

**From *Two Years before the Mast* (1840)  
by Richard Henry Dana (1815-1882)**

*from* CHAPTER VIII

... Tuesday, Jan 13th, 1835, we made the land at Point Conception, lat 34÷ 32' N., long 120÷ 06' W. The port of Santa Barbara, to which we were bound, lying about sixty miles to the southward of this point, we continued sailing down the coast during the day and following night, and on the next morning,

Jan. 14th, 1835, we came to anchor in the spacious bay of Santa Barbara, after a voyage of one hundred and fifty days from Boston.

**CHAPTER IX CALIFORNIA—A SOUTH-EASTER**

California extends along nearly the whole of the western coast of Mexico, between the gulf of California in the south and the bay of Sir Francis Drake on the north, or between the 22d and 38th degrees of north latitude. It is subdivided into two provinces—Lower or Old California, lying between the gulf and the 32d degree of latitude, or near it; (the division line running, I believe, between the bay of Todos Santos and the port of San Diego;) and New or Upper California, the southernmost port of which is San Diego, in lat. 32÷ 39', and the northernmost, San Francisco, situated in the large bay discovered by Sir Francis Drake, in lat. 37÷ 58', and called after him by the English, though the Mexicans call it Yerba Buena. Upper California has the seat of its government at Monterey, where is also the custom-house, the only one on the coast, and at which every vessel intending to trade on the coast must enter its cargo before it can commence its

traffic. We were to trade upon this coast exclusively, and therefore expected to go to Monterey at first; but the captain's orders from home were to put in at Santa Barbara, which is the central port of the coast, and wait there for the agent who lives there, and transacts all the business for the firm to which our vessel belonged.

The bay, or, as it was commonly called, the canal of Santa Barbara, is very large, being formed by the main land on one side, (between Point Conception on the north and Point St. Buena Ventura on the south,) which here bends in like a crescent, and three large islands opposite to it and at the distance of twenty miles. This is just sufficient to give it the name of a bay, while at the same time it is so large and so much exposed to the south-east and north-west winds, that it is little better than an open roadstead; and the whole swell of the Pacific ocean rolls in here before a southeaster, and breaks with so heavy a surf in the shallow waters, that it is highly dangerous to lie near to the shore during the south-easter season; that is, between the months of November and April.

This wind (the south-easter) is the bane of the coast of California. Between the months of November and April, (including a part of each,) which is the rainy season in this latitude, you are never safe from it, and accordingly, in the ports which are open to it, vessels are obliged, during these months, to lie at anchor at a distance of three miles from the shore, with slip-ropes on their cables, ready to slip and go to sea at a moment's warning. The only ports which are safe from this wind are San Francisco and Monterey in the north, and San Diego in the south.

As it was January when we arrived, and the middle of the south-easter season, we accordingly came to anchor at the distance of three miles from the shore, in eleven fathoms water, and bent a slip-rope and buoys to our cables, cast off the yard-arm gaskets from the sails, and stopped them all with rope-yarns. After we had done this, the boat went ashore with the captain, and returned with orders to the mate to send a boat ashore for him at sundown. I did not go in the first boat, and was glad to find that there was another going before night; for after so long a voyage as ours had been, a few hours is long to pass in sight and out of reach of land. We spent the day on board in the usual avocations; but as this was the first time we had been without the captain, we felt a little more freedom, and looked about us to see what sort of a country we had got into, and were to spend a year or two of our lives in.

In the first place, it was a beautiful day, and so warm that we had on straw hats, duck trowsers, and all the summer gear; and as this was mid-winter, it spoke well for the climate; and we afterwards found that the thermometer never fell to the freezing-point throughout the winter, and that there was very little difference between the seasons, except that during a long period of rainy and south-easterly weather, thick clothes were not uncomfortable.

The large bay lay about us, nearly smooth, as there was hardly a breath of wind stirring, though the boat's crew who went ashore told us that the long ground swell broke into a heavy surf upon the beach. There was only one vessel in the port—a long, sharp brig of about 300 tons, with raking masts and very square yards,

and English colors at her peak. We afterwards learned that she was built at Guayaquil, and named the Ayacucho, after the place where the battle was fought that gave Peru her independence, and was now owned by a Scotchman named Wilson, who commanded her, and was engaged in the trade between Callao, the Sandwich Islands, and California. She was a fast sailer, as we frequently afterwards perceived, and had a crew of Sandwich Islanders on board. Beside this vessel there was no object to break the surface of the bay. Two points ran out as the horns of the crescent, one of which—the one to the westward—was low and sandy, and is that to which vessels are obliged to give a wide berth when running out for a south-easter; the other is high, bold, and well wooded, and, we were told, has a mission upon it, called St. Buenaventura, from which the point is named. In the middle of this crescent, directly opposite the anchoring ground, lie the mission and town of Santa Barbara, on a low, flat plain, but little above the level of the sea, covered with grass, though entirely without trees, and surrounded on three sides by an amphitheatre of mountains, which slant off to the distance of fifteen or twenty miles. The mission stands a little back of the town, and is a large building, or rather a collection of buildings, in the centre of which is a high tower, with a belfry of five bells; and the whole, being plastered, makes quite a show at a distance, and is the mark by which vessels come to anchor. The town lies a little nearer to the beach—about half a mile from it—and is composed of one-story houses built of brown clay—some of them plastered—with red tiles on the roofs. I should judge that there were about an hundred of them; and in the midst of them stands the Presidio, or fort, built of the same materials, and apparently but little

stronger. The town is certainly finely situated, with a bay in front, and an amphitheatre of hills behind. The only thing which diminishes its beauty is, that the hills have no large trees upon them, they having been all burnt by a great fire which swept them off about a dozen years before, and they had not yet grown up again. The fire was described to me by an inhabitant, as having been a very terrible and magnificent sight. The air of the whole valley was so heated that the people were obliged to leave the town and take up their quarters for several days upon the beach.

Just before sun-down the mate ordered a boat's crew ashore, and I went as one of the number. We passed under the stern of the English brig, and had a long pull ashore. I shall never forget the impression which our first landing on the beach of California made upon me. The sun had just gone down; it was getting dusky; the damp night wind was beginning to blow, and the heavy swell of the Pacific was setting in, and breaking in loud and high "combers" upon the beach. We lay on our oars in the swell, just outside of the surf, waiting for a good chance to run in, when a boat, which had put off from the Ayacucho just after us, came alongside of us, with a crew of dusky Sandwich Islanders, talking and halooing in their outlandish tongue. They knew that we were novices in this kind of boating, and waited to see us go in. The second mate, however, who steered our boat, determined to have the advantage of their experience, and would not go in first. Finding, at length, how matters stood, they gave a shout, and taking advantage of a great comber which came swelling in, rearing its head, and lifting up the stern of our boat nearly perpendicular, and again dropping it in the trough, they gave three

or four long and strong pulls, and went in on top of the great wave, throwing their oars overboard, and as far from the boat as they could throw them, and jumping out the instant that the boat touched the beach, and then seizing hold of her and running her up high and dry upon the sand. We saw, at once, how it was to be done, and also the necessity of keeping the boat "stern on" to the sea; for the instant the sea should strike upon her broad-side or quarter, she would be driven up broad-side-on, and capsized. We pulled strongly in, and as soon as we felt that the sea had got hold of us and was carrying us in with the speed of a race-horse, we threw the oars as far from the boat as we could, and took hold of the gunwale, ready to spring out and seize her when she struck, the officer using his utmost strength to keep her stern on. We were shot up upon the beach like an arrow from a bow, and seizing the boat, ran her up high and dry, and soon picked up our oars, and stood by her, ready for the captain to come down.

Finding that the captain did not come immediately, we put our oars in the boat, and leaving one to watch it, walked about the beach to see what we could, of the place. The beach is nearly a mile in length between the two points, and of smooth sand. We had taken the only good landing-place, which is in the middle; it being more stony toward the ends. It is about twenty yards in width from high-water mark to a slight bank at which the soil begins, and so hard that it is a favorite place for running horses. It was growing dark, so that we could just distinguish the dim outlines of the two vessels in the offing; and the great seas were rolling in, in regular lines, growing larger and larger as they approached the shore, and hanging over the beach upon which they were to break, when their tops would curl over and

turn white with foam, and, beginning at one extreme of the line, break rapidly to the other, as a long card-house falls when the children knock down the cards at one end. The Sandwich Islanders, in the mean time, had turned their boat round, and ran her down into the water, and were loading her with hides and tallow. As this was the work in which we were soon to be engaged, we looked on with some curiosity. They ran the boat into the water so far that every large sea might float her, and two of them, with their trowsers rolled up, stood by the bows, one on each side, keeping her in her right position. This was hard work; for beside the force they had to use upon the boat, the large seas nearly took them off their legs. The others were running from the boat to the bank, upon which, out of the reach of the water, was a pile of dry bullocks' hides, doubled lengthwise in the middle, and nearly as stiff as boards. These they took upon their heads, one or two at a time, and carried down to the boat, where one of their number stowed them away. They were obliged to carry them on their heads, to keep them out of the water, and we observed that they had on thick woolen caps. "Look here, Bill, and see what you're coming to!" said one of our men to another who stood by the boat. "Well, D—," said the second mate to me, "this does not look much like Cambridge college, does it? This is what I call 'head work.'" To tell the truth, it did not look very encouraging.

