

The Memoirs of

CAESAR HONORE

A Curious Enterprise
in the Gold Fields
of California in 1849



Annotated by his Grandson
Bayard Taylor Honore, Jr.

By Eugene L. Conrotto

Copyright © 2015
Eugene L. Conrotto
All Rights Reserved



HypatiaMedia.com

Table of Contents

[Dedication](#)

[A FORENOTE](#)

[i](#)

[Chapter 1 — In the Beginning...](#)

[Chapter 2 — Judge Milton's Court](#)

[Chapter 3 — On to Monterey](#)

[Chapter 4 — The Vista Del Mar](#)

[Chapter 5 — Introducing the Cast](#)

[Chapter 6 — A Flurry of Activity](#)

[Chapter 7 — Reenter Billy Tremaine](#)

[Chapter 8 — On Bayard Taylor](#)

[Chapter 9 — Trapping Zachary Fenner](#)

[Chapter 10 — Finishing Up in Monterey](#)

[Chapter 11 — John C. Fremont](#)

[Chapter 12 — Doc and Phiggy](#)

[Chapter 13 — Companions](#)

[Chapter 14 — We Start for the Great Central Valley](#)

[Chapter 15 — Pairings](#)

[Chapter 16 — Burgundia \(1\)](#)

[Chapter 17 — Burgundia \(2\)](#)

[Chapter 18 — Milford "Doc" Brewer, Ole Bull, and Our "Decameron"](#)

[Chapter 19 — Over the Pacheco Pass](#)

[Chapter 20 — The California Constitutional Convention Ends](#)

[Chapter 21 — Joaquin](#)

[Chapter 22 — Trouble With the "Law"](#)

[Chapter 23 — In the Foothills](#)

[Chapter 24 — Burgundia's Letter](#)

[Chapter 25 — Indian Friends](#)

[Chapter 26 — Sonoran Camp \(1\)](#)

[Chapter 27 — Sonoran Camp \(2\)](#)

[Chapter 28 — A Summons from Hyrum](#)

[Chapter 29 — Zachary Fenner's Bees](#)

[Chapter 30 — Life in Sonora](#)

[Chapter 31 — Burgundia](#)

[Chapter 32 — Civic Violence](#)

[Chapter 33 — Daphne and Billy](#)

[Chapter 34 — Fenner Turns Up in Sonora](#)

[Chapter 35 — Wrapping Up Business](#)

[About the Author](#)

Dedication

This book is for

Dan Langhoff

...my student who became my teacher

— ELC

A FORENOTE

I shall refer to my grandfather in these notes as “C.H.” I do this not out of lack of affection or to save printer’s ink, but as a reminder to me that the annotator’s posture should be one of objectivity. C.H. was not a man with whom one—especially a worshipping grandson—could be objective. If love finds its way into this text, then I beg the reader to give me the benefit of the doubt and assume that love is a fitting supplement to the note at hand.

— *Bayard Taylor Honore Jr.*

What do we want with this vast, worthless area? This region of savages and wild beasts, of deserts of shifting sands and whirlwinds of dust, of cactus and prairie dogs? To what use could we ever hope to put these great deserts, or those endless mountain ranges, impenetrable and covered to their very base with eternal snow? What can we ever hope to do with the western coast, a coast of three thousand miles, rock-bound, cheerless, uninviting, and not a harbor on it? What use have we for this country?

–Daniel Webster¹

¹ C.H. saw Webster when the Senator was guest-of-honor at the Godfrey Lawrence Latin Academy in Boston. C.H. was eight and in the lower form, although he was a front bench scholar. He often told the story of his “brush with greatness,” especially when one of his grandchildren showed prejudice toward an exotic dish at table. Webster was what the Italians label “a great fork,” but at the Lawrence School outing he was rather picky. Headmaster Lawrence had asked mothers of his scholars to prepare “delicacies” for the great man. My great-grandmother Carolina sent a plate of ravioli in a rich sauce whose chief ingredient was the flesh and bones of 16 sparrows, C.H. knowing the exact number because he had trapped them and had the opportunity to re-check his figures when it became time to pluck the birds. Webster not only did he not sample Mama’s ravioli-con-passero, he took time out of his busy schedule to laud “Plain Yankee cooking” when scooping up a mess of plain Yankee porridge. This—plus Webster’s betrayal to his constituents by supporting the Fugitive Slave Act, telling Massachusetts in the process to conquer her “prejudice” regarding the Southern slavers, that compromise was necessary to save the Union—relegated the Senator to a class of politicians whom C.H. called “Pis-ants.” There is no doubt in my mind that C.H. used Webster’s “prejudice” against California and the West as an introduction to his memoirs was done so to satisfy the human appetite for revenge. What better way to hang a man than by his own words?

