

THE SILVERADO SQUATTERS.

SKETCHES FROM A CALIFORNIAN MOUNTAIN.

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THE scene of these chapters is on a high mountain. There are, indeed, many higher; there are many of a nobler outline. It is no place of pilgrimage for the summary globe-trotter. But to one who lives upon its sides, Mount Saint Helena soon becomes a center of interest. It is the Mont Blanc of one section of the Californian Coast Range, none of its near neighbors rising to one-half its altitude. It looks down on much green, intricate country. It feeds in the spring-time many splashing brooks. From its summit you must have an excellent lesson of geography: seeing to the south San Francisco Bay, with Tamalpais on the one hand and Monte Diablo on the other; to the west and thirty miles away, the open ocean; eastward, across the corn lands and thick tule swamps of Sacramento Valley, to where the Central Pacific Railroad begins to climb the sides of the Sierra; and northward, for what I know, the white head of Shasta looking down on Oregon. Three counties, Napa County, Lake County, and Sonoma County, march across its cliffy shoulders. Its naked peak stands nearly four thousand five hundred feet above the sea. Its sides are fringed with forest, and the soil, where it is bare, glows warm with cin-nabar. Life in its shadow goes rustically forward. Bucks, and bears, and rattlesnakes, and former mining operations are the staple of men's talk. Agriculture has only begun to mount above the valley; and though, in a few years from now, the whole district may be smiling with farms, passing trains shaking the mountain to the heart, many-windowed hotels lighting up the night like factories, and a prosperous city occupying the site of sleepy Calistoga; yet in the meantime, around the feet of that mountain, the silence of nature reigns in great measure unbroken, and the people of hill and valley go sauntering about their business as in the days before the Flood.

To reach Mount Saint Helena from San Francisco, the traveler has twice to cross the bay, once by the busy Oakland Ferry, and again, after an hour or so of the railway, from Vallejo Junction to Vallejo. Thence he takes rail once more to mount the long green strath of Napa Valley.

Early the next morning we mounted the hill along a wooden footway, bridging one marish spot after another. Here and there, as we ascended, we passed a house embowered in white roses. More of the bay became apparent, and soon the blue peak of Tamalpais arose above the green level of the island opposite. It told us we were still but a little way from the city of the Golden Gates, already, at that hour, beginning to awake among the sand hills. It called to us over the waters as with the voice of a bird. Its stately head, blue as a sapphire on the paler azure of the sky, spoke to us of wider outlooks and the bright Pacific. Far Tamalpais stands sentry, like a light-house, over the Golden Gates, between the bay and the open ocean, and looks down indifferently on both. Even as we saw and hailed it from Vallejo, seamen far out at sea were scanning it with shaded eyes; and as if to answer to the thought, one of the great ships below began silently to clothe herself with white sails, homeward bound for England.

For some way beyond Vallejo the railway led us through bald green pastures. On the west, the rough highlands of Marin shut off the ocean; in the midst, in long, straggling, gleaming arms, the bay died out among the grass; there were few trees and few inclosures; the sun shone wide over open uplands, the displumed hills stood clear against the sky. But by and by these hills began to draw nearer on either hand, and first thicket and then wood began to clothe their sides, and soon we were away from all signs of the sea's neighborhood, mounting an inland, irrigated valley. A great variety of oaks stood, now severally, now in a becoming grove, among the fields and vineyards. The towns were compact, in about equal proportions, of bright new wooden houses, and great and growing forest trees; and the chapel bell on the engine sounded most festally that sunny Sunday as we drew up at one green town after another, with the towns-folk trooping in their Sunday's best to see the strangers, with the sun sparkling on the clean houses and great domes of foliage humming overhead in the breeze.

This pleasant Napa Valley is, at its north end, blockaded by our mountain. There, at Calistoga, the railroad ceases; and the trav-

eler who intends faring further, to the geysers or to the springs in Lake County, must cross the spurs of the mountain by stage. Thus, Mount Saint Helena is not only a summit, but a frontier; and, up to the time of writing, it has stayed the progress of the iron horse.

CALISTOGA.

IT is difficult for a European to imagine Calistoga; the whole place is so new and of such an occidental pattern: the very name, I hear, was invented at a supper party by the man who found the springs.

The railroad and the highway come up the valley about parallel to one another. The street of Calistoga joins them, perpendicular to both,—a wide street with bright, clean, low houses; here and there a veranda over the sidewalk, here and there a horse-post, here and there lounging towns-folk. Other streets are marked out, and most likely named; for these towns in the New World begin with a firm resolve to grow larger, Washington and Broadway, and then First and Second, and so forth, being boldly plotted out as soon as the community indulges in a plan. But in the meanwhile all the life and most of the houses of Calistoga are concentrated upon that street between the railway station and the road. I never heard it called by any name, but I will hazard a guess that it is either Washington or Broadway. Here are the blacksmith's, the chemist's, the general merchant's, and Kong Sam Kee, the Chinese laundryman's; here, probably, is the office of the local paper (for the place has a paper, they all have papers); and here, certainly, is one of the hotels, Cheeseborough's, whence the daring Foss, a man dear to legend, starts his horses for the geysers.

It must be remembered that we are here in a land of stage-drivers and highwaymen: a land, in that sense, like England a hundred years ago. The highway robber—road-agent he is quaintly called—is still busy in these parts. The fame of Vasquez is still young. Only a few years ago, the Lakeport stage was robbed a mile or two from Calistoga. In 1879, the dentist of Mendocino City, fifty miles away upon the coast, suddenly threw off the garments of his trade, like Grindoff in "The Miller and his Men," and flamed forth in his second dress as a captain of banditti. A great robbery was followed by a long chase, a chase of days if not of weeks, among the intricate hill country; and the chase was followed by much desultory fighting, in which several—and the dentist, I believe, amongst the number—bit the dust. The grass was springing, for the first time, nourished upon their

blood, when I arrived in Calistoga. I am reminded of another highwayman of that same year. "He had been unwell," so ran his humorous defense, "and the doctor told him to take something; so he took the express box."

The cultus of the stage-coachman always flourishes highest where there are thieves on the road and where the guard travels armed, and the stage is not only a link between country and city and the vehicle of news, but has a faint wayfaring aroma, like a man who should be brother to a soldier. California boasts her famous stage-drivers; and among the famous, Foss is not forgotten. Along the unfenced, abominable mountain roads, he launches his team with small regard to human life or the doctrine of probabilities. Flinching travelers, who behold themselves coasting eternity at every corner, look with natural admiration at their driver's huge, impassive, fleshy countenance. He has the very face for the driver in Sam Weller's anecdote, who upset the election party at the required point. Wonderful tales are current of his readiness and skill. One, in particular, of how one of his horses fell at a ticklish passage of the road, and how Foss let slip the reins, and, driving over the fallen animal, arrived at the next stage with only three. This I relate as I heard it, without guarantee.

I only saw Foss once, though, strange as it may sound, I have twice talked with him. He lives out of Calistoga at a ranch called Fossville. One evening, after he was long gone home, I dropped into Cheeseborough's, and was asked if I should like to speak with Mr. Foss. Supposing that the interview was impossible, and that I was merely called upon to subscribe the general sentiment, I boldly answered yes. Next moment, I had one instrument at my ear, another at my mouth, and found myself, with nothing in the world to say, conversing with a man several miles off among desolate hills. Foss rapidly and somewhat plaintively brought the conversation to an end; and he returned to his night's grog at Fossville, while I strolled forth again on Calistoga high street. But it was an odd thing that here, on what we are accustomed to consider the very skirts of civilization, I should have used the telephone for the first time in my civilized career. So it goes in these young countries: telephones and telegraphs, and newspapers and advertisements, running far ahead among the Indians and the grizzly bears.

THE PETRIFIED FOREST.

WE drove off from the Springs Hotel about three in the afternoon. The sun

warmed me to the heart. A broad, cool wind streamed pauselessly down the valley, laden with perfume. Up at the top stood Mount Saint Helena, a great bulk of mountain, bare atop, with tree-fringed spurs, and radiating warmth. Once, we saw it framed in a grove of tall and exquisitely graceful white-oaks; in line and color a finished composition. We passed a cow stretched by the road-side, her bell slowly beating time to the movement of her ruminating jaws, her big, red face crawled over by half a dozen flies, a monument of content.

A little further, and we struck to the left up a mountain road, and for two hours threaded one valley after another, green, tangled, full of noble timber, giving us every now and again a sight of Mount Saint Helena and the blue, hilly distance, and crossed by many streams, through which we splashed to the carriage step. To the right or the left, there was scarce any trace of man but the road we followed; I think we passed but one ranch in the whole distance, and that was closed and smokeless. But we had the society of these bright streams, dazzlingly clear, as is their wont, splashing from the wheels in diamonds, and striking a lively coolness through the sunshine. And what, with the innumerable variety of greens, the masses of foliage tossing in the breeze, the glimpses of distance, the descents into seemingly impenetrable thickets, the continual dodging of the road, which made haste to plunge again into the covert, we had a fine sense of woods, and spring-time, and the open air.

Our driver gave me a lecture by the way on Californian trees: a thing I was much in need of, having fallen among painters who knew the name of nothing, and Mexicans who knew the name of nothing in English. He taught me the madrona, the manzanita, the buckeye, the maple; he showed me the crested mountain quail; he showed me where some young redwoods were already spiring heavenward from the ruins of the old; for in this district all had already perished—redwoods and redskins,—the two noblest indigeneous living things alike condemned.

At length, in a lonely dell, we came on a huge wooden gate, with a sign upon it like an inn. "The Petrified Forest; proprietor, C. Evans," ran the legend. Within, on a knoll of sward, was the house of the proprietor, and another smaller house hard by to serve as a museum, where photographs and petrifications were retailed. It was a pure little isle of touristry among these solitary hills.

The proprietor was a brave, old, white-faced Swede. He had wandered this way, Heaven knows how, and taken up his acres, I forget

how many years ago, all alone, bent double with sciatica, and with six bits in his pocket and an axe upon his shoulder. Long, useless years of sea-faring had thus discharged him at the end, penniless and sick. Without doubt, he had tried his luck at the diggings, and got no good from that; without doubt, he had loved the bottle, and lived the life of Jack ashore. But at the end of these adventures, here he came; and the place hitting his fancy, down he sat to make a new life of it, far from crimps and the salt sea. And the very sight of his ranch had done him good. It was "the handsomest spot in the Californy mountains,"—"Isn't it handsome, now?"—he said. Every penny he makes goes into that ranch to make it handsomer. Then the climate, with the sea breeze every afternoon in the hottest summer weather, had gradually cured the sciatica; and his sister and a niece were now domesticated with him for company; or rather the niece came only once in the two days, teaching music meanwhile in the valley. And then, for a last piece of luck, the handsomest spot in the "Californy" mountains had produced a petrified forest, which Mr. Evans now shows at the modest figure of half a dollar a head, or two-thirds of his capital when he first came there with an axe and a sciatica.

This tardy favorite of fortune, hobbling a little, I think, as if in memory of the sciatica, but with not a trace that I can remember of the sea, thoroughly ruralized from head to foot, proceeded to escort us up the hill behind his house.

"Who first found the forest?" asked my wife.

"The first? I was that man," said he. "I was cleaning up the pasture for my beasts, when I found *this*"—kicking a great redwood, seven feet in diameter, that lay there on its side, hollow heart, clinging lumps of bark, all changed into gray stone with veins of quartz between what had been the layers of the wood.

"Were you surprised?"

"Surprised? No! What would I be surprised about? What did I know about petrifications—following the sea? Petrification! There was no such word in my language. I thought it was a stone; so would you, if you was cleaning up pasture."

And now he had a theory of his own, which I did not quite grasp, except that the trees had not "grewed" there. But he mentioned, with evident pride, that he differed from all the scientific people who had visited the spot; and he flung about such words as tufa and silica with irreverent freedom.

When I mentioned I was from Scotland,

—“My old country,” he said; “my old country,” with a smiling look and a tone of real affection in his voice. I was mightily surprised, for he was obviously Scandinavian, and begged him to explain. It seemed he had learned his English and done nearly all his sailing in Scotch ships “out of Glasgow,” said he, or Greenock, but that’s all the same; they all hail from Glasgow; and he was so pleased with me for being a Scotchman and his adopted compatriot that he made me a present of a very beautiful piece of petrification, I believe the most beautiful and portable he had.