After they had got through with the hides, they laid hold of the bags of tallow, (the bags are made of hide, and are about the size of a common meal bag,) and lifting each upon the shoulders of two men, one at each end, walked off with them to the boat, and prepared to go aboard. Here, too, was something for us to

learn. The man who steered, shipped his oar and stood up in the stern, and those that pulled the after oars sat upon their benches, with their oars shipped, ready to strike out as soon as she was afloat. The two men at the bows kept their places; and when, at length, a large sea came in and floated her, seized hold of the gunwale, and ran out with her till they were up to their armpits, and then tumbled over the gunwale into the bows, dripping with water. The men at the oars struck out, but it wouldn't do; the sea swept back and left them nearly high and dry. The two fellows jumped out again; and the next time they succeeded better, and, with the help of a deal of outlandish hallooing and bawling, got her well off. We watched them till they were out of the breakers, and saw them steering for their vessel, which was now hidden in the darkness.

The sand of the beach began to be cold to our bare feet; the frogs set up their croaking in the marshes, and one solitary owl, from the end of the distant point, gave out his melancholy note, mellowed by the distance, and we began to think that it was high time for "the old man," as the captain is generally called, to come down. In a few minutes we heard something coming towards us. It was a man on horseback. He came up on the full gallop, reined up near us, addressed a few words to us, and receiving no answer, wheeled around and galloped off again. He was nearly as dark as an Indian, with a large Spanish hat, blanket cloak or surreppa, and leather leggins, with a long knife stuck in them. "This is the seventh city that ever I was in, and no Christian one neither," said Bill Brown. "Stand by!" said Tom, "you haven't seen the worst of it yet." In the midst of this conversation the captain appeared; and we winded the boat round, shoved her down, and prepared to go off.

The captain, who had been on the coast before and “knew the ropes,” took the steering oar, and we went off in the same way as the other boat. I, being the youngest, had the pleasure of standing at the bow, and getting wet through. We went off well, though the seas were high. Some of them lifted us up, and sliding from under us, seemed to let us drop through the air like a flat plank upon the body of the water. In a few minutes we were in the low, regular swell, and pulled for a light, which, as we came up, we found had been run up to our trysail gaff.

Coming aboard, we hoisted up all the boats, and diving down into the forecabin, changed our wet clothes, and got our supper. After supper the sailors lighted their pipes, (cigars, those of us who had them,) and we had to tell all we had seen ashore. Then followed conjectures about the people ashore, the length of the voyage, carrying hides, etc., until eight bells, when all hands were called aft, and the “anchor watch” set. We were to stand two in a watch, and as the nights were pretty long, two hours were to make a watch. The second mate was to keep the deck until eight o’clock, and all hands were to be called at daybreak, and the word was passed to keep a bright look-out, and to call the mate if it should come on to blow from the south-east. We had also orders to strike the bells every half-hour through the night, as at sea. My watchmate was John, the Swedish sailor, and we stood from twelve to two, he walking the larboard side, and I the starboard. At daylight all hands were called, and we went through the usual process of washing down, swabbing, etc., and got breakfast at eight o’clock. In the course of the forenoon, a boat went aboard of the Ayacucho and brought off a quarter of beef, which made us a fresh bite for

dinner. This we were glad enough to have, and the mate told us that we should live upon fresh beef while we were on the coast, as it was cheaper here than the salt. While at dinner, the cook called, “Sail ho!” and coming on deck, we saw two sails coming round the point. One was a large ship under top-gallant sails, and the other a small hermaphrodite brig. They both backed their topsails and sent boats aboard of us. The ship’s colors had puzzled us, and we found that she was from Genoa, with an assorted cargo, and was trading on the coast. She filled away again, and stood out; being bound up the coast to San Francisco. The crew of the brig’s boat were Sandwich Islanders, but one of them, who spoke a little English, told us that she was the Loriotte, Captain Nye, from Oahu, and was engaged in this trade. She was a lump of a thing —what the sailors call a butter-box. This vessel, as well as the Ayacucho, and others which we afterwards saw engaged in the same trade, have English or Americans for officers, and two or three before the mast to do the work upon the rigging, and to rely upon for seamanship, while the rest of the crew are Sandwich Islanders, who are active, and very useful in boating.

The three captains went ashore after dinner, and came off again at night. When in port, everything is attended to by the chief mate; the captain, unless he is also supercargo, has little to do, and is usually ashore much of his time. This we thought would be pleasanter for us, as the mate was a good-natured man and not very strict. So it was for a time, but we were worse off in the end; for wherever the captain is a severe, energetic man, and the mate is wanting in both these qualities, there will always be trouble. And trouble we had already begun to anticipate. The captain had several times found fault with

the mate, in presence of the crew; and hints had been dropped that all was not right between them. When this is the case, and the captain suspects that his officer is too easy and familiar with the crew, then he begins to interfere in all the duties, and to draw the reins tighter, and the crew have to suffer.

*from* CHAPTER X A SOUTH-EASTER—PASSAGE UP THE COAST

This night, after sundown, it looked black at the southward and eastward, and we were told to keep a bright look-out. Expecting to be called up, we turned in early. Waking up about midnight, I found a man who had just come down from his watch, striking a light. He said that it was beginning to puff up from the south-east, and that the sea was rolling in, and he had called the captain; and as he threw himself down on his chest with all his clothes on, I knew that he expected to be called. I felt the vessel pitching at her anchor, and the chain surging and snapping, and lay awake, expecting an instant summons. In a few minutes it came—three knocks on the scuttle, and “All hands ahoy! bear-a-hand up and make sail.” We sprang up for our clothes, and were about halfway dressed, when the mate called out, down the scuttle, “Tumble up here, men! tumble up! before she drags her anchor.” We were on deck in an instant. “Lay aloft and loose the topsails!” shouted the captain, as soon as the first man showed himself. Springing into the rigging, I saw that the Ayacucho’s topsails were loosed, and heard her crew singing-out at the sheets as they were hauling them home. This had probably started our captain; as “old Wilson” (the

captain of the Ayacucho) had been many years on the coast, and knew the signs of the weather. We soon had the topsails loosed; and one hand remaining, as usual, in each top, to overhaul the rigging and light the sail out, the rest of us laid down to man the sheets. While sheeting home, we saw the Ayacucho standing athwart our bows, sharp upon the wind, cutting through the head sea like a knife, with her raking masts and sharp bows running up like the head of a greyhound. It was a beautiful sight. She was like a bird which had been frightened and had spread her wings in flight. After the topsails had been sheeted home, the head yards braced aback, the fore-top-mast staysail hoisted, and the buoys streamed, and all ready forward, for slipping, we went aft and manned the slip-rope which came through the stern port with a turn round the timber-heads. “All ready forward?” asked the captain. “Aye, aye, sir; all ready,” answered the mate. “Let go!” “All gone, sir;” and the iron cable grated over the windlass and through the hawse-hole, and the little vessel’s head swinging off from the wind under the force of her backed head sails, brought the strain upon the slip-rope. “Let go aft!” Instantly all was gone, and we were under weigh. As soon as she was well off from the wind, we filled away the head yards, braced all up sharp, set the foresail and trysail, and left our anchorage well astern, giving the point a good berth. “Nye’s off too,” said the captain to the mate; and looking astern, we could just see the little hermaphrodite brig under sail standing after us.

It now began to blow fresh; the rain fell fast, and it grew very black; but the captain would not take in sail until we were well clear of the point. As soon as we left this on our quarter, and were standing out to sea, the order was given, and we

sprang aloft, double reefed each topsail, furling the foresail, and double reefed the trysail, and were soon under easy sail. In those cases of slipping for south-easters, there is nothing to be done, after you have got clear of the coast, but to lie-to under easy sail, and wait for the gale to be over, which seldom lasts more than two days, and is often over in twelve hours; but the wind never comes back to the southward until there has been a good deal of rain fallen. "Go below the watch," said the mate; but here was a dispute which watch it should be, which the mate soon however settled by sending his watch below, saying that we should have our turn the next time we got under weigh. We remained on deck till the expiration of the watch, the wind blowing very fresh and the rain coming down in torrents. When the watch came up, we wore ship, and stood on the other tack, in towards land. When we came up again, which was at four in the morning, it was very dark, and there was not much wind, but it was raining as I thought I had never seen it rain before. We had on oil-cloth suits and south-wester caps, and had nothing to do but to stand bolt upright and let it pour down upon us. There are no umbrellas, and no sheds to go under, at sea. . . . After we had got through, the mate told us that this was a small touch of California, the like of which we must expect to have through the winter.