What better way to erase the hurt of an eight-year-old having to stand in front of his eager-to-hear mother inquiring about Webster's reaction to her raviolis? "The Senator loved your ravioli, Mama," said the lad wise beyond his years in the art of diplomacy. "The big pig ate them all!"

Chapter 1

In the Beginning...

San Francisco, 1912²

Biography is the only true history³

During my long life I have done little, but have done so with a great deal of skill. The opportunity to live long and to do little came from the exciting and unusual job of work I performed during my twentieth and twenty-first years. That adventure is the subject of this chronicle.

In youth we feel riches for every new illusion; in mature years for every one we lose.⁴

Foul-smelling and impatient Death, hopping from one foot to the other, may cause me to pause over-long over memories of California and youth, for it came to me in a dream that I would not die until this work was completed. For this I beg your indulgence.

I entered into the singular adventure which occupied those long-ago days, with a desire to get on in the world. To do so one must keep eyes and ears open, and mouth shut. The young man without means who yearns to succeed must, in addition, give his employer absolute loyalty. And always remember that strangers and rogues often give the best advice.⁵ And that it is lawful to be taught by an enemy.⁶

I was born on July 8, 1829, in Boston, Massachusetts, the only child of Enrico and Carolina Honore, British subjects of Piedmontese origin. My parents made their way north through Europe,⁷ and then west across the turbulent Atlantic as manservant and maid to Lord Hector John-Cowe.⁸ “We serve and he pays,” is the way my mother described her station in life. “He’s English,” she would add with a shrug that conveyed all that had to be passed-on by way of additional dialog.

John-Cowe, a representative of his family’s banking house,⁹ had no trouble making the clever Italian couple citizens of his country. It took but one letter and with it complications of origins and frontiers vanished. One letter—and my parents, and I, came in possession of the most valuable piece of paper on earth: a British passport.

“You see,” said the Lord, “you’re now bloody British despite those God-damnible head-kerchiefs and baggy trousers you insist on wearing.” My parents remained themselves in dress and soul whenever they were not acting for John-Cowe in some official capacity. They only half-trusted what they could see of English ways in London and of American ways in Boston, and, finally, in California, only half-trusted in God.

John-Cowe, for reasons known only to himself, his family, and, no doubt, to a few others in England, spent the entire second half of his life away from his mother country. The particular skeleton in his closet was no doubt a moldy one. There were hints—mostly from my mother’s rolling eyes—that John-Cowe favored boys and in time I began to understand why it was I never found myself alone in John-Cowe’s company.

John-Cowe to my knowledge never once referred to America by its given name. It was always the “bastard states.” “Only good thing about this God-damnible country is your beef. It’s not particularly fine beef, but there’s so God-damnably so much of it.”¹⁰

Looking back I am more inclined to think John-Cowe’s major deficiency was not gluttony or sodomy but rather dullness. The trouble with that unclassified venal sin is that it is catching, and my parents strove mightily to keep this disease at bay. They did this by reading aloud to one another, and as soon as I was able to understand some of the “big words,” included me in this brand of group therapy.¹¹

Aside from my nightly rendezvous with my family reading circle, my boyhood environment was not stimulating. Boston had its great port, and its ships brought exciting cargo from the far corners of the world, but I saw little of this nor was I touched by much of it. An occasional Feejee Islander or a hairy Bantu with a monkey perched on his shoulder would cross my path on my way to or from school or on an emergency errand to fetch a spool of white thread, but there was no conversation, no gaining of insight as to why the Feejee sailor covered his walnut skin with eggplant-purple tattoos, or why the Hairy Bantu allowed a wild, agitated, constantly chattering monkey shit all down his back.

And as I passed through adolescence and the forces of nature took over, demanding night and day that I fulfill my mission in the great scheme of creation to add new souls to the population, my curiosity centered on the great mystery of life, *to wit*, why did my male peers mock the Feejee Sailor and the Bantu Shit-back, while my female peers could not hide a slight flare of their nostrils when reflecting on our visitors from abroad?