Here was a man at least, who was a Swede, a Scot, and an American, acknowledging some kind of allegiance to three lands. Mr. Wallace’s Scoto-Circassian will not fail to come before the reader. I have, myself, met and spoken with a Fifeshire German, whose combination of abominable accents struck me dumb. But, indeed, I think we all belong to many countries. And perhaps this habit of much travel, and the engendering of scattered friendships, may prepare the euthanasia of ancient nations. And the forest itself? Well, on a tangled, briery hill-side (for the pasture would bear a little farther cleaning up, to my eyes) there lie scattered thickly various lengths of petrified trunk such as the one already mentioned. It is very curious, of course, and ancient enough if that were all. Doubtless, the heart of the geologist beats quicker at the sight; but for my part, I was mightily unmoved. Sight-seeing is the art of disappointment.

“There’s nothing under heaven so blue
That’s fairly worth the traveling to.”

But, fortunately, Heaven rewards us with many agreeable prospects and adventures by the way, and sometimes, when we go out to see a petrified forest, prepares a far more delightful curiosity in the form of Mr. Evans; whom may all prosperity attend throughout a long and green old age.

THE SCOT ABROAD.

I WROTE that a man belonged, in these days, to a variety of countries; but the old land is still the true love, the others are but pleasant infidelities. I task myself in vain to think what it is that makes up Scotland. Insurmountable differences of race divide us. Two languages, many dialects, many religions, many local patriotisms and prejudices split us among ourselves more widely than the extreme East and West of that great continent of America. When I am at home, I

feel a man from Glasgow to be something like a rival, a man from Barra to be more than half a foreigner. Yet let us meet in some far country, and whether we hail from the braes of Manar or the braes of Mar, some ready-made affection joins us on the instant. It is not race. Look at us. One is Norse, one Celtic, and another Saxon. It is not community of tongue. We have it not among ourselves; and we have it, almost to perfection, with English or Irish or American. It is no tie of faith, for we hate each other’s errors. And yet somewhere, deep down in the heart of each one of us, something yearns for the old land and the old, kindly people.

Of all mysteries of the human heart, I think this bears the bell. There is no special loveliness in that grim, gray land, with its rainy, sea-beat archipelago; its fields of dark mountains; its unsightly places black with coal; its treeless, sour, unfriendly-looking corn lands; its quaint, gray, castled city, where the bells clash of a Sunday, and the wind squalls and the salt showers fly and beat. I do not even know if I desire to live there; but let me hear, in some far land, a kindred voice sing out: “Oh, why left I my hame?” and it seems at once as if no beauty under the kind heavens, and no society of the wise and good, can repay me for my absence from my country. And though, I think, I would rather die elsewhere, yet in my heart of hearts I long to be buried among good Scots clods. I will say it fairly,—it grows on me with every year,—there are no stars so lovely as Edinburgh street lamps. When I forget thee, auld Reekie, may my right hand forget its cunning!

The happiest lot on earth is to be born a Scotchman. You must pay for it in many ways, as for all other advantages on earth; you have to learn the paraphrases and the shorter catechism; you generally take to drink; your youth, as far as I can find out, is a time of louder war against society, of more outcry and tears and turmoil, than if you had been born, for instance, in England. But somehow, life is warmer and closer; the hearth burns more redly; the lights of home shine softer on the rainy street. The very names, endeared in verse and music, cling nearer around our hearts. An Englishman may meet an Englishman to-morrow upon Chimborazo, and neither of them care; but when McEckron, the Scotch wine-grower, told me of Mons Meg, it was like magic.

“From the dim shieling on the misty island,
Mountains divide us, and a world of seas;
Yet still our hearts are true, our hearts are Highland;
And we, in dreams, behold the Hebrides.”

And Highland and Lowland, all our hearts are Scotch.

Only a few days after I had seen McEckron, a message reached me in my cottage. It was a Scotchman who had come down a long way from the hills to market. He had heard there was a countryman in Calistoga, and came round to the hotel to see him. We said a few words to each other; we had not much to say—should never have seen each other had we staid at home, separated alike in space and in society; and then we shook hands, and he went his way again to his ranch among the hills. That was all.

Another Scotchman there was, a resident, who for the mere love of the common country,—douce, serious, religious man,—drove me all about the valley and took as much interest in me as if I had been his son: more, perhaps; for the son has faults too keenly felt, while the abstract countryman is perfect—like a whiff of peats.

And there was yet another. Upon him I came suddenly as he was calmly entering my cottage, his mind quite evidently bent on plunder: a man of about fifty, filthy, ragged, roguish, with a chimney-pot hat and a tail coat, and a pursing of his mouth that might have been envied by an elder of the kirk. He had just such a face as I have seen a dozen times behind the plate.

"Hullo, sir!" I cried. "Where are you going?"

He turned round without a quiver.

"You're a Scotchman, sir?" he said, gravely. "So am I. I come from Aberdeen. This is my card," presenting me with a piece of pasteboard which he had raked out of some gutter in the period of the rains. "I was just examining this palm," he continued, indicating the misbegotten plant before our door, "which is the largest specimen I have yet observed in California."

There were four or five larger within sight, but where was the use of argument? He produced a tape-line, made me help him to measure the tree at the level of the ground, and entered the figures in a large and filthy pocket-book: all with the gravity of Solomon. He then thanked me profusely, remarking that such little services were due between countrymen, shook hands with me "for auld lang syne," as he said, and took himself solemnly away, radiating dirt and humbug as he went.

A more impudent rascal I have never seen; and, had he been American, I should have ragged. But then—he came from Aberdeen.

A month or two after this encounter of mine there came a Scot to Sacramento—perhaps from Aberdeen. Anyway, there never

was any one more Scotch in this wide world. He could sing and dance and drink, I presume, and he played the pipes with vigor and success. All the Scotch in Sacramento became infatuated with him, and spent their spare time and money driving him about in an open cab, between drinks, while he blew himself scarlet at the pipes. This is a very sad story. The piper must have been a relation of my friend with the tape; or else the devil in person; for after he had borrowed money from everybody all round, he and his pipes suddenly disappeared from Sacramento, and, when I last heard, the police were looking for him.

I cannot say how this story amused me, when I felt myself so thoroughly ripe on both sides to be duped in the same way.

It is at least a curious thing, to conclude, that the races which wander widest, Jews and Scotch, should be the most clannish in the world. But perhaps these two are cause and effect. "For ye were strangers in the land of Egypt."

MR. KELMAR.

ONE thing in this new country very particularly strikes a stranger, and that is the number of antiquities. Already there have been many cycles of population succeeding each other and passing away and leaving behind them relics. These, standing on into changed times, strike the imagination as forcibly as any pyramid or feudal tower. The towns, like the vineyards, are experimentally founded; they grow great and prosper by passing occasions; and when the lode comes to an end, and the miners move elsewhere, the town remains behind them, like Palmyra in the desert. I suppose there are in no country in the world so many deserted towns as here in California.

The whole neighborhood of Mount Saint Helena, now so quiet and rural, was once alive with mining camps and villages: here there would be two thousand souls under canvas, there a thousand or fifteen hundred ensconced, as if forever, in a town of comfortable houses; but the luck had failed, the mines petered out, the army of miners had departed, and left this quarter of the world to the rattlesnakes and deer and grizzlies and to the slower but steadier advance of husbandry.

It was with an eye on one of these deserted places, Pine Flat, on the geysers road, that we had come first to Calistoga. There is something singularly enticing in the idea of going, rent-free, into a ready-made house; and to the British merchant, sitting at home at ease, it may appear that, with such a roof

over your head and a spring of clear water hard by, the whole problem of the squatter's existence would be settled. Food, however, has yet to be considered. I will go as far as most people on tinned meats; and some of the brightest moments of my life were passed over tinned mullagatawny in the cabin of a sixteen-ton schooner, storm-staid in Portree Bay; but after suitable experiments, I pronounce authoritatively that man cannot live by tins alone. Fresh meat must be had on an occasion. It is true that the great Foss, driving by along the geysers road, wooden-faced, but glorified with legend, might have been induced to bring us meat; but the great Foss could hardly bring us milk. To take a cow would have involved taking a field of grass and a milkmaid. After which it would have been hardly worth while to pause, and we might have added to our colony a flock of sheep and an experienced butcher.

Now my principal adviser in this matter was one whom I will call Kelmar. That was not what he called himself; but as soon as I set eyes on him, I knew it was or ought to be his name. Kelmar was the store-keeper, a Russian Jew, good-natured, in a very thriving way of business, and on equal terms one of the most serviceable of men. He also had something of the expression of a Scotch country elder who, by some peculiarity, should chance to be a Hebrew. He had a projecting under-lip, with which he continually smiled, or rather smirked. Mrs. Kelmar was a singularly kind woman; and the oldest son had quite a dark and romantic bearing, and might be heard on summer evenings playing sentimental airs on the violin.

I had no idea, at the time I made his acquaintance, what an important person Kelmar was. I believe, even from the little I saw, that Kelmar, if he chose to put on the screw, could send half the farmers packing in a radius of seven or eight miles round Calistoga. These are continually paying him, but are never suffered to get out of debt; he palms dull goods upon them, for they dare not refuse to buy; he goes and dines with them when he is on an outing, and no man is louder welcomed; he is their family friend, the director of their business, and, to a degree elsewhere unknown in modern days, their king.

For some reason Kelmar always shook his head at the mention of Pine Flat; and for some days I thought he disapproved of the whole scheme, and was proportionately angry. One fine morning, however, he met me, wreathed in smiles. He had found the very place for me: Silverado, another old mining town, right up the mountain; Rufe Hanson, the hunter,

could take care of us—fine people the Hansons; we should be close to the Toll House, where the Lakeport stage called daily; it was the best place for my health besides—Rufe had been consumptive, and was now quite a strong man—aint it? In short, the place and all its accompaniments seemed made for us on purpose.

He took me to his backdoor, whence, as from every point of Calistoga, Mount Saint Helena could be seen towering in the air. There, in the nick, just where the eastern foot-hills joined the mountain, and she herself began to rise above the zone of forest—there was Silverado. The name had already pleased me; the high station pleased me still more. I began to inquire with some eagerness. It was but a little while ago that Silverado was a *great* place; the mine, a silver mine, of course, had promised *great* things; there was quite a lively population, with several hotels and boarding-houses; and Kelmar himself had opened a branch store, and done extremely well. "Aint it?" he said, appealing to his wife. And she said "Yes, extremely well." Now there was no one living in the town but Rufe, the hunter; and once more I heard Rufe's praises by the yard, and this time sung in chorus.

I could not help perceiving at the time that there was something underneath, and that it was not an unmixed desire to have us comfortably settled which inspired the Kelmar family with this unusual eloquence. But I was impatient to be gone, to be about my kingly project; and when the Kelmars offered my wife and me a seat in their conveyance, I accepted on the spot. The plan of their next Sunday's outing took them, by good fortune, over the border into Lake County. They would carry us so far, drop us at the Toll House, present us to the Hansons, and call for us again on Monday morning early.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF SILVERADO.

WE were to leave by six precisely. That was solemnly pledged on both sides, and a messenger came to us the last thing at night, to remind us of the hour. But it was eight before we got clear of Calistoga: Kelmar, Mrs. Kelmar, a friend of theirs, whom we named Abramina, her little daughter, my wife, myself, and, stowed away behind us, a cluster of ship's coffee-kettles. These last were highly ornamental in the sheen of their bright tin, but I could invent no reason for their presence. Our carriageful reckoned up, as near as we could get it, some three hundred years to the six of us. Four of the six,

besides, were Hebrews. But I never, in all my life, was conscious of so strong an atmosphere of holiday. No word was spoken but of pleasure; and even when we drove in silence, nods and smiles went round the party like refreshments.

The sun shone out of a cloudless sky. Close at the zenith rode the belated moon, still clearly visible and, along one margin, even bright. The wind blew a gale from the north; the trees roared, the corn and the deep grass in the valley fled in whitening surges; the dust towered into the air along the road and dispersed like the smoke of battle. It was clear in our teeth from the first, and, for all the windings of the road, it managed to keep clear in our teeth until the end.

For some two miles we rattled through the valley, skirting the eastern foot-hills; then we struck off to the right, through bough-land; and presently, crossing a dry water-course, entered the Toll road, or, to be more local, entered on "the grade." The road mounts the near shoulder of Mount Saint Helena, bound northward into Lake County. It is a private speculation, and must have cost a pretty penny to make, nor has it yet done costing. In one place, it skirts along the edge of a narrow and deep cañon filled with trees; and I was glad, indeed, not to be driven at this point by the dashing Foss. Kelmar, with his unvarying smile, jogging to the motion of the trap, drove for all the world like a good, plain country clergyman at home; and I thought that style the most suitable for the occasion.

