Thus he obtained varied experience of the camps, and saw from many angles the life of their rude society.

Both the society and the scene made powerful impressions on him. " I was thrown," he says, " among the strangest social conditions that the latter-day world has perhaps seen. The setting was itself heroic. The great mountains of the Sierra Nevada lifted majestic, snow-capped peaks against

a sky of purest blue. Magnificent pine forests of trees which were themselves enormous gave to the landscape a sense of largeness and greatness. It was a land of rugged cañons, sharp declivities, and magnificent distances. Amid rushing waters and wildwood freedom, an army of strong men, in red shirts and topboots, were feverishly in search of the buried gold of the earth. Weaklings and old men were unknown. It took a stout heart and a strong frame to dare the venture, to brave the journey of 3000 miles and battle for life in the wilds. It was a civilisation composed entirely of young men, for on one occasion, I remember, an elderly man—he was fifty, perhaps, but he had a grey beard—was pointed out as a curiosity in the city."

Of these impressions Harte did not at once make literary use. Instead he returned to San Francisco and worked there first as a compositor and next as a journalist. Such fiction as he did write at this time was mainly experimental, and though some of it—"Mliss," for example—shows unmistakable power, it was not until 1868 that he definitely began his career as an author. In that year he was appointed editor of the *Overland Monthly*, and one of the first things he observed was that, although a good class of story was submitted to him for publication, little effort was being made to sketch the life of California itself. He made up his mind that if no good romance of California was sent in soon he himself would write one, and he did. It was "The Luck of Roaring Camp," the first of a series of tales of the mining-camps, and one of the best stories he ever wrote. That story and those which soon followed brought the author immediate fame. He was hailed, as far afield as England, as "a rising star," and ere long began to receive tempting offers from the great magazines of the Eastern States.

In 1871, drawn by such offers, Harte left California, being met and fêted on his eastward way by enthusiastic admirers. The *Atlantic Monthly* paid him a royal fee in advance for such stories as he might write within the next year, and thus, in his early thirties, he seemed to have made fortune as well as fame secure. In 1878 he was made U.S. Consul at Crefeld, and two years later was transferred to a similar post at Glasgow. Official work, however, does not seem to have been that for which he was best fitted. In 1885 he gave up the Glasgow post and went to England where he lived for the next seventeen years, writing much but not adding greatly to the reputation he had already won. He died in 1902.

More than one able critic has held that Bret Harte's first period, during which his Californian tales were produced, was not, as is commonly thought, his best ; that as he grew older he produced more and more literature of the first class. Yet to-day, thirty-two years after his death, it is still by those early stories that he is remembered. The reason is clear. In California, Harte had a field that was both striking and new. His stories of that country touched a note that had never been heard before and that never since has rung more clear and true. He was introduced to that field at an age when his great powers of observation and feeling were just mature and when the rude, vigorous life of the diggings, the grand majesty of the natural surroundings, could make the most vivid impression on his mind. He commenced to write what he had seen there just when his great powers of description were, in their turn, fully developed ; and he was thus able to give the world with almost perfect artistry the moving picture of a life with which he, alone of

great writers in English, was thoroughly and intensely familiar. He never again had the chance of painting a scene so grand or a society so simple and picturesque.

This does not mean that Harte's power depended entirely upon his setting, or that, like many writers, he was able to write well only in a single vein. It does mean, however, that the Californian scene and the Californian life called forth his powers most strongly and gave greatest play to his original observations on human life and character. Had his tales been mere journalistic impressions, sketches of the surface of life, they would long since have been forgotten, for they would have been surpassed by the first writer who brought to the same subject a deeper sympathy and a keener insight. In Mother Shipton, however, and Tennessee, and the Old Man, and Miss Folinsbee—to name only some of his minor characters—while we are presented with types of an unfamiliar society, we recognise at the same time those broad human traits which are the same everywhere and in all ages. The man who drew these people understood his brother man and sister woman with a rare and delicate understanding.

To this understanding Bret Harte added a complete mastery over the medium in which he worked—the short story. The literary short story is essentially of modern development, and when Harte began to write few authors had shown complete understanding of its peculiar laws. A good short story is as difficult to write as a good sonnet, and for the same reason—viz., that it is short. It offers no scope for free description or "fine writing." The author is compelled to bear in mind always the one main impression which he seeks to produce; to awaken the reader's interest as quickly and completely as possible, to

sustain it without flagging, and to satisfy it in the end without a superfluous word. How perfectly Harte understood all this may be seen from a study of " Tennessee's Partner," one of the finest short stories ever written.

Here we have a study of devotion. The very title warns us of what we are to expect. The first words emphasise the warning. Never throughout the tale do we read the name of the central figure. From first to last he is " Tennessee's Partner." Yet, though he is referred to only in this relative way, he occupies at every crisis, if not the centre of the stage at least the " spot-light " of interest. In the first crisis—the trial—Tennessee is unconcerned ; for him the bitterness of death was past when he surrendered to " two bowers and an ace." It is the Partner that is the tragic figure, as he struggles with " the elevated sense of justice that sways the tribunal." In the second crisis—the hanging—Bret Harte's artistry reaches the highest pitch. One false step here and he would have concentrated attention on the sordid, the sensational, and, for his purpose, the inessential. The device by which he avoids the false issue—the reference to the *Red Dog Clarion*—is characteristic and original. In the third crisis—the funeral oration—he is again on dangerous ground and again he crosses it with sure instinct. One flowery phrase, one piece of false sentiment, would have destroyed utterly the whole idea of the Partner's character which he has so skilfully built in the reader's mind. How triumphantly he avoids this ! The funeral speech is a piece of pure eloquence such as grief will bring from the lips of the poor and unlettered as readily as from those of the great and wise. Yet over the whole story, deeply as we feel its tragedy, we perceive the light of that wise, sad humour, that " resigned perception that the world

is out of joint and that he was not born to set it right," which goes so far to prove Bret Harte's kinship with our very greatest writers.

FOR FURTHER READING

Complete Works of Bret Harte, Vols. II. and III.
Life, by T. Edgar Pemberton.
Life, by H. C. Merwin.
Aspects of the Modern Short Story, English and American, by A. C. Ward.

TENNESSEE'S PARTNER

I DO not think that we ever knew his real name. Our ignorance of it certainly never gave us any social inconvenience, for at Sandy Bar in 1854 most men were christened anew. Sometimes these appellatives were derived from some distinctiveness of dress, as in the case of "Dungaree Jack"; or from some peculiarity of habit, as shown in "Saleratus Bill," so called from an undue proportion of that chemical in his daily bread; or from some unlucky slip, as exhibited in "The Iron Pirate," a mild, inoffensive man, who earned that baleful title by his unfortunate mispronunciation of the term "iron pyrites." Perhaps this may have been the beginning of a rude heraldry; but I am constrained to think that it was because a man's real name in that day rested solely upon his own unsupported statement.

"Call yourself Clifford, do you?" said Boston, addressing a timid new-comer with infinite scorn; "hell is full of such Cliffords!" He then introduced the unfortunate man, whose name happened to be really Clifford, as "Jaybird Charley,"—an unhallowed inspiration of the moment that clung to him ever after.

But to return to Tennessee's Partner, whom we never knew by any other than this relative title; that he had ever existed as a separate and distinct individuality we only learned later. It seems that in 1853 he left Poker Flat to go to San Francisco, ostensibly to procure a wife. He never got any farther than Stockton. At that place he was attracted by a young person who waited upon the table at

the hotel where he took his meals. One morning he said something to her which caused her to smile not unkindly, to somewhat coquettishly break a plate of toast over his upturned, serious simple face, and to retreat to the kitchen. He followed her, and emerged a few moments later, covered with more toast and victory. That day week they were married by a Justice of the Peace, and returned to Poker Flat. I am aware that something more might be made of this episode, but I prefer to tell it as it was current at Sandy Bar—in the gulches and bar-rooms—where all sentiment was modified by a strong sense of humour.

Of their married felicity but little is known, perhaps for the reason that Tennessee, then living with his partner, one day took occasion to say something to the bride on his own account, at which, it is said, she smiled not unkindly and chastely retreated—this time as far as Marysville, where Tennessee followed her, and where they went to housekeeping without the aid of a Justice of the Peace. Tennessee's Partner took the loss of his wife simply and seriously as was his fashion. But to everybody's surprise, when Tennessee one day returned from Marysville, without his partner's wife—she having smiled and retreated with somebody else—Tennessee's Partner was the first man to shake his hand and greet him with affection. The boys who had gathered in the cañon to see the shooting were naturally indignant. Their indignation might have found vent in sarcasm, but for a certain look in Tennessee's Partner's eye that indicated a lack of humorous appreciation. In fact, he was a grave man, with a steady application to practical detail which was unpleasant in a difficulty.

Meanwhile a popular feeling against Tennessee had grown up on the Bar. He was known to be a

gambler ; he was suspected to be a thief. In these suspicions Tennessee's Partner was equally compromised ; his continued intimacy with Tennessee after the affair above quoted could only be accounted for on the hypothesis of a co-partnership of crime. At last Tennessee's guilt became flagrant. One day he overtook a stranger on his way to Red Dog. The stranger afterwards related that Tennessee beguiled the time with interesting anecdote and reminiscence, but illogically concluded the interview in the following words :

" And now, young man, I'll trouble you for your knife, your pistols, and your money. You see, your weppings might get you into trouble at Red Dog, and your money's a temptation to the evilly disposed. I think you said your address was San Francisco. I shall endeavour to call." It may be stated here that Tennessee had a fine flow of humour, which no business preoccupation could wholly subdue.

This exploit was his last. Red Dog and Sandy Bar made common cause against the highwayman. Tennessee was hunted in very much the same fashion as his prototype, the grizzly. As the toils closed around him he made a desperate dash through the Bar, emptying his revolver at the crowd before the Arcade Saloon, and so on up Grizzly Cañon ; but at its farther extremity he was stopped by a small man on a grey horse. The men looked at each other a moment in silence. Both were fearless, both self-possessed and independent ; and both types of a civilisation that in the seventeenth century would have been called heroic, but in the nineteenth simply " reckless."

" What have you got there ? I call," said Tennessee, quietly.

" Two bowers and an ace," said the stranger, as quietly, showing two revolvers and a bowie-knife.

"That takes me," returned Tennessee; and with this gambler's epigram, he threw away his useless pistol, and rode back with his captor.

It was a warm night. The cool breeze which usually sprang up with the going down of the sun behind the *chaparral*-crested mountain was that evening withheld from Sandy Bar. The little cañon was stifling with heated resinous odours, and the decaying driftwood on the Bar sent forth faint, sickening exhalations. The feverishness of day, and its fierce passions, still filled the camp. Lights moved restlessly along the bank of the river, striking no answering reflection from its tawny current. Against the blackness of the pines the windows of the old loft above the express-office stood out staringly bright; and through their curtainless panes the loungers below could see the forms of those who were even then deciding the fate of Tennessee. And above all this, etched on the dark firmament, rose the Sierra, remote and passionless, crowned with remoter passionless stars.

The trial of Tennessee was conducted as fairly as was consistent with a judge and jury who felt themselves to some extent obliged to justify in their verdict the previous irregularities of arrest and indictment. The law of Sandy Bar was implacable, but not vengeful. The excitement and personal feeling of the chase were over; with Tennessee safe in their hands, they were ready to listen patiently to any defence, which they were already satisfied was insufficient. There being no doubt in their own minds, they were willing to give the prisoner the benefit of any that might exist. Secure in the hypothesis that he ought to be hanged, on general principles, they indulged him with more latitude of defence than his reckless hardihood seemed to ask.

The Judge appeared to be more anxious than the prisoner, who, otherwise unconcerned, evidently took a grim pleasure in the responsibility he had created. " I don't take any hand in this yer game," had been his invariable but good-humoured reply to all questions. The Judge—who was also his captor—for a moment vaguely regretted that he had not shot him " on sight " that morning, but presently dismissed this human weakness as unworthy of the judicial mind. Nevertheless, when there was a tap at the door, and it was said that Tennessee's Partner was there on behalf of the prisoner, he was admitted at once without question. Perhaps the younger members of the jury, to whom the proceedings were becoming irksomely thoughtful, hailed him as a relief.

For he was not, certainly, an imposing figure. Short and stout, with a square face, sunburned into a preternatural redness, clad in a loose duck " jumper," and trousers streaked and splashed with red soil, his aspect under any circumstances would have been quaint, and was now even ridiculous. As he stooped to deposit at his feet a heavy carpet bag he was carrying, it became obvious, from partially developed legends and inscriptions, that the material with which his trousers had been patched had been originally intended for a less ambitious covering. Yet he advanced with great gravity, and after having shaken the hand of each person in the room with laboured cordiality, he wiped his serious, perplexed face on a red bandanna handkerchief, a shade lighter than his complexion, laid his powerful hand upon the table to steady himself, and thus addressed the Judge :—

" I was passin' by," he began, by way of apology, " and I thought I'd just step in and see how things was gittin' on with Tennessee thar—my pardner.

It's a hot night. I disremember any sich weather before on the Bar."

He paused a moment, but nobody volunteering any other meteorological recollection, he again had recourse to his pocket-handkerchief, and for some moments mopped his face diligently.

"Have you anything to say in behalf of the prisoner?" said the Judge, finally.

"Thet's it," said Tennessee's Partner, in a tone of relief. "I come yar as Tennessee's pardner—knowing him nigh on four year, off and on, wet and dry, in luck and out o' luck. His ways ain't allers my ways, but thar ain't any p'ints in that young man, thar ain't any liveliness as he's been up to, as I don't know. And you sez to me, sez you—confidential-like, and between man and man—sez you, 'Do you know anything in his behalf?' and I sez to you, sez I—confidential-like, as between man and man—'What should a man know of his pardner?'"

"Is this all you have to say?" asked the Judge impatiently, feeling, perhaps, that a dangerous sympathy of humour was beginning to humanise the Court.

"Thet's so," continued Tennessee's Partner. "It ain't for me to say anything agin him. And now, what's the case? Here's Tennessee wants money, wants it bad, and doesn't like to ask it of his old pardner. Well, what does Tennessee do? He lays for a stranger, and he fetches that stranger. And you lays for *him*, and you fetches *him*—and the honours is easy. And I put it to you, bein' a far-minded man, and to you, gentlemen, all, as far-minded men, ef this isn't so."

"Prisoner," said the Judge, interrupting, "have you any questions to ask this man?"

"No! no!" continued Tennessee's Partner,

hastily. " I play this yer hand alone. To come down to the bedrock, it's just this : Tennessee, thar, has played it pretty rough and expensive-like on a stranger, and on this yer camp. And now, what's the fair thing ? Some would say more ; some would say less. Here's seventeen hundred dollars in coarse gold and a watch—it's about all my pile—and call it square ! " And before a hand could be raised to prevent him, he had emptied the contents of the carpet-bag upon the table.

For a moment his life was in jeopardy. One or two men sprang to their feet, several hands groped for hidden weapons, and a suggestion to " throw him from the window " was only overridden by a gesture from the Judge. Tennessee laughed. And apparently oblivious of the excitement, Tennessee's Partner improved the opportunity to mop his face again with his handkerchief.

When order was restored, and the man was made to understand, by the use of forcible figures and rhetoric, that Tennessee's offence could not be condoned by money, his face took a more serious and sanguinary hue, and those who were nearest to him noticed that his rough hand trembled slightly on the table. He hesitated a moment as he slowly returned the gold to the carpet-bag, as if he had not yet entirely caught the elevated sense of justice which swayed the tribunal, and was perplexed with the belief that he had not offered enough. Then he turned to the Judge, and saying, " This yer is a lone hand, played alone, and without my pardner," he bowed to the jury, and was about to withdraw, when the Judge called him back.

" If you have anything to say to Tennessee, you had better say it now."

For the first time that evening the eyes of the prisoner and his strange advocate met. Tennessee

smiled, showed his white teeth, and, saying, " Euchred, old man ! " held out his hand.

Tennessee's Partner took it in his own, and saying, " I just dropped in as I was passin' to see how things was gittin' on," let the hand passively fall, and adding that " it was a warm night," again mopped his face with his handkerchief, and without another word withdrew.

The two men never again met each other alive. For the unparalleled insult of a bribe offered to Judge Lynch—who, whether bigoted, weak, or narrow, was at least incorruptible—firmly fixed in the mind of that mythical personage any wavering determination of Tennessee's fate ; and at the break of day he was marched, closely guarded, to meet it at the top of Marley's Hill.

How he met it, how cool he was, how he refused to say anything, how perfect were the arrangements of the committee, were all duly reported, with the addition of a warning moral and example to all future evil-doers, in the *Red Dog Clarion*, by its editor, who was present, and to whose vigorous English I cheerfully refer the reader. But the beauty of that midsummer morning, the blessed amity of earth and air and sky, the awakened life of the free woods and hills, the joyous renewal and promise of Nature, and above all, the infinite serenity that thrilled through each, was not reported, as not being a part of the social lesson. And yet, when the weak and foolish deed was done, and a life, with its possibilities and responsibilities, had passed out of the misshapen thing that dangled between earth and sky, the birds sang, the flowers bloomed, the sun shone, as cheerily as before ; and possibly the *Red Dog Clarion* was right.

Tennessee's Partner was not in the group that surrounded the ominous tree. But as they turned

to disperse, attention was drawn to the singular appearance of a motionless donkey-cart halted at the side of the road. As they approached they at once recognised the venerable "Jenny" and the two-wheeled cart as the property of Tennessee's Partner—used by him in carrying dirt from his claim; and a few paces distant the owner of the equipage himself, sitting under a buckeye-tree, wiping the perspiration from his glowing face. In answer to an inquiry, he said he had come for the body of the "diseased," "if it was all the same to the committee." He didn't wish to "hurry anything"; he could "wait." He was not working that day; and when the gentlemen were done with the "diseased," he would take him. "Ef thar is any present," he added, in his simple, serious way, "as would care to jine in the fun'l, they kin come." Perhaps it was from a sense of humour, which I have already intimated was a feature of Sandy Bar—perhaps it was from something even better than that; but two-thirds of the loungers accepted the invitation at once.

