

BY GEO. MILLS JOY:

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VOL. 1.

NEW BERNE, N. C., WEDNESDAY, JULY 13, 1864.

NO. 49.

EARLY SCENES IN SAN FRANCISCO: LOVE, DICE, AND SUICIDE.

On the fourth day of July, 1849, at meridian, after a rather tedious voyage of twenty-seven days, the schooner on which I had taken passage at Hilo Bay, Hawaii, dropped its anchor in the harbor of San Francisco, between the main land on which the city stands and the rugged island of Yerba Buena.

As the vessel swung to the tide, two guns, placed on the summit of Telegraph Hill, opened their iron throats and belched forth the national salute. Each report, as it came down to the entrance of the bay, was echoed and re-echoed between the rocky walls of the Golden Gate, and then died out in faint reverberations as the wind carried it toward the sea. Hardly had the salute on the Hill ended, when from the Presidio there came in more regular succession the voices of pieces of artillery stationed in it by order of the Government.

Looking toward the city, the eye saw beyond a few wooden superstructures and adobes perched on the margin of the bay, and on the slight ascent that led to the plaza—a canvass town, tents everywhere, as if an army had been suddenly brought to a halt, and its regiments and brigades were resting for the day from a long and fatiguing march.

As I thus hastily scanned the shore, my mind noticing the roughness, not to say forbodingness of the site of the now great and soon to be imperial city of the Pacific world, a pleasure yacht, filled with revellers, swept past the stern of the schooner, with its bow pointed toward what is called Angel Island, but which, fourteen years ago, was more familiarly known to gold adventurers by its euphonious Spanish title of Isle de los Angeles.

As I looked toward the yacht, I suddenly started and ran to the port side of the vessel to observe more closely those who were singing and shouting in the joyousness of their hearts, gliding past me. Seated at the stern, with the rudder held firmly in his hand, sat one whom I had known for years; who, when I last saw him, stood on one of the docks on the East River, New York, and with a friendly grasp of the hand bade me God speed in the voyage I was about to undertake. That was nearly four years previous to the time of which I am now writing. He caught my eye, and springing to his feet, stood for a moment, seemingly irresolute, debating in his mind whether he should put about and welcome me, or proceed on his trip of pleasure. Then he raised his hat, and shouted as he did so—

"Captain, welcome! I will see you to-night. Go to Parker's on the Plaza!"

I bowed an assent, and before I had time to respond by voice to the familiar greeting of my friend, the graceful vessel in which he was took the wind fully and shot like an arrow toward the straits. Presently, as it ran through the Gate, its size to my eye was reduced to a speck, and in less time than I can express it, it was entirely lost to me, as it turned the headland.

"So, Walter is here!" I exclaimed.—"What can have induced that noble fellow to adventure so far? Surely not the desire for gold? Of that he had enough in New York, and the beautiful Emily, his intended, when I last saw the sweet girl, did she acquiesce? Surely they must have been married long ago. Well, well, I will, perhaps, have my question answered this evening. It is better not to raise conjectures, when presently my pardonable curiosity may be fully satisfied."

Walter Edgeworth (I trust the family name will not be recognized, I have slightly changed the last syllable) was a man of medium stature, but of impressive countenance. His hair, brows and eyes were dark as the wing of the raven, and the latter were, an unusual thing in black eyes, exceedingly soft, almost feminine in their expression.—When, however, he became excited, as the humor moved him with anger or merriment, it was rare indeed, when the former took possession of his soul.

Usually he was of equable temperament. His voice was low and musical, and his read command of words and powers of imitation made it a pleasure to his ends to listen to him, when of an evening they gathered around the sociable and conversed of men and events. Walter was a gentleman of leisure. His position insured him access to the most refined society, and among his many female acquaintances was Emily Bond—a girl who was as fair and beautiful as nature could make a daughter of our great Mother Eve. Constant associations with Emily assured Walter that in all womanhood he did not select one who would like Emily make him so amiable and loving a friend in his journey through the world.

Like all heroes of course fell desperately in love with the pretty girl.—He wooed, and had satisfied himself, by general reasoning, however, had won her, and long ere I had recognized him in the Bay of San Francisco, even when wandering long the skirts of the Celestial Kingdom determined in my mind they were his since, according to the phraseology of the church, "bone of one bone and flesh of one flesh."

Toward the latter part of the day, just as the golden rays of the sun were kissing the purple-crested hills of the coast, I placed myself in the boat of the schooner, by the side of its captain, and was landed on the beach near the line of what is now called Montgomery Street, the Wall reef of the Metropolis of the western side of our continent.

