"AN' GEORGE SAYS TO ME, HE SAYS—" Drawn by JAMES MONTGOMERY FLAGG

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EARLY SAN FRANCISCO DAYS, BY HER FIRST PREACHER

Diary of the Rev. T. Dwight Hunt Gives Picturesque Account of Evolution of City From a Gold Camp

THERE is something inspiring in the ultra Americanism of San Francisco. In the journal of the city's first chaplain, the Rev. T. Dwight Hunt, this is well brought out. His account of San Francisco's beginning is broken and intermittent, covering the time between his first arrival, November 1, 1848, and the end of his pastorate, some eight years later; but it is sketched with all the vividness of an eyewitness who was helping to shape the ideals of the heterogeneous multitude assembled under those sunny skies.

At the time of the gold discovery the town numbered some five hundred people. There was no church in the village, but a free school house. There was no minister of the gospel of any denomination, but the teacher of the school, a Yale graduate from New London, Conn., opened the first Protestant school in California with the reading of the Bible each morning, and on the Sabbath he conducted a Sunday school, the only religious service held in the town.

The first effect of the discovery of gold was almost to depopulate the place, about everybody able to shoulder a pick, even the women and children, left for the mines. Only a few shrewd enough to look ahead remained. Soon, as they had anticipated, vessels that had gone to Oregon, Mexico and the islands of the sea for supplies carried the news and brought back a crowd of consumers. As if by magic the deserted place was filled to overflowing.

Tents, cowsheds, ships' cabooses were in demand for shops and stores and houses. Everybody was in a hurry. Every man was for himself. For once in the world's history everybody was getting so rich that no one took time to steal from his fellow. The merchants did not even take in their samples at night.

The millennium of money makers had come. A thousand seekers of fortune of every grade were huddled together. One story and one story and a half tenements of wood and mud sprang up. The town was without fences, without streets, without sidewalks, lights, wharves; without a school or a teacher (the only representative of that calling had succumbed to the gold fever also), without church or minister; with but few women.

Some months later, disgusted with the conditions they themselves had created and into which they were ashamed and afraid to introduce their wives and children, some two hundred or more of the citizens, comprising representatives from all classes, met at the Public Institute and unanimously voted to secure the services of a clergyman to act as chaplain of the town, bury their dead, comfort their dying and if possible check the dissipation of their young men and old. It was known that a missionary from Honolulu was then in the harbor. A committee was appointed to wait upon him and present the following letter:

To the Rev. T. Dwight Hunt, San Francisco.

SIR: The undersigned, a board of trustees appointed at a meeting held last evening at the Public Institute by the subscribers to a fund for the support of a chaplain to this community, have delegated Messrs Wetmore, Bowden and Gillespie, three of their body, to wait on you with a copy of the proceedings of the meeting and to tender to you the office of chaplain to the citizens of San Francisco for one year from November 1, 1848, with a salary of twenty-five hundred ($2,500) dollars in coin, payable quarterly in advance.

Referring you to our committee to arrange any other business that may require immediate attention, we are, sir, respectfully, your obedient servants,

G. E. WETMORE,
I. BOWDEN,
G. V. GILLESPIE,
C. C. L. ROSE,
N. H. HARRISON,
Trustees.

Thus began those first steps toward decency and order which every American community takes. For many months Mr. Hunt conducted the only services held in this heterogeneous community, to be still more tried when the great wave of immigration should reach the Pacific coast from across the continent.

In the journal of the first chaplain is the following description of the arrival of the first steamer:

"The first steamer arrived to-day (November 25, 1848). The rumor of its approach at once started the whole village to the hilltops. Several men-o'-war were in port, which from foretop to mizzen at once flung to the breeze the flags of all nations. All the shipping in port put on the same gay colors. Every boat that could command an oarsman paddled to meet the stranger. Expectation was on tiptoe!

"Soon a black object, crowded with eager life, rounded into view, and from it came a shout such as never before had reached that shore. A thousand voices from ship, beach and hilltop sent back the welcome. Then three whistles from the laboring steamer pierced the air. Then as he passed the men-o'-war, whose yards were alive with seamen, each boomed its national salute, each responded to by the surrounding hills, till, echo answering echo back and forth across the water, the hundred thunders died away.

"Lively was the harbor, lively was the town, lively were the times that day, as four hundred fortune seekers came on shore. Real estate advanced at once 100 per cent. Before night property had largely changed hands and sheds and tents had arisen in vacant lots and opened to an eager trade the contents of a hundred trunks! New York papers sold readily for a dollar, and town lots at a dozen heads of navigation sold many a greedy buyer."