It was noon when the body of Tennessee was delivered into the hands of his partner. As the cart drew up to the fatal tree, we noticed that it contained a rough oblong box—apparently made from a section of sluicing—and half-filled with bark and the tassels of pine. The cart was further decorated with slips of willow, and made fragrant with buckeye blossoms. When the body was deposited in the box, Tennessee's Partner drew over it a piece of tarred canvas, and gravely mounting the narrow seat in front, with his feet upon the shafts, urged the little donkey forward. The equipage moved slowly on, at that decorous pace which was habitual with "Jenny" even under less solemn circumstances. The men—half-curiously, half-jest-

ingly, but all good-humouredly—strolled along beside the cart: some in advance, some a little in the rear of the homely catafalque. But, whether from the narrowing of the road, or some present sense of decorum, as the cart passed on the company fell to the rear in couples, keeping step, and otherwise assuming the external show of a formal procession. Jack Folinsbee, who had at the outset played a funeral march in dumb-show upon an imaginary trombone, desisted, from a lack of sympathy and appreciation—not having, perhaps, your true humorist's capacity to be content with the enjoyment of his own fun.

The way led through Grizzly Cañon—by this time clothed in funeral drapery and shadows. The redwoods, burying their moccasined feet in the red soil, stood in Indian file along the track, trailing an uncouth benediction from their bending boughs upon the passing bier. A hare, surprised into helpless inactivity, sat upright and pulsating in the ferns by the roadside as the *cortege* went by. Squirrels hastened to gain a secure outlook from higher boughs; and the blue jays, spreading their wings, fluttered before them like outriders, until the outskirts of Sandy Bar were reached, and the solitary cabin of Tennessee's Partner.

Viewed under more favourable circumstances, it would not have been a cheerful place. The unpicturesque site, the rude and unlovely outlines, the unsavoury details, which distinguish the nest-building of the California miner, were all here, with the dreariness of decay superadded. A few paces from the cabin there was a rough enclosure, which, in the brief days of Tennessee's Partner's matrimonial felicity, had been used as a garden, but was now overgrown with fern. As we approached it we were surprised to find that what we had taken for a recent

attempt at cultivation was the broken soil about an open grave.

The cart was halted before the enclosure; and rejecting the offers of assistance with the same air of simple self-reliance he had displayed throughout, Tennessee's Partner lifted the rough coffin on his back, and deposited it, unaided, within the shallow grave. He then nailed down the board which served as a lid; and mounting the little mound of earth beside it, took off his hat, and slowly mopped his face with his handkerchief. This the crowd felt was a preliminary to speech; and they disposed themselves variously on stumps and boulders, and sat expectant.

"When a man," began Tennessee's Partner, slowly, "has been running free all day, what's the natural thing for him to do? Why, to come home! And if he ain't in a condition to go home, what can his best friend do? Why, bring him home! And here's Tennessee has been running free, and we brings him home from his wandering." He paused, and picked up a fragment of quartz, rubbed it thoughtfully on his sleeve, and went on: "It ain't the first time that I've packed him on my back, as you see'd me now. It ain't the first time that I brought him to this yer cabin when he couldn't help himself; it ain't the first time that I and 'Jinny' have waited for him on yon hill, and picked him up and so fetched him home, when he couldn't speak, and didn't know me. And now that it's the last time, why—" he paused, and rubbed the quartz gently on his sleeve—"you see, it's sort of rough on his pardner. And now, gentlemen," he added, abruptly picking up his long-handled shovel, "the fun'l's over; and my thanks, and Tennessee's thanks, to you for your trouble."

Resisting any proffers of assistance, he began to

fill in the grave, turning his back upon the crowd, that after a few moments' hesitation gradually withdrew. As they crossed the little ridge that hid Sandy Bar from view, some, looking back, thought they could see Tennessee's Partner, his work done, sitting upon the grave, his shovel between his knees, and his face buried in his red bandanna handkerchief. But it was argued by others that you couldn't tell his face from his handkerchief at that distance ; and this point remained undecided.

In the reaction that followed the feverish excitement of that day, Tennessee's Partner was not forgotten. A secret investigation had cleared him of any complicity in Tennessee's guilt, and left only a suspicion of his general sanity. Sandy Bar made a point of calling on him, and proffering various uncouth but well-meant kindnesses. But from that day his rude health and great strength seemed visibly to decline ; and when the rainy season fairly set in, and the tiny grass-blades were beginning to peep from the rocky mound above Tennessee's grave, he took to his bed.

One night, when the pines beside the cabin were swaying in the storm, and trailing their slender fingers over the roof, and the roar and rush of the swollen river were heard below, Tennessee's Partner lifted his head from the pillow, saying, " It is time to go for Tennessee ; I must put ' Jinny ' in the cart " ; and would have risen from his bed but for the restraint of his attendant. Struggling, he still pursued his singular fancy : " There, now, steady, ' Jinny '—steady, old girl. How dark it is ! Look out for the ruts—and look out for him, too, old gal ! Sometimes, you know, when he's blind drunk, he drops down right in the trail. Keep on straight up to the pine on the top of the hill. Thar—I told

you so !—thar he is,—coming this way, too—all by himself, sober, and his face a-shining. Tennessee ! Pardner ! "

And so they met.

THE ILIAD OF SANDY BAR

BEFORE nine o'clock it was pretty well known all along the river that the two partners of the " Amity Claim " had quarrelled and separated at daybreak. At that time the attention of their nearest neighbour had been attracted by the sounds of altercations and two consecutive pistol-shots. Running out, he had seen dimly, in the grey mist that rose from the river, the tall form of Scott, one of the partners, descending the hill toward the cañon ; a moment later, York, the other partner, had appeared from the cabin, and walked in an opposite direction toward the river, passing within a few feet of the curious watcher. Later, it was discovered that a serious Chinaman, cutting wood before the cabin, had witnessed part of the quarrel. But John was stolid, indifferent, and reticent. " Me choppee wood—me no fightee," was his serene response to all anxious queries. " But what did they *say*, John ? " John did not " sabe." Colonel Starbottle deftly ran over the various popular epithets which a generous public sentiment might accept as reasonable provocation for an assault. But John did not recognise them. " And this yer's the cattle," said the Colonel, with some severity, " that some thinks ought'er be allowed to testify agin a White Man ! Git—you heathen ! "

Still the quarrel remained inexplicable. That two men whose amiability and grave tact had earned

for them the title of the "Peacemakers" in a community not greatly given to the passive virtues—that these men, singularly devoted to each other, should suddenly and violently quarrel, might well excite the curiosity of the camp. A few of the more inquisitive visited the late scene of conflict, now deserted by its former occupants. There was no trace of disorder or confusion in the neat cabin. The rude table was arranged as if for breakfast; the pan of yellow biscuit still sat upon that hearth whose dead embers might have typified the evil passions that had raged there but an hour before. But Colonel Starbottle's eye—albeit somewhat blood-shot and rheumy—was more intent on practical details. On examination, a bullet-hole was found in the door-post, and another, nearly opposite, in the casing of the window. The Colonel called attention to the fact that the one "agreed with" the bore of Scott's revolver, and the other with that of York's derringer. "They must hev stood about yer," said the Colonel, taking position; "not mor'n three feet apart, and—missed!" There was a fine touch of pathos in the falling inflection of the Colonel's voice, which was not without effect. A delicate perception of wasted opportunity thrilled his auditors.

But the Bar was destined to experience a greater disappointment. The two antagonists had not met since the quarrel, and it was vaguely rumoured that on the occasion of a second meeting, each had determined to kill the other "on sight." There was, consequently, some excitement—and, it is to be feared, no little gratification—when, at ten o'clock, York stepped from the Magnolia Saloon into the one long straggling street of the camp, at the same moment that Scott left the blacksmith's shop at the forks of the road. It was evident, at a glance, that

a meeting could only be avoided by the actual retreat of one or the other.

In an instant the doors and windows of the adjacent saloons were filled with faces. Heads unaccountably appeared above the river-banks and from behind boulders. An empty waggon at the cross-road was suddenly crowded with people, who seemed to have sprung from the earth. There was much running and confusion on the hill-side. On the mountain-road, Mr Jack Hamlin had reined up his horse, and was standing upright on the seat of his buggy. And the two objects of this absorbing attention approached each other.

" York's got the sun," " Scott'll line him on that tree," " He's waitin' to draw his fire," came from the cart—and then it was silent. But above this human breathlessness the river rushed and sang, and the wind rustled the treetops with an indifference that seemed obtrusive. Colonel Starbottle felt it, and in a moment of sublime preoccupation, without looking around, waved his cane behind him warningly to all Nature and said, " Shu ! "

The men were now within a few feet of each other. A hen ran across the road before one of them. A feathery seed-vessel, wafted from a wayside tree, fell at the feet of the other. And, unheeding this irony of Nature, the two opponents came nearer, erect and rigid, looked in each other's eyes, and—passed !

Colonel Starbottle had to be lifted from the cart. " This yer camp is played out," he said gloomily, as he affected to be supported into the " Magnolia." With what further expression he might have indicated his feelings it was impossible to say, for at that moment Scott joined the group.

" Did you speak to me ? " he asked of the Colonel, dropping his hand, as if with accidental familiarity, on that gentleman's shoulder.

The Colonel, recognising some occult quality in the touch, and some unknown quantity in the glance of his questioner, contented himself by replying, " No, sir," with dignity.

A few rods away, York's conduct was as characteristic and peculiar.

" You had a mighty fine chance—why didn't you plump him ? " said Jack Hamlin, as York drew near the buggy.

" Because I hate him," was the reply, heard only by Jack.

Contrary to popular belief, this reply was not hissed between the lips of the speaker, but was said in an ordinary tone. But Jack Hamlin, who was an observer of mankind, noticed that the speaker's hands were cold, and his lips dry, as he helped him into the buggy, and accepted the seeming paradox with a smile.

When Sandy Bar became convinced that the quarrel between York and Scott could not be settled after the usual local methods, it gave no further concern thereto.

But presently it was rumoured that the " Amity Claim " was in litigation, and that its possession would be expensively disputed by each of the partners. As it was well known that the claim in question was " worked out " and worthless, and that the partners, whom it had already enriched, had talked of abandoning it but a day or two before the quarrel, this proceeding could only be accounted for as gratuitous spite.

Later, two San Francisco lawyers made their appearance in this guileless Arcadia, and were eventually taken into the saloons, and—what was pretty much the same thing—the confidences of the inhabitants. The results of this unhallowed intimacy

were many subpœnas; and indeed, when the "Amity Claim" came to trial, all of Sandy Bar that was not in compulsory attendance at the county seat came there from curiosity. The gulches and ditches for miles around were deserted.

I do not propose to describe that already famous trial. Enough that, in the language of the plaintiff's counsel, "it was one of no ordinary significance, involving the inherent rights of that untiring industry which had developed the Pactolian resources of this golden land"—and in the homelier phrase of Colonel Starbottle, "a fuss that gentlemen might hev settled in ten minutes over a social glass, ef they meant business; or in ten seconds with a revolver, ef they meant fun." Scott got a verdict, from which York instantly appealed. It was said that he had sworn to spend his last dollar in the struggle.

In this way Sandy Bar began to accept the enmity of the former partners as a lifelong feud, and the fact that they had ever been friends was forgotten. The few who expected to learn from the trial the origin of the quarrel were disappointed. Among the various conjectures, that which ascribed some occult feminine influence as the cause was naturally popular in a camp given to dubious compliment of the sex.

"My word for it, gentlemen," said Colonel Starbottle—who had been known in Sacramento as a Gentleman of the Old School—"there's some lovely creature at the bottom of this." The gallant Colonel then proceeded to illustrate his theory by divers sprightly stories, such as Gentlemen of the Old School are in the habit of repeating, but which, from deference to the prejudices of gentlemen of a more recent school, I refrain from transcribing here. But it would appear that even the Colonel's theory was fallacious. The only woman who personally

might have exercised any influence over the partners was the pretty daughter of " old man Folinsbee," of Poverty Flat, at whose hospitable house—which exhibited some comforts and refinements rare in that crude civilisation—both York and Scott were frequent visitors. Yet into this charming retreat York strode one evening, a month after the quarrel, and, beholding Scott sitting there, turned to the fair hostess with the abrupt query : " Do you love this man ? "

The young woman thus addressed returned that answer—at once spirited and evasive—which would occur to most of my fair readers in such an exigency. Without another word, York left the house. " Miss Jo " heaved the least possible sigh as the door closed on York's curls and square shoulders, and then, like a good girl, turned to her insulted guest. " But would you believe it, dear," she afterwards related to an intimate friend, " the other creature, after glowering at me for a moment, got upon its hind legs, took its hat, and left too ; and that's the last I've seen of either."

The same hard disregard of all other interests or feelings in the gratification of their blind rancour characterised all their actions. When York purchased the land below Scott's new claim, and obliged the latter, at a great expense, to make a long *détour* to carry a " tail-race " around it, Scott retaliated by building a dam that overflowed York's claim on the river.

It was Scott who, in conjunction with Colonel Starbottle, first organised that active opposition to the Chinaman which resulted in the driving off of York's Mongolian labourers ; it was York who built the waggon-road and established the express which rendered Scott's mules and pack-trains obsolete ; it was Scott who called into life the

Vigilance Committee which expatriated York's friend Jack Hamlin ; it was York who created the *Sandy Bar Herald*, which characterised the act as "a lawless outrage," and Scott as a "Border Ruffian" ; it was Scott, at the head of twenty masked men, who, one moonlight night, threw the offending "formes" into the yellow river, and scattered the types in the dusty road.

These proceedings were received in the distant and more civilised outlying towns as vague indications of progress and vitality. I have before me a copy of the *Poverty Flat Pioneer*, for the week ending August 12, 1856, in which the editor, under the head of "County Improvements," says : "The New Presbyterian Church, on C Street, at Sandy Bar, is completed. It stands upon the lot formerly occupied by the Magnolia Saloon, which was so mysteriously burnt last month. The temple which now rises like a Phœnix from the ashes of the Magnolia is virtually the free gift of H. J. York, Esq., of Sandy Bar, who purchased the lot and donated the lumber. Other buildings are going up in the vicinity, but the most noticeable is the 'Sunny South Saloon,' erected by Captain Mat Scott, nearly opposite the church. Captain Scott has spared no expense in the furnishing of this saloon, which promises to be one of the most agreeable places of resort in old Tuolumne. He has recently imported two new first-class billiard tables, with cork cushions. Our old friend 'Mountain Jimmy' will dispense liquors at the bar. We refer our readers to the advertisement in another column. Visitors to Sandy Bar cannot do better than give 'Jimmy' a call." Among the local items occurred the following : "H. J. York, Esq., of Sandy Bar, has offered a reward of $100 for the detection of the parties who hauled away the steps of the new Presbyterian Church,

C Street, Sandy Bar, during Divine Service on Sabbath evening last. Captain Scott adds another hundred for the capture of the miscreants who broke the magnificent plate-glass windows of the new saloon on the following evening. There is some talk of reorganising the old Vigilance Committee at Sandy Bar."

When, for many months of cloudless weather, the hard, unwinking sun of Sandy Bar had regularly gone down on the unpacified wrath of these men, there was some talk of mediation. In particular, the pastor of the church to which I have just referred —a sincere, fearless, but perhaps not fully enlightened man—seized gladly upon the occasion of York's liberality to attempt to reunite the former partners. He preached an earnest sermon on the abstract sinfulness of discord and rancour. But the excellent sermons of the Rev. Mr Daws were directed to an ideal congregation that did not exist at Sandy Bar—a congregation of beings of unmixed vices and virtues, of single impulses and perfectly logical motives, of preternatural simplicity, of childlike faith and grown-up responsibilities. As, unfortunately, the people who actually attended Mr Daws' church were mainly very human, somewhat artful, more self-excusing than self-accusing, rather good-natured, and decidedly weak, they quietly shed that portion of the sermon which referred to themselves, and accepting York and Scott—who were both in defiant attendance—as curious examples of those ideal beings above referred to, felt a certain satisfaction—which, I fear, was not altogether Christian-like—in their "raking down." If Mr Daws expected York and Scott to shake hands after the sermon, he was disappointed. But he did not relax his purpose. With that quiet fearlessness and determination which had won for him the respect of men who were too

apt to regard piety as synonymous with effeminacy, he attacked Scott in his own house. What he said has not been recorded, but it is to be feared that it was part of his sermon. When he had concluded, Scott looked at him, not unkindly, over the glasses of his bar, and said, less irreverently than the words might convey: "Young man, I rather like your style; but when you know York and me as well as you do God Almighty, it'll be time to talk."

And so the feud progressed; and so, as in more illustrious examples, the private and personal enmity of two representative men led gradually to the evolution of some crude, half-expressed principle or belief. It was not long before it was made evident that those beliefs were identical with certain broad principles laid down by the founders of the American Constitution, as expounded by the statesmanlike A; or were the fatal quicksands on which the ship of state might be wrecked, warningly pointed out by the eloquent B. The practical result of all which was the nomination of York and Scott to represent the opposite factions of Sandy Bar in legislative councils.

For some weeks past the voters of Sandy Bar and the adjacent camps had been called upon in large type to "RALLY!" In vain the great pines at the cross-roads—whose trunks were compelled to bear this and other legends—moaned and protested from their windy watch-towers.

But one day, with fife and drum, and flaming transparency, a procession filed into the triangular grove at the head of the gulch. The meeting was called to order by Colonel Starbottle, who, having once enjoyed legislative functions, and being vaguely known as a "war-horse," was considered to be a valuable partisan of York. He concluded an appeal for his friend with an enunciation of principle, inter-

spersed with one or two anecdotes so gratuitously coarse that the very pines might have been moved to pelt him with their cast-off cones as he stood there. But he created a laugh on which his candidate rode into popular notice ; and when York rose to speak he was greeted with cheers. But, to the general astonishment, the new speaker at once launched into bitter denunciation of his rival. He not only dwelt upon Scott's deeds and examples, as known to Sandy Bar, but spoke of facts connected with his previous career hitherto unknown to his auditors. To great precision of epithet and directness of statement, the speaker added the fascination of revelation and exposure. The crowd cheered, yelled, and were delighted ; but when this astounding philippic was concluded there was a unanimous call for " Scott ! " Colonel Starbottle would have resisted this manifest impropriety, but in vain. Partly from a crude sense of justice, partly from a meaner craving for excitement, the assemblage was inflexible ; and Scott was dragged, pushed, and pulled upon the platform.