John-Cowe was not an evil or spiteful man. He simply was unfeeling. On our trip around the Horn to California he had two score pieces of luggage; 5000 silver dollars; a manservant and his wife and their son—in short 5042 separate and distinct possessions. His watery-blue eyes and smooth brick-red face held but one message: disdain. Poor man. He had nothing to be disdainful about. His fat fingers told his entire, wasted story.

I recall him worse (with the sharpness that bitterness gives the senses) during our cold, horrible passage to San Francisco. He was sitting in the saloon, his massive back steadying the root of the great mast, a human sack of sawdust, forking food into his mouth while the

very sight of vittles made me and everyone else on the ship desperately ill. His enormous belches caused the ship's confused seasick rats to give up their safe berths and scurry to find another. And when John-Cowe broke wind one of our fellow emigrants cried out, "The sails are rend in twain!" To which John-Cowe roared back: "What fool of a passenger would think sails would be shown in such a storm?"

My mother left us with the final verdict on John-Cowe's gastro-intestine prowess: "He's the only man whose farts cause me to pray." Because of this sea outing, I never again set foot on a floating plank.¹²

The clipper ship *Tronka*¹³ passed through California's Golden Gate on August 5, 1849—a date otherwise made famous in Yerba Buena¹⁴ for the fact the Baptists of this city dedicated the first Protestant Church in California on that day.

When a skiff pulled up alongside the *Tronka*, I grabbed my purse, told my folks I would meet up with them later, jumped aboard, grabbed an oar, and with oar and determination caused that skiff to literally fly across the water.

On that very first moment on dry land I was reborn, despite my India rubber legs. I wanted to pound those legs into the sandy soil, to reach up and fly with the gulls, to shout to the sun, to test my sinews in mortal combat.¹⁵

Land! Earth! I scooped up a handful of San Francisco mud¹⁶ and pressed it to my face—a baptism! From that day to this—63 years—I swear I am not French or Italian or English or New English or American: I am a Californian. My eyes are set westward to the setting sun. I was one of 25,000 emigrants to come to California in 1849. My soul was born on the Pacific slope.

I feel a deeper kinship with a Chinese herb doctor than I do with a blue-eyed Dane of an Englishman, because the Celestial¹⁷ and I are Pacific kin. Sea water is life's first blood. I have seen this green and golden land fill with all manner of men and women, and I love them because they turned their backs on home and friends and family to let their sweat irrigate a new pasture.

On that very first hour in San Francisco, the stentorian cries of the leather-lunged hotel and boarding house drummers in my ears, I set a course through the shanties of the Chinese,¹⁸ seeking higher ground.

Here was my first venture into the strangeness of red streamers, the feel of sandalwood and the sweet smell of jasmine: dingy buildings that were home and fan-tan parlor; home and chop house; home and grocery store; home and laundry. Their inhabitants wore quilted jackets and full blue cotton breeches reaching to the knees. The soles on their sandals were an inch thick. Under the black beehive caps hung sacred pigtails.

Without bothering to wash the soil of California from my mouth, I pointed to and subsequently downed a bowl of white rice. Happy to be alive, happy to be 20 years old,

happy to be on land, I pointed again and downed a second bowl of white rice. Then I tried to strike up a conversation with the first Californian with whom I had the pleasure of dining. But, alas, there was no opportunity to discuss anything more esoteric than white rice. Pity. I attended a colloquy at Harvard Divinity School in which a Harvard professor stated Emerson and the Transcendentalists were not to be dismissed lightly, that their exploration of Eastern Religion was more than a protest against the lack of spirituality in the mainstream Western religions.¹⁹

From the chop house I walked up a steep path to where I could see a wide plaza topped by a flagpole displaying the stars and bars. I paused often to gaze over the retreating bay—a forest of masts tracing lazy circles in the salt air—a body of water so vast the distant east shore was a line of haze. Here were anchored vessels flying the flags of England, France, Spain, Portugal, New Granada, Russia, Peru, Tahiti, Oldenburg, Bremen...and, of course, the United States....

The Parker House dominated the plaza. Across the way stood the City Hotel, a bright yellow and red board advertising its rates: \$25 per week; \$20 more for meals. Porters ran in and out of both hotels, toting luggage recently removed from the now idle fleet in the bay.