A few minutes walk, aided by the direction of persons I inquired of in the street, brought me to the Plaza—an open space, bounded on its westerly side by a long adobe building, which had been devoted, previous to my arrival, to a variety of government purposes; but which had been turned into an indifferent sort of stable at one end, and house of entertainment for certain children of Asia, who had, about the same time with the Europe, been attacked by the omifever—and must come to California to participate in the fabulous wealth which it was supposed to yield without grudging hand, to all who worshipped at the shrine of Mammon. On the easterly side were the Eldorado, the United States, Denisons Exchange, and the Parker House. In one of these named I unhesitatingly entered. I found myself, on ascending a flight of stairs, in a spacious saloon, around the walls of which and through the cere, were placed "monte," "faro," at roulette tables. On each of these were placed, in regular order, piles of Mexican silver dollars, golden onzas, American eagles, and bags of various sizes and shapes, made of every conceivable material, filled with the auriferous metal which those who had stard, and sweated, and toiled under the scorching sun, had brought thither that they might enjoy a few minutes' excitement at the gaming table.

Those who were attracted to these tables, were dressed every possible style of costume, at were of every country under the sun. All were engaged winning and losing their hundreds, and, in some instances, thousands of dollars, with a nonchalance that to one unaccustomed to such scenes, as I was, were really astonishing. At one table, at the further end of the saloon, I noticed a number of gentlemen, elegantly attired, compared with those in other parts of the room. To this table I quietly made my way, and before it, gambling desperately, I found Walter Edgeworth.

"A thousand on them," I heard him exclaim: and then I drew to his side, he whispered, some dealer turned a card, in a low, hoarse, tremulous voice—

"Lost!"

Again the game was resumed, and while it was progressing, Walter wrote on a slip an acceptance which he handed to the keeper of the table, who nodded assentingly as he glanced over it.

"Place it on the ten!" said Walter, as he saw that his credit was good with the bank.

The dealer did as he was bidden, and resumed the distribution of the cards. I could not ascertain at the moment

how much my friend had staked, but I saw that his eyes, yet unconscious of my presence, glared like a wild beast in the dark on the particular card on which he had wagered, as if he had been affected with mania.

"Damnation!" he growled, as he sprang to his feet, "I've lost—lost again! Ten thousand dollars gone. And now I'm a beggar!"

Those who, like myself, had been watching the game—one of whom unhesitatingly accepted the seat vacated by Walter—did not seem to be affected by his losses. They simply regarded his ill fortune as a matter of course—as one of those "runs of ill-luck," which all who court the fickle goddess are expected to experience.

Walter hurried from the table, and seemed anxious to get out of the suffocating heat and poisoned atmosphere of the room, which had by this time been brilliantly lighted.

As I followed closely on his steps, I congratulated myself that I had not been recognized by him while he was engaged at the gaming table, as it might have placed him and myself in rather awkward positions, which might call for mutual explanations. While thus reasoning with myself Walter hastened onward, and passed through a throng that was making toward the centre saloon. My progress was momentarily interrupted and I lost sight of my friend. However, I hastened through the crowd as best I could, and finally reached the doorway.

The night was exceedingly dark, and I paused, chagrined at the thought that Walter had escaped me.

While I stood, hesitating, uncertain which path to pursue, in the hope of overtaking him, a pistol was fired in the Plaza; and the next I heard, but could but dimly discern, a number of persons hastening in the direction from whence the report had come. Impelled by curiosity, I also followed; and soon I came up to a group of men who were apparently looking at something lying prone on the ground. I was about to make inquiry, when one of those standing near exclaimed—

"Poor fellow! He has blown his brains out!"

"Who is he?" cried another. "Let us take him into the house, whoever he is!"

"A good suggestion," remarked a bystander. "Come, let us take him to the Parker. He may yet be alive. Perhaps, after all, the wound is not mortal!"

Very carefully the body of the man was raised and conveyed to the hall-way of the Dennison House, where there was a strong light, and where it was suggested a physician could be found. When they had placed him on the floor, I had an opportunity, for the first time, of noting the features.

Great God! It was the body of my friend, Walter Edgeworth. I knelt by his side, and involuntarily placed a hand on his breast. His heart had ceased to pulsate. He was dead! Fifteen minutes previously he was in the vigor of life—in the flush of manly beauty!

It was not until I had returned to New York, some three years subsequent to the sad event here related, that I was enabled to gather the full particulars of the motives which induced Walter Edgeworth to adventure to California.

The old story of unrequited affection was told me. Walter fell, as I had long been sweet, desperately, madly in love with the sweet, amiable, pretty Emily Bond; and when in a moment of sweet communion, he avowed his passion and asked for her hand, the fair creature, sighed, and in melting tones declined the honor of the alliance—she was already engaged!

Then Walter found that he had been throwing his love away upon a heartless, undemonstrative coquette—a woman of fair exterior, of winning manners, of intellectual endowments, who, without making any effort to make captive the hearts of her followers, never failed to bring them to her feet.