As his frowsy head and unkempt beard appeared above the railing, it was evident that he was drunk. But it was also evident, before he opened his lips, that the orator of Sandy Bar—the one man who could touch their vagabond sympathies (perhaps because he was not above appealing to them)—stood before them. A consciousness of this power lent a certain dignity to his figure, and I am not sure but that his very physical condition impressed them as a kind of regal unbending and large condescension. Howbeit, when this unexpected Hector arose from the ditch, York's myrmidons trembled.

" There's nought, gentlemen," said Scott, leaning forward on the railing—" there's nought as that man hez said as isn't true. I was run outer Cairo ; I

did belong to the Regulators; I did desert from the army; I did leave a wife in Kansas. But thar's one thing he didn't charge me with, and, maybe, he's forgotten. For three years, gentlemen, I was that man's pardner!——" Whether he intended to say more, I cannot tell; a burst of applause artistically rounded and enforced the climax, and virtually elected the speaker. That Fall he went to Sacramento; York went abroad, and for the first time in many years, distance and a new atmosphere isolated the old antagonists.

With little change in the green wood, grey rock, and yellow river, but with much shifting of human landmarks, and new faces in its habitations, three years passed over Sandy Bar. The two men, once so identified with its character, seemed to have been quite forgotten. "You will never return to Sandy Bar," said Miss Folinsbee, the "Lily of Poverty Flat," on meeting York in Paris—"for Sandy Bar is no more. They call it Riverside now; and the new town is built higher up on the river-bank. By-the-by, 'Jo' says that Scott has won his suit about the 'Amity Claim,' and that he lives in the old cabin, and is drunk half his time. Oh, I beg your pardon," added the lively lady, as a flush crossed York's sallow cheek; "but, bless me! I really thought that old grudge was made up. I'm sure it ought to be."

It was three months after this conversation, and a pleasant summer evening, that the Poverty Flat coach drew up before the veranda of the Union Hotel at Sandy Bar. Among its passengers was one, apparently a stranger, in the local distinction of well-fitting clothes and closely shaven face, who demanded a private room, and retired early to rest. But before sunrise next morning he arose, and drawing some clothes from his carpet-bag, proceeded

to array himself in a pair of white duck trousers, a white duck overshirt, and straw hat. When his toilet was completed, he tied a red bandanna handkerchief in a loop, and threw it loosely over his shoulders. The transformation was complete: as he crept softly down the stairs and stepped into the road, no one would have detected in him the elegant stranger of the previous night, and but few have recognised the face and figure of Henry York, of Sandy Bar.

In the uncertain light of that early hour, and in the change that had come over the settlement, he had to pause for a moment to recall where he stood. The Sandy Bar of his recollections lay below him, nearer the river; the buildings around him were of later date and newer fashion. As he strode toward the river, he noticed here a schoolhouse and there a church. A little farther on, "The Sunny South" came in view—transformed into a restaurant—its gilding faded and its paint rubbed off. He now knew where he was; and running briskly down a declivity, crossed a ditch, and stood upon the lower boundary of the Amity Claim.

The grey mist was rising slowly from the river, clinging to the tree-tops, and drifting up the mountain-side, until it was caught among those rocky altars, and held a sacrifice to the ascending sun. At his feet the earth, cruelly gashed and scarred by his forgotten engines, had, since the old days, put on a show of greenness here and there, and now smiled forgivingly up at him, as if things were not so bad, after all. A few birds were bathing in the ditch with a pleasant suggestion of its being a new and special provision of Nature, and a hare ran into an inverted sluice-box as he approached, as if it were put there for that purpose.

He had not yet dared to look in a certain direction.

But the sun was now high enough to paint the little eminence on which the cabin stood. In spite of his self-control, his heart beat faster as he raised his eyes towards it. Its window and door were closed, no smoke came from its adobe chimney, but it was else unchanged. When within a few yards of it, he picked up a broken shovel, and shouldering it, with a smile, strode toward the door and knocked. There was no sound from within. The smile died upon his lips as he nervously pushed the door open.

A figure started up angrily and came toward him : a figure whose bloodshot eyes suddenly fixed into a vacant stare, whose arms were at first outstretched, and then thrown up in warning gesticulation : a figure that suddenly gasped, choked, and then fell forward in a fit.

But before he touched the ground, York had him out into the open air and sunshine. In the struggle, both fell and rolled over on the ground. But the next moment York was sitting up, holding the convulsed frame of his former partner on his knee, and wiping the foam from his inarticulate lips. Gradually the tremor became less frequent, and then ceased ; and the strong man lay unconscious in his arms.

For some moments York held him quietly thus, looking in his face. Afar, the stroke of a woodman's axe—a mere phantom of sound—was all that broke the stillness. High up the mountain, a wheeling hawk hung breathlessly above them. And then came voices, and two men joined them. "A fight ?" No, a fit ; and would they help him bring the sick man to the hotel ?

And there, for a week, the stricken partner lay, unconscious of aught but the visions wrought by disease and fear. On the eighth day, at sunrise, he rallied, and opening his eyes, looked upon York, and pressed his hand ; then he spoke—

" And it's you. I thought it was only whisky."

York replied by taking both of his hands, boyishly working them backward and forward, as his elbow rested on the bed, with a pleasant smile.

" And you've been abroad. How did you like Paris ? "

" So, so. How did *you* like Sacramento ? "

" Bully."

And that was all they could think to say. Presently Scott opened his eyes again—

" I'm mighty weak."

" You'll get better soon."

" Not much."

A long silence followed, in which they could hear the sounds of wood-chopping, and that Sandy Bar was already astir for the coming day. Then Scott slowly and with difficulty turned his face to York, and said—

" I might hev killed you once."

" I wish you had."

They pressed each other's hands again, but Scott's grasp was evidently failing. He seemed to summon his energies for a special effort.

" Old man ! "

" Old chap."

" Closer ! "

York bent his head toward the slowly fading face.

" Do ye mind that morning ? "

" Yes."

A gleam of fun slid into the corner of Scott's blue eye as he whispered—

" Old man, thar *was* too much saleratus in that bread."

It is said that these were his last words. For when the sun which had so often gone down upon the idle wrath of these foolish men looked again upon them reunited, it saw the hand of Scott fall cold and

irresponsive from the yearning clasp of his former partner, and it knew that the feud of Sandy Bar was at an end.

HOW SANTA CLAUS CAME TO SIMPSON'S BAR

IT had been raining in the valley of the Sacramento. The North Fork had overflowed its banks, and Rattlesnake Creek was impassable. The few boulders that had marked the summer ford at Simpson's Crossing were obliterated by a vast sheet of water stretching to the foothills. The up stage was stopped at Grangers; the last mail had been abandoned in the *tules*, the rider swimming for his life. "An area," remarked the *Sierra Avalanche*, with pensive local pride, "as large as the State of Massachusetts is now under water."

Nor was the weather any better in the foothills. The mud lay deep on the mountain road; waggons that neither physical force nor moral objurgation could move from the evil ways into which they had fallen, encumbered the track, and the way to Simpson's Bar was indicated by broken-down teams and hard swearing. And farther on, cut off and inaccessible, rained upon and bedraggled, smitten by high winds and threatened by high water, Simpson's Bar, on the eve of Christmas Day, 1862, clung like a swallow's nest to the rocky entablature and splintered capitals of Table Mountain and shook in the blast.

As night shut down on the settlement a few lights gleamed through the mist from the windows of cabins on either side of the highway now crossed and gullied by lawless streams and swept by

marauding winds. Happily most of the population were gathered at Thompson's store, clustered around a red-hot stove, at which they silently spat in some accepted sense of social communion that perhaps rendered conversation unnecessary. Indeed, most methods of diversion had long since been exhausted on Simpson's Bar ; high water had suspended the regular occupations on gulch and on river, and a consequent lack of money and whisky had taken the zest from most illegitimate recreations. Even Mr Hamlin was fain to leave the Bar with fifty dollars in his pocket—the only amount actually realised of the large sums won by him in the successful exercise of his arduous profession. " Ef I was asked," he remarked somewhat later, " ef I was asked to pint out a purty little village where a retired sport as didn't care for money could exercise hisself frequent and lively, I'd say Simpson's Bar ; but for a young man with a large family depending on his exertions, it don't pay." As Mr Hamlin's family consisted mainly of female adults, this remark is quoted rather to show the breadth of his humour than the exact extent of his responsibilities.

Howbeit, the unconscious objects of this satire sat that evening in the listless apathy begotten of idleness and lack of excitement. Even the sudden splashing of hoofs before the door did not arouse them. Dick Bullen alone paused in the act of scraping out his pipe, and lifted his head, but no other one of the group indicated any interest in, or recognition of, the man who entered.

It was a figure familiar enough to the company, and known in Simpson's Bar as " The Old Man." A man of perhaps fifty years ; grizzled and scant of hair, but still fresh and youthful of complexion. A face full of ready, but not very powerful sympathy, with a chameleon-like aptitude for taking on the

shade and colour of contiguous moods and feelings. He had evidently just left some hilarious companions and did not at first notice the gravity of the group, but clapped the shoulder of the nearest man jocularly, and threw himself into a vacant chair.

"Jest heard the best thing out, boys! Ye know Smiley, over yar—Jim Smiley—funniest man in the Bar? Well, Jim was jest telling the richest yarn about——"

"Smiley's a fool," interrupted a gloomy voice.

"A particular skunk," added another in sepulchral accents.

A silence followed these positive statements. The Old Man glanced quickly around the group. Then his face slowly changed.

"That's so," he said, reflectively, after a pause; "certainly a sort of a skunk and suthin of a fool. In course." He was silent for a moment as in painful contemplation of the unsavouriness and folly of the unpopular Smiley. "Dismal weather, ain't it?" he added, now fully embarked on the current of prevailing sentiment. "Mighty rough papers on the boys, and no show for money this season. And to-morrow's Christmas."

There was a movement among the men at this announcement, but whether of satisfaction or disgust was not plain.

"Yes," continued the Old Man in the lugubrious tone he had within the last few moments unconsciously adopted, "yes, Christmas, and to-night's Christmas Eve. Ye see, boys, I kinder thought—that is, I sorter had an idee, jest passin' like, you know—that maybe ye'd all like to come over to my house to-night and have a sort of tear round. But I suppose, now, you wouldn't? Don't feel like it, maybe?" he added with anxious sympathy, peering into the faces of his companions.

"Well, I don't know," responded Tom Flynn with some cheerfulness. "P'r'aps we may. But how about your wife, Old Man? What does *she* say to it?"

The Old Man hesitated. His conjugal experience had not been a happy one, and the fact was known to Simpson's Bar. His first wife, a delicate, pretty little woman, had left a boy of three years to comfort her bereaved husband. The Old Man's present wife had been his cook. She was large, loyal, and aggressive.

Before he could reply, Joe Dimmick suggested with great directness that it was the "Old Man's house," and that, invoking the Divine Power, if the case were his own, he would invite whom he pleased, even if in so doing he imperilled his salvation. The Powers of Evil, he further remarked, should contend against him vainly. All this delivered with a terseness and vigour lost in this necessary translation.

"In course. Certainly. Thet's it," said the Old Man, with a sympathetic frown. "Thar's no trouble about *thet*. It's my own house, built every stick on it myself. Don't you be afeard o' her, boys. She *may* cut up a trifle rough—ez wimmin do—but she'll come round." Secretly the Old Man trusted to the exaltation of liquor and the power of courageous example to sustain him in such an emergency.

As yet, Dick Bullen, the oracle and leader of Simpson's Bar, had not spoken. He now took his pipe from his lips. "Old Man, how's that yer Johnny gettin' on? Seems to me he didn't look so peart last time I seed him on the bluff heavin' rocks at Chinamen. Didn't seem to take much interest in it. Thar was a gang of 'em by yar yesterday—drownded out up the river—and I kinder thought

o' Johnny, and how he'd miss 'em ! Maybe now, we'd be in the way ef he wus sick ? "

The father, evidently touched not only by this pathetic picture of Johnny's deprivation, but by the considerate delicacy of the speaker, hastened to assure him that Johnny was better, and that a " little fun might 'liven him up." Whereupon Dick arose, shook himself, and saying, " I'm ready ; lead the way, Old Man ; here goes," himself led the way with a leap, a characteristic howl, and darted out into the night. As he passed through the outer room he caught up a blazing brand from the hearth. The action was repeated by the rest of the party, closely following and elbowing each other, and before the astonished proprietor of Thompson's grocery was aware of the intention of his guests, the room was deserted.

The night was pitchy dark. In the first gust of wind their temporary torches were extinguished, and only the red brands dancing and flitting in the gloom like drunken will-o'-the-wisps indicated their whereabouts. Their way led up Pine-Tree Cañon, at the head of which a broad, low, bark-thatched cabin burrowed in the mountain-side. It was the home of the Old Man, and the entrance to the tunnel in which he worked when he worked at all. Here the crowd paused for a moment, out of delicate deference to their host, who came up panting in the rear.

" P'r'aps ye'd better hold on a second out yer, whilst I go in and see thet things is all right," said the Old Man, with an indifference he was far from feeling. The suggestion was graciously accepted, the door opened and closed on the host, and the crowd, leaning their backs against the wall and cowering under the eaves, waited and listened.

For a few moments there was no sound but the

dripping of water from the eaves, and the stir and rustle of wrestling boughs above them. Then the men became uneasy, and whispered suggestion and suspicion passed from the one to the other.

"Reckon's she's caved in his head the first lick!"

"Decoyed him inter the tunnel and barred him up, likely."

"Got him down and sittin' on him."

"Prob'ly bilin' suthin' to heave on us: stand clear the door, boys!"

For just then the latch clicked, the door slowly opened, and a voice said, "Come in out o' the wet."

The voice was neither that of the Old Man nor of his wife. It was the voice of a small boy, its weak treble broken by that preternatural hoarseness which only vagabondage and the habit of premature self-assertion can give. It was the face of a small boy that looked up at theirs—a face that might have been pretty and even refined but that it was darkened by evil knowledge from within, and dirt and hard experience from without. He had a blanket around his shoulders, and had evidently just risen from his bed. "Come in," he repeated, "and don't make no noise. The Old Man's in there talking to mar," he continued, pointing to an adjacent room which seemed to be a kitchen, from which the Old Man's voice came in deprecating accents. "Let me be," he added, querulously, to Dick Bullen, who had caught him up, blanket and all, and was affecting to toss him into the fire, "let go o' me, you old fool, d'ye hear?"

Thus adjured, Dick Bullen lowered Johnny to the ground with a smothered laugh, while the men, entering quietly, ranged themselves around a long table of rough boards which occupied the centre of the room. Johnny then gravely proceeded to a cupboard and brought several articles, which he

deposited on the table. "Thar's whisky, and crackers, and red herons, and cheese." He took a bite of the latter on his way to the table. "And sugar." He scooped up a mouthful *en route* with a small and very dirty hand. "And terbacker. Thar's dried appils too on the shelf, but I don't admire 'em; appils is swellin'. Thar," he continued, "now wade in, and don't be afeard. *I* don't mind the old woman. She don't b'long to *me*. S'long."

He had stepped to the threshold of a small room, scarcely larger than a closet, partitioned off from the main apartment, and holding in its dim recess a small bed. He stood there a moment looking at the company, his bare feet peeping from the blanket, and nodded.

"Hello, Johnny! You ain't going to turn in agin, are ye?" said Dick.

"Yes, I are," responded Johnny, decidedly.

"Why, wot's up, old fellow?"

"I'm sick."

"How sick?"

"I've got a fevier; and childblains; and roomatiz," returned Johnny, and vanished within. After a moment's pause, he added in the dark, apparently from under the bedclothes—"And biles!"

There was an embarrassing silence. The men looked at each other and at the fire. Even with the appetising banquet before them, it seemed as if they might again fall into the despondency of Thompson's grocery, when the voice of the Old Man, incautiously lifted, came deprecatingly from the kitchen.

"Certainly! Thet's so. In course they is. A gang o' lazy, drunken loafers, and that ar Dick Bullen's the ornariest of all. Didn't heve no more *sabe* than to come round yar with sickness in the house and

no provision. Thet's what I said : ' Bullen,' sez I, ' it's crazy drunk you are, or a fool,' sez I, ' to think o' such a thing. Staples,' I sez, ' be you a man, Staples, and 'spect to raise h—ll under my roof and invalids lyin' 'round ? ' But they would come, they would. Thet's what you must 'spect o' such trash as lays round the Bar."

A burst of laughter from the men followed this unfortunate exposure. Whether it was overheard in the kitchen, or whether the Old Man's irate companion had just then exhausted all other modes of expressing her contemptuous indignation, I cannot say, but a back door was suddenly slammed with great violence. A moment later and the Old Man reappeared, haply unconscious of the cause of the late hilarious outburst, and smiled blandly.

" The old woman thought she'd just run over to Mrs McFadden's for a sociable call," he explained, with jaunty indifference, as he took a seat at the board.

Oddly enough, it needed this untoward incident to relieve the embarrassment that was beginning to be felt by the party, and their natural audacity returned with their host. I do not propose to record the convivialities of that evening. The inquisitive reader will accept the statement that the conversation was characterised by the same intellectual exaltation, the same cautious reverence, the same fastidious delicacy, the same rhetorical precision, and the same logical and coherent discourse somewhat later in the evening, which distinguish similar gatherings of the masculine sex in more civilised localities and under more favourable auspices. No glasses were broken, in the absence of any ; no liquor was uselessly spilt on floor or table in the scarcity of that article.

It was nearly midnight when the festivities were

interrupted. "Hush," said Dick Bullen, holding up his hand. It was the querulous voice of Johnny from his adjacent closet: "Oh, dad!"