This was Portsmouth Square, the very heart of this young city.²⁰ I sat down on an abandoned crate and let the sounds and sights of a new world come to me. Here was humanity in perpetual motion: oval-faced Lascars, small-eyed Kanackers, zarape-clad Mexicans, Chileans, Peruvians, flannel-shirted Saxons, Negroes, Feejians, tattooed New Zealanders, Chinese, jet-black Abyssinians, fiery-eyed Malays, turbaned Turks, Russians....²¹

Of women there were few. Likewise the elderly.²²

“The latest news from the States!” cried a voice I immediately recognized. It was Mr. Laney, a fellow-passenger on the *Tronka*.

Merchants, idlers, gold-seekers, and scholars perked an ear toward Mr. Laney—then they became a mob rushing to buy one of his 90-day-old newspapers. As part of Lord John-Cowe’s 20-pieces-of luggage entourage aboard the *Tronka* I had been snobbishly bemused by Mr. Laney’s meager shipboard possessions. He lived out of one small portmanteau, but continually hovered over two cartons crammed full of these New York newspapers. Mr. Laney afforded us a snitch of relief from the agony of the sea. When we came face to face with the dreadful Horn, Mr. Laney led our shrieking lamentations: we for our lives, he for his newspapers.

In fact, the jokes directed at Mr. Laney and the *New York Herald* became so gross the captain, finally, ordered the subject off limits at the mess, fearing, I supposed at the time, that his absolute authority would be eroded by the incessant talk on so tiny a target.

Mr. Laney, I felt, was crazy.

After half-an-hour watching Mr. Laney sell 600 two-cent 90-day-old newspapers for a

dollar per each, I knew which of us stood nearest to ignorance.

Even then I correctly sensed that money was the key to freedom. The love of money might be the root of evil, but money itself is a most blissful friend, to be spoken of in the same reverence one reserves for an old wife or a faithful dog.

When Mr. Laney²³ concluded his business, he ambled over to where I stood probably mouth agape. A lesser person would have sunk his teeth into my flesh, seeking the terrene taste of vindication, and saying, perhaps, “Can I interest you in a 90-day-old newspaper—provided your master has given you your weekly dollar required for its purchase?”

Instead, this excellent man said: “Ah, Caesar (pronouncing it correctly: CHE-sar-eh), you’re looking better. I really worried about you out there.

“Thank you, Mr. Laney,” I answered. “I’m feeling much better, but I’m puzzled: how did you get your newspapers up here so quickly? I don’t think the *Tronka* has tied-up yet.”

“Gold is the picklock that never fails,” he answered. “The ship’s crew is amenable to bribery so I fixed it with them to have my papers and myself delivered to shore even before the sun rose this morning. The crew, incidentally, is at this moment jumping ship and leaving your fellow passengers to make their own off-loading rituals.”

This was disquieting news. This means John-Cowe would need my muscle-power to help with luggage (he had round-the-clock possession of the silver dollars).

Mr. Laney knew what was going through my mind. “First,” he said, “let us repair to a grog shop for two 90-day-old East Coast newspapers worth of a welcome home drink.”

“Welcome home?” I asked.

“Young man,” he said, “you are young and strong and uncommonly smart. You are California’s bridegroom.”

“Bridegroom?” I asked. “What does that mean?”

“It means,” my friend said, “you will marry this place and live your entire life and die here.”

“But,” he added, “let us find a liquor bar if such an establishment exists in San Francisco.”

Mr. Laney making jokes! Every other business establishment sold alcohol, by the barrel, gallon, quart, pint, glass, or shot. As it was, fate led us into the darkened interior of a place bearing the uncommon name, “Nellie’s Fleas²⁴”—a circumstance upon which my destiny pirouetted.

I recall, as we passed out of the sunlight into the liquor bar, having had a twinge of conscience: I had already over-extended my morning jaunt.

My parents would be expecting me to help make the ship-to-shore transfer, and John-Cowe would certainly leave all the work to them. I covered my guilt with the knowledge that my parents were resourceful. If Mr. Laney could get an entire ship’s crew to do a rather minor service for him, I felt my parents would manage.

Liberty is given by nature even to mute animals, and I was enjoying the banquet of freedom that was mine by simply sitting down to it.

Nellie's Fleas was comfortably filled with men of every description and persuasion in need of an early morning "eye opener." We were interrupted by the appearance at the open door of a crew of roughnecks muscling in a magnificent oak panel complete with several rows of beveled mirrors.