Poor fellow, when he had fully ascertained his fate, plunged at once into desperate courses. He threw his fortune to the winds; and when his friends drew away from him, when he became an outcast, refused entrance to the circles of society in which he had from childhood moved, he gathered up the fragments of his fortune—resolved to forget the past, and immigrate to the land of gold.

He had hardly landed in San Francisco, when he surrounded himself with "good fellows," and plunged wildly into every excitement. Drinking and gambling were his daily and nightly occupations; and I happened to see him for the first time in California, on the memorable Fourth of July, 1849; when, having thrown away his last dollar at faro, he deliberately left the table, and proceeded to the Plaza, and there cut in two the silver cord of life—a life that might under happier auspices, have been one of honor and of use to his fellow-men.

The Campaign.

It is not long since we heard that a considerable portion of Lee's army had been detached to guard the Danville Railroad. We now hear that Gen. Wilson's cavalry has destroyed forty miles of the track north-east and south-west of Burkesville, the station at which the Petersburg and Lynchburg, and Richmond and Danville Railroads intersect. We infer, therefore, that if Lee ever distributed his forces for the protection of these important lines, he has recently found other occupation for them. Gen. Wilson met no opposition whatever along the line of his operations.

A good deal has been said of the facility with which the Rebels reconstruct their damaged railways, and we have lately been entertained with an account of a Construction Corps, numbering several English engineers among its members, which is represented as competent to relay tracks about as fast as they are destroyed. It is affirmed, also, that duplicates of all important bridges lie ready to be thrown across

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the streams. We wholly discredit the story. The resources of the Rebel Confederacy are sufficiently magnified without resorting to such fairy tales as these. In reference to the probability of their possessing vast stores of rails and other material, it is sufficient to say that Gen. Wilson found the Danville Road laid with the old-fashioned strap rail on longitudinal sleepers—and this on the most important line of communication then remaining to the Confederacy. Nor is there any evidence that the rebels have succeeded in replacing the long extent of the Virginia Central Railroad destroyed by our army while lying south of the North Anna, and subsequently by Sheridan on his Gordonsville raid.

We attach, therefore, great importance to the success of Gen. Wilson. He has destroyed in all seventy miles of railroad, which we do not believe can be replaced except with great delay and difficulty, and which if replaced will again lie at the mercy of Gen. Grant's cavalry and again be torn to pieces, should it then be worth while. It is idle to talk of guarding these roads against a heavy force of cavalry. Lee cannot spare men enough to do it effectually, for the cavalry takes so wide a sweep, descends so suddenly, and does its destructive work so rapidly, that it is impossible either to cover all the ground defensively beforehand, or to concentrate infantry in season to interrupt the mischief.

It is probable that this expedition has broken off the work of provisioning Richmond for a siege. The two lines cut were the last remaining communications of the Rebel capital. The Richmond and Danville Railroad was the sole link between Richmond and Atlanta—assuming what we are entitled to believe on Rebel authority, that the Weldon Railroad has been for some days in the undisturbed possession of Gen. Grant. It was vitally important, therefore, not only as an avenue of supply, but as the means of rapid exchange of troops between Lee and Johnston. As matters now stand, Lee must fight his battles with what forces he has. The other road which Gen. Wilson has cut in two, the Petersburg and Lynchburg, formed the only communication, save the James River Canal, between Richmond and Lynchburg, which latter place has been and doubtless still is an important depot of supplies of all kinds. And it strikes us as probable that Wilson has done a very important service, somewhat incidentally. The two divisions, comprising nine brigades, which Lee sent to repel Hunter, were still at last accounts in the neighborhood of Lynchburg, and are, therefore, cut off from immediate re-enforcing Lee in case of urgent necessity.

Wilson had one hard fight at Stony Creek, on the same road, the result of which was indecisive, but as his work was done and his business then was to get home, he had eluded the enemy by a flank movement, only to bring up against the position at Reims Station. It is stated that the 6th Corps and two Divisions of the 2d were instantly sent forward by Gen. Mead to relieve Wilson, and the language used implies that the Rebel force at Reims was in direct communication with the right of Lee's army. The length of Gen. Grant's line, from that point held on the Appomattox to any point on the Weldon Road, is scarcely less than twelve miles, and is almost too long to be securely held unless there has been a change of position hitherto unannounced.

Presuming that the public is well through its moment of despondency, we have nothing to remark concerning the campaign in general, except that the days of partial rest which Gen. Grant has given to his army are a better assurance of progress than if he had kept hammering at the defenses of Petersburg. The army had gone through such fatigue as even Napoleon, the most pitiless of Generals, seldom required of his soldiers. It was entitled to some repose; and it is a cruel impatience which would deny it to men who have fought and marched and suffered as have the heroes of our army for two months past. But the lull in the campaign is only preparation and portent of the coming storm.—Tribune.

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