After we had furled the sails and got dinner, we saw the Lorientte nearing, and she had her anchor before night. At sun-down we went ashore again, and found the Lorientte's boat waiting on the beach. The Sandwich Islander who could speak English, told us that he had been up to the town; that our agent, Mr. R——, and some other passengers, were going to Monterey with us, and that we were to sail the same night. In a few minutes Captain

T——, with two gentlemen and one female, came down, and we got ready to go off. They had a good deal of baggage, which we put into the bows of the boat, and then two of us took the señora in our arms, and waded with her through the water, and put her down safely in the stern. She appeared much amused with the transaction, and her husband was perfectly satisfied, thinking any arrangement good which saved his wetting his feet. I pulled the after oar, so that I heard the conversation, and learned that one of the men, who, as well as I could see in the darkness, was a young-looking man, in the European dress, and covered up in a large cloak, was the agent of the firm to which our vessel belonged; and the other, who was dressed in the Spanish dress of the country, was a brother of our captain, who had been many years a trader on the coast, and had married the lady who was in the boat. She was a delicate, dark-complexioned young woman, and of one of the best families in California. I also found that we were to sail the same night. As soon as we got on board, the boats were hoisted up, the sails loosed, the windlass manned, the slip-ropes and gear cast off; and after about twenty minutes of heaving at the windlass, making sail, and bracing yards, we were well under weigh, and going with a fair wind up the coast to Monterey. The Lorientte got under weigh at the same time, and was also bound up to Monterey, but as she took a different course from us, keeping the land aboard, while we kept well out to sea, we soon lost sight of her. We had a fair wind, which is something unusual when going up, as the prevailing wind is the north, which blows directly down the coast; whence the northern are called the windward, and the southern the leeward ports.

*from* CHAPTER XI PASSAGE UP  
THE COAST—MONTEREY

We got clear of the islands before sunrise the next morning, and by twelve o'clock were out of the canal, and off Point Conception, the place where we first made the land upon our arrival. This is the largest point on the coast, and is uninhabited headland, stretching out into the Pacific, and has the reputation of being very windy. Any vessel does well which gets by it without a gale, especially in the winter season. . . . After a few days we made the land at Point Pinos, (pines,) which is the headland at the entrance of the bay of Monterey. As we drew in, and ran down the shore, we could distinguish well the face of the country, and found it better wooded than that to the southward of Point Conception. In fact, as I afterwards discovered, Point Conception may be made the dividing line between two different faces of the country. As you go to the northward of the point, the country becomes more wooded, has a richer appearance, and is better supplied with water. This is the case with Monterey, and still more so with San Francisco; while to the southward of the point, as at Santa Barbara, San Pedro, and particularly San Diego, there is very little wood, and the country has a naked, level appearance, though it is still very fertile.

The bay of Monterey is very wide at the entrance, being about twenty-four miles between the two points, Año Nuevo at the north, and Pinos at the south, but narrows gradually as you approach the town, which is situated in a bend, or large cove, at the south-eastern extremity, and about eighteen miles from the points, which makes the whole depth of the bay. The shores are extremely well wooded,

(the pine abounding upon them,) and as it was now the rainy season, everything was as green as nature could make it,—the grass, the leaves, and all; the birds were singing in the woods, and great numbers of wild-fowl were flying over our heads. Here we could lie safe from the south-easters. We came to anchor within two cable lengths of the shore, and the town lay directly before us, making a very pretty appearance; its houses being plastered, which gives a much better effect than those of Santa Barbara, which are of a mud-color. The red tiles, too, on the roofs, contrasted well with the white plastered sides and with the extreme greenness of the lawn upon which the houses—about an hundred in number—were dotted about, here and there, irregularly. There are in this place, and in every other town which I saw in California, no streets, or fences, (except here and there a small patch was fenced in for a garden,) so that the houses are placed at random upon the green, which, as they are of one story and of the cottage form, gives them a pretty effect when seen from a little distance.

It was a fine Saturday afternoon when we came to anchor, the sun about an hour high, and everything looking pleasantly. The Mexican flag was flying from the little square Presidio, and the drums and trumpets of the soldiers, who were out on parade, sounded over the water, and gave great life to the scene. Every one was delighted with the appearance of things. We felt as though we had got into a Christian (which in the sailor's vocabulary means civilized) country. The first impression which California had made upon us was very disagreeable:—the open roadstead of Santa Barbara; anchoring three miles from the shore; running out to sea before every south-easter; landing in a high surf; with a

little dark-looking town, a mile from the beach; and not a sound to be heard, or anything to be seen, but Sandwich Islanders, hides, and tallow-bags. Add to this the gale off Point Conception, and no one can be at a loss to account for our agreeable disappointment in Monterey. Beside all this, we soon learned, which was of no small importance to us, that there was little or no surf here, and this afternoon the beach was as smooth as a duck-pond.

We landed the agent and passengers, and found several persons waiting for them on the beach, among whom were some, who, though dressed in the costume of the country, spoke English; and who, we afterwards learned, were English and Americans who had married and settled in the country.

I also connected with our arrival here another circumstance which more nearly concerns myself; viz, my first act of what the sailors will allow to be seamanship—sending down a royal-yard. I had seen it done once or twice at sea, and an old sailor, whose favor I had taken some pains to gain, had taught me carefully everything which was necessary to be done, and in its proper order, and advised me to take the first opportunity when we were in port, and try it. I told the second mate, with whom I had been pretty thick when he was before the mast, that I would do it, and got him to ask the mate to send me up the first time they were struck. Accordingly I was called upon, and went up, repeating the operations over in my mind, taking care to get everything in its order, for the slightest mistake spoils the whole. Fortunately, I got through without any word from the officer, and heard the “well done” of the mate, when the yard reached the deck, with as much

satisfaction as I ever felt at Cambridge on seeing a “bene” at the foot of a Latin exercise.

## CHAPTER XII LIFE AT MONTEREY

The next day being Sunday, which is the liberty-day among merchantmen, when it is usual to let a part of the crew go ashore, the sailors had depended upon a day on land, and were already disputing who should ask to go, when, upon being called in the morning, we were turned-to upon the rigging, and found that the topmast, which had been sprung, was to come down, and a new one to go up, and top-gallant and royal-masts, and the rigging to be set up. This was too bad. If there is anything that irritates sailors and makes them feel hardly used, it is being deprived of their Sabbath. Not that they would always, or indeed generally, spend it religiously, but it is their only day of rest. Then, too, they are often necessarily deprived of it by storms, and unavoidable duties of all kinds, that to take it from them when lying quietly and safely in port, without any urgent reason, bears the more hardly. The only reason in this case was, that the captain had determined to have the custom-house officers on board on Monday, and wished to have his brig in order. Jack is a slave aboard ship; but still he has many opportunities of thwarting and balking his master. When there is danger, or necessity, or when he is well used, no one can work faster than he; but the instant he feels that he is kept at work for nothing, no sloth could make less headway. He must not refuse his duty, or be in any way disobedient, but all the work that an officer gets out of him, he may be welcome to. Every man who has been three months at sea knows how to “work

Tom Cox's traverse"— "three turns round the long-boat, and a pull at the scuttled-butt." This morning everything went in this way. "Sogering" was the order of the day. Send a man below to get a block, and he would capsize everything before finding it, then not bring it up till an officer had called him twice, and take as much time to put things in order again. Marline-spikes were not to be found; knives wanted a prodigious deal of sharpening, and, generally, three or four were waiting round the grindstone at a time. When a man got to the mast-head, he would come slowly down again to get something which he had forgotten; and after the tackles were got up, six men would pull less than three who pulled "with a will." When the mate was out of sight, nothing was done. It was all uphill work; and at eight o'clock, when we went to breakfast, things were nearly where they were when we began.

During our short meal, the matter was discussed. One proposed refusing to work; but that was mutiny, and of course was rejected at once. I remember, too, that one of the men quoted "Father Taylor," (as they call the seamen's preacher at Boston,) who told them that if they were ordered to work on Sunday, they must not refuse their duty, and the blame would not come upon them. After breakfast, it leaked out, through the officers, that if we would get through our work soon, we might have a boat in the afternoon and go fishing. This bait was well thrown, and took with several who were fond of fishing; and all began to find that as we had one thing to do, and were not to be kept at work for the day, the sooner we did it, the better.

Accordingly, things took a new aspect; and before two o'clock this work, which was in a fair way to last two days,

was done; and five of us went a fishing in the jolly-boat, in the direction of Point Pinos; but leave to go ashore was refused. Here we saw the *Loriotte*, which sailed with us from Santa Barbara, coming slowly in with a light sea-breeze, which sets in towards afternoon, having been becalmed off the point all the first part of the day. We took several fish of various kinds, among which cod and perch abounded, and F——, (the cidevant second mate,) who was of our number, brought up with his hook a large and beautiful pearl-oyster shell. We afterwards learned that this place was celebrated for shells, and that a small schooner had made a good voyage, by carrying a cargo of them to the United States.

