

REMINISCENCES OF JOAQUIN MILLER

Second Absorbing Chapter in This Thrilling Story of Pioneer Struggles and Victories as Told by the Poet, Judge and Philosopher of the Sierras.

Reminiscences of Joaquin Miller

Life Among the Indians.

I DO not know how, when or where or even why my father was made a magistrate—maybe appointed by the governor at request of the new settlers in the new neighborhood. I am only certain that it was not only without his request, but without his knowledge or consent. He was the most shy man I have ever met in a long life of contact with my fellow-men. But for all that he was Squire or Judge Miller from that day till up in his seventy-third year, when he himself passed on and up to judgment. Wherever he sat down in his many immigrations he was elected squire, and had to perform marriages and to hear petty troubles and pass judgment on his neighbors.

The first trial that impressed itself on my mind was that of some Indians. The rule established by the agent across the river among the Indians was to the effect that so long as they remained on the reservation they should judge themselves and rule according to their traditions and sense of justice; but that if they left the reservation and went over on the white man's ground, for which they had been paid and were still receiving generous annuities, they must abide by the white man's judgments.

There was a bad white man named George Sparks (there are always bad white men hovering around where there are good Indians with good money), and he had a "doghouse" over on the other side of Pipe creek in the edge of the settlements. The narrow little trail over which Indians could ride their little ponies led from the reservation to this bad place by way of our new home. Indians often stopped in on their way back. Once some tall splendid fellow in their red and yellow blankets got down at the cabin door, and standing in the middle of the floor, struck some sulphur matches and held them up for mother to see them burn. What a miracle! I guess they had never seen matches before. I know mother never had, and it was hard to believe that fire could be made to come out of the end of a little stick, and her surprise was sincere and deep. This delighted the simple hearted Indians, and, with many a "haw-haw," they rode away in their long single file through the brush toward Pipe creek. After they had gone mother and I and the rest of us picked up the dead stump from the floor and rubbed them hard on the hearth stone, but no fire. Papa wore one entirely out and hurt his finger on the rough stone before he gave it up. He was full of wonder that he, who knew all sorts of books, could not get fire out of a little stick as well as a blanketed Indian.

Called by Indians to Judge.

On the return from one of these frequent trips to the Pipe creek doghouse they were noisy and rode with uncertain seat. And they had a poor battered and bleeding Indian tied with a rope, led in the rear, with a rope around his neck. Four of the Indians, the oldest of a numerous band, were sober Indians at the head of the unsteady party. They tied their horses to the new fence, completed now and selecting the lowest place, led by the sober Indians they all came in and squatted in the yard around their prisoner. The sober old man asked for the white man to come and judge them all. Papa stood in the door. Mother, who always had a natural dignity, gave him the only chair, and he sat down looking severely at the poor bald, naked and badly mutilated prisoner. With a singular wisdom he beckoned the oldest Indian to rise and tell him the truth. Indians, as the patriarchs of old, always have great reverence for age.

The old Indian dropped his blanket from his shoulders and pointing to all the Indians except the three at his side, one after another, said, "Cock-kusee! Cock-kusee! Cock-kusee! Cock-kusee! Cock-kusee!" At this papa slowly and sadly shook his head, looking first at the nearest Indian a long time and so on to the last. Then he beckoned the first to take the rich red silk shawl which he had muffled about his neck and put it about the loins of the pitiful wretch in the middle of the group. He had kept standing all the time with his shaggy and battered head held low on his breast. The Indian, respecting this as his part of the sentence, rose on his feet at once and not only handed over the gaudy bit of garment, but helped the poor prisoner put it decently about his naked thighs. Then he beckoned the next one to put one of his extra blankets on his shoulders. Indians in those days generally wore all they had to wear. Three shirts was no un-

usual thing at the date of this settlement, and they were always of the most gaudy sort and often of the richest silk.