The pages of Mr. Hunt's journal of these first days are full of picturesque scenes and thrilling incidents and of the efforts of the vigilance committees which sprang up to meet the necessities of the times. Of the very early conditions after the coming of the gold seekers the chaplain writes, after a visit to some of the outlying mining-camps:

"A lady seems to be a curiosity. Men run to the doors and windows to catch a glimpse of her, as if her passing were a menagerie. A story is told illustrating this. A miner, who was hard up, bethought him of an expedient to make money. Obtaining a woman's bonnet he took it to the mines, exhibiting it upon a pole. The miners flocked about him and dropped into his purloined bonnet their spare gold in bountiful quantities.

"On another occasion in a large dance and music hall the cry of a babe was heard. With one shout the music was stopped, the mother and child brought forward and at once an eager crowd of men, hungry for home sounds, filled her lap with gold.

"At the corners, here and there, the saloons, dens of gambling and drunkenness, are filled to overflowing, while from balustrades and windows above or from behind the bar or from the gaming table tawdry women look on. Everywhere the loud oath jars upon the ear. A brass band is drawing the crowd to a large tent near by, where is to be a bear fight. This surely is America let loose!

"A little removed from this camp is a collection of Digger Indians. See them go down into their underground dens on hands and feet backward. See them come up almost naked from their pits to sit in the sun and pick themselves like monkeys. See them run and howl, chasing grasshoppers and gathering acorns for food.

"But what means that shanty that has risen overnight on his broad acres like a mushroom? It is the house of an American squatter who with pistol and bowie knife in his belt has come to assert his squatter sovereignty, to fence in and cultivate the land and run down and eat the cattle of the Spaniard and shoot him too if he should ever so politely ask why he trespassed on his neighbor's farm.

"Coming again upon another mining camp, I wandered into a shack serving as hotel and barroom. It was full of riotous gamblers, swearing and gambling at the tables, guns at their sides. Instantly a cry goes up, 'A parson; let's have a preach!' A table was brought from the inner room, upon it I was hoisted and I talked to those rough, hardened fellows of home, mother, sisters, sweethearts, wives and children, the sound of the church bells.

"Tears coursed down their red faces. Then when I had finished a hat was joyously passed around and filled with gold. Hardly was I upon the floor again ere they had taken up their games where I interrupted them and oaths soon mingled with the clink of glasses.

"The bartender had gazed very intently upon my face from the first of my entering. As I turned to go out he extended his hand and said in a low tone, 'I think you were a classmate of mine in Auburn Theological Seminary,' and he gave his name. Sure enough! And here he was, caught in the maelstrom of these fearful days of temptation and making one with it all!"

These are but a few excerpts from the chaplain's journal, illustrative of the character of California's early days. From the coming of that first ship dated the extraordinary growth, exorbitant prices, fearful excitements and revolutions in that wonderful city.

In five years it grew from 1,000 to 50,000 inhabitants, burning down five times to the water's edge, each time rising from its ashes more substantial than before. The miserable mud flats exposed at low tide were covered with fireproof buildings and stores; the wharves received goods from every nation under heaven. Competition between river and ocean steamship lines became fiercely exciting. Beautiful houses of worship and schoolhouses had been erected, giving security and permanence to homes. The one congregation had been multiplied to thirty.

This extraordinary wave of financial success upon which the worldings had ridden crested and broke. Then followed three years of such depression from the overdriven trade and speculation as San Francisco has never seen since. It was a test that only the good could stand and pull through.

The bad grew desperate and villainy became rampant. The city, now numbering 60,000 people, became a veritable Land of Nod, to which came every Cain to drive his murderous trade. Americans are proverbially long suffering; the citizens of this city were no exception to the rule. Every legal course was first exhausted to remedy the ills under which they suffered.

But that bulwark of American civic life had been corrupted. By unseen power each effort of justice was defeated. The ballot was a farce. Political plunderers laughed in the faces of suffering citizens and bet with certainty on the outcome of each election. Ballot boxes with secret springs and drops were stuffed beforehand; the vilest of men could be elected even in districts where they were not announced as candidates. Homicides averaged one a night.

The press seemed stifled. But that organ of the people's liberty could not long be silenced. The *Bulletin* sprang up as the organ of reform. The editor, James King, attacked the gambling and murderous fraternity without fear; laid open and exposed to view the dens and perpetrators of iniquity.

He became from that moment a marked man for the bullet or knife of the assassin. What followed during those strenuous days and nights is graphically told by Mr. Hunt in his journal. He was now the pastor of the First Congregational Church, his voice was very influential in this work of moral reform and he was a participator in the stirring scenes of the last Vigilance Committee. He wrote in his journal:

"James King fell in the open street, in open day, in the sight of the city's police who were watching for his downfall on the nearest corner, and who instantly received his murderer as their hero, escorting him safely beyond the reach of the gathering people. With a cocked pistol in each hand to defend his precious life from the indignation of the populace he was borne in triumph by a gambling Sheriff and police force to the jail as to an asylum. There that night these officers held high carnival, with Casey, the murderer, offering toasts and exchanging congratulations over the bleeding and dying King. It was their last revel.