The Old Man arose hurriedly and disappeared in the closet. Presently he reappeared. "His rheumatiz is coming on agin bad," he explained, "and he wants rubbin'." He lifted the demijohn of whisky from the table and shook it. It was empty. Dick Bullen put down his tin cup with an embarrassed laugh. So did the others. The Old Man examined their contents, and said, hopefully, "I reckon that's enough; he don't need much. You hold on all o' you for a spell, and I'll be back"; and vanished in the closet with an old flannel shirt and the whisky. The door closed but imperfectly, and the following dialogue was distinctly audible:—

"Now, sonny, whar does she ache worst?"

"Sometimes over yar and sometimes under yer; but it's most powerful from yer to yer. Rub yer, dad."

A silence seemed to indicate a brisk rubbing. Then Johnny:

"Hevin' a good time out yer, dad?"

"Yes, sonny."

"To-morrer's Chrismiss, ain't it?"

"Yes, sonny. How does she feel now?"

"Better. Rub a little furder down. Wot's Chrismiss anyway? Wot's it all about?"

"Oh, it's a day."

This exhaustive definition was apparently satisfactory, for there was a silent interval of rubbing. Presently Johnny again:

"Mar sez that everywhere else but yer everybody gives things to everybody Chrismiss, and then she jist waded inter you. She sez thar's a man they call Sandy Claws, not a white man, you know, but a kind o' Chinemin, comes down the chimbley night

afore Chrismiss and gives things to chillern—boys like me. Puts 'em in their butes! Thet's what she tried to play upon me. Easy now, pop, whar are you rubbin' to—thet's a mile from the place. She jest made that up, didn't she, jest to aggrawate me and you? Don't rub thar. . . . Why, dad!"

In the great quiet that seemed to have fallen upon the house the sigh of the near pines and the drip of leaves without was very distinct. Johnny's voice, too, was lowered as he went on, "Don't you take on now, fur I'm gettin' all right fast. Wot's the boys doin' out thar?"

The Old Man partly opened the door and peered through. His guests were sitting there sociably enough, and there were a few silver coins and a lean buckskin purse on the table. "Bettin' on suthin—some little game or 'nother. They're all right," he replied to Johnny, and recommenced his rubbing.

"I'd like to take a hand and win some money," said Johnny, reflectively, after a pause.

The Old Man glibly repeated what was evidently a familiar formula, that if Johnny would wait until he struck it rich in the tunnel, he'd have lots of money, etc., etc.

"Yes," said Johnny, "but you don't. And whether you strike it and I win it, it's about the same. It's all luck. But it's mighty cur'o's about Chrismiss — ain't it? Why do they call it Chrismiss?"

Perhaps for some instinctive deference to the overhearing of his guests, or from some vague sense of incongruity, the Old Man's reply was so low as to be inaudible beyond the room.

"Yes," said Johnny, with some slight abatement of interest, "I've heerd o' *him* before. Thar, that'll do, dad. I don't ache near so bad as I did. Now wrap me tight in this yer blanket. So. Now," he

added, in a muffled whisper, " sit down yer by me till I go asleep." To assure himself of obedience, he disengaged one hand from the blanket and, grasping his father's sleeve, again composed himself to rest.

For some moments the Old Man waited patiently. Then the unwonted stillness of the house excited his curiosity, and without moving from the bed, he cautiously opened the door with his disengaged hand, and looked into the main room. To his infinite surprise it was dark and deserted. But even then a smouldering log on the hearth broke, and by the upspringing blaze he saw the figure of Dick Bullen sitting by the dying embers.

" Hello ! "

Dick started, rose, and came somewhat unsteadily towards him.

" Whar's the boys ? " said the Old Man.

" Gone up the cañon on a little *pasear*. They're coming back for me in a minit. I'm waitin' round for 'em. What are you starin' at, Old Man ? " he added, with a forced laugh ; " do you think I'm drunk ? "

The Old Man might have been pardoned the supposition, for Dick's eyes were humid, and his face flushed. He loitered and lounged back to the chimney, yawned, shook himself, buttoned up his coat and laughed. " Liquor ain't so plenty as that, Old Man. Now don't you git up," he continued, as the Old Man made a movement to release his sleeve from Johnny's hand. " Don't you mind manners. Sit jest whar you be ! I'm goin' in a jiffy. Thar, that's them now."

There was a low tap at the door. Dick Bullen opened it quickly, nodded " Good-night " to his host, and disappeared. The Old Man would have followed him but for the hand that still unconsciously

grasped his sleeve. He could have easily disengaged it ; it was small, weak, and emaciated. But perhaps because it *was* small, weak, and emaciated, he changed his mind, and, drawing his chair closer to the bed, rested his head upon it. In this defenceless attitude the potency of his earlier potations surprised him. The room flickered and faded before his eyes, reappeared, faded again, went out, and left him—asleep.

Meantime Dick Bullen, closing the door, confronted his companions. "Are you ready?" said Staples. "Ready," said Dick ; "what's the time?" "Past twelve," was the reply ; "can you make it?—it's nigh on fifty miles, the round trip hither and yon." "I reckon," returned Dick, shortly. "Whar's the mare?" "Bill and Jack's holdin' her at the crossin'." "Let 'em hold on a minit longer," said Dick.

He turned and re-entered the house softly. By the light of the guttering candle and dying fire he saw that the door of the little room was open. He stepped towards it on tiptoe and looked in. The Old Man had fallen back in his chair, snoring, his helpless feet thrust out in a line with his collapsed shoulders, and his hat pulled over his eyes. Beside him, on a narrow wooden bedstead, lay Johnny, muffled tightly in a blanket that hid all save a strip of forehead, and a few curls, damp with perspiration. Dick Bullen made a step forward, hesitated, and glanced over his shoulder into the deserted room. Everything was quiet. With a sudden resolution he parted his huge moustache with both hands, and stooped over the sleeping boy. But even as he did so a mischievous blast, lying in wait, swooped down the chimney, rekindled the hearth, and lit up the room with a shameless glow from which Dick fled in bashful terror.

His companions were already waiting for him at the crossing. Two of them were struggling in the darkness with some strange misshapen bulk, which as Dick came nearer took the semblance of a great yellow horse.

It was the mare. She was not a pretty picture. From her Roman nose to her rising haunches, from her arched spine hidden by the stiff *machillas* of a Mexican saddle, to her thick, straight, bony legs, there was not a line of equine grace. In her half-blind but wholly vicious white eyes, in her protruding under lip, in her monstrous colour, there was nothing but ugliness and vice.

"Now then," said Staples, "stand cl'ar of her heels, boys, and up with you. Don't miss your first hold of her mane, and mind ye get your off stirrup *quick*. Ready!"

There was a leap, a scrambling struggle, a bound, a wild retreat of the crowd, a circle of flying hoofs, two springless leaps that jarred the earth, a rapid play and jingle of spurs, a plunge, and then the voice of Dick somewhere in the darkness, "All right!"

"Don't take the lower road back onless you're hard pushed for time! Don't hold her in the down hill! We'll be at the ford at five. G'lang! Hoopa! Mula! GO!"

A splash, a spark struck from the ledge in the road, a clatter in the rock cut beyond, and Dick was gone.

* * * * *

Sing, O Muse, the ride of Richard Bullen! Sing, O Muse, of chivalrous men! the sacred quest, the doughty deeds, the battery of low churls, the fearsome ride and gruesome perils of the Flower of Simpson's Bar! Alack! she is dainty, this Muse! She will have none of this bucking brute and swaggering, ragged rider, and I must fain follow him in prose, afoot!

It was one o'clock, and yet he had only gained Rattlesnake Hill. For in that time Jovita had rehearsed to him all her imperfections and practised all her vices. Thrice had she stumbled. Twice had she thrown up her Roman nose in a straight line with the reins, and, resisting bit and spur, struck out madly across country. Twice had she reared, and, rearing, fallen backward; and twice had the agile Dick, unharmed, regained his seat before she found her vicious legs again. And a mile beyond them, at the foot of a long hill, was Rattlesnake Creek. Dick knew that here was the crucial test of his ability to perform his enterprise, set his teeth grimly, put his knees well into her flanks, and changed his defensive tactics to brisk aggression. Bullied and maddened, Jovita began the descent of the hill. Here the artful Richard pretended to hold her in with ostentatious objurgation and well-feigned cries of alarm. It is unnecessary to add that Jovita instantly ran away. Nor need I state the time made in the descent; it is written in the chronicles of Simpson's Bar. Enough that in another moment, as it seemed to Dick, she was splashing on the overflowed banks of Rattlesnake Creek. As Dick expected, the momentum she had acquired carried her beyond the point of balking, and, holding her well together for a mighty leap, they dashed into the middle of the swiftly flowing current. A few moments of kicking, wading, and swimming, and Dick drew a long breath on the opposite bank.

The road from Rattlesnake Creek to Red Mountain was tolerably level. Either the plunge in Rattlesnake Creek had dampened her baleful fire, or the art which led to it had shown her the superior wickedness of her rider, for Jovita no longer wasted her surplus energy in wanton conceits. Once she bucked, but it was from force of habit; once she

shied, but it was from a new freshly-painted meeting-house at the crossing of the country road. Hollows, ditches, gravelly deposits, patches of freshly springing grasses, flew from beneath her rattling hoofs. She began to smell unpleasantly, once or twice she coughed slightly, but there was no abatement of her strength or speed. By two o'clock he had passed Red Mountain and begun the descent to the plain. Ten minutes later the driver of the fast Pioneer coach was overtaken and passed by a "man on a Pinto hoss"—an event sufficiently notable for remark. At half-past two Dick rose in his stirrups with a great shout. Stars were glittering through the rifted clouds, and beyond him, out of the plain, rose two spires, a flagstaff, and straggling line of black objects. Dick jingled his spurs and swung his *riata*, Jovita bounded forward, and in another moment they swept into Tuttleville and drew up before the wooden piazza of "The Hotel of All Nations."

What transpired that night at Tuttleville is not strictly a part of this record. Briefly I may state, however, that, after Jovita had been handed over to a sleepy ostler whom she at once kicked into unpleasant consciousness, Dick sallied out with the bar-keeper for a tour of the sleeping town. Lights still gleamed from a few saloons and gambling-houses; but, avoiding these, they stopped before several closed shops, and by persistent tapping and judicious outcry roused the proprietors from their beds, and made them unbar the doors of their magazines and expose their wares. Sometimes they were met by curses, but oftener by interest and some concern in their needs, and the interview was invariably concluded by a drink. It was three o'clock before this pleasantry was given over, and, with a small waterproof bag of india-rubber strapped

on his shoulders, Dick returned to the hotel. But here he was waylaid by Beauty—Beauty opulent in charms, affluent in dress, persuasive in speech, and Spanish in accent! In vain she repeated the invitation in "Excelsior," happily scorned by all Alpine climbing youth, and rejected by this child of the Sierras—a rejection softened in this instance by a laugh and his last gold coin. And then he sprang to the saddle and dashed down the lonely street and out into the lonelier plain, where presently the lights, the black line of houses, the spires, and the flagstaff sank into the earth behind him again and were lost in the distance.

The storm had cleared away, the air was brisk and cold, the outlines of adjacent landmarks were distinct, but it was half-past four before Dick reached the meeting-house and the crossing of the country road. To avoid the rising grade he had taken a longer and more circuitous road, in whose viscid mud Jovita sank fetlock deep at every bound. It was a poor preparation for a steady ascent of five miles more; but Jovita, gathering her legs under her, took it with her usual blind, unreasoning fury, and a half-hour later reached the long level that led to Rattlesnake Creek. Another half-hour would bring him to the creek. He threw the reins lightly upon the neck of the mare, chirruped to her, and began to sing.

Suddenly Jovita shied with a bound that would have unseated a less practised rider. Hanging to her rein was a figure that had leaped from the bank, and at the same time from the road before her arose a shadowy horse and rider. "Throw up your hands," commanded this second apparition, with an oath.

Dick felt the mare tremble, quiver, and apparently sink under him. He knew what it meant, and was prepared.

"Stand aside, Jack Simpson; I know you, you thief. Let me pass or——"

He did not finish the sentence. Jovita rose straight in the air with a terrific bound, throwing the figure from her bit with a single shake of her vicious head, and charged with deadly malevolence down on the impediment before her. An oath, a pistol-shot, horse and highwayman rolled over in the road, and the next moment Jovita was a hundred yards away. But the good right arm of her rider, shattered by a bullet, dropped helplessly by his side.

Without slacking his speed he shifted the reins to his left hand. But a few moments later he was obliged to halt and tighten the saddle-girths that had slipped in the onset. This in his crippled condition took some time. He had no fear of pursuit, but looking up he saw that the eastern stars were already paling, and that the distant peaks had lost their ghostly whiteness, and now stood out blackly against a lighter sky. Day was upon him. Then, completely absorbed in a single idea, he forgot the pain of his wound, and mounting again dashed on towards Rattlesnake Creek. But now Jovita's breath came broken by gasps, Dick reeled in his saddle, and brighter and brighter grew the sky.

Ride, Richard; run, Jovita; linger, O day!

For the last few rods there was a roaring in his ears. Was it exhaustion from loss of blood, or what? He was dazed and giddy as he swept down the hill, and did not recognise his surroundings. Had he taken the wrong roads or was this Rattlesnake Creek?

It was. But the brawling creek he had swum a few hours before had risen, more than double its volume, and now rolled a swift and resistless river between him and Rattlesnake Hill. For the first time that night Richard's heart sank within him.

The river, the mountain, the quickening east, swam before his eyes. He shut them to recover his self-control. In that brief interval, by some fantastic mental process, the little room at Simpson's Bar and the figures of the sleeping father and son rose upon him. He opened his eyes wildly, cast off his coat, pistol, boots, and saddle, bound his precious pack tightly to his shoulders, grasped the bare flanks of Jovita with his bared knees, and with a shout dashed into the yellow water. A cry rose from the opposite bank as the head of a man and horse struggled for a few moments against the battling current, and then were swept away amidst uprooted trees and whirling drift-wood.

* * * * *

The Old Man started and woke. The fire on the hearth was dead, the candle in the outer room flickering in its socket, and somebody was rapping at the door. He opened it, but fell back with a cry before the dripping, half-naked figure that reeled against the door-post.

"Dick?"

"Hush! Is he awake yet?"

"No—but, Dick——"

"Dry up, you old fool! Get me some whisky, *quick!*" The Old Man flew and returned with—an empty bottle! Dick would have sworn, but his strength was not equal to the occasion. He staggered, caught at the handle of the door, and motioned to the Old Man.

"Thar's suthin' in my pack yer for Johnny. Take it off. I can't."

The Old Man unstrapped the pack and laid it before the exhausted man.

"Open it, quick!"

He did so with trembling fingers. It contained only a few poor toys—cheap and barbaric enough,

goodness knows, but bright with paint and tinsel. One of them was broken ; another, I fear, was irretrievably ruined by water ; and on the third—ah me ! there was a cruel spot.

" It don't look like much, that's a fact," said Dick, ruefully. " But it's the best we could do. . . . Take 'em, Old Man, and put 'em in his stocking, and tell him—tell him, you know—hold me, Old Man——" The Old Man caught at his sinking figure. " Tell him," said Dick, with a weak little laugh—" tell him Sandy Claus has come."

And even so, bedraggled, ragged, unshaven, and unshorn, with one arm hanging helplessly at his side, Santa Claus came to Simpson's Bar and fell fainting on the first threshold. The Christmas dawn came slowly after, touching the remoter peaks with the rosy warmth of ineffable love. And it looked so tenderly on Simpson's Bar that the whole mountain, as if caught in a generous action, blushed to the skies.

THE OUTCASTS OF POKER FLAT

As Mr John Oakhurst, gambler, stepped into the main street of Poker Flat on the morning of the twenty-third of November, 1850, he was conscious of a change in its moral atmosphere since the preceding night. Two or three men, conversing earnestly together, ceased as he approached, and exchanged significant glances. There was a Sabbath lull in the air, which, in a settlement unused to Sabbath influences, looked ominous.

Mr Oakhurst's calm, handsome face betrayed small concern in these indications. Whether he

was conscious of any predisposing cause was another question. " I reckon they're after somebody," he reflected ; " likely it's me." He returned to his pocket the handkerchief with which he had been whipping away the red dust of Poker Flat from his neat boots, and quietly discharged his mind of any further conjecture.

In point of fact, Poker Flat was " after somebody." It had lately suffered the loss of several thousand dollars, two valuable horses, and a prominent citizen. It was experiencing a spasm of virtuous reaction, quite as lawless and ungovernable as any of the acts that had provoked it. A secret committee had determined to rid the town of all improper persons. This was done permanently in regard of two men who were then hanging from the boughs of a sycamore in the gulch, and temporarily in the banishment of certain other objectionable characters. I regret to say that some of these were ladies. It is but due to the sex, however, to state that it was only in easily established standards of evil that Poker Flat ventured to sit in judgment.

Mr Oakhurst was right in supposing that he was included in this category. A few of the committee had urged hanging him as a possible example, and a sure method of reimbursing themselves from his pockets of the sums he had won from them. " It's agin justice," said Jim Wheeler, " to let this yer young man from Roaring Camp—an entire stranger —carry away our money." But a crude sentiment of equity residing in the breasts of those who had been fortunate enough to win from Mr Oakhurst overruled this narrower local prejudice.

Mr Oakhurst received his sentence with philosophic calmness, none the less coolly that he was aware of the hesitation of his judges. He was too much of a gambler not to accept Fate. With him, life was at

best an uncertain game, and he recognised the usual percentage in favour of the dealer.

A body of armed men accompanied the deported wickedness of Poker Flat to the outskirts of the settlement. Besides Mr Oakhurst, who was known to be a coolly desperate man, and for whose intimidation the armed escort was intended, the expatriated party consisted of a young woman, familiarly known as " The Duchess " : another, who had won the title of " Mother Shipton " ; and " Uncle Billy," a suspected sluice-robber and confirmed drunkard. The cavalcade provoked no comments from the spectators, nor was any word uttered by the escort. Only when the gulch which marked the uttermost limit of Poker Flat was reached, the leader spoke briefly, and to the point. The exiles were forbidden to return, at the peril of their lives.