By this time the other Indians caught up the idea that they too must pay penalty, and one after the other took off something and put it on the naked man till he was clothed better than the best. Then the old "sober Indian" took a rich red handkerchief from about his neck and tied it about his head, pushing back the blood matted hair that hung down over his face, and poking him gently in the stomach with his fist, made him stand up straight and look him in the face. The name of this old Indian was Shingle-Ma-See. Another "sober Indian," Jim-Sas-See-Grass, a mighty hunter, gave him a pair of red flannel leggings. This revealed another pair of leggings, filled buckskin, underneath the red ones. But with all his wealth and new dignity the mutilated little man seemed not quite satisfied, and another "sober Indian" handed over an extra old blanket. Then one Indian after another kept handing over things till the mean little prisoner was almost smothered with clothes. He was revealing the very trait no doubt that had made him despised. The climax came when he made sign that he must have a horse to ride. There was no spare

spoke of it as being as big as fifty canoes. The chief stopped him and reminded the tribe, all gathered about on his right to hear the wonderful story, that he had said ten canoes at first. The honest traveler admitted this and tendered his scalp, explaining that he was afraid to say at first how big it really was. Then he was urged to tell how big, but he loudly protested that he was still afraid, for if they should heap all the canoes to be found in the mountain lakes and rivers together they would not have half enough to make a single steamboat. He was still urged to go on, but when he tried to make the noise of the wheels and the puff and piercing scream of the monster, he nearly took the roof off the council house and it seemed as going to kill himself. In his honest effort, when the chief thought him a maniac and made him get out.

This dismal little dusky man who stood before his judge, with the tribe squatted about, was possibly a Ute or Blackfoot; anyway, he was from some barren and bowy land. For people as well as the trees grow close to the ground in bleak and windy countries, and they are low and dark in mind and body, as well as in stature. Papa hesitated a long time before

lost in the dense woods on their way home.

Our savage soon washed his face, we all sat down to dinner together, and when he had hastily eaten, got my brother's tomahawk and went for wood. He slept by the fire in his blanket and kept the cabin warm all night.

The Judge's Pay.

"My," said mother next morning as we sat together at breakfast and talked of the magistrate's first "trial." "My," but I did want that red silk shawl; they tied about and over his upper legs. What became of it? The Indian must have understood. For that day he went down to the branch, washed and tried the big bright shawl and when mother was out cutting brush he spread it over the foot of the bed. And it was cheerful!

Papa said, "Why Margaret?" "Heulin Miller, you are a magistrate, the judge of all this country, and here you put in nearly the whole day deciding between these Indians and never got a cent, did you?"

"Why Margaret, I never thought of that, guess you have a right to the shawl if you want it." I think the Indian understood and was glad, for he got wood right along

when we were making sugar and sewed up the holes and put the three silver dollars in it, saying as she shook it down, "Nest egg to buy the land."

Each head of a family could locate 160 acres of land. The price was \$125 an acre. But the land laws were primitive and pretty severe in these early days and you must not only have the money in hand at the time the land came into market, but you must have two reliable witnesses to "prove up"—that is, to prove that you had built a house and made a home in it for more than a year. As there was a feeling against greased paper for windows, you were required to prove that you had glass in the windows. When papa stopped working at the mill, after about four months, he went to Miami, the county seat of our Grant county, and got some panes of glass. At the same time he got two little dry goods boxes and from one of these whittled out a sash. One day a good-natured old neighbor from Tennessee, by the name of Billy Fields, seeing papa whittling away at his sash, said: "All nonsense, Squire, all a waste of time."

"But the law says we must have glass in the windows." "Well, what's the matter with setting an old bottle or two in your win-

dowed till it could hold up no longer, but sash to rest on the wool. Then some one would pick up the little sleeper and lay him gently away in the trundle bed. For we no longer slept in the big bed with our parents.

The flax was not so troublesome, nor do you have to plant it, and plough it, and hoe it as you do corn. You have to get the pith all out, then you must comb and curry it till it is ready for the distaff of the little spinning wheel. Mother had to have flax to make warp for the wool of her bolt of cloth to be made on the loom and then manifested at Marlon, the only town then within many a mile.

Papa sold all the increase of the sheep and the two calves to the Indians and got some money for mother's "nest egg" that way and mother raised many chickens and disposed of the same to the tribe. Once, when we two boys went with papa, we took too much care of the poor hens, as the day was cold and raw, and smothered three of them. Papa did not

die of the floor, had us children get back in the foot of the bed as before, and treated them as if he had been her own blood.