Vineyards and deep meadows, islanded and framed with thicket, gave place more and more, as we ascended, to woods of oak and madrona, dotted with enormous pines. It was these pines, as they shot above the lower wood, that produced that penciling of single trees I had so often remarked from the valley. The oak is no baby; even the madrona, upon these spurs of Mount Saint Helena, comes to a fine bulk and ranks among forest trees; but the pines look down upon the rest for under-wood. As Mount Saint Helena among her foot-hills, so these dark giants outtop their fellow vegetables. Alas, if they had left the redwoods, the pines, in turn, would have been dwarfed. But the redwoods, fallen from their high estate, are serving as family bedsteads, or yet more humbly as field-fences along all Napa Valley.

A rough smack of resin was in the air, and a crystal mountain purity. It came pouring over these green slopes by the oceanful. The woods sang aloud, and gave largely of their healthful breath. Gladness seemed to inhabit these upper zones, and we had left indiffer-

ence behind us in the valley. I to the hills will lift mine eyes! There are days in a life when thus to climb out of the lowlands seems like scaling heaven.

Some way beyond the cañon, there stands a white house, with *Saloon* painted on it, and a horse-trough with a spray of diamond water. On the other side of the road, we could see a few brown houses dotted in the bottom of the dell, and a great brown mill big as a factory, two stories high, and with tanks and ladders along the roof. This was Silverado mill and mill town: Lower Silverado, if you like; now long deserted and yielded up to squatters. Even the saloon was a saloon no longer; only its tenant, old Wash, kept up the character of the place by the amount and strength of his potatoes.

As we continued to ascend, the wind fell upon us with increasing strength. It was a wonder how the two stout horses managed to pull us up that steep incline and still face the athletic opposition of the wind, or how their great eyes were able to endure the dust. Ten minutes after we went by, a tree fell, blocking the road; and even before us, leaves were thickly strewn, and boughs had fallen, large enough to make the passage difficult. But now we were hard by the summit. The road crosses the ridge, just in the nick that Kelmar showed me from below, and then, without pause, plunges down a deep, thickly wooded glen on the farther side. At the highest point, a trail strikes up the main hill to the leftward; and that leads to Silverado. A hundred yards beyond, and in a kind of elbow of the glen, stands the Toll House Hotel. We came up the one side, were caught upon the summit by the whole weight of the wind as it poured over into Napa Valley, and a minute after had drawn up in shelter, but all buffeted and breathless, at the Toll House door.

A water-tank, and stables, and a gray house of two stories, with gable ends and a veranda, are jammed hard against the hill-side, just where a stream has cut for itself a narrow cañon, filled with pines. The pines go right up overhead; a little more, and the stream might have played, like a fire-hose, on the Toll House roof. In front, the ground drops as sharply as it rises behind. There is just room for the road and a sort of promontory of croquet-ground, and then you can lean over the edge and look deep below you through the wood. I said croquet-ground, not *green*; for the surface was of brown, beaten earth. The toll-bar itself was the only other note of originality: a long beam, turning on a post, and kept slightly horizontal by a counter-weight of stones. Regularly about sundown this rude barrier was swung, like a

derrick, across the road and made fast, I think, to a tree on the other side.

On our arrival, there followed a gay scene in the bar. I was presented to Mr. Corwin, the landlord; to Mr. Jennings, the engineer, who lives there for his health; to Mr. Hoddy, a most pleasant little gentleman, once a member of the Ohio Legislature, again the editor of a local paper, and now, with undiminished dignity, keeping the Toll House bar. I had a number of drinks and cigars bestowed on me, and enjoyed a famous opportunity of seeing Kelmar in his glory, friendly, radiant, smiling, steadily edging one of the ship's kettles on the reluctant Mr. Corwin. Corwin, plainly aghast, resisted gallantly, and for that bout victory crowned his arms.

At last we set forth for Silverado on foot. Kelmar and his jolly Jew girls were full of the sentiment of Sunday outings, and breathed geniality and vagueness. Kelmar suffered a little vile boy from the hotel to lead him here and there about the woods, without even explaining where he wished to go. So long as he might now and then draw up and descant upon the scenery, to get his wind again, it was identically the same to that Ebrew Jew whether we ever arrived anywhere or not.

For three people, all so old, so bulky in body, and belonging to a race so venerable, they could not but surprise us by their extreme and almost imbecile youthfulness of spirit. They were only going to stay ten minutes at the Toll House; had they not twenty long miles of road before them on the other side? Stay to dinner? Not they! Put up the horses? Never; let us attach them to the veranda by a wisp of straw rope, such as would not have held a person's hat that blustering day. And with all these protestations of hurry, they proved irresponsible, like children. Kelmar himself, shrewd old Russian Jew, with a smirk that seemed just to have concluded a bargain to its satisfaction, intrusted himself and us devoutly to that boy. Yet the boy was patently fallacious; and for that matter, a most unsympathetic urchin, raised apparently on gingerbread. He was bent on his own pleasure, nothing else, and Kelmar followed him to his ruin, with the same shrewd smirk. If the boy said there was "a hole there in the hill,"—a hole, pure and simple, neither more nor less,—Kelmar and his Jew girls would follow him a hundred yards to look complacently down that hole. For two hours we looked for houses, and for two hours they followed us, smelling trees, picking flowers, foisting false botany on the unwary; had we taken five, with that vile lad to lead them off on meaningless divagations, for five they would have smiled and stumbled through the woods.

However, we came forth at length upon a lawn, sparse-planted, like an orchard, but with forest instead of fruit trees. And that was the site of Silverado mining town. There was a piece of ground leveled up where Kelmar's store had been; and there was Rufe Hanson's house, still bearing on its front the legend, "Silverado Hotel." Not another sign of habitation. Silverado town had all been carted from the scene; one of the houses was now the school-house far down the road; one was gone here, one there, but all were gone away. It was now a sylvan solitude, and the silence was unbroken but by the great, vague voice of the wind. Some days before our visit, a cinnamon bear had been sporting around the Hanson's chicken-house.

Mrs. Hanson was at home alone, we found. Rufe had been out late after a "bar," had risen late, and was now gone, it did not clearly appear whither. Perhaps he had had wind of Kelmar's coming, and was now ensconced among the underwood, or watching us from the shoulder of the mountain. We, hearing there were no houses to be had, were for immediately giving up all hopes of Silverado. But this, somehow, was not to Kelmar's fancy. He first proposed that we should "camp someveres around, aint it?" waving his hand cheerily as though to weave a spell; and when that was firmly rejected, he decided that we must take up house with the Hansons. Mrs. Hanson had been, from the first, flustered, subdued, and a little pale; but from this proposition she recoiled with haggard indignation. So did we, who would have preferred, in a manner of speaking, death. But Kelmar was not to be put by. He edged Mrs. Hanson into a corner, where for a long time he threatened her with his forefinger, like a character in Dickens; and the poor woman, driven to her entrenchments, at last remembered with a shriek that there were still some houses at the tunnel.

Thither we went; the Jews, who should already have been miles into Lake County, still cheerily accompanying us. For about a furlong we followed a good road along the hill-side through the forest, until suddenly that road widened out and came abruptly to an end. A cañon, woody below, red, rocky, and naked overhead, was here walled across by a dump of rolling stones, dangerously steep, and from twenty to thirty feet in height. A rusty iron chute, on wooden legs, came flying, like a monstrous gargoyle, across the parapet. It was down this that they poured the precious ore; and below here, the carts stood to wait their lading, and carry it millward down the mountain.

The whole cañon was so entirely blocked, as if by some rude guerrilla fortification, that

we could only mount by lengths of wooden ladder, fixed in the hill-side. These led us round the further corner of the clump; and when they were at an end, we still persevered, over loose rubble and wading deep in poison oak, till we struck a triangular platform, filling up the whole glen, and shut in, on either hand, by bold projections of the mountain. Only in front the place was open like the proscenium of a theater, and we looked forth into a great realm of air, and down upon tree-tops and hill-tops, and far and near on wild and varied country. The place still stood as on the day it was deserted; a line of iron rails with a bifurcation, a truck in working order, a world of lumber, old wood, old iron; a blacksmith's forge on one side, half buried in the leaves of dwarf madronas; and on the other, an old brown wooden house.

Fanny and I dashed at the house. It consisted of three rooms, and was so plastered against the hill, that one room was right atop of another, that the upper floor was more than twice as large as the lower, and that all three apartments must be entered from a different side and level. Not a window-sash remained. The door of the lower room was smashed, and one panel hung in splinters. We entered it, and found a fair amount of lumber; sand and gravel that had been sifted in there by the mountain winds; straw, sticks and stones; a table, a barrel, a plate-rack on the wall; two home-made boot-jacks—signs of miners and their boots; and a pair of papers pinned on the boarding, headed respectively "Funnel No. 1" and "Funnel No. 2," but with the tails torn away. The window, sashless, of course, was choked with the green and sweetly smelling foliage of a bay; and through a chink in the floor, a spray of poison-oak had shot up, and was handsomely prospering in the interior. It was my first care to cut away that poison-oak, Fanny standing by at a respectful distance. That was our first improvement by which we took possession.

The room immediately above could only be entered by a plank propped against the threshold, along which the intruder must foot it gingerly, clutching for support to sprays of poison-oak, the proper product of the country. Herein was, on either hand, a triple tier of beds, where miners had once lain; and the other gable was pierced by a sashless window and a doorless door-way opening on the air of heaven, five feet above the ground. As for the third room, which entered squarely from the ground-level, only higher up the hill and further up the cañon, it contained only rubbish and the uprights for another triple tier of beds.

The whole building was overhung by a bold,

lion-like, red rock. Poison-oak, sweet bay-trees, calcanthus, brush and chaparral grew freely but sparsely all about it. In front, in the strong sunshine, the platform lay overstrewn with busy litter, as though the labors of the mine might begin again to-morrow in the morning.

Following back into the cañon, among the mass of rotting plant and through the flowering bushes, we came to a great crazy staging, with a windlass on the top; and clambering up, we could look into an open shaft, leading edgeways down into the bowels of the mountain, trickling with water, and lit by some stray sun-gleams, whence I know not. In that quiet place, the still, far-away tinkle of the water drops was loudly audible. Close by, another shaft led edgeways up into the superincumbent shoulder of the hill. It lay partly open, and, sixty or a hundred feet above our head, we could see the strata propped apart by solid wooden wedges, and a pine, half undermined, precariously nodding on the verge. Here also a rugged horizontal tunnel ran to I know not what depth. This secure angle in the mountain's flank was, even on this wild day, as still as my lady's chamber. But in the tunnel a cold, wet draught tempestuously blew. Nor have I ever known that place otherwise than cold and windy.

A little way back from there, some clear cold water lay in a pool at the foot of a choked trough; and forty or fifty feet higher up, through a thick jungle and hard by another house where Chinamen had slept in the days of the prosperity of Silverado, we were shown the intake of the pipe and the same bright water welling from its spring.

Such was our first prospect of Juan Silverado. I own I had looked for something different—a clique of neighborly houses on a village green, we shall say, all empty to be sure, but swept and varnished; a trout-stream brawling by; great elms or chestnuts, humming with bees and nested in by song-birds; and the mountains standing round about, as at Jerusalem. Here, mountain and house and the old tools of industry were all alike rusty and downfalling. The hill was here wedged up, and there poured forth its bowels in a spout of broken mineral; man, with his picks and powder, and nature, with her own great blasting tools of sun and rain, laboring together at the ruin of that proud mountain. The view of the cañon was a glimpse of devastation; dry red minerals sliding together, here and there a crag, here and there dwarf thicket clinging in the general glissade, and over all a broken outline trenching on the blue of heaven. Downward, indeed, from our rock eyrie we beheld the greener side of nature; and the bearing of the pines and the sweet smell

of bays and nutmegs commended themselves gratefully to our senses. One way and another, now the die was cast. Silverado be it!

After we had got back to the Toll House the Jews were not long of striking forward. But I observed that one of the Hanson lads came down before their departure and returned with a ship's kettle. Happy Hansons! Nor was it until after Kelmar was gone, if I remember rightly, that Rufe put in an appearance to arrange the details of our installation.