We returned by sun-down, and found the *Loriotte* at anchor, within a cable's length of the *Pilgrim*. The next day we were "turned-to" early, and began taking off the hatches, overhauling the cargo, and getting everything ready for inspection. At eight, the officers of the customs, five in number, came on board, and began overhauling the cargo, manifest, etc.

The Mexican revenue laws are very strict, and require the whole cargo to be landed, examined, and taken on board again; but our agent, Mr. R——, had succeeded in compounding with them for the two last vessels, and saving the trouble of taking the cargo ashore. The officers were dressed in the costume which we found prevailed through the country. A broad-brimmed hat, usually of a black or dark-brown color, with a gilt or figured band round the crown, and lined inside with silk; a short jacket of silk or figured calico, (the European skirted body-coat is never worn;) the shirt open in the neck; rich waistcoat, if any; pantaloons wide,

straight, and long, usually of velvet, velveteen, or broadcloth; or else short breeches and white stockings. They wear the deer-skin shoe, which is of a dark-brown color, and, (being made by Indians,) usually a good deal ornamented. They have no suspenders, but always wear a sash round the waist, which is generally red, and varying in quality with the means of the wearer. Add to this the never-failing cloak, and you have the dress of the Californian. This last garment, the cloak, is always a mark of the rank and wealth of the owner. The "gente de razon," or aristocracy, wear cloaks of black or dark blue broadcloth, with as much velvet and trimmings as may be; and from this they go down to the blanket of the Indian; the middle classes wearing something like a large table-cloth, with a hole in the middle for the head to go through. This is often as coarse as a blanket, but being beautifully woven with various colors, is quite showy at a distance. Among the Mexicans there is no working class; (the Indians being slaves and doing all the hard work;) and every rich man looks like a grandee, and every poor scamp like a broken-down gentleman. I have often seen a man with a fine figure, and courteous manners, dressed in broadcloth and velvet, with a noble horse completely covered with trappings; without a real in his pocket, and absolutely suffering for something to eat.

### **CHAPTER XIII TRADING—A BRITISH SAILOR**

The next day, the cargo having been entered in due form, we began trading. The trade-room was fitted up in the steerage, and furnished out with the lighter goods, and with specimens of the rest of the cargo; and M——, a young man

who came out from Boston with us, before the mast, was taken out of the fore-castle, and made supercargo's clerk. He was well qualified for the business, having been clerk in a counting-house in Boston. He had been troubled for some time with the rheumatism, which unfitted him for the wet and exposed duty of a sailor on the coast. For a week or ten days all was life on board. The people came off to look and to buy—men, women, and children; and we were continually going in the boats, carrying goods and passengers,—for they have no boats of their own. Everything must dress itself and come aboard and see the new vessel, if it were only to buy a paper of pins. The agent and his clerk managed the sales, while we were busy in the hold or in the boats. Our cargo was an assorted one; that is, it consisted of everything under the sun. We had spirits of all kinds, (sold by the cask,) teas, coffee, sugars, spices, raisins, molasses, hardware, crockery-ware, tinware, cutlery, clothing of all kinds, boots and shoes from Lynn, calicoes and cottons from Lowell, crepes, silks; also shawls, scarfs, necklaces, jewelry, and combs for the ladies; furniture; and in fact, everything that can be imagined, from Chinese fireworks to English cart-wheels—of which we had a dozen pairs with their iron rims on.

The Californians are an idle, thriftless people, and can make nothing for themselves. The country abounds in grapes, yet they buy bad wines made in Boston and brought round by us, at an immense price, and retail it among themselves at a real (12½ cents) by the small wine-glass. Their hides, too, which they value at two dollars in money, they give for something which costs seventy-five cents in Boston; and buy shoes (like as not, made of their own hides, and which

have been carried twice around Cape Horn) at three or four dollars, and “chicken-skin” boots at fifteen dollars apiece. Things sell, on an average, at an advance of nearly three hundred per cent upon the Boston prices. This is partly owing to the heavy duties which the government, in their wisdom, with the intent, no doubt, of keeping the silver in the country, has laid upon imports. These duties, and the enormous expenses of so long a voyage, keep all merchants, but those of heavy capital, from engaging in the trade. Nearly two-thirds of all the articles imported into the country from round Cape Horn, for the last six years, have been by the single house of Bryant, Sturgis & Co., to whom our vessel belonged, and who have a permanent agent on the coast.

This kind of business was new to us, and we liked it very well for a few days, though we were hard at work every minute from daylight to dark; and sometimes even later.

By being thus continually engaged in transporting passengers with their goods, to and fro, we gained considerable knowledge of the character, dress, and language of the people. The dress of the men was as I have before described it. The women wore gowns of various texture—silks, crape, calicoes, etc.,—made after the European style, except that the sleeves were short, leaving the arm bare, and that they were loose about the waist, having no corsets. They wore shoes of kid, or satin; sashes or belts of bright colors; and almost always a necklace and ear-rings. Bonnets they had none. I only saw one on the coast, and that belonged to the wife of an American sea-captain who had settled in San Diego, and had imported the chaotic mass of straw and ribbon, as a choice

present to his new wife. They wear their hair (which is almost invariably black, or a very dark brown) long in their necks, sometimes loose, and sometimes in long braids; though the married women often do it up on a high comb. Their only protection against the sun and weather is a large mantle which they put over their heads, drawing it close round their faces, when they go out of doors, which is generally only in pleasant weather. When in the house, or sitting out in front of it, which they often do in fine weather, they usually wear a small scarf or neckerchief of a rich pattern. A band, also, about the top of the head, with a cross, star, or other ornament in front, is common. Their complexions are various, depending—as well as their dress and manner—upon their rank; or, in other words, upon the amount of Spanish blood they can lay claim to. Those who are of pure Spanish blood, having never intermarried with the aborigines, have clear brunette complexions, and sometimes, even as fair as those of English women. There are but few of these families in California; being mostly those in official stations, or who, on the expiration of their offices, have settled here upon property which they have acquired; and others who have been banished for state offences. These form the aristocracy; inter-marrying, and keeping up an exclusive system in every respect. They can be told by their complexions, dress, manner, and also by their speech; for, calling themselves Castilians, they are very ambitious of speaking the pure Castilian language, which is spoken in a somewhat corrupted dialect by the lower classes. From this upper class, they go down by regular shades, growing more and more dark and muddy, until you come to the pure Indian, who runs about with nothing upon him but a small piece of cloth, kept up by a wide leather strap

drawn round his waist. Generally speaking, each person's caste is decided by the quality of the blood, which shows itself, too plainly to be concealed, at first sight. Yet the least drop of Spanish blood, if it be only of quadroon or octoroon, is sufficient to raise them from the rank of slaves, and entitle them to a suit of clothes—boots, hat, cloak, spurs, long knife, and all complete, though coarse and dirty as may be,—and to call themselves Españolos, and to hold property, if they can get any.

The fondness for dress among the women is excessive, and is often the ruin of many of them. A present of a fine mantle, or of a necklace or pair of earrings, gains the favor of the greater part of them. Nothing is more common than to see a woman living in a house of only two rooms, and the ground for a floor, dressed in spangled satin shoes, silk gown, high comb, and gilt, if not gold, ear-rings and necklace. If their husbands do not dress them well enough, they will soon receive presents from others. They used to spend whole days on board our vessels, examining the fine clothes and ornaments, and frequently made purchases at a rate which would have made a seamstress or waiting-maid in Boston open her eyes.

Next to the love of dress, I was most struck with the fineness of the voices and beauty of the intonations of both sexes. Every common ruffian-looking fellow, with a slouched hat, blanket cloak, dirty under-dress, and soiled leather leggins, appeared to me to be speaking elegant Spanish. It was a pleasure, simply to listen to the sound of the language, before I could attach any meaning to it. They have a good deal of the Creole drawl, but it is varied with an occasional extreme rapidity of utterance, in which

they seem to skip from consonant to consonant, until, lighting upon a broad, open vowel, they rest upon that to restore the balance of sound. The women carry this peculiarity of speaking to a much greater extreme than the men, who have more evenness and stateliness of utterance. A common bullock-driver, on horseback, delivering a message, seemed to speak like an ambassador at an audience. In fact, they sometimes appeared to me to be a people on whom a curse had fallen, and stripped them of everything but their pride, their manners, and their voices.

Another thing that surprised me was the quantity of silver that was in circulation. I certainly never saw so much silver at one time in my life, as during the week that we were at Monterey. The truth is, they have no credit system, no banks, and no way of investing money but in cattle. They have no circulating medium but silver and hides—which the sailors call "California bank notes." Everything that they buy they must pay for in one or the other of these things. The hides they bring down dried and doubled, in clumsy ox-carts, or upon mules' backs, and the money they carry tied up in a handkerchief;—fifty, eighty, or an hundred dollars and half dollars.