I knew this panel! It held a conspicuous place in the *Tronka's* hold, and now it was going to be the backbar in the very first liquor saloon I had ever entered.

It seemed every one of the men in that saloon took a hand in aligning and anchoring the panel to the back wall. When it was secure, Mike O'Farrell, the burly Australian, his left eye gone, co-owner of Nellie's Fleas, declared: "Drinks on the house." Pandemonium. Cheers. Whistles. Until Mike's brother and partner, Robby, stood on a chair, got silence, and said: "Limit of two drinks except the crew that fetched it from the ship—six drinks."

Mr. Laney talked about his life in New York. He had been a back-bench accountant. He told of his wife and seven (this fact amazed me!) children, and how he would be able to send for them—not, I thought, on his newspaper venture earnings. If he had an ace up his sleeve he did not say nor did I inquire.

Hypocrites weep, and you cannot tell their tears apart from a saint's; but no bad man ever laughed sweetly. Mr. Laney's laugh was pure sweetness, and I knew that the crew and passengers—me especially included—aboard the *Tronka* had done an injustice to this sweet man.

Our shots before us, I studied how the others handled the whiskey and I did the same, turning my back to the bar, throwing my head back, opening my mouth to receive the shot. When I opened my eyes I received the shock of my young life—not from the liquor because strong drink was no stranger in the surroundings of my former life: a heroic-size painting on the wall I was now facing for the first time—a nude—lying on a satin bed—a nude with legs wide apart—my first view, albeit a fairly competent artist's rendition, of that divine orifice that rules and often ruins every male on earth, from Adam onward.

Innocence and mystery never dwell long together.²⁵

Most artists, I learned later in life, treat nudity with some reverence. I'm sure the oil on my nude was still wet, and that the artist²⁶ was off somewhere seeking inspiration for his next masterpiece. In any event, my nude was clean-shaven, so to speak, and printed in handsome letters on that pink curve of her Mound of Venus was the legend *Edepol nunc nos tempus est malas peioris fieri*.

"Do you know Latin?" Mr. Laney asked.

"Afraid not," I answered. It was not the mystery of the Latin that held my full attention, and I'm sure my riveted amazement was much easier to read than the Latin legend.

Mr. Laney spoke: "How old are you, Caesar?"

“Twenty, last month,” I said.

“Close your mouth,” he said. Then he patted me on my arm and quietly slipped out of the barroom.

Mike O’Farrell looked me over with his one good eye. “Know what it says?” he asked, referring to the Latin.

“No idea,” I answered.

At this time I had been on dry land in a city I had only heard about previously for less than two hours, when in walks a second person I had known on the *Tronka*.

Billy Tremaine.²⁷ A deckhand completing his first voyage. A devil-may-care sort, younger than me by two years, who displayed uncommon courage when it came to climbing up to the crow’s nest in the worst of horrible weather while all I could do is lie on my back on the deck praying for death.

Most of the other sailors had spared no *sotte voce* comments on my seamanship, but Billy Tremaine had done worse: he had ignored me.

“Hello, Bill,” I said, extending my hand.

“Hello,” he said. His handshake was firm. No matter what our stations might have been aboard ship, here we met as fellow pioneers in a brave, new world.²⁸

“I’ve been studying my Latin,” I said by way of starting a conversation. I pointed to the nude.

“What’s it say?” Billy asked.

Mike O’Farrell, busy poring drinks for the backbar celebrants, caught Billy’s question. “What do you think it says?” he asked.

“Something to do with quim,” answered Billy.

“Holy name!” cried Mike. “We have a bloody genius come belly-up to my bar.” He scanned the room with his one good eye and it fell on a gray-haired ancient boozier.²⁹ “Parker,” he cried, “These youngsters need a Latin lesson. Bring your glass!”

Parker’s glass, of course, was empty. He held it up to be filled, turned to the nude and waited for the room to quiet down. When he had the audience’s attention, he recited, first in Latin then in English in a timbre-dripping stage voice: “The immortal words of the Roman playwright Titus Maccius Platus. I quote—“*Edepol nunc nos tempus est malas peioris fieri*—in English—Now’s the time for bad girls to become worse still.”

Billy Tremaine, it turns out, had kin in Monterey. He had no plans to get back on the *Tronka* except to fetch his pay and his gear. There would be no problem because he had signed up for a one-way trip. If the truth be told, the *Tronka* would not find crew enough to put to sea for several months for Billy Tremaine’s mates may have been able to weather the Horn, but they could not cure gold fever. Most of the 600 ships at anchor in the bay would be abandoned.