As the escort disappeared, their pent-up feelings found vent in a few hysterical tears from the Duchess, some bad language from Mother Shipton, and a Parthian volley of expletives from Uncle Billy. The philosophic Oakhurst alone remained silent. He listened calmly to Mother Shipton's desire to cut somebody's heart out, to the repeated statements of the Duchess that she would die in the road, and to the alarming oaths that seemed to be bumped out of Uncle Billy as he rode forward. With the easy good-humour characteristic of his class, he insisted upon exchanging his own riding-horse, " Five Spot," for the sorry mule which the Duchess rode. But even this act did not draw the party into any closer sympathy. The young woman re-adjusted her somewhat draggled plumes with a feeble, faded coquetry ; Mother Shipton eyed the possessor of " Five Spot " with malevolence ; and Uncle Billy included the whole party in one sweeping anathema.

The road to Sandy Bar—a camp that, not having as yet experienced the regenerating influences of Poker Flat, consequently seemed to offer some invitation to the emigrants—lay over a steep mountain range. It was distant a day's severe travel. In that advanced season, the party soon passed out of the moist, temperate regions of the foot-hills into the dry, cold, bracing air of the Sierras. The trail was narrow and difficult. At noon the Duchess, rolling out of her saddle upon the ground, declared her intention of going no farther, and the party halted.

The spot was singularly wild and impressive. A wooded amphitheatre, surrounded on three sides by precipitous cliffs of naked granite, sloped gently toward the crest of another precipice that overlooked the valley. It was, undoubtedly, the most suitable spot for a camp, had camping been advisable. But Mr Oakhurst knew that scarcely half the journey to Sandy Bar was accomplished, and the party were not equipped or provisioned for delay. This fact he pointed out to his companions curtly, with a philosophic commentary on the folly of " throwing up their hand before the game was played out." But they were furnished with liquor, which in this emergency stood them in place of food, fuel, rest, and prescience. In spite of his remonstrances, it was not long before they were more or less under its influence. Uncle Billy passed rapidly from a bellicose state into one of stupor, the Duchess became maudlin, and Mother Shipton snored. Mr Oakhurst alone remained erect, leaning against a rock, calmly surveying them.

Mr Oakhurst did not drink. It interfered with a profession which required coolness, impassiveness, and presence of mind, and, in his own language, he " couldn't afford it." As he gazed at his recumbent

fellow-exiles, the loneliness begotten of his pariah-trade, his habits of life, his very vices, for the first time seriously oppressed him. He bestirred himself in dusting his black clothes, washing his hands and face, and other acts characteristic of his studiously neat habits, and for a moment forgot his annoyance. The thought of deserting his weaker and more pitiable companions never perhaps occurred to him. Yet he could not help feeling the want of that excitement which, singularly enough, was most conducive to that calm equanimity for which he was notorious. He looked at the gloomy walls that rose a thousand feet sheer above the circling pines around him ; at the sky, ominously clouded ; at the valley below, already deepening into shadow. And, doing so, suddenly he heard his own name called.

A horseman slowly ascended the trail. In the fresh, open face of the new-comer Mr Oakhurst recognised Tom Simson, otherwise known as " The Innocent " of Sandy Bar. He had met him some months before over a " little game," and had, with perfect equanimity, won the entire fortune—amounting to some forty dollars—of that guileless youth. After the game was finished, Mr Oakhurst drew the youthful speculator behind the door, and thus addressed him : " Tommy, you're a good little man, but you can't gamble worth a cent. Don't try it over again." He then handed him his money back, pushed him gently from the room, and so made a devoted slave of Tom Simson.

There was a remembrance of this in his boyish and enthusiastic greeting of Mr Oakhurst. He had started, he said, to go to Poker Flat to seek his fortune. " Alone ? " No, not exactly alone ; in fact (a giggle), he had run away with Piney Woods. Didn't Mr Oakhurst remember Piney ? She that used to wait on the table at the Temperance House ? They

had been engaged a long time, but old Jake Woods had objected ; and so they had run away, and were going to Poker Flat to be married, and here they were. And they were tired out, and how lucky it was they had found a place to camp and company. All this the Innocent delivered rapidly, while Piney, a stout, comely damsel of fifteen, emerged from behind the pine-tree where she had been blushing unseen, and rode to the side of her lover.

Mr Oakhurst seldom troubled himself with sentiment, still less with propriety ; but he had a vague idea that the situation was not fortunate. He retained, however, his presence of mind sufficiently to kick Uncle Billy, who was about to say something, and Uncle Billy was sober enough to recognise in Mr Oakhurst's kick a superior power that would not bear trifling. He then endeavoured to dissuade Tom Simson from delaying further, but in vain. He even pointed out the fact that there was no provision, nor means of making a camp. But, unluckily, the Innocent met this objection by assuring the party that he was provided with an extra mule loaded with provisions, and by the discovery of a rude attempt at a loghouse near the trail. " Piney can stay with Mrs Oakhurst," said the Innocent, pointing to the Duchess, " and I can shift for myself."

Nothing but Mr Oakhurst's admonishing foot saved Uncle Billy from bursting into a roar of laughter. As it was, he felt compelled to retire up the cañon until he could recover his gravity. There he confided the joke to the tall pine-trees, with many slaps of his leg, contortions of his face, and the usual profanity. But when he returned to the party, he found them seated by a fire—for the air had grown strangely chill and the sky overcast—in apparently amicable conversation. Piney was actually talking in an impulsive, girlish fashion to

the Duchess, who was listening with an interest and animation she had not shown for many days. The Innocent was holding forth, apparently with equal effect, to Mr Oakhurst and Mother Shipton, who was actually relaxing into amiability. "Is this yer a picnic?" said Uncle Billy, with inward scorn, as he surveyed the sylvan group, the glancing firelight, and the tethered animals in the foreground. Suddenly an idea mingled with the alcoholic fumes that disturbed his brain. It was apparently of a jocular nature, for he felt impelled to slap his leg again and cram his fist into his mouth.

As the shadows crept slowly up the mountain, a slight breeze rocked the tops of the pine-trees, and moaned through their long and gloomy aisles. The ruined cabin, patched and covered with pine-boughs, was set apart for the ladies. As the lovers parted, they unaffectedly exchanged a kiss, so honest and sincere that it might have been heard above the swaying pines. The frail Duchess and the malevolent Mother Shipton were probably too stunned to remark upon this last evidence of simplicity, and so turned without a word to the hut. The fire was replenished, the men lay down before the door, and in a few minutes were asleep.

Mr Oakhurst was a light sleeper. Toward morning he awoke, benumbed and cold. As he stirred the dying fire, the wind, which was now blowing strongly, brought to his cheek that which caused the blood to leave it—snow.

He started to his feet with the intention of awakening the sleepers, for there was no time to lose. But turning to where Uncle Billy had been lying, he found him gone. A suspicion leaped to his brain and a curse to his lips. He ran to the spot where the mules had been tethered; they were no longer there. The tracks were already rapidly disappearing in the snow.

The momentary excitement brought Mr Oakhurst back to the fire with his usual calm. He did not waken the sleepers. The Innocent slumbered peacefully, with a smile on his good-humoured, freckled face ; Piney slept beside her frailer sisters as sweetly as though attended by celestial guardians, and Mr Oakhurst, drawing his blanket over his shoulders, stroked his mustaches and waited for the dawn. It came slowly in a whirling mist of snow-flakes, that dazzled and confused the eye. What could be seen of the landscape appeared magically changed. He looked over the valley, and summed up the present and future in two words—" snowed in ! "

A careful inventory of the provisions, which, fortunately for the party, had been stored within the hut, and so escaped the felonious fingers of Uncle Billy, disclosed the fact that with care and prudence they might last ten days longer. " That is," said Mr Oakhurst, *sotto voce* to the Innocent, " if you're willing to board us. If you ain't—and perhaps you'd better not—you can wait till Uncle Billy gets back with provisions." For some occult reason, Mr Oakhurst could not bring himself to disclose Uncle Billy's rascality, and so offered the hypothesis that he had wandered from the camp, and had accidentally stampeded the animals. He dropped a warning to the Duchess and Mother Shipton, who of course knew the facts of their associate's defection. " They'll find out the truth about us *all* when they find out anything," he added, significantly, " and there's no good frightening them now."

Tom Simson not only put all his worldly store at the disposal of Mr Oakhurst, but seemed to enjoy the prospect of their enforced seclusion. " We'll have a good camp for a week, and then the snow'll melt, and we'll all go back together." The cheerful gaiety of the young man and Mr Oakhurst's calm

infected the others. The Innocent, with the aid of pine-boughs, extemporised a thatch for the roofless cabin, and the Duchess directed Piney in the arrangement of the interior with a taste and tact that opened the blue eyes of that provincial maiden to their fullest extent. "I reckon now you're used to fine things at Poker Flat," said Piney. The Duchess turned away sharply to conceal something that reddened her cheek through its professional tint, and Mother Shipton requested Piney not to "chatter." But when Mr Oakhurst returned from a weary search for the trail, he heard the sound of happy laughter echoed from the rocks. He stopped in some alarm, and his thoughts first naturally reverted to the whisky, which he had prudently *cachéd*. "And yet it don't somehow sound like whisky," said the gambler. It was not until he caught sight of the blazing fire through the still blinding storm, and the group around it, that he settled to the conviction that it was "square fun."

Whether Mr Oakhurst had *cachéd* his cards with the whisky, as something debarred the free access of the community, I cannot say. It was certain that, in Mother Shipton's words, he "didn't say cards once" during that evening. Happily, the time was beguiled by an accordion, produced somewhat ostentatiously by Tom Simson from his pack. Notwithstanding some difficulties attending the manipulation of this instrument, Piney Woods managed to pluck several reluctant melodies from its keys, to an accompaniment by the Innocent on a pair of bone castanets. But the crowning festivity of the evening was reached in a rude camp-meeting hymn, which the lovers, joining hands, sang with great earnestness and vociferation. I fear that a certain defiant tone and Covenanter's swing to its chorus, rather than any devotional quality, caused

it speedily to infect the others, who at last joined in the refrain :—

" ' I'm proud to live in the service of the Lord,
And I'm bound to die in His army.' "

The pines rocked, the storm eddied and whirled above the miserable group, and the flames of their altar leaped heavenward, as if in token of the vow.

At midnight the storm abated, the rolling clouds parted, and the stars glittered keenly above the sleeping camp. Mr Oakhurst, whose professional habits had enabled him to live on the smallest possible amount of sleep, in dividing the watch with Tom Simson, somehow managed to take upon himself the greater part of that duty. He excused himself to the Innocent by saying that he had " often been a week without sleep."

" Doing what ? " asked Tom.

" Poker ! " replied Oakhurst, sententiously ; " when a man gets a streak of luck—nigger-luck—he don't get tired. The luck gives in first. Luck," continued the gambler, reflectively, " is a mighty queer thing. All you know about it for certain is that it's bound to change. And it's finding out when it's going to change that makes you. We've had a streak of bad luck since we left Poker Flat—you come along, and slap you get into it, too. If you can hold your cards right along, you're all right. For," added the gambler, with cheerful irrelevance—

" ' I'm proud to live in the service of the Lord,
And I'm bound to die in His army.' "

The third day came, and the sun, looking through the white-curtained valley, saw the outcasts divide their slowly decreasing store of provisions for the morning meal. It was one of the peculiarities of that mountain climate that its rays diffused a kindly warmth over the wintry landscape, as if in regretful

commiseration of the past. But it revealed drift on drift of snow piled high around the hut—a hopeless, unchartered, trackless sea of white lying below the rocky shores to which the castaways still clung. Through the marvellously clear air the smoke of the pastoral village of Poker Flat rose miles away. Mother Shipton saw it, and from a remote pinnacle of her rocky fastness hurled in that direction a final malediction. It was her last vituperative attempt, and perhaps for that reason was invested with a certain degree of sublimity. It did her good, she privately informed the Duchess. "Just you go out there and cuss, and see." She then set herself to the task of amusing "the child," as she and the Duchess were pleased to call Piney. Piney was no chicken, but it was a soothing and original theory of the pair thus to account for the fact that she didn't swear and wasn't improper.

When night crept up again through the gorges, the reedy notes of the accordion rose and fell in fitful spasms and long-drawn gasps by the flickering camp-fire. But music failed to fill entirely the aching void left by insufficient food, and a new diversion was proposed by Piney—story-telling. Neither Mr Oakhurst nor his female companions caring to relate their personal experiences, this plan would have failed too, but for the Innocent. Some months before he had chanced upon a stray copy of Mr Pope's ingenious translation of the "Iliad." He now proposed to narrate the principal incidents of that poem—having thoroughly mastered the argument and fairly forgotten the words—in the current vernacular of Sandy Bar. And so for the rest of that night the Homeric demi-gods again walked the earth. Trojan bully and wily Greek wrestled in the winds, and the great pines in the cañon seemed to bow to the wrath of the son of

Peleus. Mr Oakhurst listened with quiet satisfaction. Most especially was he interested in the fate of "Ash-heels," as the Innocent persisted in denominating the "swift-footed Achilles."

So with small food and much of Homer and the accordion, a week passed over the heads of the outcasts. The sun again forsook them, and again from leaden skies the snow-flakes were sifted over the land. Day by day closer around them drew the snowy circle, until at last they looked from their prison over drifted walls of dazzling white that towered twenty feet above their heads. It became more and more difficult to replenish their fires, even from the fallen trees beside them, now half-hidden in the drifts. And yet no one complained. The lovers turned from the dreary prospect, and looked into each other's eyes, and were happy. Mr Oakhurst settled himself coolly to the losing game before him. The Duchess, more cheerful than she had been, assumed the care of Piney. Only Mother Shipton—once the strongest of the party—seemed to sicken and fade. At midnight on the tenth day she called Oakhurst to her side.

"I'm going," she said, in a voice of querulous weakness, "but don't say anything about it. Don't waken the kids. Take the bundle from under my head and open it."

Mr Oakhurst did so. It contained Mother Shipton's rations for the last week, untouched.

"Give 'em to the child," she said, pointing to the sleeping Piney.

"You've starved yourself," said the gambler.

"That's what they call it," said the woman, querulously, as she lay down again, and, turning her face to the wall, passed quietly away.

The accordion and the bones were put aside that day, and Homer was forgotten. When the body of

Mother Shipton had been committed to the snow, Mr Oakhurst took the Innocent aside, and showed him a pair of snow-shoes, which he had fashioned from the old pack-saddle.

"There's one chance in a hundred to save her yet," he said, pointing to Piney; "but it's there," he added, pointing toward Poker Flat. "If you can reach there in two days, she's safe."

"And you?" asked Tom Simson.

"I'll stay here," was the curt reply.

The lovers parted with a long embrace.

"You are not going too?" said the Duchess, as she saw Mr Oakhurst apparently waiting to accompany him.

"As far as the cañon," he replied. He turned suddenly, and kissed the Duchess, leaving her pallid face aflame, and her trembling limbs rigid with amazement.

Night came, but not Mr Oakhurst. It brought the storm again and the whirling snow. Then the Duchess, feeding the fire, found that some one had quietly piled beside the hut enough fuel to last a few days longer. The tears rose to her eyes, but she hid them from Piney.

The women slept but little. In the morning, looking into each other's faces, they read their fate. Neither spoke; but Piney, accepting the position of the stronger, drew near and placed her arm around the Duchess's waist. They kept this attitude for the rest of the day. That night the storm reached its greatest fury, and, rending asunder the protecting pines, invaded the very hut.

Toward morning they found themselves unable to feed the fire, which gradually died away. As the embers slowly blackened, the Duchess crept closer to Piney, and broke the silence of many hours: "Piney, can you pray?"

"No, dear," said Piney, simply.

The Duchess, without knowing exactly why, felt relieved, and, putting her head upon Piney's shoulder, spoke no more. And so reclining, the younger and purer pillowing the head of her soiled sister upon her virgin breast, they fell asleep.

The wind lulled as if it feared to waken them. Feathery drifts of snow, shaken from the long pine-boughs, flew like white-winged birds, and settled about them as they slept. The moon through the rifted clouds looked down upon what had been the camp. But all human stain, all trace of earthly travail, was hidden beneath the spotless mantle mercifully flung from above.

They slept all that day and the next, nor did they waken when voices and footsteps broke the silence of the camp. And when pitying fingers brushed the snow from their wan faces, you could scarcely have told, from the equal peace that dwelt upon them, which was she that had sinned. Even the law of Poker Flat recognised this, and turned away, leaving them still locked in each other's arms.

But at the head of the gulch, on one of the largest pine-trees, they found the deuce of clubs pinned to the bark with a bowie-knife. It bore the following, written in pencil, in a firm hand :—

BENEATH THIS TREE
LIES THE BODY
OF
JOHN OAKHURST,
WHO STRUCK A STREAK OF BAD LUCK
ON THE 23RD OF NOVEMBER, 1850
AND
HANDED IN HIS CHECKS
ON THE 7TH DECEMBER, 1850.

†

And pulseless and cold, with a derringer by his side and a bullet in his heart, though still calm as in life, beneath the snow lay he who was at once the strongest and yet the weakest of the outcasts of Poker Flat.

BABY SYLVESTER

It was at a little mining-camp in the California Sierras that he first dawned upon me in all his grotesque sweetness.

I had arrived early in the morning, but not in time to intercept the friend who was the object of my visit. He had gone "prospecting"—so they told me on the river—and would not probably return until late in the afternoon. They could not say what direction he had taken; they could not suggest that I would be likely to find him if I followed. But it was the general opinion that I had better wait.

I looked around me. I was standing upon the bank of the river; and apparently the only other human beings in the world were my interlocutors, who were even then just disappearing from my horizon, down the steep bank, towards the river's dry bed. I approached the edge of the bank.

Where could I wait?

Oh! anywhere—down with them on the river-bar, where they were working, if I liked. Or I could make myself at home in any of those cabins that I found lying round loose. Or perhaps it would be cooler and pleasanter for me in my friend's cabin on the hill. Did I see those three large sugar-pines, and, a little to the right, a canvas roof and chimney, over the bushes? Well, that was my friend's—that was Dick Sylvester's cabin. I could stake my

horse in that little hollow, and just hang round there till he came. I would find some books in the shanty. I could amuse myself with them; or I could play with the baby.