I had never studied Spanish while at college, and could not speak a word, when at Juan Fernandez; but during the latter part of the passage out, I borrowed a grammar and dictionary from the cabin, and by a continual use of these, and a careful attention to every word that I heard spoken, I soon got a vocabulary together, and began talking for myself. As I soon knew more Spanish than any of the crew, (who indeed knew none at all,) and had been at college and knew Latin, I got the name of a great linguist, and was always

sent for by the captain and officers to get provisions, or to carry letters and messages to different parts of the town. I was often sent to get something which I could not tell the name of to save my life; but I liked the business, and accordingly never pleaded ignorance. Sometimes I managed to jump below and take a look at my dictionary before going ashore; or else I overhauled some English resident on my way, and got the word from him; and then, by signs, and the help of my Latin and French, contrived to get along. This was a good exercise for me, and no doubt taught me more than I should have learned by months of study and reading; it also gave me opportunities of seeing the customs, characters, and domestic arrangements of the people; beside being a great relief from the monotony of a day spent on board ship.

Monterey, as far as my observation goes, is decidedly the pleasantest and most civilized-looking place in California. In the centre of it is an open square, surrounded by four lines of one-story plastered buildings, with half a dozen cannon in the centre; some mounted, and others not. This is the "Presidio," or fort. Every town has a presidio in its centre; or rather, every presidio has a town built around it; for the forts were first built by the Mexican government, and then the people built near them for protection. The presidio here was entirely open and unfortified. There were several officers with long titles, and about eighty soldiers, but they were poorly paid, fed, clothed, and disciplined. The governor-general, or, as he is commonly called, the "general," lives here; which makes it the seat of government. He is appointed by the central government at Mexico, and is the chief civil and military officer. In addition to him, each town has a commandant, who is

the chief military officer, and has charge of the fort, and of all transactions with foreigners and foreign vessels; and two or three alcaldes and corregidores, elected by the inhabitants, who are the civil officers. Courts and jurisprudence they have no knowledge of. Small municipal matters are regulated by the alcaldes and corregidores; and everything relating to the general government, to the military, and to foreigners, by the commandants, acting under the governor-general. Capital cases are decided by him, upon personal inspection, if he is near; or upon minutes sent by the proper officers, if the offender is at a distant place. No Protestant has any civil rights, nor can he hold any property, or, indeed, remain more than a few weeks on shore, unless he belong to some vessel. Consequently, the Americans and English who intend to remain here become Catholics, to a man; the current phrase among them being,—"A man must leave his conscience at Cape Horn."

But to return to Monterey. The houses here, as everywhere else in California, are of one story, built of clay made into large bricks, about a foot and a half square and three or four inches thick, and hardened in the sun. These are cemented together by mortar of the same material, and the whole are of a common dirt-color. The floors are generally of earth, the windows grated and without glass; and the doors, which are seldom shut, open directly into the common room; there being no entries. Some of the more wealthy inhabitants have glass to their windows and board floors; and in Monterey nearly all the houses are plastered on the outside. The better houses, too, have red tiles upon the roofs. The common ones have two or three rooms which open into each other, and are furnished with a bed or two, a few chairs

and tables, a looking-glass, a crucifix of some material or other, and small daubs of paintings enclosed in glass, and representing some miracle or martyrdom. They have no chimneys or fire-places in the houses, the climate being such as to make a fire unnecessary; and all their cooking is done in a small cook-house, separated from the house. The Indians, as I have said before, do all the hard work, two or three being attached to each house; and the poorest persons are able to keep one, at least, for they have only to feed them and give them a small piece of coarse cloth and a belt, for the males; and a coarse gown, without shoes or stockings, for the females.

In Monterey there are a number of English and Americans (English or "Ingles" all are called who speak the English language) who have married Californians, become united to the Catholic church, and acquired considerable property. Having more industry, frugality, and enterprise than the natives, they soon get nearly all the trade into their hands. They usually keep shops, in which they retail the goods purchased in larger quantities from our vessels, and also send a good deal into the interior, taking hides in pay, which they again barter with our vessels. In every town on the coast there are foreigners engaged in this kind of trade, while I recollect but two shops kept by natives. The people are generally suspicious of foreigners, and they would not be allowed to remain, were it not that they become good Catholics, and by marrying natives, and bringing up their children as Catholics and Mexicans, and not teaching them the English language, they quiet suspicion, and even become popular and leading men. The chief alcaldes in Monterey and Santa Barbara were both Yankees by birth.

The men in Monterey appeared to me to be always on horseback. Horses are as abundant here as dogs and chickens were in Juan Fernandez. There are no stables to keep them in, but they are allowed to run wild and graze wherever they please, being branded, and having long leather ropes, called "lassos," attached to their necks and dragging along behind them, by which they can be easily taken. The men usually catch one in the morning, throw a saddle and bridle upon him, and use him for the day, and let him go at night, catching another the next day. When they go on long journeys, they ride one horse down, and catch another, throw the saddle and bridle upon him, and after riding him down, take a third, and so on to the end of the journey. There are probably no better riders in the world. They get upon a horse when only four or five years old, their little legs not long enough to come half way over his sides; and may almost be said to keep on him until they have grown to him. The stirrups are covered or boxed up in front, to prevent their catching when riding through the woods; and the saddles are large and heavy, strapped very tight upon the horse, and have large pommels, or loggerheads, in front, round which the "lasso" is coiled when not in use. They can hardly go from one house to another without getting on a horse, there being generally several standing tied to the door-posts of the little cottages. When they wish to show their activity, they make no use of their stirrups in mounting, but striking the horse, spring into the saddle as he starts, and sticking their long spurs into him, go off on the full run. Their spurs are cruel things, having four or five rowels, each an inch in length, dull and rusty. The flanks of the horses are often sore from them, and I have seen men come in from chasing bullocks with their

horses' hind legs and quarters covered with blood. They frequently give exhibitions of their horsemanship, in races, bull-baitings, etc.; but as we were not ashore during any holyday, we saw nothing of it. Monterey is also a great place for cock-fighting, gambling of all sorts, fandangos, and every kind of amusement and knavery. Trappers and hunters, who occasionally arrive here from over the Rocky mountains, with their valuable skins and furs, are often entertained with every sort of amusement and dissipation, until they have wasted their time and their money, and go back, stripped of everything.

Nothing but the character of the people prevents Monterey from becoming a great town. The soil is as rich as man could wish; climate as good as any in the world; water abundant, and situation extremely beautiful. The harbor, too, is a good one, being subject only to one bad wind, the north; and though the holding-ground is not the best, yet I heard of but one vessel's being driven ashore here. That was a Mexican brig, which went ashore a few months before our arrival, and was a total wreck, all the crew but one being drowned. Yet this was from the carelessness or ignorance of the captain, who paid out all his small cable before he let go his other anchor. The ship *Lagoda*, of Boston, was there at the time, and rode out the gale in safety, without dragging at all, or finding it necessary to strike her top-gallant masts.

The only vessel in port with us was the little *Loriotte*. I frequently went on board her, and became very well acquainted with her Sandwich Island crew. One of them could speak a little English, and from him I learned a good deal about them. They were well formed and active,

with black eyes, intelligent countenances, dark-olive, or, I should rather say, copper complexions and coarse black hair, but not woolly like the negroes. They appeared to be talking continually. In the fore-castle there was a complete Babel. Their language is extremely guttural, and not pleasant at first, but improves as you hear it more, and is said to have great capacity. They use a good deal of gesticulation, and are exceedingly animated, saying with their might what their tongues find to say. They are complete water-dogs, therefore very good in boating. It is for this reason that there are so many of them on the coast of California; they being very good hands in the surf. They are also quick and active in the rigging, and good hands in warm weather; but those who have been with them round Cape Horn, and in high latitudes, say that they are useless in cold weather. In their dress they are precisely like our sailors. In addition to these Islanders, the vessel had two English sailors, who acted as boatswains over the Islanders, and took care of the rigging. One of them I shall always remember as the best specimen of the thoroughbred English sailor that I ever saw. He had been to sea from a boy, having served a regular apprenticeship of seven years, as all English sailors are obliged to do, and was then about four or five and twenty. He was tall; but you only perceived it when he was standing by the side of others, for the great breadth of his shoulders and chest made him appear but little above the middle height. His chest was as deep as it was wide; his arm like that of Hercules; and his hand "the fist of a tar—every hair a rope-yarn." With all this he had one of the pleasantest smiles I ever saw. His cheeks were of a handsome brown; his teeth brilliantly white; and his hair, of a raven black, waved in loose curls all over his head, and fine, open forehead; and his eyes

he might have sold to a duchess at the price of diamonds, for their brilliancy. As for their color, they were like the Irishman's pig, which would not stay to be counted, every change of position and light seemed to give them a new hue; but their prevailing color was black, or nearly so. Take him with his well-varnished black tarpaulin stuck upon the back of his head; his long locks coming down almost into his eyes; his white duck trowsers and shirt; blue jacket; and black kerchief, tied loosely round his neck; and he was a fine specimen of manly beauty. On his broad chest he had stamped with India ink "Parting moments;"—a ship ready to sail; a boat on the beach; and a girl and her sailor lover taking their farewell. Underneath were printed the initials of his own name, and two other letters, standing for some name which he knew better than I did. This was very well done, having been executed by a man who made it his business to print with India ink, for sailors, at Havre. On one of his broad arms, he had the crucifixion, and on the other the sign of the "foul anchor."