But they both wailed and moaned bitterly, and begged papa to take the clocks, and at his leisure dispose of them to his neighbors. There was a whole carriage load of them, but in the double and treble assurance that he could double or triple his money on one thing about the real price or value of such wares, signed a note and once more became a "merchant." Let me get rid of that hatchet-faced wretch right here, for un-Christian as it is, I hate him yet. He for, he came at the end of the year, exacting his money with enormous interest, although papa had not sold a single one of the old clocks. Jacobs came forward and took up the note generously, and tore it up, for mother was crying; but we were in debt again, and papa had to struggle on and to work till he was before.

When we set out to cross the plains years later these old clocks, still in hand, all save a single one, took up more than half the wagon load. We hauled them almost to the top of the Rocky mountains, and then one night in a terrific snowstorm, when the wagon upset and we needed the old clocks for kindling wood, they were brass, glass, and varnish, yet all were cremated. Peace to their sounding brass; rest to their brazen faces!

Making a Cradle for Jimmy.

Papa had brought two little dry goods boxes down from Marlon. One he had made into window sash. We boys kept wondering and wondering what he was going to do with the other. He kept it in the smoke house, and once when we found him in there all alone, when he thought we were down at the creek catching catfish, we found him busy in these fixing rockers on the little box. We were delighted with the idea, and, asking him what it was for, he timidly and with some confusion, said it was to be a cradle for little Jimmy. But little Jimmy thrust both his hands in his pants pockets and said it was not big enough, and he added, with a pout, that baby Jimmy did not want to sleep in a cradle anyhow.

A few days before this little rebellion by the baby boy in his first post-natal year, an honest man and his pretty young wife, really the prettiest woman I had ever seen except mother, came to papa to be married, and, as usual, where money was so scarce, brought two coon skins. And they were very fine skins, killed in the heart of winter and dressed to perfection. To dress or tan a coon skin properly you first par-flesh it with the back edge of your hunting-knife, then take the brains of the animal and, rubbing this on the flesh side, you manipulate the skin with your hands industriously, rubbing and rubbing for hours. This is, or was done, in these days, work by the cabin fire, after the day's work was done. It takes three operations to complete the task. But when it is done the skin shines and glistens as if oiled; and each particular bit of fur stands up as if alive.

Mother had claimed these two beautiful skins for some special purpose of her own and put them away under her pillow, where she always kept the money, when there was any money, and she now brought out the beautiful skins, which Jimmy had also admired very much and she put them carefully and tenderly in the cradle and talking gentle baby talk to baby Jimmy. But he again thrust his hands deep in his pockets and turning as if in disgust, stalked away to the door and went out. No cradle for Jimmy Miller. So mother took the coon skins out for the time at least and the cradle was put back again in the smoke house.

Soon after a good old Southern woman came from the Billy Fields settlement and sent us little folks away to Billy Fields and his house full of girls. And when the good old woman went away we were all back home and very, very happy. I led the horse that carried her and she sat up a straddle smoking a cob pipe and holding tight before her one of those clocks, the first and only one we ever disposed of. But let me tell the end of this chapter in verse. For there are things that are song suits better the prose and a song suits better the theme. This is from Harpers:

WHEN LITTLE SISTER CAME.

We dwelt in the woods of the Tippecanoe,
In a long, last cabin, with never a view
Of the full day's sun for a whole year
Through
With strange half hints through the russet
corn
We children were hurried one night. Next
morn
There was frost in the trees, and a sprinkle
of snow,
And tracks in the ground. We burst through
the door,
And a girl baby cried—and then we were
four.

We were not sturdy, and we were not wise,
In the things of the world, and the ways
men dare;
A pale-browed mother with a prophetic eye
A father that dreamed and looked anywhere,
Three brothers—wild blossoms, tall fash-
ioned as men,
And we mingled with none, but we lived as
when
The path first lived, ere they knew the fall;
And loving all things we believed in all.
Oh! stinging yourself and throwing your
strength
On the front of the forest that stands in
mash,
Sounds, scull indeed in a pioneer's tale,
Of a sweet soil banished and bound like
this!
This reaching of weary-worn arms full
length
This stooping all day to the cold stubborn
soil—
This holding the heart! It is more than
toll!
What needless of heart! What washings to
die
In that soul bound to earth, that was born
for the sky!