The latter part of the day Fanny and I sat in the veranda of the Toll House, utterly stunned by the uproar of the wind among the trees on the other side of the valley. Sometimes, we would have it, it was like a sea; but it was not various enough for that. And, again, we thought it like the roar of a cataract, but it was too changeful for the cataract; and then we would decide, speaking in sleepy voices, that it could be compared with nothing but itself. My mind was entirely preoccupied by the noise. I hearkened to it by the hour, gapingly hearkened, and let my cigarette go out. Sometimes the wind would make a sally nearer hand, and send a shrill, whistling crash among the foliage on our side of the glen; and sometimes a back-draught would strike into the elbow where we sat and cast the gravel and torn leaves into our faces. But, for the most part, this great, streaming gale passed unweariedly by us into Napa Valley, not two hundred yards away, visible by the tossing boughs, stunningly audible, and yet not moving a hair upon our heads. So it blew all night long while I was writing up my journal and after we were in bed, under a cloudless, star-set heaven; and so it was blowing still next morning when we rose.

It was a laughable thought to us what had become of our cheerful, wandering Hebrews. We could not suppose they had reached a destination. The meanest boy could lead them miles out of their way to see a gopher-hole. Boys, we felt to be their special danger. None others were of that exact pitch of cheerful irrelevancy to exercise a kindred sway upon their minds; but before the attractions of a boy, their most settled resolutions would be as wax. We thought we could follow in fancy these three aged Hebrew truants, wandering in and out on hill-top and in thicket, a demon boy trotting far ahead, their will-o'-the-wisp conductor; and at last, about midnight, the wind still roaring in the darkness, we had a vision of all three on their knees upon a mountain-top around a glow-worm.

Next morning we were up by half-past five, according to agreement; and it was ten by the clock before our Jew boys returned to pick us up: Kelmar, Mrs. Kelmar, and Abra-

mina, all smiling from ear to ear, and full of tales of the hospitality they had found on the other side. It had not gone unrewarded; for I observed with interest that the ship's kettles, all but one, had been "placed." Three Lake County families, at least, endowed for life with a ship's kettle: come, this was no mis-spent Sunday. The absence of the kettles told its own story.

Take them for all in all, few people have done my heart more good. They seemed so thoroughly entitled to happiness, and to enjoy it in so large a measure and so free from after-thought. Almost they persuaded me to be a Jew. There was, indeed, a chink of money in their talk. They particularly commended people who were well to do. "*He don't care, aint it?*" was their highest word of commendation to an individual fate; and here I seem to grasp the root of their philosophy. It was to be free from care, to be free to make these Sunday wanderings, that they so eagerly pursued after wealth; and all their carefulness was to be careless. The fine good humor of all three seemed to declare they had attained their end.

So ended our excursion with the village usurers; and now that it was done, we had no more idea of the nature of the business, nor of the part we had been playing in it, than the child unborn. That all the people we had met were the slaves of Kelmar, though in various degrees of servitude; that we ourselves had been sent up the mountain in the interests of none but Kelmar; that the money we laid out, dollar by dollar, cent by cent, and through the hands of various intermediaries, should all hop ultimately into Kelmar's till—these were facts that we only grew to recognize in the course of time and by the accumulation of evidence.

THE ACT OF SQUATTING.

THERE were four of us squatters, myself and my wife, the King and Queen of Silverado; Sam, the Crown Prince; and Chuchu, the Grand Duke. Chuchu, a setter crossed with spaniel, was the most unsuited for a rough life. He had been nurtured tenderly in the society of ladies. His heart was large and soft. He regarded the sofa-cushion as a bed-rock necessary of existence. Though about the size of a sheep, he loved to sit in ladies' laps. He never said a bad word in all his blameless days; and if he had seen a flute, I am sure he could have played upon it by nature. It may seem hard to say it of adog, but Chuchu was a tame cat.

The King and Queen, the Grand Duke, and a basket of cold provender for immediate

use, set forth from Calistoga in a double buggy; the Crown Prince, on horseback, led the way like an outrider. Bags and boxes and a second-hand stove were to follow close upon our heels by Hanson's team. It was a beautiful still day. The sky was one field of azure. Not a leaf moved, not a speck appeared in heaven. Only from the summit of the mountain one little snowy wisp of cloud after another kept detaching itself, like smoke from a volcano, and blowing southward in some high stream of air, Mount Saint Helena still at her interminable task, making the weather, like a Lapland witch.

By noon we had come in sight of the mill, which, as a pendicle of Silverado mine, we held to be an outlying province of our own. Thither, then, we went, crossing the valley by a grassy trail, and there lunched out of the basket, sitting in a kind of portico and wondering, while we ate, at this great bulk of useless building. Through a chink we could look far down into the interior and see sunbeams floating in the dust and striking on tier after tier of silent, rusty machinery. It cost six thousand dollars, twelve hundred English sovereigns; and now here it stands, deserted, like the temple of a forgotten religion, the busy millers toiling somewhere else. All the time we were there, mill and mill town showed no sign of life. That part of the mountain-side, which is very open and green, was tenanted by no living creature but ourselves and the insects; and nothing stirred but the cloud manufactory upon the mountain summit. It was odd to compare this with the former days, when the engine was in full blast, the mill palpitating to its strokes, and the carts came rattling down from Silverado charged with ore.

By two we had been landed at the mine, the buggy was gone again, and we were left to our own reflections and the basket of cold provender until Hanson should arrive. Hot as it was by the sun, there was something chill in such a home-coming, in that world of wreck and rust, splinter and rolling gravel, where, for so many years, no fire had smoked.

Silverado platform filled the whole width of a cañon. Above, as I have said, this was a wild, red, stony gully in the mountains. But below, it was a woody dingle, and through this I was told there had gone a path between the mine and the Toll House, our natural north-west passage to civilization. I found and followed it, clearing my way as I went through fallen branches and dead trees. It went straight down that steep cañon till it brought you out abruptly over the roofs of the hotel. There was nowhere any break in the descent. It almost seemed as if, were you to drop a stone down the old iron chute at our

platform, it would never rest until it hopped upon the Toll House shingles. The whole ravine is choked with madrona and low brush; thence spring great old pines, and, high as are the banks, plant their black spires against the sky. Signs were not wanting of the ancient greatness of Silverado. The foot-path was well marked, and had been well trodden in the old days by thirsty miners. And far down, buried in foliage, deep out of sight of Silverado, I came on a last outpost of the mine, a mound of gravel, some wreck of a wooden aqueduct, and the mouth of a tunnel, like a treasure grotto in a fairy story. A stream of water, fed by the invisible leakage from our shaft, and dyed red with cinnabar or iron, ran trippingly forth out of the bowels of the cave; and, looking far under the arch, I could see something like an iron lantern fastened on the rocky wall. It was a promising spot for the imagination. No boy could have left it unexplored.

The stream thenceforward staid along the bottom of the dingle, and made, for that dry land, a pleasant warbling in the leaves. Once, I suppose, it ran splashing down the whole length of the cañon; but now its head-waters had been tapped by the shaft at Silverado, and for a great part of its course it wandered sunless among the joints of the mountain. No wonder that it should better its pace when it sees, far before it, daylight whitening in the arch; or that it should come trotting forth into the sunlight with a song.

The two stages had gone by when I got down; and the Toll House stood dozing in sun and dust and silence, like a place enchanted. My mission was after hay for bedding; and that I was readily promised. But when I mentioned that we were waiting for Rufe, the people shook their heads. Rufe was not a regular man, anyway, it seemed; and if he got playing poker—well, poker was too many for Rufe. I had not yet heard them bracketed together; but it seemed a natural conjunction, and commended itself swiftly to my fears; and as soon as I returned to Silverado, and had told my story, we practically gave Hanson up, and set ourselves to do what we could find do-able in our desert island state.

The lower room had been the assayer's office. The floor was thick with débris: part human, from the former occupants; part natural, sifted in by mountain winds. In a sea of red dust, there swam or floated sticks, boards, hay, straw, stones, and paper; ancient newspapers, above all, for the newspaper, especially when torn, soon becomes an antiquity; and bills of the Silverado boarding-house, some dated Silverado, some Calistoga mine. Here is one verbatim; and if any one

can calculate the scale of charges, they have my envious admiration :

" CALISTOGA MINE, May 3d, 1875.

" JOHN STANLEY.

" To S. CHAPMAN, DR.

" To board from April 1st to April 30th.....\$25.75

" " " May 1st to 3rd 2.00

\$27.75

Where is John Stanley mining now? Where is S. Chapman, within whose hospitable walls we were to lodge? The date was but five years old; but in that time the world had changed for Silverado; like Palmyra in the desert, it had outlived its people and its purpose; we camped, like Layard, amid ruins; and these names spoke to us of prehistoric time. A boot-jack, a pair of boots, a dog-hutch, and these bills of Mr. Chapman's were the only speaking relics that we disinterred from all that vast Silverado rubbish-heap; but what would I not have given to unearth a letter, a pocket-book, a diary, only a ledger, or a roll of names, to take me back, in a more personal manner, to the past? It pleases me, besides, to fancy that Stanley or Chapman or one of their companions may light upon this chronicle, and be struck by the name, and read some news of their anterior home, coming, as it were, out of a subsequent epoch of history in that quarter of the world.

As we were tumbling the mingled rubbish on the floor, kicking it with our feet, and groping for these written evidences of the past, Sam, with a somewhat whitened face, produced a paper bag. "What's this?" said he. It contained a granulated powder, something the color of Gregory's mixture, but rosier; and as there were several of the bags, and each more or less broken, the powder was spread widely on the floor. Had any of us ever seen giant powder? No, nobody had; and instantly there grew up in my mind a shadowy belief, verging with every moment nearer to certitude, that I had somewhere heard somebody describe it as just such a powder as the one around us. I have learnt since that it is a substance not unlike tallow, and is made up in rolls for all the world like tallow candles.

Fanny, to add to our happiness, told us a story of a gentleman who had camped one night, like ourselves, by a deserted mine. He was a handy, thrifty fellow, and looked right and left for plunder; but all he could lay his hands on was a can of oil. After dark he had to see to the horses with a lantern; and not to miss an opportunity, filled up his lamp from the oil-can. Thus equipped, he set forth into the forest. A little after, his friends heard a loud explosion; the mountain echoes bellowed, and then all was still. On examination, the can

proved to contain oil with the trifling addition of nitro-glycerine; but no research disclosed a trace of either man or lantern.

It was a pretty sight, after this anecdote, to see us sweeping out the giant powder. It seemed never to be far enough away. And, after all, it was only some rock pounded for assay.

So much for the lower room. We scraped some of the rougher dirt off the floor, and left it. That was our sitting-room and kitchen, though there was nothing to sit upon but the table, and no provision for a fire except a hole in the roof of the room above, which had once contained the pipe of a stove.

To that upper room we now proceeded. There were the eighteen bunks in a double tier, nine on either hand, where from eighteen to thirty-six miners had once snored together all night long, John Stanley perhaps snoring loudest. There was the roof, with a hole in it, through which the sun now shot an arrow. There was the floor in much the same state as the one below, though perhaps there was more hay, and certainly there was the added ingredient of broken glass, the man who stole the window-panes having apparently made a miscarriage with this one. Without a broom, without hay or bedding, we could but look about us with a beginning of despair. The one bright arrow of day, in that gaunt and shattered barrack, made the rest look dirtier and darker; and the sight drove us at last into the open.

Here, also, the handiwork of man lay ruined; but the plants were all alive and thriving. The view below was fresh with the colors of nature, and we had exchanged a dim human garret for a corner, even although it were untidy, of the blue hall of heaven. Not a bird, not a beast, not a reptile. There was no noise in that part of the world, save when we passed beside the staging and heard the water musically falling in the shaft.

We wandered to and fro. We searched among that drift of lumber-wood and iron, nails and rails, and sleepers, and the wheels of trucks. We gazed up the cleft into the bosom of the mountain. We sat by the margin of the dump and saw, far below us, the green tree-tops standing still in the clear air. Beautiful perfumes, breaths of bay, resin, and nutmeg, came to us more often and grew sweeter and sharper as the afternoon declined. But still there was no word of Hanson.

I set to with pick and shovel and deepened the pool behind the shaft till we were sure of sufficient water for the morning; and, by the time I had finished, the sun had begun to go down behind the mountain shoulder, the platform was plunged in quiet shadow, and a chill descended from the sky. Night began

early in our cleft. Before us, over the margin of the dump, we could see the sun still striking slant into the wooded nick below and on the battlemented, pine-besattered ridges on the further side.