Do what?

But they had already gone. I leaned over the bank and called after their vanishing figures—

"What did you say I could do?"

The answer floated slowly up on the hot, sluggish air—

"Pla-a-y with the ba-by."

The lazy echoes took it up, and tossed it languidly from hill to hill, until Bald Mountain opposite made some incoherent remark about the baby; and then all was still.

I must have been mistaken. My friend was not a man of family; there was not a woman within forty miles of the river camp; he never was so passionately devoted to children as to import a luxury so expensive. I must have been mistaken.

I turned my horse's head toward the hill. As we slowly climbed the narrow trail, the little settlement might have been some exhumed Pompeiian suburb, so deserted and silent were its habitations. The open doors plainly disclosed each rudely-furnished interior—the rough pine table, with the scant equipage of the morning meal still standing; the wooden bunk with its tumbled and dishevelled blankets. A golden lizard, the very genius of desolate stillness, had stopped breathless upon the threshold of one cabin; a squirrel peeped impudently into the window of another; a woodpecker, with the general flavour of undertaking which distinguishes that bird, withheld his sepulchral hammer from the coffin-lid of the roof on which he was professionally engaged, as we passed. For a moment I half regretted that I had not accepted the invitation to the river-bed;

but the next moment a breeze swept up the long, dark cañon, and the waiting files of the pines beyond bent toward me in salutation. I think my horse understood, as well as myself, that it was the cabins that made the solitude human, and therefore unbearable; for he quickened his pace, and with a gentle trot brought me to the edge of the wood, and the three pines that stood like vedettes before the Sylvester outpost.

Unsaddling my horse in the little hollow, I unslung the long *riata* from the saddle-bow, and, tethering him to a young sapling, turned toward the cabin. But I had gone only a few steps, when I heard a quick trot behind me, and poor Pomposo, with every fibre tingling with fear, was at my heels. I looked hurriedly around. The breeze had died away, and only an occasional breath from the deep-chested woods, more like a long sigh than any articulate sound, or the dry singing of a cicala in the heated cañon, were to be heard. I examined the ground carefully for rattlesnakes, but in vain. Yet here was Pomposo, shivering from his arched neck to his sensitive haunches, his very flanks pulsating with terror. I soothed him as well as I could, and then walked to the edge of the wood, and peered into its dark recesses. The bright flash of a bird's wing, or the quick dart of a squirrel, was all I saw. I confess it was with something of superstitious expectation that I again turned towards the cabin. A fairy child, attended by Titania and her train, lying in an expensive cradle, would not have surprised me: a Sleeping Beauty, whose awakening would have re-peopled these solitudes with life and energy, I am afraid I began to confidently look for, and would have kissed without hesitation.

But I found none of these. Here was the evidence of my friend's taste and refinement, in the hearth

swept scrupulously clean, in the picturesque arrangement of the fur skins that covered the floor and furniture, and the striped *serápe* lying on the wooden couch. Here were the walls fancifully papered with illustrations from the *London News:* here was the wood-cut portrait of Mr Emerson over the chimney, quaintly framed with blue jays' wings: here were his few favourite books on the swinging-shelf; and here, lying upon the couch, the latest copy of *Punch*. Dear Dick! The flour-sack was sometimes empty; but the gentle satirist seldom missed his weekly visit.

I threw myself on the couch and tried to read. But I soon exhausted my interest in my friend's library, and lay there staring through the open door on the green hill-side beyond. The breeze again sprang up; and a delicious coolness, mixed with the rare incense of the woods, stole through the cabin. The slumbrous droning of humble bees outside the canvas roof, the faint cawing of rooks on the opposite mountain, and the fatigue of my morning ride, began to droop my eyelids. I pulled the *serápe* over me, as a precaution against the freshening mountain breeze, and in a few moments was asleep.

I do not remember how long I slept. I must have been conscious, however, during my slumber, of my inability to keep myself covered by the *serápe*, for I awoke once or twice clutching it with a despairing hand as it was disappearing over the foot of the couch. Then I became suddenly aroused to the fact that my efforts to retain it were resisted by some equally persistent force, and, letting it go, I was horrified at seeing it swiftly drawn under the couch. At this point I sat up, completely awake, for immediately after what seemed to be an exaggerated muff began to emerge from under the couch. Presently it appeared fully, dragging the *serápe* after

it. There was no mistaking it now : it was a baby bear—a mere suckling, it was true, a helpless roll of fat and fur, but unmistakably a grizzly cub !

I cannot recall anything more irresistibly ludicrous than its aspect as it slowly raised its small, wondering eyes to mine. It was so much taller on its haunches than its shoulders, its forelegs were so disproportionately small, that, in walking, its hind feet invariably took precedence. It was perpetually pitching forward over its pointed, inoffensive nose, and recovering itself always, after these involuntary somersaults, with the gravest astonishment. To add to its preposterous appearance, one of its hind feet was adorned by a shoe of Sylvester's into which it had accidentally and inextricably stepped. As this somewhat impeded its first impulse to fly, it turned to me ; and then, possibly recognising in the stranger the same species as its master, it paused. Presently it slowly raised itself on its hind legs, and vaguely and deprecatingly waved a baby-paw, fringed with little hooks of steel. I took the paw and shook it gravely. From that moment we were friends. The little affair of the *serápe* was forgotten.

Nevertheless, I was wise enough to cement our friendship by an act of delicate courtesy. Following the direction of his eyes, I had no difficulty in finding on a shelf near the ridge-hole the sugar-box and the square lumps of white sugar that even the poorest miner is never without. While he was eating them I had time to examine him more closely. His body was a silky, dark, but exquisitely modulated grey, deepening to black in his paws and muzzle. His fur was excessively long, thick, and soft as eider-down ; the cushions of flesh beneath, perfectly infantine in their texture and contour. He was so very young that the palms of his half-human feet were still tender as a baby's. Except for the bright

blue, steely hooks, half sheathed in his little toes, there was not a single harsh outline or detail in his plump figure. He was as free from angles as one of Leda's offspring. Your caressing hand sank away in his fur with dreamy languor. To look at him long was an intoxication of the senses; to pat him was a wild delirium; to embrace him, an utter demoralisation of the intellectual faculties.

When he had finished the sugar, he rolled out of the door with a half-diffident, half-inviting look in his eyes, as if he expected me to follow. I did so; but the sniffing and snorting of the keen-scented Pomposo in the hollow not only revealed the cause of his former terror, but decided me to take another direction. After a moment's hesitation, he concluded to go with me, although I am satisfied, from a certain impish look in his eye, that he fully understood and rather enjoyed the fright of Pomposo. As he rolled along at my side, with a gait not unlike a drunken sailor, I discovered that his long hair concealed a leather collar around his neck, which bore for its legend the single word "Baby!" I recalled the mysterious suggestion of the two miners. This, then, was the "baby" with whom I was to "play."

How we "played"; how Baby allowed me to roll him down-hill, crawling and puffing up again each time with perfect good humour; how he climbed a young sapling after my Panama hat, which I had "shied" into one of the topmost branches; how, after getting it, he refused to descend until it suited his pleasure; how, when he did come down, he persisted in walking about on three legs, carrying my hat, a crushed and shapeless mass, clasped to his breast with the remaining one; how I missed him at last, and finally discovered him seated on a table in one of the tenantless cabins,

with a bottle of syrup between his paws, vainly endeavouring to extract its contents—these and other details of that eventful day I shall not weary the reader with now. Enough that, when Dick Sylvester returned, I was pretty well fagged out, and the baby was rolled up, an immense bolster, at the foot of the couch, asleep.

Sylvester's first words after our greeting were, " Isn't he delicious ? "

" Perfectly. Where did you get him ? "

" Lying under his dead mother, five miles from here," said Dick, lighting his pipe. " Knocked her over at fifty yards : perfectly clean shot ; never moved afterwards. Baby crawled out, scared, but unhurt. She must have been carrying him in her mouth, and dropped him when she faced me, for he wasn't more than three days old, and not steady on his pins. He takes the only milk that comes to the settlement, brought up by Adams's Express at seven o'clock every morning. They say he looks like me. Do you think so ? " asked Dick, with perfect gravity, stroking his hay-coloured mustaches, and evidently assuming his best expression.

I took leave of the baby early the next morning in Sylvester's cabin, and, out of respect to Pomposo's feelings, rode by without any postscript of expression. But the night before I had made Sylvester solemnly swear that, in the event of any separation between himself and Baby, it should revert to me.

" At the same time," he had added, " it's only fair to say that I don't think of dying just yet, old fellow ; and I don't know of anything else that would part the cub and me."

Two months after this conversation, as I was turning over the morning's mail at my office in San Francisco, I noticed a letter bearing Sylvester's familiar hand. But it was postmarked " Stockton,"

and I opened it with some anxiety at once. Its contents were as follows :—

O FRANK !—Don't you remember what we agreed upon anent the baby ? Well, consider me as dead for the next six months, or gone where cubs can't follow me—East. I know you love the baby ; but do you think, dear boy—now, really, do you think you *could* be a father to it ? Consider this well. You are young, thoughtless, well-meaning enough ; but dare you take upon yourself the functions of guide, genius, or guardian to one so young and guileless ? Could you be the Mentor to this Telemachus ? Think of the temptations of a metropolis. Look at the question well, and let me know speedily, for I've got him as far as this place, and he's kicking up an awful row in the hotel yard, and rattling his chain like a maniac. Let me know by telegraph at once. SYLVESTER.

P.S.—Of course he's grown a little, and doesn't take things always as quietly as he did. He dropped rather heavily on two of Watson's " pups " last week, and scratched old Watson himself bald-headed for interfering. You remember Watson ? For an intelligent man, he knows very little of Californian fauna. How are you fixed for bears on Montgomery Street—I mean in regard to corrals and things ? S.

P.P.S.—He's got some new tricks. The boys have been teaching him to put up his hands with them. He slings an ugly left. S.

I am afraid that my desire to possess myself of Baby overcame all other considerations, and I telegraphed an affirmative at once to Sylvester. When I reached my lodgings late that afternoon, my landlady was awaiting me with a telegram. It was two lines from Sylvester—

All right. Baby goes down on night-boat. Be a father to him.
S.

It was due, then, at one o'clock that night. For a moment I was staggered at my own precipitation. I had as yet made no preparations, had said nothing to my landlady about her new guest. I expected to arrange everything in time ; and now, through

Sylvester's indecent haste, that time had been shortened twelve hours.

Something, however, must be done at once. I turned to Mrs Brown. I had great reliance in her maternal instincts : I had that still greater reliance common to our sex in the general tender-heartedness of pretty women. But I confess I was alarmed. Yet with a feeble smile I tried to introduce the subject with classical ease and lightness. I even said, " If Shakespeare's Athenian clown, Mrs Brown, believed that a lion among ladies was a dreadful thing, what must——" But here I broke down, for Mrs Brown, with the awful intuition of her sex, I saw at once was more occupied with my manner than my speech. So I tried a business *brusquerie*, and, placing the telegram in her hand, said hurriedly, " We must do something about this at once. It's perfectly absurd ; but he will be here at one to-night. Beg thousand pardons ; but business prevented my speaking before "—and paused, out of breath and courage.

Mrs Brown read the telegram gravely, lifted her pretty eyebrows, turned the paper over and looked on the other side, and then, in a remote and chilling voice, asked me if she understood me to say that the mother was coming also.

" Oh, dear, no ! " I exclaimed with considerable relief. " The mother is dead, you know. Sylvester, that is my friend who sent this, shot her when the baby was only three days old." But the expression of Mrs Brown's face at this moment was so alarming that I saw that nothing but the fullest explanation would save me. Hastily, and I fear not very coherently, I told her all.

She relaxed sweetly. She said I had frightened her with my talk about lions. Indeed, I think my picture of poor Baby, albeit a trifle highly coloured,

touched her motherly heart. She was even a little vexed at what she called Sylvester's " hard-heartedness." Still I was not without some apprehension. It was two months since I had seen him ; and Sylvester's vague allusion to his " slinging an ugly left " pained me. I looked at sympathetic little Mrs Brown ; and the thought of Watson's pups covered me with guilty confusion.

Mrs Brown had agreed to sit up with me until he arrived. One o'clock came, but no Baby. Two o'clock, three o'clock, passed. It was almost four when there was a wild clatter of horses' hoofs outside, and with a jerk a waggon stopped at the door. In an instant I had opened it, and confronted a stranger. Almost at the same moment the horses attempted to run away with the waggon.

The stranger's appearance was, to say the least, disconcerting. His clothes were badly torn and frayed ; his linen sack hung from his shoulders like a herald's apron ; one of his hands was bandaged ; his face scratched ; and there was no hat on his dishevelled head. To add to the general effect, he had evidently sought relief from his woes in drink, and he swayed from side to side as he clung to the door-handle, and, in a very thick voice, stated that he had " suthin " for me outside. When he had finished, the horses made another plunge.

Mrs Brown thought they must be frightened at something.

" Frightened ! " laughed the stranger with bitter irony. " Oh, no ! Hossish aint frightened ! On'y ran away four timesh comin' here. Oh, no ! Nobody's frightened. Everythin's all ri'. Aint it, Bill ? " he said, addressing the driver. " On'y been overboard twish ; knocked down a hatchway once. Thash nothin' : On'y two men under doctor's han's

at Stockton. Thash nothin' ! Siz hunner dollarsh cover all damish."

I was too much disheartened to reply, but moved toward the waggon. The stranger eyed me with an astonishment that almost sobered him.

" Do you reckon to tackle that animile yourself ? " he asked, as he surveyed me from head to foot.

I did not speak, but with an appearance of boldness I was far from feeling, walked to the waggon, and called, " Baby ! "

" All ri'. Cash loose them straps, Bill, and stan' clear."

The straps were cut loose, and Baby, the remorseless, the terrible, quietly tumbled to the ground, and, rolling to my side, rubbed his foolish head against me.

I think the astonishment of the two men was beyond my vocal expression. Without a word, the drunken stranger got into the waggon, and drove away.

And Baby ! He had grown, it is true, a trifle larger, but he was thin, and bore the marks of evident ill-usage. His beautiful coat was matted and unkempt, and his claws, those bright steel hooks, had been ruthlessly pared to the quick. His eyes were furtive and restless and the old expression of stupid good-humour had changed to one of intelligent distrust. His intercourse with mankind had evidently quickened his intellect, without broadening his moral nature.

I had great difficulty in keeping Mrs Brown from smothering him in blankets, and ruining his digestion with the delicacies of her larder, but I at last got him completely rolled up in the corner of my room, and asleep. I lay awake some time later with plans for his future. I finally determined to take him to Oakland, where I had built a little cottage, and

always spent my Sundays, the very next day. And in the midst of a rosy picture of domestic felicity I fell asleep.

When I awoke it was broad day. My eyes at once sought the corner where Baby had been lying, but he was gone. I sprang from the bed, looked under it, searched the closet, but in vain. The door was still locked, but there were the marks of his blunted claws upon the sill of the window that I had forgotten to close. He had evidently escaped that way. But where? The window opened upon a balcony, to which the only other entrance was through the hall. He must be still in the house.

My hand was already upon the bell-rope, but I stayed it in time. If he had not made himself known, why should I disturb the house? I dressed myself hurriedly, and slipped into the hall. The first object that met my eyes was a boot lying upon the stairs. It bore the marks of Baby's teeth; and as I looked along the hall, I saw too plainly that the usual array of freshly-blackened boots and shoes before the lodgers' doors was not there. As I ascended the stairs I found another, but with the blacking carefully licked off. On the third floor were two or three more boots, slightly mouthed; but at this point Baby's taste for blacking had evidently palled. A little farther on was a ladder leading to an open scuttle. I mounted the ladder, and reached the flat roof that formed a continuous level over the row of houses to the corner of the street. Behind the chimney on the very last roof something was lurking. It was the fugitive Baby. He was covered with dust and dirt, and fragments of glass. But he was sitting on his hind legs, and was eating an enormous slab of peanut candy, with a look of mingled guilt and infinite satisfaction. He even, I fancied, slightly stroked his stomach with his

disengaged forepaw as I approached. He knew that I was looking for him, and the expression of his eye said plainly, " The past at least is secure."

I hurried him, with the evidences of his guilt, back to the scuttle, and descended on tiptoe to the floor beneath. Providence favoured us : I met no one on the stairs ; and his own cushioned tread was inaudible. I think he was conscious of the dangers of detection, for he even forebore to breathe, or much less chew the last mouthful he had taken ; and he skulked at my side with the syrup dropping from his motionless jaws. I think he would have silently choked to death just then, for my sake ; and it was not until I had reached my room again, and threw myself panting on the sofa, that I saw how near strangulation he had been. He gulped once or twice apologetically, and then walked to the corner of his own accord, and rolled himself up like an immense sugar-plum, sweating remorse and treacle at every pore.

I locked him in when I went to breakfast, when I found Mrs Brown's lodgers in a state of intense excitement over certain mysterious events of the night before, and the dreadful revelations of the morning. It appeared that burglars had entered the block from the scuttles ; that, being suddenly alarmed, they had quitted our house without committing any depredation, dropping even the boots they had collected in the halls, but that a desperate attempt had been made to force the till in the confectioner's shop on the corner, and that the glass show-cases had been ruthlessly smashed. A courageous servant in No. 4 had seen a masked burglar, on his hands and knees, attempting to enter their scuttle, but on her shouting, " Away wid yees ! " he instantly fled.

I sat through this recital with cheeks that burned

uncomfortably ; nor was I the less embarrassed, on raising my eyes, to meet Mrs Brown's fixed curiously and mischievously on mine. As soon as I could make my escape from the table, I did so, and, running rapidly upstairs, sought refuge from any possible inquiry in my own room. Baby was still asleep in the corner. It would not be safe to remove him until the lodgers had gone down town ; and I was revolving in my mind the expediency of keeping him until night veiled his obtrusive eccentricity from the public eye, when there came a cautious tap at my door. I opened it. Mrs Brown slipped in quietly, closed the door softly, stood with her back against it and her hand on the knob, and beckoned me mysteriously towards her. Then she asked, in a low voice—

" Is hair-dye poisonous ? "

I was too confounded to speak.