Looking back at the far away morning, the fates had me in mind for just as Parker was

receiving the last pat on the back for a Latin job well done, into Nellie's Fleas came the *Tronka's* second mate, Martin Bledsoe—my third shipmate.

Bledsoe was as mean as he was ugly. It was he who disciplined the crew. He often recalled with a sneering degree of joy the “gone years” when flogging was the standard and not the exception. He walked up to us and without so much as a greeting said, “Billy, get back on the ship and get your pay.” To me he said, “Get your ass back to the ship. You're wanted by John-Cowe to do your work.” To Mike O'Farrell: “No more of your rotten liquor to this fine Christian gentleman,” meaning me, delivered with dripping sarcasm.

Billy scampered out of Nellie's Fleas. One-eyed Mike reached under the bar and snarled at Bledsoe: “Unless you want your scalp blessed with a second harelip, I suggest you turn around...” Mike and Bledsoe at the same instant at this point in Mike's warning slammed down on the bar identical heavy wooden boat cleats, the weapon *de jour*.

They stood amazed—then Mike started laughing and Bledsoe stood back. It was a startling development—a perfectly timed *pas de deux*.

So startled by the simultaneous bangs, I too laughed.

Not able to handle Mike and a barroom full of his friends, Bledsoe turned to me. “I'd like to crack your head,” he said, glaring into my eyes.

Mike intervened. “You know this man?” he asked Bledsoe.

“He's not a man,” said the second mate, “he's a pasty-faced half-cock servant of some British lord.” He dangled the boat cleat under my nose. “No doubt amuses his master by taking the likes of this up his arse.”

I should not have done what I ended up doing; but Bledsoe left me with no choice. I should have counted to 10, but I had no choice. I should have counted to 20, but I had no choice. I blame my first two hours in California, Mr. Laney making \$600 in a half-hour. I blame the nude. I blame the utter joy of standing on firm ground.

I had all the time in the world to think this out. Like the audience waiting to have Parker deliver the line from Titus Maccius Platus, the audience held its breath.

Thanks to Bledsoe I had come early to this vital crossroads in my life: freedom or servitude. The wrong choice would haunt me until my last breath.

I doubled up my fist until the sinews cried for relief, and hit the second mate square on the nose. Fortune is always on the side of the largest battalions—but more important, she smiles on the army that delivers the first blow.

I felt cartilage crumbling. Bledsoe, probably more surprised than hurt, lurched forward. He raised the wooden boat cleat. The debate was over. I remember thinking: “He wants to kill me.” Immediately followed by: “I want to kill him.” And as this colloquy was reaching its climax, Mike wrenched the boat cleat out of Bledsoe's hand, leaving his nose open to a decisive second attack. I struck. Bledsoe stumbled backward and sat down on the floor. I hit him square upon his crown with a brass spittoon, then poured the spent offerings of a hundred brown cuds over his bleeding and broken head.

Nellie's Fleas exploded. Mike was over the plank in one hurdle. He grabbed half of me while a squad of his devotees took hold of the other half and out into the street I was thrown.

San Francisco weather! I remember thinking: What happened to the sunshine? Where did all this fog come from? I also remember in that instance of departure a visual mixture of Bledsoe's smashed nose, wild faces, animated beards, the rich black walnut backbar, and the nude.³⁰

I landed in the middle of the busy street at John-Cowe's feet. Following Bledsoe's humiliating pronouncement to a bar-full of probable degenerates, the last person I wanted or expected to see was my parents' employer.

"Caesar," he said, "you are wanted to help your parents with my things."

Looking back, there are many things I wish I had said in response, but my favorite is: "This is California. Get your own damned things." Alas, I did not say anything. I reached behind me, gathered up a fresh horse turd and hurled it in John-Cowe's direction.

A fresh horse turd was my Declaration of Independence!³¹

We stood facing one another when a freight wagon turned a corner, the driver shouting, "Round the corner, Sally!" separated us.

When the wagon passed John-Cowe was gone and with him my strings to the past. Thus it was that I became a free citizen of the Pacific Basin. I had vanquished Bledsoe and his scurrilous libel, said my good-bye to my Parents' employer, had a first look at the gates of paradise, had two shots of whiskey under my belt, and \$31³² in my pocket.