There was no stove, of course, and no hearth, in our lodging; so we betook ourselves to the blacksmith's forge across the platform. If the platform be taken as a stage, and the out-curving margin of the dump to represent the line of the foot-lights, then our house would be the first wing on the actor's left, and this blacksmith's forge, although no match for it in size, the foremost on the right. It was a low, brown cottage, planted close against the hill and overhung by the foliage and peeling boughs of a madrona thicket. Within, it was full of dead leaves and mountain dust and rubbish from the mine. But we soon had a good fire brightly blazing, and sat close about it on impromptu seats. Chuchu, the slave of sofa-cushions, whimpered for a softer bed; but the rest of us were greatly revived and comforted by that good creature, fire, which gives us warmth and light and companionable sounds, and colors up the emptiest building with better than frescoes. For awhile it was even pleasant in the forge, with a blaze in the midst, and a look over our shoulders on the woods and mountains where the day was dying like a dolphin.

It was between seven and eight before Hanson arrived, with a wagonful of our effects and two of his wife's relatives to lend him a hand. The elder showed surprising strength. He would pick up a large packing-case, full of books, of all things, swing it on his shoulder, and away up the two crazy ladders and the break-neck spout of rolling mineral, familiarly termed a path, that led from the cart-track to our house. Even for a man unburdened, the ascent was toilsome and precarious; but Irvine scaled it with a light foot, carrying box after box, as the hero whisks the stage child up the practicable foot-way beside the water-fall of the fifth act. With so strong a helper, the business was speedily transacted. Soon the assayer's office was thronged with our belongings, piled higgledy-piggledy and upside down about the floor. There were our boxes, indeed, but my wife had left her keys in Calistoga. There was the stove; but alas! our carriers had forgotten the stove-pipe, and lost one of the plates along the road. The Silverado problem was scarce solved.

Rufe himself was grave and good-natured over his share of blame; he even, if I remember right, expressed regret. But his crew, to my astonishment and anger, grinned from ear

to ear and laughed aloud at our distress. They thought it "real funny" about the stove-pipe they had forgotten, "real funny" that they should have lost a plate. As for hay, the whole party refused to bring us any till they should have supped. See how late they were! Never had there been such a job as coming up that grade—nor often, I suspect, such a game of poker as that before they started. But about nine, as a particular favor, we should have some hay.

So they took their departure, leaving me still staring; and we resigned ourselves to wait for their return. The fire in the forge had been suffered to go out, and we were one and all too weary to kindle another. We dined, or—not to take that word in vain—we ate after a fashion, in the nightmare disorder of the assayer's office, perched among boxes. A single candle lighted us. It could scarce be called a house-warming, for there was, of course, no fire; and with the two open doors and the open window gaping on the night like breaches in a fortress, it began to grow rapidly chill. Talk ceased; nobody moved but the unhappy Chuchu, still in quest of sofa-cushions, who tumbled complainingly among the trunks. It required a certain happiness of disposition to look forward hopefully from so dismal a beginning, across the brief hours of night, to the warm shining of to-morrow's sun.

But the hay arrived at last; and we turned, with our last spark of courage, to the bedroom. We had improved the entrance; but it was still a kind of rope-walking, and it would have been droll to see us mounting, one after another, by candle-light, under the open stars.

The western door, that which looked up the cañon, and through which we entered by our bridge of flying plank, was still entire, a handsome, paneled door, the most finished piece of carpentry in Silverado. And the two lowest bunks next to this we roughly filled with hay for that night's use. Through the opposite or eastern-looking gable, with its open door and window, a faint, diffused starshine came into the room like mist; and when we were once in bed, we lay, awaiting sleep, in a haunted, incomplete obscurity. At first the silence of the night was utter. Then a high wind began in the distance among the tree-tops, and, for hours, continued to grow higher; it seemed to me much such a wind as we had found on our visit. Yet here in our open chamber we were fanned only by gentle and refreshing draughts, so deep was the cañon, so close our house was planted under the overhanging rock.

THE SILVERADO SQUATTERS.

SKETCHES FROM A CALIFORNIAN MOUNTAIN.

BY ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON,

Author of "New Arabian Nights," "Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes," "An Inland Voyage," etc.

THE HUNTER'S FAMILY.

THERE is quite a large race or class of people in America for whom we scarcely seem to have a parallel in England. Of pure white blood, they are unknown or unrecognizable in towns; inhabit the fringe of settlements and the deep, quiet places of the country; rebellious to all labor and pettily theftuous, like the English gypsies; rustically ignorant, but with a touch of wood-lore and the dexterity of the savage. Where they came from is a moot-point. At the time of the war they poured north in crowds to escape the conscription; lived during summer on fruits, wild animals, and petty theft; and at the approach of winter, when these supplies failed, built great fires in the forest and there died stoically by starvation. They are widely scattered, however, and easily recognized. Loutish but not ill-looking, they will sit all day, swinging their legs, on a field fence, the mind seemingly as devoid of all reflection as a Suffolk peasant's, careless of politics, for the most part incapable of reading, but with a rebellious vanity and a strong sense of independence. Hunting is their most congenial business or, if the occasion offers, a little amateur detection. In tracking a criminal, following a particular horse along a beaten highway, and drawing inductions from a hair or a foot-print, one of these somnolent, grinning hedges will suddenly display activity of body and finesse of mind. By their names ye may know them: the women figuring as Loveina, Larsenia, Serena, Leanna, Orreana; the men answering to Alvin, Alva, or Orion, pronounced Orrion, with the accent on the first. Whether they are indeed a race, or whether this is the form of degeneracy common to all back-woodsmen, they are at least known by a generic by-word as Poor Whites, or Low-downers.

I will not say that the Hanson family was Poor White; but I may go as far as this: they were, in many points, not unsimilar to the people usually so called. Rufe himself combined two of these qualifications; for he was both a hunter and an amateur detective. It was he who pursued Russel and Dollar,

the robbers of the Lake Port stage, and captured them, the very morning after the exploit, while they were still sleeping in a hay-field. Russel, a drunken Scotch carpenter, was even an acquaintance of his own, and he expressed much grave commiseration for his fate. In all that he said and did, Rufe was grave. I never saw him hurried. When he spoke, he took out his pipe with ceremonial deliberation, looked east and west, and then, in quiet tones and few words, stated his business or told his story. His gait was to match; it would never have surprised you if, at any step, he had turned around and walked away again; so warily and slowly, and with so much seeming hesitation, did he go about it. He lay long in bed in the morning, rarely, indeed, rose much before noon. He loved all games from poker to clerical croquet; and on the Toll House croquet-ground I have seen him laboring at the latter with the devotion of a curate. He took an interest in education, was an active member of the local school-board, and when I was there he had recently lost the school-house key. His wagon was broken, but it never seemed to occur to him to mend it. Like all other truly idle people, he had an artistic eye; he chose the print stuff for his wife's dresses, and counseled her in the making of a patchwork quilt—always, as she thought, wrongly—but, to the more educated eye, always with bizarre and admirable taste—the taste of an Indian. With all this he was a perfect, unoffending gentleman in word and act. Take his clay pipe from him, and he was fit for any society but that of fools. Quiet as he was, there burned a deep, permanent excitement in his dark blue eyes; and when this grave man smiled, it was like sunshine in a shady place.

Mrs. Hanson (*née*—if you please—Love-lands) was more commonplace than her lord. She was a comely woman, too, plump, fair-colored, with wonderful white teeth; and, in her print dresses (chosen by Rufe) and with a large sun-bonnet shading her valued complexion, made, I assure you, a very agreeable figure. But she was on the surface, what there was of her; outspoken and loud-spoken. Her noisy laughter had none of the charm of one

of Hanson's rare, slow-spreading smiles; there was no reticence, no mystery, no manner about the woman; she was a first-class dairy-maid, but her husband was an unknown quantity between the savage and the nobleman. She was often in and out with us; merry and healthy and fair; he came far seldomer; only, indeed, when there was business, or now and again to pay us a visit of ceremony, brushed up for the occasion, with his wife on his arm, and a clean clay pipe in his teeth. These visits, in our forest state, had quite the air of an event, and turned our red cañon into a salon.

Such was the pair who ruled in the old "Silverado Hotel," among the windy trees, on the mountain shoulder overlooking the whole length of Napa Valley, as the man aloft looks down on the ship's deck. There they kept house, with sundry horses and fowls, and a family of sons, Daniel Webster, and I think George Washington, among the number. Nor did they want visitors. An old gentleman of singular stolidity and called Breedlove—I think he had crossed the plains in the same caravan with Rufe—housed with them for awhile during our stay; and they had besides a permanent lodger in the form of Mrs. Hanson's brother, Irvine Lovelands. I spell Irvine by guess; for I could get no information on the subject; just as I could never find out, in spite of many inquiries, whether or not Rufe was a contraction for Rufus. They were all cheerfully at sea about their own names in that generation; but times change; and their descendants, the George Washingtons and Daniel Websters, will be clear upon the point. Any way, and however his name should be spelt, this Irvine Lovelands was the most unmitigated Caliban I ever knew.

Our very first morning at Silverado, when we were full of business, patching up doors and windows, making beds and seats, and getting our rough lodging into shape, Irvine and his sister made their appearance together—she for neighborliness and general curiosity—he, because he was working for me, if you please—cutting fire-wood at I forget how much a day. The way that he set about cutting wood was characteristic. We were at that moment patching up and unpacking in the kitchen. Down he sat on one side, and down sat his sister on the other. Both were chewing pine-tree gum, and he, to my annoyance, accompanied that simple pleasure with profuse expectoration. She rattled away, talking up hill and down dale, laughing, tossing her head, showing her brilliant teeth. He looked on in silence, now spitting heavily on the floor, now putting his head back and uttering a loud, discordant, joyless laugh. He had a

tangle of shock hair, the color of wool; his mouth was a grin; although as strong as a horse, he looked neither heavy nor yet adroit, only leggy, coltish, and in the road; but it was plain he was in high spirits, thoroughly enjoying his visit, and he laughed frankly whenever we failed to accomplish what we were about. This was scarcely helpful; it was, even to amateur carpenters, embarrassing; but it lasted until we knocked off work and began to get dinner. Then Mrs. Hanson remembered she should have been gone an hour ago, and the pair retired, and the lady's laughter died away among the nutmegs down the path. That was Irvine's first day's work in my employment—the devil take him!

The next morning he returned, and, as he was this time alone, he bestowed his conversation upon us with great liberality. He prided himself on his intelligence; asked us, if we knew the school-ma'am. *He* didn't think much of her any way. He had tried her, he had. He had put a question to her: if a tree a hundred feet high were to fall a foot a day, how long would it take to fall right down? She had not been able to solve the problem. "She don't know nothing," he opined. He told us how a friend of his kept school with a revolver, and chuckled mightily over that; his friend could teach school, he could. All the time, he kept chewing gum and spitting. He would stand awhile, looking down; and then he would toss back his shock of hair, and laugh hoarsely, and spit, and bring forward a new subject. A man, he told us, who bore a grudge against him had poisoned his dog. "That was a low thing for a man to do, now, wasn't it? It wasn't like a man that, nohow. But I got even with him—I poisoned *his* dog." His clumsy utterance, his rude, embarrassed manner, set a fresh value on the stupidity of his remarks. I do not think I ever appreciated the meaning of two words until I knew Irvine—the verb, loaf, and the noun, oaf. Between them, they complete his portrait. He could lounge, and wriggle, and rub himself against the wall, and grin, and be more in everybody's way than any other two people that I ever set my eyes on. Nothing that he did became him; and yet you were conscious that he was one of your own race, that his mind was cumbrously at work revolving the problem of existence like a quid of gum, and in his own cloudy manner enjoying life and passing judgment on his fellows. Above all things, he was delighted with himself. You would not have thought it, from his uneasy manners and troubled, struggling utterance; but he loved himself to the marrow, and was happy and proud like a peacock on a rail.