32—COUNT 'EM—32!

Thirty-two millions to make the world
better,
Thirty-two millions to train up out
youth,
Thirty-two millions to shatter the fet-
ter,
Thirty-two millions to set forth the
truth.

Thirty-two millions for human improve-
ment,
Thirty-two millions to lighten our toll,
Possibly this may account for the move-
ment
Showing advances in prices of oil,
—Indianapolis News.



"At the First Sight of a Match My Mother Started Back in Amazement."

pony and no true Indian of this tribe would be seen on foot.

Who this despised Indian was no one can say at this distance of years, but from my experience I should say he had come to the tribe of Miami as a traveler or, more properly, a tramp. Indians are, or were, great travelers. They were always welcome, no matter where from or when, war or peace. For, as there were no fortifications to betray or expose, they were never treated as spies or suspected of evil designs. They paid their way by describing strange lands through which they passed, making maps or figures in the ashes of the camp fires or in little heaps of sand. But there was this difference between the Indian traveler of the old days and the white traveler of the present date—he must always tell the truth. A Marco Polo would have been disgraced and driven out of camp the first hour of his stay, or possibly lost his scalp on the spot.

An Indian's Description of a Steamboat.

A Rocky mountain Indian of the old days who had descended as far as St. Louis and seen a steamboat tried to tell about it on his return, and described it as big as ten canoes the first night of his narrative. The next night he

deciding what to do with this mass of silk and wool, old clothes and new, and then at last beckoned the last donor to take back his gift, then another, then another, then another till the beggar had only fifty raiment and an extra blanket.

Then he slowly rose up, closed his hands, bowed slowly three times to old Shingle-Ma-See, and sat down. The trial had concluded. Then the sober Indians came forward, one at a time, and reaching the right hand, said heartily: "How! How! Shake! Shake!"

Then the other Indians, all sober now, or nearly so, came up, and did the same. Then the mean little dark man reached his hand, but papa did not notice it, only motioning Shingle-Ma-See to lead off. Then he made sign by closing his eyes with his head aside that the dismal man must stay with him, and stay for three moons, till well and strong. At this all the Indians were glad and excited with delight—that is, as much excited as an Indian ever allows himself to be—and again coming forward, shouted: "How! How!" and shaking hands heartily they made their way over the low place in the fence, untied their ponies, and, following their old chief in long, single file, we were soon

all winter and out and burned more brush than any white man could have done. But in the spring when the sap began to run he ran with it and we never saw him any more.

Working to Get Land.

There was talk all the time of the land coming into market. Plenty of adventurers who had been too late to get location were waiting to pounce on that of those unfortunate enough not to have money in hand to purchase. Papa had no money now, but he worked hard, night and day, you may say, all winter and with the help of a neighbor had made a loom, a big spinning wheel and a little wheel for mother; the big wheel for wool, and the little wheel for flax. When the frost was out of the ground he plowed the little field and put it in corn and flax; mother and we lads made the garden.

A man by the name of Lorenzo Jacobs began to build a mill on our side of the Massassinnee, "the beautiful river," about a mile off, and there papa got work at 50 cents a day, boarding at home, but having his dinner with the mill hands. He was paid every Saturday night.

Mother the first Saturday night got an old mitten she had knit for him

dot; plenty of men to swear you have got glass in your window."

Chased by Wolves.

The last winter had been a hard one and packs of the big gray wolves had crossed the ice and come down from the north into our neighborhood. As the Indians did not hunt much any more, having plenty of money, the wolves became bold, even dangerous.

One night as papa was coming home they got after him. We boys, who had come to meet him as usual, heard him calling for mother, and we took up the cry of terror. Mother came almost at once with a big hickory bark torch, held high as she ran, and the wolves shrank back. But poor papa was sadly broken and was ill for a long time.

He was well enough pretty soon, however, to pull and cure the flax and help pick and card the wool for mother to card into rolls and spin for her loom. The wool in those days was awful. Burs and beggar lice stuck to the sheep that ran in the woods at will, till they were almost black. And this had to be picked out by hand. But we little fellows, all three, could pick wool now. And this we did by the light of the wood fire, where one little head after another nodded and