It was my desire to put distance between me and Nellie's Fleas. For all I knew, the brass spittoon may have killed Bledsoe. At least, if not dead, he would be mightily vexed. A mile north of Portsmouth Square, I rented two blankets, a rough table, a looking glass, a wash basin, a three-legged chair, and a cot—\$25 for the week, in advance—another \$15 if I wanted breakfast and dinner, which I did not having already mastered the art of ordering food in a Chinese chop shop. The hostelry's dirt floor reassured me that it would not require me to sweep it.

At high noon I fell upon said cot and enjoyed a most delicious sleep.

² This the place and year of C.H.'s death.

³ This quote is from Carlyle. Emerson said: "There is properly no history, only biography."

⁴ A quote—without acknowledgement—to Mme. Swetehine. As Goethe said, there would be little left of him if he were to discard what he owed to others.

⁵ This business of strangers and rogues giving the best advice is lifted from C. H. Bailey, and often quoted by C.H. His home was overrun by such persons—all were

welcome: saint or sinner.

⁶ The quote here is lifted from Cicero or Seneca. C.H. had a penchant for things Roman.

⁷ John-Cowe engaged my great-grandparents during his year-long stay in Savonna in 1827. He then returned briefly to London, and departed for New York and Boston on March 15, 1828. My great-grandparents were in his service a total of 22 years. John-Cowe never married, upon his death left \$10,000 to Enrico and Carolina. The bulk of his estate went to various nephews, some of whom I met in San Francisco banking circles.

⁸ Actually, they were a bit more than that. Enrico kept the Lord's books and was, in fact, his private secretary, for John-Cowe made these various forays into remote parts of the globe not so much as to find recreation as it was to check-up on his family's financial interests. Carolina took on the manservice duties: she fed, clothed and groomed John-Cowe.

⁹ Pinder's Trust. The wealth flowed down from the mother's side. The bank failed in the panic of 1893.

¹⁰ John-Cowe must have held some sort of record in this category. C.H. suggested that John-Cowe had better pray God is not a cow because God's punishment will make Hell's lakes of fire seem like a pleasant afternoon at the Sutro Baths. John-Cowe liked his beef boiled. Upon huge mounds of meat he would pour either a green (parsley, onions, garlic, olive oil) or red (garlic, bell pepper, tomato) *bagno*—"bath." This is how C.H. ate, and how even to the generation of my grandchildren ate beef.

So much for acquired taste.

¹¹ My birthday and Christmas gifts from C.H. were always books, and with each book a fancy or unusual pen or pencil, to remind me to write in the book margins, to ask questions, to challenge, to underscore, in short to participate with the author in his or her search for truth or beauty or nothing at all.

¹² Here we are treated to one of C.H.'s most egregious "exaggerations." He most certainly used the ferry boats and the Sacramento River steamers simply because our family owned them! And he went by ship to Seattle and Juneau to seal a trade deal for his father-in-law, Hyrum Milton. In 1872 he went to Europe with his family, sailing on the *Empress of Russia* by way of Macao, Singapore, and Cape Town. On the very same run two years later the vessel was destroyed in a typhoon off of Manila with a heavy loss of life.

¹³ Built by Wm. Jones & Sons in the Brooklyn Yards in 1848. The voyage we made was ship's second trip to California. She had a long, narrow hull and tall masts that carried tremendous clouds of canvas—the clipper ship was built for speed, and the *Tronka* could do 18 knots. She made the San Francisco run in 100 days averaging 6-1/4 knots. The gold

rush spurred development of the clipper ships. People wanted a “fast” passage to California, but, more important, they wanted a means of bringing along substantial personal freight: tools, machinery, books, merchandise, etc., at reasonable freight rates. This could not be done by overland transport, and the transcontinental railroads were decades away.

¹⁴ Surely C.H. knew that the name Yerba Buena had been officially changed to San Francisco some months before.

¹⁵ C.H. had just turned 20. He was an even six-foot tall, 180 pounds, and very muscular by virtue of the manual labor he did independently of what piddling duties he did for John-Cowe by way of his parents. From age 12 C.H. was a for-hire stable mucker. “The secret of success,” he often expounded, “is never to work for wages. Work by the job. A man wants you to muck-out five stables. You give him a price—say \$25. Agreed! Shake hands. You go to the commons and find five lads in need of cash. You hire them at \$4 a stable. Let’s see. How much do you make on that deal, Bayard?”