His self-esteem was indeed the one joint in his harness. He could be got to work, and even kept at work, by flattery. As long as my wife stood over him, crying out how strong he was, so long exactly he would stick to the matter in hand; and the moment she turned her back, or ceased to praise him, he would stop. His physical strength was wonderful, and to have a woman stand by and admire his achievements warmed his heart like sunshine. Yet he was as cowardly as he was powerful, and felt no shame in owing to the weakness. Something was once wanted from the crazy platform over the shaft, and he at once refused to venture there,—“did not like,” as he said, “foolin’ round them kind o’ places,”—and let my wife go instead of him, looking on with a grin. Vanity, where it exists, is usually more heroic; but Irvine steadily approved himself, and expected others to approve him,—rather looked down upon my wife, and decidedly expected her to look up to him, on the strength of his superior prudence. Yet the strangest part of the whole matter was perhaps this, that Irvine was as beautiful as a statue. His features were, in themselves, perfect; it was only his cloudy, uncouth, and coarse expression that disfigured them. So much strength residing in so spare a frame was proof sufficient of the accuracy of his shape. He must have been built somewhat after the pattern of Jack Sheppard; but the famous house-breaker, we may be certain, was no lout. It was by the extraordinary powers of his mind, no less than by the vigor of his body, that he broke his strong prison with such imperfect implements, turning the very obstacles to service. Irvine in the same case would have sat down and spat and grumbled curses. He had the soul of a fat sheep; but, regarded as an artist’s model, the exterior of a Greek god. It was a cruel thought to persons less favored in their birth, that this creature, endowed, to use the language of the theaters, with extraordinary “means,” should so manage to misemploy them that he looked ugly and almost deformed. It was only by an effort of abstraction, and after many days, that you discovered what he was.

By playing on the oaf’s conceit, and standing closely over him, we got a path made around the corner of the dump to our door, so that we could come and go with decent ease; and he even enjoyed the work, for in that there were bowlders to be plucked up bodily, bushes to be uprooted, and other occasions for athletic display; but cutting wood was another pair of shoes. Anybody could cut wood; and besides, my wife was tired of supervising him and had other things to attend to. And in short, days went by, and

Irvine came daily and talked and lounged and spat; but the fire-wood remained intact as sleepers on the platform, as growing trees upon the mountain-side. Irvine, as a wood-cutter, we could tolerate; but Irvine as a friend of the family, at so much a day, was too coarse an imposition; and at length, in the afternoon of the fourth or fifth day of our connection, I explained to him, as clearly as I could, the light in which I had grown to regard his presence. I pointed out to him that I could not continue to give him a salary for spitting on the floor; and this expression, which came after a good many others, at last penetrated his obdurate wits. He rose at once and said, if that was the way he was going to be spoken to, he reckoned he would quit. And no one interposing, he departed.

So far, so good. But we had no fire-wood. The next afternoon, I strolled down to Rufe’s and consulted him on the subject. It was a very droll interview, in the large, bare, north room of the “Silverado Hotel,” Mrs. Hanson’s patchwork on a frame, and Rufe, and his wife, and I, and the oaf himself, all more or less embarrassed. Rufe announced there was nobody in the neighborhood but Irvine who could do a day’s work for anybody. Irvine thereupon refused to have any more to do with my service; he “wouldn’t work no more for a man as had spoke to him’s I had done.” I found myself on the point of the last humiliation: driven to beg the creature whom I had just dismissed with insult; but I took the high hand in despair, said there must be no talk of Irvine coming back unless matters were to be differently managed, that I would rather chop fire-wood for myself than be fooled; and in short, the Hansons being eager for the lad’s hire, I so imposed upon them with merely affected resolution that they ended by begging me to reëmploy him, on a solemn promise that he should be more industrious. The promise, I am bound to say, was kept; we soon had a fine pile of fire-wood at our door; and if Caliban gave me the cold shoulder and spared me his conversation, I thought none the worse of him for that, nor did I find my days much longer for the deprivation.

The leading spirit of the family was, I am inclined to fancy, Mrs. Hanson. Her social brilliancy somewhat dazzled the others; and she had more of the small change of sense. It was she who faced Kelmar, for instance; and perhaps, if she had been alone, Kelmar would have had no rule within her doors. Rufe, to be sure, had a fine, sober, open-air attitude of mind, seeing the world without exaggeration. Perhaps we may even say without enough; for he lacked, along with the others,

that commercial idealism which puts so high a value on time and money. Society itself is a kind of convention; perhaps Rufe was wrong; but looking on life plainly, he was unable to perceive that croquet or poker was in any way less important than, for instance, mending his wagon. Even his own profession, hunting, was dear to him mainly as a sort of play; even that he would have neglected, had it not appealed to his imagination. His hunting suit, for instance, had cost I should be afraid to say how many bucks—the currency in which he paid his way; it was all befringed after the Indian fashion, and it was dear to his heart. The pictorial side of his daily business was never forgotten; he was even anxious to stand for his picture in those buckskin hunting clothes; and I remember how he once warmed almost into enthusiasm, his dark blue eyes growing perceptibly larger, as he planned the composition in which he should appear “with the horns of some real big bucks, and dogs, and a camp on a crick” (creek, stream).

There was no trace in Irvine of this woodland poetry. He did not care for hunting, nor yet for buckskin suits. He had never observed scenery. The world, as it appeared to him, was almost obliterated by his own great grinning figure in the foreground: Caliban-Malvolio. And it seems to me, as if in the persons of these brothers-in-law, we had the two sides of rusticity fairly well represented: the hunter living really in nature, the clod-hopper living merely out of society; the one bent up in every corporal agent to capacity in one pursuit, and doing at least one thing keenly and thoughtfully, and thoroughly alive to all that touches it; the other, in the inert and bestial state, walking in a faint dream, and taking so dim an impression of the myriad sides of life that he is truly conscious of nothing but himself. It is only in the fastnesses of nature, forests, mountains, and the backs of man's beyond, that a creature endowed with five senses can grow up into the perfection of this crass and earthy vanity. In towns or the busier country-sides, he is roughly reminded of other men's existence; and if he learns no more, he learns at least to fear contempt. But Irvine had come scathless through life; conscious only of himself, of his great strength and intelligence; and in the silence of the universe, to which he did not listen, dwelling with delight on the sound of his own thoughts.

THE SEA FOGS.

A CHANGE in the color of the light usually called me in the morning. By a certain hour

the long, vertical chinks in our western gable, where the boards had shrunk and separated, flashed suddenly into my eyes as stripes of dazzling blue, at once so dark and so splendid that I used to marvel how the qualities could be combined. At an earlier hour the heavens in that quarter were still quietly colored; but the shoulder of the mountain which shuts in the cañon already glowed with sunlight in a wonderful compound of gold and rose and green; and this, too, would kindle, although more mildly and with rainbow tints, the fissures of our crazy gable. If I were sleeping heavily, it was the bold blue that struck me awake; if more lightly, then I would come to myself in that earlier and fairer light.

One Sunday morning, about five, the first brightness called me. I rose and turned to the east, not for my devotions, but for air. The night had been very still; the little private gale that blew every evening in our cañon for ten minutes, or perhaps a quarter of an hour, had swiftly blown itself out; in the hours that followed not a sigh of wind had shaken the tree-tops; and our barrack, for all its trenches, was less fresh that morning than of wont. But I had no sooner reached the window than I forgot all else in the sight that met my eyes; and I made but two bounds into my clothes, and down the crazy plank to the platform.

The sun was still concealed below the opposite hill-tops, though it was shining already not twenty feet above my head on our own mountain slope. But the scene, beyond a few near features, was entirely changed. Napa Valley was gone; gone were all the lower slopes and woody foot-hills of the range; and in their place, not a thousand feet below me, rolled a great level ocean. It was as though I had gone to bed the night before, safe in a nook of inland mountains, and had awakened in a bay upon the coast. I had seen these inundations from below; at Calistoga I had risen and gone abroad in the early morning, coughing and sneezing, under fathoms on fathoms of gray sea vapor like a cloudy sky: a dull sight for the artist, and a painful experience for the invalid. But to sit aloft one's self in the pure air and under the unclouded dome of heaven, and thus look down on the submergence of the valley, was strangely different and even delightful to the eyes. Far away were hill-tops like little islands. Nearer land, a smoky surf beat about the foot of precipices and poured into all the coves of these rough mountains. The color of that fog ocean was a thing never to be forgotten. For an instant, among the Hebrides and just about sundown, I have seen something like it on the sea itself. But the white was not so

opaline, nor was there, what surprisingly increased the effect, that breathless, crystal stillness over all. Even in its gentlest moods, the salt sea travails, moaning among the weeds or lipping on the sand; but that vast fog ocean lay in a trance of silence, nor did the sweet air of the morning tremble with a sound.

As I continued to sit upon the dump, I began to observe that this sea was not so level as, at first sight, it appeared to be. Away in the extreme south, a little hill of fog arose against the sky above the general surface; and as it had already caught the sun, it shone on the horizon like the top-sails of some giant ship. There were huge waves, stationary, as it seemed, like waves in a frozen sea; and yet, as I looked again, I was not sure but they were moving after all, with a slow and august advance. And while I was yet doubting, a promontory of the hills some four or five miles away, conspicuous by a bouquet of tall pines, was in a single instant overtaken and swallowed up. It re-appeared in a little with its pines, but this time as an islet, and only to be swallowed up once more, and then for good. This set me looking nearer hand, and I saw that in every cove along the line of mountains the fog was being piled in higher and higher as though by some wind that was inaudible to me. I could trace its progress, one pine tree first growing hazy and then disappearing after another; although sometimes there was none of this forerunning haze, but the whole opaque white ocean gave a start and swallowed a piece of mountain-side at a gulp. It was to flee these poisonous fogs that I had left the seaboard and climbed so high among the mountains. And now, behold, here came the fog to besiege me in my chosen altitudes, and yet came so beautifully that my first thought was of welcome.

The sun had now gotten much higher, and through all the gaps of the hills it cast long bars of gold across that white ocean. An eagle, or some other very great bird of the mountain, came wheeling over the nearer pine-tops, and hung, poised and something sideways, as if to look abroad on that unwonted desolation, spying, perhaps with terror, for the eyries of her comrades. Then, with a long cry, she disappeared again toward Lake County and the clearer air. At length, it seemed to me as if the flood were beginning to subside. The old landmarks by whose disappearance I had measured its advance, here a crag, there a brave pine tree, now began, in the inverse order, to make their re-appearance into daylight. I judged all danger of the fog was over for this little while. This was not Noah's flood; it was but a warning spring, and would now drift out seaward

whence it came. So, mightily relieved and a good deal exhilarated by the sight, I went into the house to light the fire.

I suppose it was nearly seven when I once more mounted the platform to look abroad. The fog ocean had swelled up enormously since last I saw it; and a few hundred feet below me, in the deep gap where the Toll House stands and the road runs through into Lake County, it had already topped the slope, and was pouring over and down the other side like driving smoke. The wind had climbed along with it; and though I was still in calm air, I could see the trees tossing below me, and their long, strident sighing mounted to me where I stood. Half an hour later, the fog had surmounted all the ridge on the opposite side of the gap, though a shoulder of the mountain still warded it out of our cañon. Napa Valley and its bounding hills were now utterly blotted out. The fog, snowy white in the sunshine, was pouring over into Lake County in a huge, ragged cataract, tossing tree-tops appearing and disappearing in the spray. The air struck with a little chill, and set me coughing. It smelt strong of the fog, like the smell of a washing-house, but with a shrewd tang of the sea-salt.

Had it not been for two things,—the sheltering spur which answered as a dyke, and the great valley on the other side which rapidly engulfed whatever mounted,—our own little platform in the cañon must have been already buried a hundred feet in salt and poisonous air. As it was, the interest of the scene entirely occupied our minds. We were set just out of the wind, and but just above the fog, and could listen to the voice of the one as to music on the stage; we could plunge our eyes down into the other as into some flowing stream from over the parapet of a bridge; thus we looked on upon a strange, impetuous, silent, shifting exhibition of the powers of nature, and saw the familiar landscape changing from moment to moment like figures in a dream. The imagination loves to trifle with what is not. Had this been indeed the deluge, I should have felt more strongly, but the emotion would have been similar in kind. I played with the idea, as the child flees in delighted terror from the creations of his fancy. The look of the thing helped me. And when at last I began to flee up the mountain, it was, indeed, partly to escape from the raw air that kept me coughing, but it was also part in play.