" Oh, do ! you know what I mean," she said, impatiently. " This stuff." She produced suddenly from behind her a bottle with a Greek label so long as to run two or three times spirally around it from top to bottom. " He says it isn't a dye : it's a vegetable preparation, for invigorating——"

" Who says ? " I asked, despairingly.

" Why, Mr Parker, of course ! " said Mrs Brown, severely, with the air of having repeated the name a great many times, " the old gentleman in the room above. The simple question I want to ask," she continued, with the calm manner of one who had just convicted another of gross ambiguity of language, " is only this : If some of this stuff were put in a saucer, and left carelessly on a table, and a child, or a baby, or a cat, or any young animal, should come in at the window and drink it up—a whole saucerful—because it had a sweet taste, would it be likely to hurt them ? "

I cast an anxious glance at Baby, sleeping peacefully in the corner, and a very grateful one at Mrs Brown, and said I didn't think it would.

"Because," said Mrs Brown, loftily, as she opened the door, "I thought if it was poisonous, remedies might be used in time. Because," she added, suddenly abandoning her lofty manner, and wildly rushing to the corner with a frantic embrace of the unconscious Baby, "because, if any nasty stuff should turn its booful hair a horrid green, or a naughty pink, it would break its own muzzer's heart, it would!"

But, before I could assure Mrs Brown of the inefficiency of hair-dye as an internal application, she had darted from the room.

That night, with the secrecy of defaulters, Baby and I decamped from Mrs Brown's. Distrusting the too emotional nature of that noble animal the horse, I had recourse to a hand-cart, drawn by a stout Irishman, to convey my charge to the ferry. Even then Baby refused to go unless I walked by the cart, and at times rode in it.

"I wish," said Mrs Brown, as she stood by the door, wrapped in an immense shawl, and saw us depart, "I wish it looked less solemn—less like a pauper's funeral."

I must admit, that, as I walked by the cart that night, I felt very much as if I were accompanying the remains of some humble friend to his last resting-place, and that, when I was obliged to ride in it, I never could entirely convince myself that I was not hopelessly overcome by liquor, or the victim of an accident, *en route* to the hospital. But at last we reached the ferry. On the boat, I think no one discovered Baby, except a drunken man who approached me to ask for a light for his cigar, but who suddenly dropped it, and fled in dismay to the

gentlemen's cabin, where his incoherent ravings were luckily taken for the earlier indications of *delirium tremens*.

It was nearly midnight when I reached my little cottage on the outskirts of Oakland, and it was with a feeling of relief and security that I entered, locked the door, and turned him loose in the hall, satisfied that henceforth his depredations would be limited to my own property. He was very quiet that night, and after he had tried to mount the hat-rack, under the mistaken impression that it was intended for his own gymnastic exercise, and knocked all the hats off, he went peaceably to sleep on the rug.

In a week, with the exercise afforded him by the run of a large, carefully-boarded enclosure, he recovered his health, strength, spirits, and much of his former beauty. His presence was unknown to my neighbours, although it was noticeable that horses invariably "shied" in passing to the windward of my house, and that the baker and milkman had great difficulty in the delivery of their wares in the morning, and indulged in unseemly and unnecessary profanity in so doing.

At the end of the week I determined to invite a few friends to see the Baby, and to that purpose wrote a number of formal invitations. After descanting at some length on the great expense and danger attending his capture and training, I offered a programme of the performance of the "Infant phenomenon of Sierran Solitudes," drawn up into the highest professional profusion of alliteration and capital letters. A few extracts will give the reader some idea of his educational progress :—

1. He will, rolled up in a Round Ball, roll down the Wood-Shed Rapidly, illustrating His manner of Escaping from His Enemy in His Native Wilds.
2. He will Ascend the Well-Pole, and remove from the Very

Top a Hat, and as much of the Crown and Brim thereof as May be Permitted.

3. He will perform in a pantomime, descriptive of the Conduct of the Big Bear, The Middle-Sized Bear, and The Little Bear of the Popular Nursery Legend.
4. He will shake his chain Rapidly, showing his Manner of striking Dismay and Terror in the Breasts of Wanderers in Ursine Wildernesses.

The morning of the exhibition came, but an hour before the performance the wretched Baby was missing. The Chinese cook could not indicate his whereabouts. I searched the premises thoroughly, and then, in despair, took my hat, and hurried out into the narrow lane that led toward the open fields and the woods beyond. But I found no trace nor track of Baby Sylvester. I returned, after an hour's fruitless search, to find my guests already assembled on the rear verandah. I briefly recounted my disappointment, my probable loss, and begged their assistance.

"Why," said a Spanish friend, who prided himself on his accurate knowledge of English, to Barker, who seemed to be trying vainly to rise from his reclining position on the verandah, "why do you not disengage yourself from the verandah of our friend? And why, in the name of Heaven, do you attach to yourself so much of this thing, and make to yourself such unnecessary contortion? Ah," he continued, suddenly withdrawing one of his own feet from the verandah with an evident effort. "I am myself attached! Surely it is something here!"

It evidently was. My guests were all rising with difficulty. The floor of the verandah was covered with some glutinous substance. It was—syrup!

I saw it all in a flash. I ran to the barn. The keg of "golden syrup," purchased only the day before, lay empty upon the floor. There were sticky tracks all over the enclosure, but still no Baby.

" There's something moving the ground over there by that pile of dirt," said Barker.

He was right. The earth was shaking in one corner of the enclosure like an earthquake. I approached cautiously. I saw, what I had not noticed, that the ground was thrown up ; and there, in the middle of an immense grave-like cavity, crouched Baby Sylvester, still digging, and slowly but surely sinking from sight in a mass of dust and clay.

What were his intentions ? Whether he was stung by remorse, and wished to hide himself from my reproachful eyes, or whether he was simply trying to dry his syrup-besmeared coat, I never shall know, for that day, alas ! was his last with me.

He was pumped upon for two hours, at the end of which time he still yielded a thin treacle. He was then taken, and carefully enwrapped in blankets, and locked up in the storeroom. The next morning he was gone ! The lower portion of the window-sash and pane were both gone too. His successful experiments on the fragile texture of glass at the confectioner's on the first day of his entrance to civilisation had not been lost upon him. His first essay at combining cause and effect ended in his escape.

Where he went, where he hid, who captured him, if he did not succeed in reaching the foot-hills beyond Oakland, even the offer of a large reward, backed by the efforts of an intelligent police, could not discover. I never saw him again from that day until——

Did I see him ? I was in a horse-car on the Sixth Avenue, a few days ago, when the horses suddenly became unmanageable, and left the track for the sidewalk, amid the oaths and execrations of the driver. Immediately in front of the car a crowd had gathered around two performing bears and a

showman. One of the animals, thin, emaciated, and a mere wreck of his native strength, attracted my attention. I endeavoured to attract his. He turned a pair of bleared, sightless eyes in my direction; but there was no sign of recognition. I leaned from the car-window, and called softly, "Baby!" But he did not heed. I closed the window. The car was just moving on when he suddenly turned, and, either by accident or design, thrust a callous paw through the glass.

"It's worth a dollar and a half to put in a new pane," said the conductor. "If folks will play with bears——"

THE RIGHT EYE OF THE COMMANDER

THE year of grace 1797 passed away on the coast of California in a south-westerly gale. The little bay of San Carlos, albeit sheltered by the headlands of the blessed Trinity, was rough and turbulent; its foam clung quivering to the seaward wall of the Mission garden; the air was filled with flying sand and spume, and as the Señor Comandante, Hermenegildo Salvatierra, looked from the deep embrasured window of the Presidio guard-room, he felt the salt breath of the distant sea buffet a colour into his smoke-dried cheeks.

The Commander, I have said, was gazing thoughtfully from the window of the guard-room. He may have been reviewing the events of the year now about to pass away. But, like the garrison at the Presidio, there was little to review; the year, like its predecessors, had been uneventful—the days

had slipped by, in a delicious monotony of simple duties, unbroken by incident or interruption. The regularly recurring Feasts and Saints' Days, the half-yearly courier from San Diego, the rare transport-ship and rarer foreign vessel, were the mere details of his patriarchal life. If there was no achievement there was certainly no failure. Abundant harvests and patient industry amply supplied the wants of Presidio and Mission. Isolated from the family of nations, the wars which shook the world concerned them not so much as the last earthquake ; the struggle that emancipated their sister colonies on the other side of the continent, to them had no suggestiveness. In short, it was that glorious Indian summer of Californian history around which so much poetical haze still lingers—that bland, indolent autumn of Spanish rule, so soon to be followed by the wintry storms of Mexican independence and the reviving spring of American conquest.

The Commander turned from the window and walked toward the fire that burned brightly on the deep, ovenlike hearth. A pile of copy-books, the work of the Presidio school, lay on the table. As he turned over the leaves with a paternal interest, and surveyed the fair round Scripture text—the first pious pot-hooks of the pupils of San Carlos—an audible commentary fell from his lips. " ' Abimelech took her from Abraham '—Ah, little one, excellent ! —' Jacob sent to see his brother '—Body of me ! that up-stroke of thine, Paquita, is marvellous ; the Governor shall see it." A film of honest pride dimmed the Commander's left eye—the right, alas ! twenty years before had been sealed by an Indian arrow. He rubbed it softly with the sleeve of his leather jacket, and continued : " ' The Ishmaelites having arrived——' "

He stopped, for there was a step in the courtyard,

a foot upon the threshold, and a stranger entered. With the instinct of an old soldier, the Commander, after one glance at the intruder, turned quickly toward the wall, where his trusty Toledo hung, or should have been hanging. But it was not there, and as he recalled that the last time he had seen that weapon, it was being ridden up and down the gallery by Pepito, the infant son of Bautista, the tortilla maker, he blushed, and then contented himself with frowning upon the intruder.

But the stranger's air, though irreverent, was decidedly peaceful. He was unarmed, and wore the ordinary cape of tarpauling and sea-boots of a mariner. Except a villainous smell of cod-fish, there was little about him that was peculiar.

His name, as he informed the Commander, in Spanish that was more fluent than elegant or precise —his name was Peleg Scudder. He was master of the schooner *General Court*, of the port of Salem, in Massachusetts, on a trading voyage to the South Seas, but now driven by stress of weather into the bay of San Carlos. He begged permission to ride out the gale under the headlands of the blessed Trinity, and no more. Water he did not need, having taken in a supply at Bodega. He knew the strict surveillance of the Spanish port regulations in regard to foreign vessels, and would do nothing against the severe discipline and good order of the settlement. There was a slight tinge of sarcasm in his tone as he glanced toward the desolate parade-ground of the Presidio, and the open unguarded gate. The fact was, that the sentry, Felipe Gomez, had discreetly retired to shelter at the beginning of the storm, and was then sound asleep in the corridor.

The Commander hesitated. The port regulations were severe, but he was accustomed to exercise

individual authority, and beyond an old order issued ten years before, regarding the American ship *Columbia* there was no precedent to guide him. The storm was severe, and a sentiment of humanity urged him to grant the stranger's request. It is but just to the Commander to say that his inability to enforce a refusal did not weigh with his decision. He would have denied, with equal disregard of consequences, that right to a seventy-four gun-ship which he now yielded so gracefully to this Yankee trading-schooner. He stipulated only that there should be no communication between the ship and shore. "For yourself, Señor Captain," he continued, "accept my hospitality. The fort is yours as long as you shall grace it with your distinguished presence"; and with old-fashioned courtesy he made the semblance of withdrawing from the guard-room.

Master Peleg Scudder smiled as he thought of the half-dismantled fort, the two mouldy brass cannon, cast in Manilla a century previous, and the shiftless garrison. A wild thought of accepting the Commander's offer literally, conceived in the reckless spirit of a man who never let slip an offer for trade, for a moment filled his brain, but a timely reflection of the commercial unimportance of the transaction checked him. He only took a capacious quid of tobacco, as the Commander gravely drew a settle before the fire, and, in honour of his guest, untied the black silk handkerchief that bound his grizzled brows.

What passed between Salvatierra and his guest that night it becomes me not, as a grave chronicler of the salient points of history, to relate. I have said that Master Peleg Scudder was a fluent talker, and under the influence of divers strong waters, furnished by his host, he became still more loquacious. And think of a man with a twenty years' budget of gossip!

The Commander learned, for the first time, how Great Britain lost her colonies; of the French Revolution; of the great Napoleon, whose achievements, perhaps, Peleg coloured more highly than the Commander's superiors would have liked. And when Peleg turned questioner, the Commander was at his mercy. He gradually made himself master of the gossip of the Mission and Presidio, the "small-beer" chronicles of that pastoral age, the conversion of the heathen, the Presidio schools, and even asked the Commander how he had lost his eye! It is said that at this point of the conversation Master Peleg produced from about his person divers small trinkets, kick-shaws, and new-fangled trifles, and even forced some of them upon his host. It is further alleged that, under the malign influence of Peleg and several glasses of *aguardiente*, the Commander lost somewhat of his decorum, and behaved in a manner unseemly for one in his position, reciting high-flown Spanish poetry and even piping in a thin, high voice, divers madrigals and heathen canzonets of an amorous complexion; chiefly in regard to a "little one" who was his, the Commander's, "soul": These allegations, perhaps unworthy the notice of a serious chronicler, should be received with great caution, and are introduced here as simple hearsay. Enough for the purposes of this narrative that at midnight Peleg assisted his host to bed, with many protestations of undying friendship, and then, as the gale had abated, took his leave of the Presidio and hurried aboard the *General Court*. When the day broke, the ship was gone.

I know not if Peleg kept his word with his host. It is said that the holy Fathers at the Mission that night heard a loud chanting in the plaza, as of the heathen singing psalms through their noses; that

for many days after an odour of salt codfish prevailed in the settlement; that a dozen hard nutmegs, which were unfit for spice or seed, were found in the possession of the wife of the baker, and that several bushels of shoe-pegs, which bore a pleasing resemblance to oats, but were quite inadequate to the purposes of provender, were discovered in the stable of the blacksmith. But when the reader reflects upon the sacredness of a Yankee trader's word, the stringent discipline of the Spanish port regulations, and the proverbial indisposition of my countrymen to impose upon the confidence of a simple people, he will at once reject this part of this story.

A roll of drums, ushering in the year 1798, awoke the Commander. The sun was shining brightly, and the storm had ceased. He sat up in bed, and through the force of habit rubbed his left eye. As the remembrance of the previous night came back to him, he jumped from his couch and ran to the window. There was no ship in the bay. A sudden thought seemed to strike him, and he rubbed both of his eyes. Not content with this, he consulted the metallic mirror which hung beside his crucifix. There was no mistake; the Commander had a visible second eye—a right one—as good, save for the purposes of vision, as the left.

Whatever might have been the true secret of this transformation, but one opinion prevailed at San Carlos. It was one of those rare miracles vouchsafed a pious Catholic community as an evidence to the heathen, through the intercession of the blessed San Carlos himself. That their beloved Commander, the temporal defender of the Faith, should be the recipient of this miraculous manifestation, was most fit and seemly. The Commander himself was

reticent; he could not tell a falsehood—he dared not tell the truth. After all, if the good folk of San Carlos believed that the powers of his right eye were actually restored, was it wise and discreet for him to undeceive them? For the first time in his life the Commander thought of policy—for the first time he quoted that text which has been the lure of so many well-meaning but easy Christians, of being " all things to all men." Infeliz Hermenegildo Salvatierra!

For by degrees an ominous whisper crept through the little settlement. The Right Eye of the Commander, although miraculous, seemed to exercise a baleful effect upon the beholder. No one could look at it without winking. It was cold, hard, relentless, and unflinching. More than that, it seemed to be endowed with a dreadful prescience—a faculty of seeing through and into the inarticulate thoughts of those it looked upon. The soldiers of the garrison obeyed the eye rather than the voice of their Commander, and answered his glance rather than his lips in questioning. The servants could not evade the ever-watchful but cold attention that seemed to pursue them. The children of the Presidio School smirched their copybooks under the awful supervision, and poor Paquita, the prize pupil, failed utterly in that marvellous up-stroke when her patron stood beside her. Gradually mistrust, suspicion, self-accusation, and timidity took the place of trust, confidence, and security throughout San Carlos. Wherever the Right Eye of the Commander fell, a shadow fell with it.

Nor was Salvatierra entirely free from the baleful influence of his miraculous acquisition. Unconscious of its effect upon others, he only saw in their actions evidence of certain things that the crafty Peleg had hinted on that eventful New Year's Eve. His most

trusty retainers stammered, blushed, and faltered before him. Self-accusations, confessions of minor faults and delinquencies, or extravagant excuses and apologies met his mildest inquiries. The very children that he loved—his pet pupil, Paquita—seemed to be conscious of some hidden sin. The result of this constant irritation showed itself more plainly. For the first half-year the Commander's voice and eye were at variance. He was still kind, tender, and thoughtful in speech. Gradually, however, his voice took upon itself the hardness of his glance and its sceptical, impassive quality ; and as the year again neared its close it was plain that the Commander had fitted himself to the eye, and not the eye to the Commander.

It may be surmised that these changes did not escape the watchful solicitude of the Fathers. Indeed, the few who were first to ascribe the right eye of Salvatierra to miraculous origin and the special grace of the blessed San Carlos, now talked openly of witchcraft and the agency of Luzbel, the evil one. It would have fared ill with Hermenegildo Salvatierra had he been aught but Commander, or amenable to local authority. But the reverend Father, Friar Manuel de Cortes, had no power over the political executive, and all attempts at spiritual advice failed signally. He retired, baffled and confused, from his first interview with the Commander, who seemed now to take a grim satisfaction in the fateful power of his glance. The holy Father contradicted himself, exposed the fallacies of his own arguments, and even, it is asserted, committed himself to several undoubted heresies. When the Commander stood up at Mass, if the officiating priest caught that sceptical and searching eye, the service was inevitably ruined. Even the power of the Holy Church seemed to be lost, and the last hold upon the affections of the

people and the good order of the settlement departed from San Carlos.