He was very fond of reading, and we lent him most of the books which we had in the fore-castle, which he read and returned to us the next time we fell in with him. He had a good deal of information, and his captain said he was a perfect seaman, and worth his weight in gold on board a vessel, in fair weather and in foul. His strength must have been great, and he had the sight of a vulture. It is strange that one should be so minute in the description of an unknown, outcast sailor, whom one may never see again, and whom no one may care to hear about; but so it is. Some people we see under no remarkable circumstances, but whom, for some reason or other, we never forget. He called himself Bill Jackson; and I know no one of

all my accidental acquaintances to whom I would more gladly give a shake of the hand than to him. Whoever falls in with him will find a handsome, hearty fellow, and a good shipmate.

Sunday came again while we were at Monterey, but as before, it brought us no holyday. The people on shore dressed themselves and came off in greater numbers than ever, and we were employed all day in boating and breaking out cargo, so that we had hardly time to eat. Our cidevant second mate, who was determined to get liberty if it was to be had, dressed himself in a long coat and black hat, and polished his shoes, and went aft and asked to go ashore. He could not have done a more imprudent thing; for he knew that no liberty would be given; and besides, sailors, however sure they may be of having liberty granted them always go aft in their working clothes, to appear as though they had no reason to expect anything, and then wash, dress, and shave, after they get their liberty. But this poor fellow was always getting into hot water, and if there was a wrong way of doing a thing, was sure to hit upon it. We looked to see him go aft, knowing pretty well what his reception would be. The captain was walking the quarter-deck, smoking his morning cigar, and F— went as far as the break of the deck, and there waited for him to notice him. The captain took two or three turns, and then walking directly up to him, surveyed him from head to foot, and lifting up his forefinger, said a word or two, in a tone too low for us to hear, but which had a magical effect upon poor F—. He walked forward, sprang into the fore-castle, and in a moment more made his appearance in his common clothes, and went quietly to work again. What the captain said to him, we never could get him to tell, but it certainly changed him

outwardly and inwardly in a most surprising manner.

**From CHAPTER XIV SANTA BARBARA—HIDE-DROGHING—HARBOR DUTIES—DISCONTENT—SAN PEDRO**

. . . Leaving Santa Barbara, we coasted along down, the country appearing level or moderately uneven, and, for the most part, sandy and treeless; until, doubling a high, sandy point, we let go our anchor at a distance of three or three and a half miles from shore. It was like a vessel, bound to Halifax, coming to anchor on the Grand Banks; for the shore being low, appeared to be at a greater distance than it actually was, and we thought we might as well have staid at Santa Barbara, and sent our boat down for the hides. The land was of a clayey consistency, and, as far as the eye could reach, entirely bare of trees and even shrubs; and there was no sign of a town,—not even a house to be seen. What brought us into such a place, we could not conceive. No sooner had we come to anchor, than the slip-rope, and the other preparations for south-easters, were got ready; and there was reason enough for it, for we lay exposed to every wind that could blow, except the north-west, and that came over a flat country with a range of more than a league of water. As soon as everything was snug on board, the boat was lowered, and we pulled ashore, our new officer, who had been several times in the port before, taking the place of steersman. As we drew in, we found the tide low, and the rocks and stones, covered with kelp and sea-weed, lying bare for the distance of nearly an eighth of a mile. Picking our way barefooted over these, we came to what is called the landing-place, at high-water mark. The soil was as it appeared at first, loose and clayey, and except the stalks of the mustard plant, there was no vegetation. Just in front of the landing, and immediately over it, was a small hill, which, from its being not more than thirty or forty feet high, we had not perceived from our anchorage. Over this hill we saw three men coming down, dressed partly like sailors and partly like Californians; one of them having on a pair of untanned leather trowsers and a red baize shirt. When they came down to us, we found that they were Englishmen, and they told us that they had belonged to a small Mexican brig which had been driven ashore here in a south-

easter, and now lived in a small house just over the hill. Going up this hill with them, we saw, just behind it, a small, low building, with one room, containing a fire-place, cooking apparatus, etc., and the rest of it unfinished, and used as a place to store hides and goods. This, they told us, was built by some traders in the Pueblo, (a town about thirty miles in the interior, to which this was the port,) and used by them as a storehouse, and also as a lodging place when they came down to trade with the vessels. These three men were employed by them to keep the house in order, and to look out for the things stored in it. They said that they had been there nearly a year; had nothing to do most of the time, living upon beef, hard bread, and frijoles (a peculiar kind of bean very abundant in California). The nearest house, they told us, was a Rancho, or cattle-farm, about three miles off; and one of them went up, at the request of our officer, to order a horse to be sent down, with which the agent, who was on board, might go up to the Pueblo. From one of them, who was an intelligent English sailor, I learned a good deal, in a few minutes' conversation, about the place, its trade, and the news from the southern ports. San Diego, he said, was about eighty miles to the leeward of San Pedro; that they had heard from there, by a Mexican who came up on horseback, that the California had sailed for Boston, and that the Lagoda, which had been in San Pedro only a few weeks before, was taking in her cargo for Boston. The Ayacucho was also there, loading for Callao, and the little Lorient, which had run directly down from Monterey, where we left her. San Diego, he told me, was a small, snug place, having very little trade, but decidedly the best harbor on the coast, being completely land-locked, and the water as smooth as a duck-pond. This was the depot for all the vessels engaged in the trade; each one having a large house there, built of rough boards, in which they stowed their hides, as fast as they collected them in their trips up and down the coast, and when they had procured a full cargo, spent a few weeks there, taking it in, smoking ship, supplying wood and water, and making other preparations for the voyage home. The Lagoda was now about this business. When we should be about it, was more than I could tell; two years, at least, I thought to myself.

I also learned, to my surprise, that the desolate-looking place we were in was the best place on the whole coast for hides. It was the only port for a distance of eighty miles, and about thirty miles in the interior

was a fine plane country, filled with herds of cattle, in the centre of which was the Pueblo de los Angeles—the largest town in California—and several of the wealthiest missions; to all of which San Pedro was the sea-port.

Having made our arrangements for a horse to take the agent to the Pueblo the next day, we picked our way again over the green, slippery rocks, and pulled aboard. By the time we reached the vessel, which was so far off that we could hardly see her, in the increasing darkness, the boats were hoisted up, and the crew at supper. Going down into the fore-castle, eating our supper, and lighting our cigars and pipes, we had, as usual, to tell all we had seen or heard ashore. We all agreed that it was the worst place we had seen yet, especially for getting off hides, and our lying off at so great a distance looked as though it was bad for south-easters. After a few disputes as to whether we should have to carry our goods up the hill, or not, we talked of San Diego, the probability of seeing the Lagoda before she sailed, etc., etc.

The next day we pulled the agent ashore, and he went up to visit the Pueblo and the neighboring missions; and in a few days, as the result of his labors, large ox-carts, and droves of mules, loaded with hides, were seen coming over the flat country. We loaded our long-boat with goods of all kinds, light and heavy, and pulled ashore. After landing and rolling them over the stones upon the beach, we stopped, waiting for the carts to come down the hill and take them; but the captain soon settled the matter by ordering us to carry them all up to the top, saying that, that was “California fashion.” So what the oxen would not do, we were obliged to do. The hill was low, but steep,

and the earth, being clayey and wet with the recent rains, was but bad holding-ground for our feet. The heavy barrels and casks we rolled up with some difficulty, getting behind and putting our shoulders to them; now and then our feet slipping, added to the danger of the casks rolling back upon us. But the greatest trouble was with the large boxes of sugar. These, we had to place upon oars, and lifting them up rest the oars upon our shoulders, and creep slowly up the hill with the gait of a funeral procession. After an hour or two of hard work, we got them all up, and found the carts standing full of hides, which we had to unload, and also to load again with our own goods; the lazy Indians, who came down with them, squatting down on their hams, looking on, doing nothing, and when we asked them to help us, only shaking their heads, or drawling out “no quiero.”