As I ascended the mountain-side, I came once more to overlook the upper surface of the fog; but it was a different appearance from what I had beheld at day-break. For, first, the sun now fell on it from high over-

head, and its surface shone and undulated like a great nor'land moor country sheeted with untrodden morning snow. And next, the new level must have been a thousand or fifteen hundred feet higher than the old, so that only five or six points of all the broken country below me still stood out. Napa Valley was now one with Sonoma on the west. On the hither side, only a thin scattered fringe of bluffs was unsubmerged; and through all the gaps the fog was pouring over, like an ocean, into the blue, clear, sunny country on the east. There it was soon lost, for it fell instantly into the bottom of the valleys, following the water-shed; and the hill-tops in that quarter were still clear cut upon the eastern sky.

Through the Toll House gap and over the near ridges on the other side, the deluge was immense. A spray of thin vapor was thrown high above it, rising and falling and blown into fantastic shapes. The speed of its course was like a mountain torrent. Here and there a few tree-tops were discovered and then whelmed again; and for one second the bough of a dead pine beckoned out of the spray like the arm of a drowning man. But still the imagination was dissatisfied, still the ear waited for something more. Had this indeed been water (as it seemed so, to the eye), with what a plunge of reverberating thunder would it have rolled upon its course, disemboweling mountains and deracinating pines! And yet water it was, and sea water at that; true Pacific billows, only somewhat rarefied, rolling in mid-air among the hill-tops.

I climbed still higher, among the red rattling gravel and dwarf underwood of Mount Saint Helena, until I could look right down upon Silverado, and admire the favored nook in which it lay. The snowy plain of fog was several hundred feet higher; behind the protecting spur a gigantic accumulation of cottony vapor threatened, with every second, to blow over and submerge our homestead; but the vortex setting past the Toll House was too strong; and there lay our little platform, in the arms of the deluge, but still enjoying its unbroken sunshine. About eleven, however, thin spray came flying over the friendly buttress, and I began to think the fog had hunted out its Jonah, after all. But it was the last effort. The wind veered while we were at dinner, and began to blow equally from the mountain summit; and by half-past one all that world of sea-fogs was utterly routed, and fleeing here and there into the south in little rags of cloud. And instead of a lone sea-beach, we found ourselves once more inhabiting a high mountain-side, with the clear, green country far below us, and the light smoke of Calistoga blowing in the air.

This was the great Russian campaign for that season; now and then, in the early morning, a little white lakelet of fog would be seen far down in Napa Valley; but the heights were not again assailed, nor was the surrounding world again shut off from Silverado.

A STARRY DRIVE.

IN our rule at Silverado, there was a melancholy interregnum. The queen and the crown prince with one accord fell sick; and as I was sick to begin with, our lone position on Mount Saint Helena was no longer tenable, and we had to hurry back to Calistoga and a cottage on the green. By that time we had begun to realize the difficulties of our position; we had found what an amount of labor it cost to support life in our red cañon; and it was the dearest desire of our hearts to get a China boy to go along with us when we returned. We could have given him a whole house to himself, self-contained, as they say in the advertisements, and on the money question we were prepared to go far. Kong Sam Kee, the Calistoga washerman, was intrusted with the office; and from day to day it languished on, with protestations on our part and mellifluous excuses on the part of Kong Sam Kee.

At length, about half-past eight of our last evening, with the wagon ready harnessed to convey us up the grade, the washerman, with a somewhat sneering air, produced the boy. He was a handsome, gentlemanly lad, attired in rich dark blue and shod with snowy white; but alas! he had heard rumors of Silverado; he knew it for a lone place on the mountain-side, with no friendly wash-house near by, where he might smoke a pipe of opium o' nights, with other China boys, and lose his little earnings at the game of tan; and he just backed out for more money, and then, when that demand was satisfied, refused to come point-blank. He was wedded to his wash-houses; he had no taste for the rural life; and we must go to our mountain servantless. It must have been near half an hour before we reached that conclusion, standing in the midst of Calistoga high street under the stars, and the China boy and Kong Sam Kee singing their pigeon English in the sweetest voices and with the most musical inflections.

We were not, however, to return alone; for we brought with us Joe Strong, the painter, a most good-natured comrade and a capital hand at an omelette. I do not know in which capacity he was most valued, as a cook or a companion; and he did excellently well in both.

The Kong Sam Kee negotiation had delayed us unduly; it must have been half-past

nine before we left Calistoga, and night came fully ere we struck the bottom of the grade. I have never seen such a night. It seemed to throw calumny in the teeth of all the painters that ever dabbled in starlight. The sky itself was of a ruddy, powerful, nameless, changing color, dark and glossy like a serpent's back. The stars, by innumerable millions, stuck boldly forth like lamps. The milky way was bright, like a moonlit cloud; half heaven seemed milky way. The greater luminaries shone each more clearly than a winter's moon; their light was dyed in every sort of color, red like fire, blue like steel, green like the tracks of sunset; and so sharply did each stand forth in its own luster, that there was no appearance of that flat, star-spangled arch we know so well in pictures, but all the bottom of heaven was one chaos of contesting luminaries—a hurly-burly of stars. Against this, the hills and rugged tree-tops stood out redly dark.

As we continued to advance, the lesser lights and milky ways first grew pale and then vanished; the countless hosts of heaven dwindled in number by successive millions; those that still shone had tempered their exceeding brightness and fallen back into their customary wistful distance; and the sky declined from its first bewildering splendor into the appearance of a common night. Slowly this change proceeded, and still there was no sign of any cause. Then a whiteness like mist was thrown over the spurs of the mountain. Yet awhile and, as we turned a corner, a great leap of silver light and net of forest shadows fell across the road and upon our wandering wagonful; and swimming low among the trees, we beheld a strange, misshapen, waning moon, half tilted on her back.

"Where are ye when the moon appears?" as the old poet sang, half taunting, to the stars, bent upon a courtly purpose.

"As the sunlight round the dim earth's midnight tower of shadow pours,
Streaming past the dim, wide portals,
Viewless to the eyes of mortals,
Till it floods the moon's pale islet on the morning's golden shores."

So sings Mr. Trowbridge, with a noble inspiration. And so had the sunlight flooded that pale islet of the moon; and her lit face put out, one after another, that galaxy of stars. The wonder of the drive was over; but by some nice conjunction of clearness in the air and fit shadow in the valley where we traveled, we had seen for a little while that brave display of the midnight heavens. It was gone, but it had been; nor shall I ever again behold the stars with the same mind. He who has seen the sea commoved with a great hurricane, thinks of it very dif-

ferently from him who has seen it only in a calm. The difference between a calm and a hurricane is not greatly more striking than that between the ordinary face of night and the splendor that shone upon us in that drive. Two in our wagon had often seen night in the tropics; but even that bears no comparison,—the nameless color of the sky, the hues of the star-fire, and the incredible projection of the stars themselves, starting from their orbits, so that the eye seemed to distinguish their positions in the hollow of space, these were things that we had never seen before and shall never see again.

Meanwhile, in this altered night, we proceeded on our way among the scents and silence of the forest, reached the top of the grade, wound up by Hanson's, and came at last to a stand under the flying gargoyle of the chute. Sam, who had been lying back, fast asleep, with the moon on his face, got down with the remark that it was pleasant "to be home." The wagon turned and drove away, the noise gently dying in the woods, and we clambered up the rough path, Caliban's great feat of engineering, and came home to Silverado.

The moon shone in at the eastern doors and windows and over the lumber on the platform. The one tall pine beside the ledge was steeped in silver. Away up the cañon, a wild-cat welcomed us with three discordant squalls. But, once we had lit a candle and begun to review our improvements, homely in either sense, and count our stores, it was wonderful what a feeling of possession and permanence grew up in the hearts of the lords of Silverado. A bed had still to be made up for Strong, and the morning's water to be fetched, with clinking pail; and as we set about these household duties, and showed off our wealth and conveniences before the stranger, and had a glass of wine, I think, in honor of our return, and trooped at length, one after another, up the flying bridge of plank, and lay down to sleep in our shattered, moon-pierced barrack, we were among the happiest sovereigns in the world, and certainly ruled over the most contented people. Yet, in our absence, the palace had been sacked. Wild-cats, so the Hansons said, had broken in and carried off a side of bacon, a hatchet, and two knives.

TOILS AND PLEASURES.

I MUST try to convey some notion of our life, of how the days passed, and what pleasure we took in them, of what there was to do, and how we set about doing it, in our mountain hermitage. The house, after we had repaired the worst of the damages, and

filled in some of the doors and windows with white cotton cloth, became a healthy and a pleasant dwelling-place, always airy and dry, and haunted by the outdoor perfumes of the glen. Within, it had the look of habitation, the human look. You had only to go into the third room, which we did not use, and see its stones, its sifting earth, its tumbled litter, and then return to our lodging with the beds made, the plates on the rack, the pail of bright water behind the door, the stove crackling in a corner, and perhaps the table roughly laid against a meal; and man's order, the little clean spots that he creates to dwell in, were at once contrasted with the rich passivity of nature. And yet our house was everywhere so wrecked and shattered, the air came and went so freely, the sun found so many port-holes, the golden outdoor glow shone in so many open chinks, that we enjoyed, at the same time, some of the comforts of a roof and much of the gayety and brightness of al-fresco life. A single shower of rain, to be sure, and we should have been drowned out like mice. But ours was a Californian summer, and an earthquake was a far likelier accident than a shower of rain.

Trustful in this fair weather, we kept the house for kitchen and bedroom, and used the platform as our summer parlor. The sense of privacy, as I have said already, was complete. We could look over the dump on miles of forest and rough hill-top; our eyes commanded some of Napa Valley, where the train ran, and the little county townships sat so close together along the line of the rail; but here there was no man to intrude. None but the Hansons were our visitors. Even they came but at long intervals, or twice daily, at a stated hour, with milk. So our days, as they were never interrupted, drew out to the greater length; hour melted insensibly into hour; the household duties, though they were many and some of them laborious, dwindled into mere islets of business in a sea of sunny day-time; and it appears to me, looking back, as though the far greater part of our life at Silverado had been passed propped upon an elbow or seated on a plank, listening to the silence that there is among the hills.

My work, it is true, was over early in the morning. I rose before any one else, lit the stove, put on the water to boil, and strolled forth upon the platform to wait till it was ready. Silverado would then be still in shadow, the sun shining on the mountain higher up. A clean smell of trees, a smell of the earth at morning, hung in the air. Regularly, every day, there was a single bird, not singing, but awkwardly chirruping among the green ma-

dronas; and the sound was cheerful, natural, and stirring. It did not hold the attention nor interrupt the thread of meditation like a blackbird or a nightingale; it was mere woodland prattle, of which the mind was conscious like a perfume. The freshness of these morning seasons remained with me far on into the day:

As soon as the kettle boiled, I made porridge and coffee; and that, beyond the literal drawing of water and the preparation of kindling, which it would be hyperbolic to call the hewing of wood, ended my domestic duties for the day. Thenceforth, my wife labored single-handed in the palace, and I lay or wandered on the platform at my own sweet will. The little corner near the forge, where we found a refuge under the madronas from the unsparing early sun, is indeed connected in my mind with some nightmare encounters over Euclid and the Latin grammar. These were known as Sam's lessons. He was supposed to be the victim and the sufferer; but here there must have been some misconception. For, whereas I generally retired to bed after one of these engagements, he was no sooner set free than he dashed up to the Chinaman's house, where he had installed a printing-press, that great element of civilization, and the sound of his labors would be faintly audible about the cañon half the day.

To walk at all was a laborious business. The foot sank and slid, the boots were cut to pieces among sharp, uneven, rolling stones. When we crossed the platform in any direction, it was usual to lay a course, using as much as possible the line of wagon-rails. Thus, if water were to be drawn, the water-carrier left the house along some tilting planks that we had laid down and not laid down very well. These carried him to that great high-road, the railway, and the railway served him as far as to the head of the shaft. But from there to the spring and back again he made the best of his unaided way, staggering among the stones and wading in low growth of the calcanthus, where the rattle-snakes lay hissing at his passage. Yet I liked to draw water. It was pleasant to dip the gray metal pail into the clean, colorless, cool water; pleasant to carry it back, with the water lipping at the edge and a broken sun-beam quivering in the midst.