¹⁶ C.H. is back on track.

¹⁷ China was known as the Celestial Kingdom, hence the name for the individual.

¹⁸ Another C.H. fiction. Up to 1850 a mere handful of Chinese had come to California. Chum Ming, who arrived in 1848, was the first. He got word back to a friend in Canton, Cheong Yum, that there was gold in the mountains of this new country. Ship masters in Hong Kong and Canton circulated glowing reports and flaming advertisements on the wonders of California. San Francisco was singled out as “The Market of the Three Barbarian Tribes.” In 1850 40 vessels sailed to California from Hong Kong. By year’s end in 1851, 25,000 Chinese had come to California. At first the Chinese were considered a novelty, but as their numbers swelled in the gold diggings they were viewed as competition—serious competition to be harshly dealt with by the “Americans” who had won California fair and square in a war with Mexico.

¹⁹ There is one subject I never brought up with my grandfather, nor did I inquire into it with my parents: C.H. was in Boston in his late teens. Why did he not make an effort to attend Harvard? The Harvard professor was Theodore Price. In his later years he recanted his criticism of the Transcendentalists and became a Zen Buddhist. He is remembered for the lines: “I will walk with fate / And thus compel the Jade to go my way./ A jackal falling down a well said / ‘Here I camp today.’”

²⁰ The name honors Commodore John D. Sloat’s *U.S.S. Portsmouth* which entered San Francisco Bay on July 9, 1846, and seized Alta California for the United States.

²¹ C.H. “borrows” this catalog from the *Journal* of William Perkins, a Sonora merchant.

²² On October 21, 1849, Nathan Spear died of heart disease. He was 47 years of age—one of the oldest inhabitants of San Francisco. Spear was a partner of Jacob P. Leese,

who formed the first mercantile establishment in San Francisco.

²³ Born Charles Robert Laney in Brooklyn, New York, he was listed in the San Francisco city registry every year through 1857. He drowned off the Faralone Islands when the bark *Hunter* went aground.

²⁴ Nell Fulton ran a bawdy house in Sydney, Australia, during a time when the locals were plagued by an infestation of fleas. Nell, who basked in the reputation of her “clean” girls, offered a free go at the merchandise if anyone found a flea on one of the girls. The promotion ended when some customers figured out fleas were transportable.

²⁵ A quote from Madame Necker. I have no idea what it means.

²⁶ Joseph Hendrix by name, a teacher of Latin in a former life. His paintings—complete with Latin footnotes—were scattered about San Francisco. Many were of the same girl, but none other that I was aware of, in the same pose.

²⁷ Billy Tremaine figures prominently in C.H.’s “curious enterprise.”

²⁸ C.H. always displayed a penchant for quoting Shakespeare. This reference to “a brave, new world” is doubly apt because it comes from *The Tempest*—the very condition the two men had experienced.

²⁹ He could not have been too ancient. The most elderly citizen in this city of young men at the time was but 55 years of age.

³⁰ When Nellie’s Fleas was closed by the revived San Francisco Committee of Vigilance in 1856, the black walnut backbar was sold at auction to a interior designer. C.H. ran across it in the bathroom of a Nob Hill banker while attending a reception honoring patrons of the local opera. His first inclination was to inject a bit of spice into the dull soirée by giving the true and unvarnished history of that wooden slab, including a history of Nellie and some choice passages in Latin, but he knew Nana Burgandia would not be pleased. [Note: In response to escalating crime, San Francisco merchants first organized a Committee of Vigilance in 1851. On June 9 John Jenkins of Sydney, Australia, was hanged for stealing a safe from a business. At that time in California, grand larceny was punishable by death. These irregular militias hanged seven others, deported several Sydneyites, and forced several elected officials to resign.]

³¹ This is undoubtedly fiction. Ours is the kind of family in which family episodes are retold almost ritualistically (certain occasions demand certain stories be retold). Never had I heard this story until I read C.H.’s journal. So far as I know, his split from John-Cowe’s retinue was amicable. C.H.’s parents likewise understood that once in California he would strike out on his own.

³² The truth is C.H. had well over \$500 on his person when he made landfall in San Francisco, and a credit secured by hard cash of \$1500 with the Farmers and Merchants Trust of Boston. In addition to his stable mucking, he dried herbs and sold them door-to-

door. He had both rosemary and lavender hair treatments, and dried thyme to spice up traditional clam chowder.