Having loaded the carts, we started up the Indians, who went off, one on each side of the oxen, with long sticks, sharpened at the end, to punch them with. This is one of the means of saving labor in California;—two Indians to two oxen. Now, the hides were to be got down; and for this purpose, we brought the boat round to a place where the hill was steeper, and threw them down, letting them slide over the slope. Many of them lodged, and we had to let ourselves down and set them agoing again; and in this way got covered with dust, and our clothes torn. After we had got them all down, we were obliged to take them on our heads, and walk over the stones, and through the water, to the boat. The water and the stones together would wear out a pair of shoes a day, and as shoes were very scarce and very dear, we were compelled to go barefooted. At night, we went on board, having had the hardest and most

disagreeable day's work that we had yet experienced. For several days, we were employed in this manner, until we had landed forty or fifty tons of goods, and brought on board about two thousand hides; when the trade began to slacken, and we were kept at work, on board, during the latter part of the week, either in the hold or upon the rigging. On Thursday night, there was a violent blow from the northward, but as this was off-shore, we had only to let go our other anchor and hold on. We were called up at night to send down the royal-yards. It was as dark as a pocket, and the vessel pitching at her anchors, I went up to the fore, and my friend S——, to the main, and we soon had them down "ship-shape and Bristol fashion," for, as we had now got used to our duty aloft, everything above the cross-trees was left to us, who were the youngest of the crew, except one boy.

***From* CHAPTER XV A FLOGGING—  
A NIGHT ON SHORE—THE STATE  
OF THINGS ON BOARD—SAN  
DIEGO**

. . . We sailed leisurely down the coast before a light fair wind, keeping the land well aboard, and saw two other missions, looking like blocks of white plaster, shining in the distance; one of which, situated on the top of a high hill, was San Juan Campestrano, under which vessels sometimes come to anchor, in the summer season, and take off hides. The most distant one was St. Louis Rey, which the third mate said was only fifteen miles from San Diego. At sunset on the second day, we had a large and well wooded headland directly before us, behind which lay the little harbor of San Diego. We were becalmed off this point all night, but the

next morning, which was Saturday, the 14th of March, having a good breeze, we stood round the point, and hauling our wind, brought the little harbor, which is rather the outlet of a small river, right before us. Every one was anxious to get a view of the new place. A chain of high hills, beginning at the point, (which was on our larboard hand, coming in,) protected the harbor on the north and west, and ran off into the interior as far as the eye could reach. On the other sides, the land was low, and green, but without trees. The entrance is so narrow as to admit but one vessel at a time, the current swift, and the channel runs so near to a low stony point that the ship's sides appeared almost to touch it. There was no town in sight, but on the smooth sand beach, abreast, and within a cable's length of which three vessels lay moored, were four large houses, built of rough boards, and looking like the great barns in which ice is stored on the borders of the large ponds near Boston; with piles of hides standing round them, and men in red shirts and large straw hats, walking in and out of the doors. These were the hide-houses. . . .

Sunday, they said, was always given in San Diego, both at the hide-houses and on board the vessels, a large number usually going up to the town, on liberty. We learned a good deal from them about curing and stowing of hides, etc. and they were anxious to have the latest news (seven months old) from Boston. One of their first inquiries was for Father Taylor, the seamen's preacher in Boston. Then followed the usual strain of conversation, inquiries, stories, and jokes, which, one must always hear in a ship's fore-castle, but which are perhaps, after all, no worse, nor, indeed, more gross, than that of many well-dressed gentlemen at their clubs.

## CHAPTER XVI LIBERTY-DAY ON SHORE

The next day being Sunday, after washing and clearing decks, and getting breakfast, the mate came forward with leave for one watch to go ashore, on liberty. We drew lots, and it fell to the larboard, which I was in. Instantly all was preparation. Buckets of fresh water, (which we were allowed in port,) and soap, were put in use; go-ashore jackets and trowsers got out and brushed; pumps, neckerchiefs, and hats overhauled; one lending to another; so that among the whole each one got a good fit-out. A boat was called to pull the "liberty men" ashore, and we sat down in the stern sheets, "as big as pay passengers," and jumping ashore, set out on our walk for the town, which was nearly three miles off.

It is a pity that some other arrangement is not made in merchant vessels, with regard to the liberty-day. When in port, the crews are kept at work all the week, and the only day they are allowed for rest or pleasure is the Sabbath; and unless they go ashore on that day, they cannot go at all. I have heard of a religious captain who gave his crew liberty on Saturdays, after twelve o'clock. This would be a good plan, if shipmasters would bring themselves to give their crews so much time. For young sailors especially, many of whom have been brought up with a regard for the sacredness of the day, this strong temptation to break it, is exceedingly injurious. As it is, it can hardly be expected that a crew, on a long and hard voyage, will refuse a few hours of freedom from toil and the restraints of a vessel, and an opportunity to tread the ground and see

the sights of society and humanity, because it is on a Sunday. It is too much like escaping from prison, or being drawn out of a pit, on the Sabbath day.

I shall never forget the delightful sensation of being in the open air, with the birds singing around me, and escaped from the confinement, labor, and strict rule of a vessel—of being once more in my life, though only for a day, my own master. A sailor's liberty is but for a day; yet while it lasts it is perfect. He is under no one's eye, and can do whatever, and go wherever, he pleases. This day, for the first time, I may truly say, in my whole life, I felt the meaning of a term which I had often heard—the sweets of liberty. My friend S—— was with me, and turning our backs upon the vessels, we walked slowly along, talking of the pleasure of being our own masters, of the times past, and when we were free in the midst of friends, in America, and of the prospect of our return; and planning where we would go, and what we would do, when we reached home. It was wonderful how the prospect brightened, and how short and tolerable the voyage appeared, when viewed in this new light. Things looked differently from what they did when we talked them over in the little dark fore-castle, the night after the flogging at San Pedro. It is not the least of the advantages of allowing sailors occasionally a day of liberty, that it gives them a spring, and makes them feel cheerful and independent, and leads them insensibly to look on the bright side of everything for some time after.

S—— and myself determined to keep as much together as possible, though we knew that it would not do to cut our shipmates; for, knowing our birth and education, they were a little suspicious that we would try to put on the gentleman

when we got ashore, and would be ashamed of their company; and this won't do with Jack. When the voyage is at an end, you may do as you please, but so long as you belong to the same vessel, you must be a shipmate to him on shore, or he will not be a shipmate to you on board. Being forewarned of this before I went to sea, I took no "long togs" with me, and being dressed like the rest, in white duck trousers, blue jacket and straw hat, which would prevent my going in better company, and showing no disposition to avoid them, I set all suspicion at rest. Our crew fell in with some who belonged to the other vessels, and, sailor-like, steered for the first grog-shop. This was a small mud building, of only one room, in which were liquors, dry and West India goods, shoes, bread, fruits, and everything which is vendible in California. It was kept by a yankee, a one-eyed man, who belonged formerly to Fall River, came out to the Pacific in a whale-ship, left her at the Sandwich Islands, and came to California and set up a "Pulperia." S—— and I followed in our shipmates' wake, knowing that to refuse to drink with them would be the highest affront, but determining to slip away at the first opportunity. It is the universal custom with sailors for each one, in his turn, to treat the whole, calling for a glass all round, and obliging every one who is present, even the keeper of the shop, to take a glass with him. When we first came in, there was some dispute between our crew and the others, whether the new comers or the old California rangers should treat first; but it being settled in favor of the latter, each of the crews of the other vessels treated all round in their turn, and as there were a good many present, (including some "loafers" who had dropped in, knowing what was going on, to take advantage of Jack's hospitality,) and the liquor was a real (12½

cents) a glass, it made somewhat of a hole in their lockers. It was now our ship's turn, and S—— and I, anxious to get away, stepped up to call for glasses; but we soon found that we must go in order—the oldest first, for the old sailors did not choose to be preceded by a couple of youngsters; and *bon gr' mal gr'*, we had to wait our turn, with the twofold apprehension of being too late for our horses, and of getting corned; for drink you must, every time; and if you drink with one and not with another, it is always taken as an insult.