But the extreme roughness of the walking confined us in common practice to the platform, and, indeed, to those parts of it that were most easily accessible along the line of rails. The rails came straight forward from the shaft, here and there overgrown with little green bushes, but still entire, and still carrying a truck, which it was Sam's delight to trundle to and fro by the hour with vari-

ous ladings. About midway down the platform the railroad trended to the right, leaving our house and coasting along the far side within a few yards of the madronas and the forge, and not far off the latter ended in a sort of platform on the edge of the dump. There, in old days, the trucks were tipped and their loads sent thundering down the chute. There, besides, was the only spot where we could approach the margin of the dump. Anywhere else, you took your life in your right hand when you came within a yard and a half to peer over; for, at any moment, the dump might begin to slide and carry you down and bury you below its ruins. Indeed, the neighborhood of an old mine is a place beset with dangers; for, as still as Silverado was, at any moment the report of rotten wood might tell us that the platform had fallen into the shaft, the dump might begin to pour into the road below, or a wedge slip in the great upright seam, and hundreds of tons of mountain bury the scene of our encampment.

I have already compared the dump to a rampart, built certainly by some rude people and for prehistoric wars. It was likewise a frontier. All below was green and woodland, the tall pines soaring one above another, each with a firm outline and full spread of bough. All above was arid, rocky, and bald. The great spout of broken mineral, that here dammed the cañon up, was a creature of man's handiwork,—its material dug out with pick and powder, and spread by the service of the trucks. But Nature herself, in that upper district, seemed to have had an eye to nothing besides mining; and even the natural hill-side was all sliding gravel and precarious boulder. Close at the margin of the well, leaves would decay to skeletons and mummies, which at length some stronger gust would carry clear of the cañon and scatter in the subjacent woods. Even moisture and decaying vegetable matter could not, with all nature's alchemy, concoct enough soil to nourish a few poor grasses. It is the same, they say, in the neighborhood of all silver mines,—the nature of that precious rock being stubborn with quartz and poisonous with cinnabar. Both were plenty in our Silverado. The stones sparkled white in the sunshine with quartz; they were all stained red with cinnabar. Here, doubtless, came the Indians of yore to paint their faces for the war-path, and cinnabar, if I remember rightly, was one of the few articles of Indian commerce. Now, Sam had it in his undisturbed possession, to pound down and slake, and paint his rude designs with. But to me it had always a fine flavor of poetry, compounded out of Indian story and Hawthornden's allusion:

“Desire, alas, desire a Zeuxis new,
From Indies borrowing gold, from eastern skies
Most bright cinoper —”

Yet this is but half the picture; our Silverado platform had another side to it. Though there was no soil and scarce a blade of grass, yet out of these tumbled gravel heaps and broken bowlders a flower-garden bloomed as at home in a conservatory. Calcanthus crept like a hardy weed all over our rough parlor, choking the railway and pushing forth its rusty, aromatic cones from between two blocks of shattered mineral. Azaleas made a big snow-bed just above the well. The shoulder of the hill waved white with Mediterranean heath. In the crannies of the ledge, and about the spurs of the tall pine, a red flowering stone-plant hung in clusters. Even the low, thorny chaparral was thick with pea-like blossom. Close at the foot of our path, nutmegs prospered, delightful to the sight and smell. At sunrise and again late at night, the scent of the sweet bay-trees filled the cañon, and the down-blowing night wind must have borne it hundreds of feet into the outer air.

All this vegetation, to be sure, was stunted. The madrona was here no bigger than the manzanita; the bay was but a stripling shrub; the very pines, with four or five exceptions, in all our upper cañon were not as tall as myself, or but a little taller; and the most of them came lower than to my waist. For a prosperous forest tree, we must look below where the glen was crowded with green spires. But for flowers and ravishing perfume, we had none to envy; our heap of road metal was thick with bloom like a hawthorn in the front of June; our red, baking angle in the mountain a laboratory of poignant scents. It was an endless wonder to my mind, as I dreamed about the platform, following the progress of the shadows, where the madrona with its leaves, the azalea and calcanthus with their blossoms, could find moisture to support such thick, wet, waxy growths, or the bay tree collect the ingredients of its perfume. But there they all grew together, healthy, happy, and happy-making, as though rooted in a fathom of black soil.

Nor was it only vegetable life that prospered. We had indeed few birds, and none that had much of a voice, or anything worthy to be called a song. My morning comrade had a thin chirp, unmusical and monotonous, but friendly and pleasant to hear. He had but one rival, a fellow with an ostentatious cry of near an octave descending, not one note of which properly followed another. This is the only bird I ever knew with a wrong ear. But there was something enthralling about his performance; you listened and

listened, thinking each time he must surely get it right. But no; it was always wrong, and always wrong the same way. Yet he seemed proud of his song, delivered it with execution and a manner of his own, and was charming to his mate. A very incorrect, incessant human whistler had thus a chance of knowing how his own music pleased the world. Two great birds, eagles we thought, dwelt at the top of the cañon, among the crags that were printed on the sky. Now and again, but very rarely, they wheeled high over our heads in silence, or with a distant, dying scream; and then, with a fresh impulse, winged fleetly forward, dipped over a hill-top, and were gone. They seemed solemn and ancient things, sailing the blue air,—perhaps coëval with the mountain where they haunted, perhaps emigrants from Rome, where the glad legions may have shouted to behold them on the morn of battle.

But if birds were rare, the place abounded with rattlesnakes—the rattlesnakes' nest, it might have been named. Whenever we brushed among the bushes, our passage woke their angry buzz. One dwelt habitually in the wood-pile, and, sometimes, when we came for fire-wood, thrust up his small head between two logs, and hissed at the intrusion. The rattle has a legendary credit; it is said to be awe-inspiring, and, once heard, to stamp itself forever in the memory. But the sound is not at all alarming. The hum of many insects and the buzz of the wasp convince the ear of danger quite as readily. As a matter of fact, we lived for weeks in Silverado, coming and going, with rattles sprung on every side, and it never occurred to us to be afraid. I used to take sun-baths and do calisthenics in a certain pleasant walk among azalea and calcanthus, the rattles whizzing on every side like spinning-wheels, and the combined hiss or buzz rising louder and angrier at every sudden movement; but I was never in the least impressed, nor ever attacked. It was only toward the end of our stay that a man down at Calistoga, who was expatiating on the terrifying nature of the sound, gave me at last a very good imitation; and it burst on me at once that we dwelt in the very metropolis of deadly snakes, and that the rattle was simply the commonest noise in Silverado. Immediately on our return, we attacked the Hansons on the subject. They had formerly assured us that our cañon was favored, like Ireland, with an entire absence of all poisonous reptiles; but, with the perfect inconsequence of the natural man, they were no sooner found out than they went off at score in the contrary direction, and we were told that in no part of the world did rattlesnakes

attain to such a monstrous bigness as among the warm, flower-covered rocks of Silverado. This is a contribution rather to the natural history of the Hansons than to that of snakes.

One person, however, better served by his instinct, had known the rattle from the first, and that was Chuchu, the dog. No rational creature has ever led an existence more poisoned by terror than that dog's at Silverado. Every whiz of the rattle made him bound. His eyes rolled; he trembled; he would be often wet with sweat. One of our greatest mysteries was his terror of the mountain. A little way above our nook, the azaleas and almost all the vegetation ceased. Dwarf pines, not big enough to be Christmas-trees, grew thinly among loose stones and gravel seams. Here and there a big boulder sat quiescent on a knoll, having paused there till the next rain, in his long slide down the mountain. There was here no ambuscade for the snakes; you could see clearly where you trod; and yet the higher I went the more abject and appealing became Chuchu's terror. He was an excellent master of that composite language in which dogs communicate with men; and he would assure me, on his honor, that there was some peril on the mountain,— appeal to me, by all that I held holy, to turn back,—and at length, finding all was in vain, and that I still persisted, ignorantly foolhardy, he would suddenly whip round and make a bee-line down the slope for Silverado, the gravel showering after him. What was he afraid of? There were, admittedly, brown bears and California lions on the mountain; and a grizzly visited Rupe's poultry-yard not long before, to the unspeakable alarm of Caliban, who dashed out to chastise the intruder and found himself, by moonlight, face to face with such a tartar. Something, at least, there must have been; some hairy, dangerous brute lodged permanently among the rocks a little to the north-west of Silverado, spending his summer thereabout, with wife and family.

Crickets were not wanting; I thought I could make out exactly four of them, each with a corner of his own, who used to make night musical at Silverado. In the matter of voice they far excelled the birds, and their ringing whistle sounded from rock to rock, calling and replying the same thing, as in a meaningless opera. Thus, children in full health and spirits shout together, to the dismay of neighbors; and their idle, happy, deafening vociferations rise and fall like the song of the crickets. I used to sit at night on the platform and wonder why these creatures were so happy, and what was wrong with man that he also did not wind up his days with an hour or two of shouting; but

I suspect that all long-lived animals are solemn. The dogs alone are hardly used by nature, and it seems a manifest injustice for poor Chuchu to die in his teens after a life so shadowed and troubled, continually shaken with alarms, and the tear of elegant sentiment permanently in his eye.

There was another neighbor of ours at Silverado, small but very active, a destructive fellow. This was a black, ugly fly—a bore, the Hansons called him—who lived, by hundreds, in the boarding of our house. He entered by a round hole, more neatly pierced than a man can do it with a gimlet, and he seems to have spent his life in cutting out the interior of the plank, but whether as a dwelling or a store-house, I could never find. When I used to lie in bed in the morning for a rest,—we had no easy chairs in Silverado,—I would hear, hour after hour, the sharp, cutting sound of his labors, and from time to time a dainty shower of sawdust would fall upon the blankets. There lives no more industrious animal than a bore.

And now that I have named to the reader all our animals and insects without exception,—only I find I have forgotten the flies,—he will be able to appreciate the singular privacy and silence of our days. It was not only man who was excluded; animals, the song of birds, the lowing of cattle, the bleating of sheep, clouds, even, and the variations of the weather, were here also wanting; and as day after day the sky was one dome of blue, and the pines below us stood motionless in the still air, so the hours themselves were marked out from each other only by the series of our own affairs and the sun's great period as he ranged westward through the heavens. The two birds cackled awhile in the early morning; all day the water tinkled in the shaft, the bores ground sawdust in the planking of our crazy palace—infinesimal sounds; and it was only with the return of night that any change would fall on our surroundings, as the four crickets began to flute together in the dark.

Indeed, it would be hard to exaggerate the pleasure that we took in the approach of evening. Our day was not very long, but very tiring. To trip along unsteady planks or wade among shifting stones, to go to and fro for water, to clamber down the glen to the Toll House after meat and letters, to cook, to make fires and beds were all exhausting to the body. Life out-of-doors, besides, under the fierce eye of day, draws largely on the animal spirits. There are certain hours in the afternoon when a man, unless he is in strong health or enjoys a vacant mind, would rather creep into a cool

corner of a house and sit upon the chairs of civilization. About that time the sharp stones, the planks, the upturned boxes of Silverado, began to grow irksome to my body; I set out on that hopeless, never-ending quest for a more comfortable position; I would be fevered and weary of the staring sun; and just then he would begin courteously to withdraw his countenance, the shadows lengthened, the aromatic airs awoke, and an indescribable but happy change announced the coming of the night.

Our nights were never cold, and they were always still, but for one remarkable exception. Regularly, about nine o'clock, a warm wind sprang up and blew, for ten minutes or may be a quarter of an hour, right down the cañon, fanning it well out, airing it as a mother airs the night nursery before the children sleep. As far as I could judge, in the clear darkness of the night, this wind was purely local; perhaps dependent on the configuration of the glen. At least, it was very welcome to the hot and weary squatters; and if we were not abed already, the springing up of this lilliputian valley-wind would often be our signal to retire.

I was the last to go to bed, as I was the first to rise. Many a night I have strolled about the platform, taking a bath of darkness before I slept. The rest would be in bed, and even from the forge I could hear them talking together from bunk to bunk. A single candle in the neck of a pint bottle was their only illumination; and yet the old cracked house seemed literally bursting with the light. It shone keen as a knife through all the vertical chinks, it struck upward through the broken shingles, and through the eastern door and window it fell in a great splash upon the thicket and the overhanging rock. You would have said a conflagration or, at the least, a roaring forge; and behold, it was but a candle. Or perhaps it was yet more strange to see the procession moving bedward around the corner of the house and up the plank that brought us to the bedroom door: under the immense spread of the starry heavens, down in a crevice of the giant mountain, these few human shapes, with their unshielded taper, made so disproportionate a figure in the eye and mind. But the more he is alone with nature, the greater man and his doings bulk in the consideration of his fellow-men. Miles and miles away upon the opposite hill-tops, if there were any hunter belated or any traveler who had lost his way, he must have stood and watched and wondered, from the time the candle issued from the door of the assayer's office till it had mounted the plank and disappeared again into the miners' dormitory.