As the long dry summer passed, the low hills that surrounded the white walls of the Presidio grew more and more to resemble in hue the leathern jacket of the Commander, and Nature herself seemed to have borrowed his dry, hard glare. The earth was cracked and seamed with drought; a blight had fallen upon the orchards and vineyards, and the rain, long delayed and ardently prayed for, came not. The sky was as tearless as the right eye of the Commander. Murmurs of discontent, insubordination, and plotting among the Indians reached his ears; he only set his teeth the more firmly, tightened the knot of his black silk handkerchief, and looked up his Toledo.

The last day of the year 1798 found the Commander sitting, at the hour of evening prayers, alone in the guardroom. He no longer attended the services of the Holy Church, but crept away at such times to some solitary spot, where he spent the interval in silent meditation. The firelight played upon the low beams and rafters, but left the bowed figure of Salvatierra in darkness. Sitting thus, he felt a small hand touch his arm, and, looking down, saw the figure of Paquita, his little Indian pupil, at his knee. "Ah, littlest of all," said the Commander, with something of his old tenderness lingering over the endearing diminutives of his native speech—"sweet one, what doest thou here? Art thou not afraid of him whom every one shuns and fears?"

"No," said the little Indian, readily, "not in the dark. I hear your voice—the old voice; I feel your touch—the old touch; but I see not your eye, Señor Comandante. That only I fear—and that, O Señor, O my father," said the child, lifting her

little arms towards his—" that I know is not thine own ! "

The Commander shuddered and turned away. Then, recovering himself, he kissed Paquita gravely on the forehead, and bade her retire. A few hours later, when silence had fallen upon the Presidio, he sought his own couch and slept peacefully.

At about the middle watch of the night a dusky figure crept through the low embrasure of the Commander's apartment. Other figures were flitting through the parade-ground, which the Commander might have seen had he not slept so quietly. The intruder stepped noiselessly to the couch and listened to the sleeper's deep-drawn inspiration. Something glittered in the firelight as the savage lifted his arm ; another moment and the sore perplexities of Hermenegildo Salvatierra would have been over, when suddenly the savage started and fell back in a paroxysm of terror. The Commander slept peacefully, but his right eye, widely opened, fixed and unaltered, glared coldly on the would-be assassin. The man fell to the earth in a fit, and the noise awoke the sleeper.

To rise to his feet, grasp his sword, and deal blows thick and fast upon the mutinous savages who now thronged the room, was the work of a moment. Help opportunely arrived, and the undisciplined Indians were speedily driven beyond the walls, but in the scuffle the Commander received a blow upon his right eye, and, lifting his hand to that mysterious organ, it was gone. Never again was it found, and never again, for bale or bliss, did it adorn the right orbit of the Commander.

With it passed away the spell that had fallen upon San Carlos. The rain returned to invigorate the languid soil, harmony was restored between priest and soldier, the green grass presently waved over

the sere hill-sides, the children flocked again to the side of their martial preceptor, a *Te Deum* was sung in the Mission Church, and pastoral content once more smiled upon the gentle valleys of San Carlos. And far southward, crept the *General Court* with its master, Peleg Scudder, trafficking in beads and peltries with the Indians, and offering glass eyes, wooden legs, and other Boston notions to the chiefs.

NOTES

Tennessee's Partner

saleratus : bicarbonate of potash, an ingredient in baking powder.

the beginning of a rude heraldry : whereby men would be known, like the knights of old, by their deeds or peculiarities.

hell is full of such Cliffords : I suspect your name to be assumed as a cover for your misdeeds.

two bowers and an ace : the figure is borrowed from the gambling game of euchre. The " bower " is the knave.

chaparral : grove (Spanish, *chaparra,* evergreen-oak).

legends : something meant to be read—printed matter. Probably the patches were cut from sacks bearing the name of some firm.

meteorological recollections : reminiscences of the weather. Tennessee's Partner is nonplussed because the only conversational opening known to him has failed.

Judge Lynch . . . that mythical personage : the mob itself, in its assumed character of a court of justice. See dictionary—" lynch."

buckeye-tree : American horse-chestnut.

The Iliad of Sandy Bar

Iliad : the Homeric poem depicting the fall of Troy. The rivalry of York and Scott is compared to that of Achilles and Hector.

John : nickname for any Chinaman.

sabe : savvy, know (Spanish).

this yer cattle : this (here) kind of pitiful creature.

saloons : public-houses.

a few rods away : rod, pole or perch. An English writer would have written " yards."

Arcadia : an ideal land of rustic happiness. Harte is partly ironical.

Pactolian : like the river Pactolus in Lydia, celebrated in ancient times for its golden sands. Golden.

Gentleman of the Old School : the capitals are ironical. Starbottle passed for a gentleman but, as appears from other tales in which he figures (as here) as a kind of chorus, was a dissolute, coarse, and selfish old blackguard.

tail-race : channel of a dam below the sluice.

express : " wagon " is understood.

Vigilance Committee : a committee constituted in early Western townships to maintain law and order, before the advent of the regular police.

gone down on the unpacified wrath : adapted from Ephesians, ii. 26—" Be ye angry and sin not : let not the sun go down upon your wrath."

was called to order by Colonel S. : Colonel S. was chairman.

this manifest impropriety : i.e. of calling upon one candidate to speak from the other's platform.

myrmidons : the followers of Achilles.

Cairo : probably Cairo on the Mississippi.

Regulators : bands who professed to maintain order, but often themselves lawless and intolerable.

Fall : now purely an Americanism. See dictionary.

the local distinction : it was a distinction in that locality.

How Santa Claus came to Simpson's Bar

tules : bulrushes. The word is dissyllabic, and is said to be Aztec.

amount actually realized : the rest, being in promissory notes, was probably worthless.

pasear : walk or ride. (Spanish word.)

battery of low churls : see below. Jack Simpson and his accomplice.

Pinto horse : piebald horse. (Spanish, *pinto,* painted, mottled.)

riata : lariat (Spanish word).

The Outcasts of Poker Flat

sluice-robber : the sluices were set to collect the " placer," or gravel, etc., from which the gold was obtained.
cachéd : now adopted as an English word, and written without italics or accent.
square fun : honest mirth.
son of Peleus : Achilles.

Baby Sylvester

exhumed Pompeian suburb : Pompeii, overwhelmed by an eruption of Vesuvius in 79 A.D., was excavated in modern times.
serápe : " a fine Mexican blanket, used as an outer garment for riding "—Author's Note.
Titania : queen of the fairies, in " A Midsummer Night's Dream."
Mr Emerson : Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), the celebrated American writer.
Leda's offspring : eggs.
Telemachus : son of Ulysses. Sylvester is alluding to his own forthcoming journey, and comparing himself to Ulysses as a wanderer.
slings an ugly left : slang of the boxing ring. The bear has been taught to box, and is clever in the use of his left.
Shakespeare's Athenian clown : Bottom, in " A Midsummer Night's Dream," Act III., Scene 1—" to bring in—God shield us !—a lion among ladies, is a most dreadful thing."
brusquerie : curtness, abruptness (French word).
scuttle : hatch leading to deck or, as here, to roof.
on the corner : an Americanism ; English, " at the corner."

The Right Eye of the Commander

This is one of a number of sketches in which Bret Harte endeavoured to picture the life of California in the days of Spanish domination.

San Carlos : probably San Carlos de Monterey, now known as Monterey.

Indian summer : here used as a metaphor. A period of genial, summerlike weather, experienced in some parts of North America during late autumn ; in early days Indian raids were common during this season.

Spanish rule : from about 1776 to 1810. After the latter date, owing to the overthrow of the Spanish government by Bonaparte, the Spanish colonies were in a state of revolt.

Mexican independence : From 1821 California was recognised as part of the larger state of Mexico which had revolted as explained above.

American conquest : 1846-1848. By the treaty of 1848, California became a state of the Union.

Toledo : sword made at Toledo in Spain, long famous for the manufacture of such weapons.

Yankee : in Britain, " an American " ; in America, more usually, a New Englander. Said to be derived from *Janke* (Dutch), diminutive of *Jan*, John. Note the irony of the whole sentence about Yankee honesty and Spanish discipline.

peltries : " furs," from French *pelletier*, a furrier.

QUESTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Tennessee's Partner

1. " A man's real name rested upon his own statement." Why ?

2. Name one or two seventeenth-century heroes of Tennessee's type.

3. Why should the Judge regret not having shot Tennessee on sight ?

4. " The proceedings were becoming irksomely thoughtful." Explain the innuendo implied in " irksomely," and consider the tragic irony of the whole statement.

5. Compare the Partner's offer to the court with that of Evan Dhu at the trial of Fergus, in *Waverley*.

6. " A secret investigation had left only a suspicion of his general sanity." Consider the question of his sanity in the light of the saying that the insane man is the abnormal man.

7. Compare his funeral speech as a piece of homely eloquence with the lament of Mrs Mucklebackit for her son Steenie in *The Antiquary*.

8. Show that the miners were rather thoughtless than unfeeling.

9. Cite instances of Harte's use of humour and irony as restraints upon sentiment.

10. Is the last passage (" In the reaction . . . so they met ") an improvement to the story or not ?

11. Explain the meaning of each of the following words, and use each appropriately in a sentence : appellative, compromised, prototype, exhalation, preternatural, laboured, jeopardy, sanguinary, catafalque, pulsating.

The Iliad of Sandy Bar

1. Is it inconsistent with human nature that this famous quarrel should arise from a trivial cause ? Suppose a man quarrelled violently with his best friend for such a reason, would he feel ashamed ?

2. Would he try to justify himself by provoking his friend to meaner and sillier acts than his own? Would this be a fitting description of the actions of Scott and York?

3. Did the two men really *hate* each other? Why did they not shoot? Why did Scott glower when Miss Jo was rude to York?

4. Why did York leave the district when Scott was elected?

5. Why did he return home?

6. "The young woman thus addressed returned that answer—at once," etc. What do you suppose the answer was?

7. Was Miss Folinsbee sincere or malicious when she spoke to York in Paris? If malicious, what could be her motive?

8. Account for the astonishing growth of Sandy Bar in three years.

9. Rewrite the report of the *Poverty Flat Pioneer*, avoiding its hackneyed and pompous phraseology.

10. Show that neither York nor Scott conformed to the type of the other inhabitants of Sandy Bar.

11. Explain and use: rheumy, sublime, occult, paradox, litigation, rancour, Phoenix, gratuitously, philippic, vagabond (adj.).

Distinguish in meaning: evolution, involution, convolution, devolution.

How Santa Claus came to Simpson's Bar

1. Explain clearly in your own words why the floods had made social life dull at Simpson's Bar.

2. Account for the man of fifty being nicknamed "The Old Man."

3. What was Mr Hamlin's "arduous profession"?

4. How does Dick Bullen's first remark prepare us for his great feat?

5. Explain in unfigurative language the passage: "the conversation was characterised . . . more favourable auspices."

6. From the description of the ride, pick out such incidents

and phrases as remind you of other famous rides in literature—*e.g.*, *How They brought the Good News.*

7. What does the author mean by repeating at the end of the story the bald, literal assertion that Santa Claus came to Simpson's Bar?

8. What light does the story throw upon the character of the miners?

9. Show from various little incidents in the story that it was Dick's leadership, as much as his pluck, that led him, rather than his companions, to undertake the midnight ride.

10. How does the attempted highway robbery heighten one's appreciation of (*a*) the greatness of the feat; (*b*) the unselfishness of the rider?

11. Explain and use: chameleon-like aptitude, will-o'-the-wisp, querulously, deprecatingly, demijohn, a familiar formula, balking, wanton conceits, piazza, viscid.

Distinguish between contiguous and contagious, barbaric and barbarous.

The Outcasts of Poker Flat

1. The third paragraph contains an ironically euphemistic phrase, characteristic of Bret Harte. What is it? Can you find any other examples in this story?

2. In how far did the justice of Poker Flat depend on self-interest?

3. We are in danger of forgetting that Mr Oakhurst was a dangerous man. How does the author fix it in our minds?

4. What comments occur to you on reading the description of the young lovers?

5. What do you suppose to have been Oakhurst's motive for concealing from Piney and the Innocent the real character of his companions?

6. How far does this story suggest that in Harte's eyes the unforgiveable sin was meanness?

7. Jot down in summary form the probable thoughts of Mother Shipton when she resolved to starve for Piney's benefit.

8. What well-known poem of the author's describes, as does this story, a rude audience enjoying the fancies of a great author?

9. Would it have improved or spoiled the story if Piney had been made a shrinking and helpless girl?

10. Discuss the author's closing pronouncement on Oakhurst's character.

11. Explain and use: category, reimburse, expatriated, Parthian, anathema, prescience, pariah, inventory, vituperative, travail.

Distinguish between defection and deficit, unaffected and disaffected.

Baby Sylvester

1. Harte says that many of the miners were educated men. Does this story show it?

2. What figure of speech is used in the sentence: "To look at him long was an intoxication . . . the intellectual faculties?"

3. Rewrite the P.S. and P.P.S. of Sylvester's letter, avoiding the use of slang, but not that of ordinary colloquialisms.

4. Comment on the expressions attributed to the bear and the servant: "The past, at least, is secure" and "Away wid yees."

5. Relate what Mrs Brown saw of the bear, as she might have told it to a friend.

6. What do you gather from the story as to the character of the teller (not necessarily meant to be Harte himself)?

7. Is this a story in the same sense as the others in the book? If not, what might it be called?

8. Judging from this story alone, would you call the author unduly sentimental?

9. Compare the story with any other tale of a pet.

10. Taking it as a model, write such a story for yourself.

11. Explain and use: interlocutor, videttes, cicala, descanting, disproportionately, glutinous, mentor, obtrusive, delirium tremens, callous (in two senses).

The Right Eye of the Commander

1. What do you gather from this story about the various ways, apart from his official duties, in which the Commander passed his time?

2. What do you gather about Yankee traders of a bygone age?

3. "The Commander fitted himself to the eye, and not the eye to the Commander." Explain what this means.

4. What was the secret of the Commander's new eye? At what point in the story did this first become clear to you?

5. At what point in the story does the author reveal the secret quite plainly?

6. Does the author appear to think a severe or an easy discipline the better for bringing out the best in people?

7. Show that a suspicious and unbending ruler may see faults where none exist.

8. Write a composition entitled "Peleg Scudder's News." Remember that it covered twenty years, ending 1797, and that the teller was not British.

9. Identify as many as you can of the Scripture texts which the children copied.

10. Explain and use each of the following words: patriarchal, emancipated, surveillance, precedent, salient, loquaciousness, stringent, manifestation, heresy, paroxysm.

REVISION EXERCISES

1. Make a list of all the various *types* of character described in these tales.

2. Make a list of those which do not conform to any special type, and note down what you consider to be the distinctive peculiarities of each.

3. Choose any of the stories except "Tennessee's Partner," and state briefly what is the central theme. Consider carefully each incident in the story, and trace its connexion with the theme as stated by you.

4. What do you consider to be (*a*) the most exciting, (*b*) the most amusing, (*c*) the most vivid, (*d*) the most touching, (*e*) the most completely satisfying of the tales? Write a few sentences in support of each choice.

5. Write an essay on one of the following :—

A Californian Mining-Camp in the 'Fifties.
Bret Harte's use of "Newspaper Reports," as a device in story-telling.
The Characteristics of a Good Short Story.
Bret Harte's Early Life, as reflected in his works.

6. Assign the following speeches to the proper speakers :—

"This yer camp's played out."
"That cock won't fight here, young man."
"They say he looks like me. Do you think so?"
"*I* don't mind the old woman. She don't b'long to *me*."
"If you can reach there in two days she's safe."
"Your weppings might get you into trouble at Red Dog, and your money's a temptation to the evilly-disposed."

7. What do the above speeches reveal concerning the respective speakers?

8. Consider (*a*) the opening, and (*b*) the closing sentences of each tale. Which do you think the most effective of each kind?

9. Reproduce as well as you can from memory (*a*) Tennessee's conversation with his captor, (*b*) Scott's last words, (*c*) Dick Bullen's words spoken before he fainted, (*d*) Mr Oakhurst's epitaph, (*e*) Mrs Brown's address to the sleeping Baby. Compare each of your reproductions with the original.

10. Write from memory an outline of one of the tales.

11. As an exercise in prose, write a description of the scene as depicted in the following poem by Bret Harte. The verses were written in July 1870, after he had heard of the death of Charles Dickens. Use as far as you can your own words in your effort to retell the author's vivid description and the thoughts he expresses so beautifully.

DICKENS IN CAMP

Above the pines the moon was slowly drifting,
The river sang below;
The dim Sierras, far beyond, uplifting
Their minarets of snow.

The roaring camp-fire, with rude humour, painted
The ruddy tints of health
On haggard face and form that drooped and fainted
In the fierce race for wealth;

Till one arose, and from his pack's scant treasure
A hoarded volume drew,
And cards were dropped from hands of listless leisure,
To hear the tale anew;

And then, while round them shadows gathered faster,
And as the firelight fell,
He read aloud the book wherein the Master
Had writ of "Little Nell."

Perhaps 'twas boyish fancy—for the reader
Was youngest of them all—
But, as he read, from clustering pine and cedar
A silence seemed to fall ;

The fir-trees, gathering closer in the shadows,
Listened in every spray,
While the whole camp, with " Nell," on English meadows
Wandered and lost their way.

And so in mountain solitudes—o'ertaken
As by some spell divine—
Their cares dropped from them like the needles shaken
From out the gusty pine.

Lost is that camp, and wasted all its fire ;
And he who wrought that spell ?—
Ah, towering pine and stately Kentish spire,
Ye have one tale to tell !

Lost is that camp ! but let its fragrant story
Blend with the breath that thrills
With hop-vines' incense all the pensive glory
That fills the Kentish hills.

And on that grave where English oak and holly
And laurel wreaths intwine,
Deem it not all a too presumptuous folly—
This spray of Western pine.

BRET HARTE.

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