Having at length gone through our turns and acquitted ourselves of all obligations, we slipped out, and went about among the houses, endeavoring to get horses for the day, so that we might ride round and see the country. At first we had but little success, all that we could get out of the lazy fellows, in reply to our questions, being the eternal drawling "Quien sabe?" ("who knows?") which is an answer to all questions. After several efforts, we at length fell in with a little Sandwich Island boy, who belonged to Captain Wilson of the *Ayacucho*, and was well acquainted in the place; and he, knowing where to go, soon procured us two horses, ready saddled and bridled, each with a lasso coiled over the pommel. These we were to have all day, with the privilege of riding them down to the beach at night, for a dollar, which we had to pay in advance. Horses are the cheapest thing in California; the very best not being worth more than ten dollars apiece, and very good ones being often sold for three, and four. In taking a day's ride, you pay for the use of the saddle, and for the labor and trouble of catching the horses. If you bring the saddle back safe, they care but little what becomes of the horse. Mounted on our horses, which were spirited beasts,

and which, by the way, in this country, are always steered by pressing the contrary rein against the neck, and not by pulling on the bit,—we started off on a fine run over the country. The first place we went to was the old ruinous presidio, which stands on a rising ground near the village, which it overlooks. It is built in the form of an open square, like all the other presidios, and was in a most ruinous state, with the exception of one side, in which the commandant lived, with his family. There were only two guns, one of which was spiked, and the other had no carriage. Twelve, half clothed, and half starved looking fellows, composed the garrison; and they, it was said, had not a musket apiece. The small settlement lay directly below the fort, composed of about forty dark brown looking huts, or houses, and two larger ones, plastered, which belonged to two of the “gente de razon.” This town is not more than half as large as Monterey, or Santa Barbara, and has little or no business. From the presidio, we rode off in the direction of the mission, which we were told was three miles distant. The country was rather sandy, and there was nothing for miles which could be called a tree, but the grass grew green and rank, and there were many bushes and thickets, and the soil is said to be good. After a pleasant ride of a couple of miles, we saw the white walls of the mission, and fording a small river, we came directly before it. The mission is built of mud, or rather of the unburnt bricks of the country, and plastered. There was something decidedly striking in its appearance: a number of irregular buildings, connected with one another, and disposed in the form of a hollow square, with a church at one end, rising above the rest, with a tower containing five belfries, in each of which hung a large bell, and with immense rusty iron crosses at the tops. Just outside of the

buildings, and under the walls, stood twenty or thirty small huts, built of straw and of the branches of trees, grouped together, in which a few Indians lived, under the protection and in the service of the mission.

Entering a gate-way, we drove into the open square, in which the stillness of death reigned. On one side was the church; on another, a range of high buildings with grated windows; a third was a range of smaller buildings, or offices; and the fourth seemed to be little more than a high connecting wall. Not a living creature could we see. We rode twice round the square, in the hope of waking up some one; and in one circuit, saw a tall monk, with shaven head, sandals, and the dress of the Grey Friars, pass rapidly through a gallery, but he disappeared without noticing us. After two circuits, we stopped our horses, and saw, at last, a man show himself in front of one of the small buildings. We rode up to him, and found him dressed in the common dress of the country, with a silver chain round his neck, supporting a large bunch of keys. From this, we took him to be the steward of the mission, and addressing him as “Mayordomo,” received a low bow and an invitation to walk into his room. Making our horses fast, we went in. It was a plain room, containing a table, three or four chairs, a small picture or two of some saint, or miracle, or martyrdom, and a few dishes and glasses. “Hay algunas cosa de comer?” said I. “Si Señor!” said he. “Que gusta usted?” Mentioning frijoles, which I knew they must have if they had nothing else, and beef and bread, and a hint for wine, if they had any, he went off to another building, across the court, and returned in a few moments, with a couple of Indian boys, bearing dishes and a decanter of wine. The dishes contained

baked meats, frijoles stewed with peppers and onions, boiled eggs, and California flour baked into a kind of macaroni. These, together with the wine, made the most sumptuous meal we had eaten since we left Boston; and, compared with the fare we had lived upon for seven months, it was a regal banquet. After dispatching our meal, we took out some money and asked him how much we were to pay. He shook his head, and crossed himself, saying that it was charity: —that the Lord gave it to us. Knowing the amount of this to be that he did not sell it, but was willing to receive a present, we gave him ten or twelve reals, which he pocketed with admirable nonchalance, saying, “Dios se lo pague.” Taking leave of him, we rode out to the Indians’ huts. The little children were running about among the huts, stark naked, and the men were not much better; but the women had generally coarse gowns, of a sort of tow cloth. The men are employed, most of the time, in tending the cattle of the mission, and in working in the garden, which is a very large one, including several acres, and filled, it is said, with the best fruits of the climate. The language of these people, which is spoken by all the Indians of California, is the most brutish and inhuman language, without any exception, that I ever heard, or that could well be conceived of. It is a complete slabber. The words fall off of the ends of their tongues, and a continual slabbering sound is made in the cheeks, outside of the teeth. It cannot have been the language of Montezuma and the independent Mexicans.

Here, among the huts, we saw the oldest man that I had ever seen; and, indeed, I never supposed that a person could retain life and exhibit such marks of age. He was sitting out in the sun, leaning against the side of a hut; and his legs and

arms, which were bare, were of a dark red color, the skin withered and shrunk up like burnt leather, and the limbs not larger round than those of a boy of five years. He had a few grey hairs, which were tied together at the back of his head; and he was so feeble that, when we came up to him, he raised his hands slowly to his face, and taking hold of his lids with his fingers, lifted them up to look at us; and being satisfied, let them drop again. All command over the lid seemed to have gone. I asked his age, but could get no answer but “Quien sabe?” and they probably did not know the age.

Leaving the mission, we returned to village, going nearly all the way on a full run. The California horses have no medium gait, which is pleasant, between walking and running; for as there are no streets and parades, they have no need of the genteel trot, and their riders usually keep them at the top of their speed until they are fired, and then let them rest themselves by walking. The fine air of the afternoon; the rapid rate of the animals, who seemed almost to fly over the ground; and the excitement and novelty of the motion to us, who had been so long confined on shipboard, were exhilarating beyond expression, and we felt willing to ride all day long. Coming into the village, we found things looking very lively. The Indians, who always have a holyday on Sunday, were engaged at playing a kind of running game of ball, on a level piece of ground, near the houses. The old ones sat down in a ring, looking on, while the young ones—men, boys and girls—were chasing the ball, and throwing it with all their might. Some of the girls ran like greyhounds. At every accident, or remarkable feat, the old people set up a deafening screaming and clapping of hands. Several blue jackets were reeling

about among the houses, which showed that the pulperias had been well patronized. One or two of the sailors had got on horseback, but being rather indifferent horsemen, and the Spaniards having given them vicious horses, they were soon thrown, much to the amusement of the people. A half dozen Sandwich Islanders, from the hide-houses and the two brigs, who are bold riders, were dashing about on the full gallop, hallooing and laughing like so many wild men.

It was now nearly sundown, and S—— and myself went into a house and sat quietly down to rest ourselves before going down to the beach. Several people were soon collected to see “los Ingles marineros,” and one of them—a young woman—took a great fancy to my pocket handkerchief, which was a large silk one that I had before going to sea, and a handsomer one than they had been in the habit of seeing. Of course, I gave it to her; which brought us into high favor; and we had a present of some pears and other fruits, which we took down to the beach with us. When we came to leave the house, we found that our horses, which we left tied at the door, were both gone. We had paid for them to ride down to the beach, but they were not to be found. We went to the man of whom we hired them, but he only shrugged his shoulders, and to our question, “Where are the horses?” only answered—“Quien sabe?” but as he was very easy, and made no inquiries for the saddles, we saw that he knew very well where they were. After a little trouble,

determined not to walk down,—a distance of three miles—we procured two, at four reals apiece, with an Indian boy to run on behind and bring them back. Determined to have “the go” out of the horses, for our trouble, we went down at full speed, and were on the beach in fifteen minutes. Wishing to make our liberty last as long as possible, we rode up and down among the hide-houses, amusing ourselves with seeing the men, as they came down, (it was now dusk,) some on horseback and others on foot. The Sandwich Islanders rode down, and were in “high snuff.” We inquired for our shipmates, and were told that two of them had started on horseback and had been thrown or had fallen off, and were seen heading for the beach, but steering pretty wild, and by the looks of things, would not be down much before midnight.

The Indian boys having arrived, we gave them our horses, and having seen them safely off, hailed for a boat and went aboard. Thus ended our first liberty-day on shore. We were well tired, but had had a good time, and were more willing to go back to our old duties. About midnight, we were waked up by our two watch-mates, who had come aboard in high dispute. It seems they had started to come down on the same horse, double-backed; and each was accusing the other of being the cause of his fall. They soon, however, turned-in and fell asleep, and probably forgot all about it, for the next morning the dispute was not renewed.

## Bret Harte (1836-1902)

### The Outcasts of Poker Flat (1869)

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 their impropriety was professional, and it was only in such 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 recognized the usual percentage in favor 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 humor 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 readjusted 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 foothills 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 amphitheater, 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 newcomer Mr. Oakhurst recognized 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 recognize in Mr. Oakhurst's kick a superior power that would not bear trifling. He then endeavored 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 log house 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 canyon 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 damned 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-humored, freckled face; the virgin 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 snowflakes 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 extemporized a thatch for the roofless cabin, and the Duchess directed Piney in the rearrangement 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 cheeks 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 cached. “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 cached 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. Haply 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, uncharted, trackless sea of white lying below the rocky shores to which the castaways still clung. Through the marvelously 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 campfire. But music failed to fill entirely the aching void left by insufficient food, and a new diversion was proposed by Piney—storytelling. 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 demigods again walked the earth. Trojan bully and wily Greek wrestled in the winds, and the great pines in the canyon 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 snowflakes 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 snowshoes, 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 canyon," 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 someone 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 recognized 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 23d 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.