"The crisis had come. While murderers were rioting over their victims (for Cora, the murderer of the late United States Marshal, was among them) there was another power arising and another court convening of which they dreamed not then, but which they soon knew would be their doom.

"No mob was assembling. There was no angry clamor in the streets. There was no blind revenge astir with torch and halter to burn and hang. The feeling aroused was deeper, calmer, firmer, a feeling equal in strength and righteousness to the resolute duty required of all good citizens for the future of the city and State.

"Deliberately a large hall was secured; deliberately books were opened. Names were entered. Lives and fortunes were pledged, should the emergency require them. Thus day and night succeeded day and night, the work never ceasing, while names were entered, arms were bought, companies were drilled and a citizen police, 3,000 strong, was ready for action. Meantime a carefully written constitution and by-laws were drawn up, and an executive committee was chosen of wise, responsible men, and power conferred on them to sit in daily council and direct as the public safety might require.

"It was a Sabbath noon, a time not chosen because it was the Sabbath, but because everything was ready and delay was hazardous. Slowly three thousand citizens marched in companies to the jail, built on the side of Telegraph Hill to the north of the city. Its flat roof was covered thick and black with the Sheriff's posse, armed for defence. Above and around and in front of it citizens' bands were stationed to command the building from every point. In front of the jail door stood a carriage and a mounted cannon, and by the cannon a burning match. All was as still as a funeral procession waiting in front of a church door.

"Word was passed in to the Sheriff that five minutes would be given for the peaceful surrender of the prisoners. With watch in one hand and match in the other the gunner counted out the minutes. One, two, three minutes passed, and not a movement was made! Four minutes passed—there was a stir, the guard aloft began to descend into the jail.

"Five minutes had passed and the match was drawing to the spot, when the jail door opened and Casey and Cora were handed out to the carriage. Three thousand bayonets guarded them silently through the streets, as if to their graves, till they were safely ironed in the committee's cell. The companies dispersed, and that evening was as quiet as if the pavements had not resounded to the footfall of armed men.

"Mr. King lingered in great suffering for a week, the public feeling beating high or low as he rose or fell between recovery and death. He died. City and country suspended business and put on mourning. His funeral was a rare pageant of public grief. But to avoid a public tumult and while the populace was attracted to the funeral procession of the victim the guilty murderer and his guilty companion were quietly hanged from the upper window of the committee's hall.

"Thus the dangerous work went on. Very quietly, yet firmly, unarmed police were sent to seize on this and that objectionable person. Before an impartial jury that could not be bribed or made afraid they were tried and sentenced to execution or banishment. Unlike the tribunals of Paris or any other of its kind, it never used its power thus assumed for cruel purposes. Not an instance can be cited where punishment was inflicted that was not justified by the facts of the crime. Never did they forfeit the moral support of the people of the State. The Governor of the State declared the country in a state of insurrection and called on the State militia, but not a man responded!

"But a crisis came that forced even their enemies to admit their wisdom and justice. Judge Terry of the Supreme Court in open day stabbed an unarmed policeman for attempting the arrest of a spotted villain. Immediately upon this being known at headquarters the well known bell was tolled for instant muster.

"'Surely,' they whispered on the street corners, "no one will dare arrest a Judge of the Supreme bench!'

"The ominous tread of 6,000 men in response to the call was the answer, and the Judge of the Supreme Court was lodged in those rooms so feared. For six weeks he lingered there, while his victim wavered between life and death. Finally, to the surprise of all, he recovered. The Judge was instantly released, and at midnight under a heavy guard, to prevent the outraged populace from stringing him up to the nearest post, escorted to a man-o'-war lying in the harbor, and there kept until public feeling was at a lower temperature, then set free.

"This act of the committee forever put to rest the doubts and fears of the community. The experiment had been a dangerous one, but the end justified the means. Law and order were restored. Then the committee quietly withdrew to private life. Since then the city has passed through many trials of its character, but no other committee has had to be brought together."

These were the darker aspects of California's early life. Its growth, political, social and religious, was phenomenal. Passing through no territorial experience, she sprang into the Union full grown. Homes, schools, churches sprang up as if by magic beside the stores, theatres and jails.

Here have gathered in unusual sharpness of contrast the world's best and worst. She has prospered as few States have. The same conditions that have brought out wickedness in its most atrocious forms have developed those sterling qualities that have made her the pride of her people and make it possible for her to rise to meet with such splendid courage each experience, be it a gold rush, a volcanic eruption, or an exposition in the face of unprecedented obstacles from a world conflagration.

Thrilling Times of the Vigilance Committee—Determined Way in Which It Put Down Lawlessness