

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott  
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel  
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen  
Weber Freiligrath Frey  
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel  
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas  
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach  
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil  
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London  
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer  
Trackl Stevenson Lichtenberg Doyle Gjellerup  
Mommsen Thoma Tolstoi Lenz Hambruch Droste-Hülshoff  
Dach Thoma von Arnim Hägele Hanrieder Hauptmann Humboldt  
Karrillon Reuter Verne Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier  
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder  
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer Bebel Proust  
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Dickens Grimm Jerome Rilke George  
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot  
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy  
Storm Casanova Lessing Langbein Gilm Gryphius  
Chamberlain Schiller Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates  
Brentano Strachwitz Claudius Schilling Kralik Bellamy Gerstäcker Raabe Gibbon Tschechow  
Katharina II. von Rußland Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Wilde Gleim Vulpius  
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Morgenstern Goedicke  
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Kleist Mörike Musil  
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus  
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus  
Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo Moltke  
Nestroy Marie de France  
Nietzsche Nansen Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht Ringelnatz  
Marx Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz  
von Ossietzky May vom Stein Lawrence Irving  
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# **The Shirley Letters from California Mines in 1851-52**

Louise Amelia Knapp Smith Clappe

## Imprint

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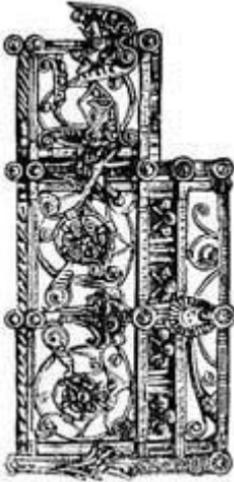
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*To her Sister in Massachusetts  
And now Reprinted from the  
Pioneer Magazine  
of 1854-55*



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California, by Dr. Josiah Royce, in the handsome as well as handy American Commonwealths series, is commonly regarded as the best short history of California ever written, and particularly so as to the early mining era. Dr. Royce knew his state, and a more competent writer could hardly have been selected. Reviewing, in his history, almost everything accessible, worthy of consideration, in connection with mining-camps, it is noteworthy that the Doctor has much to say concerning the Shirley Letters. Thus (p. 344),—

Fortune has preserved to us from the pen of a very intelligent woman, who writes under an assumed name, a marvelously skillful and undoubtedly truthful history of a mining community during a brief period, first of cheerful prosperity, and then of decay and disorder. The wife of a physician, and herself a well-educated New England woman, "Dame Shirley," as she chooses to call herself, was the right kind of witness to describe for us the social life of a mining camp from actual experience. This she did in the form of letters written on the spot to her own sister, and collected for publication some two or three years later. Once for all, allowing for the artistic defects inevitable in a disconnected series of private letters, these

"Shirley" letters form the best account of an early mining camp that is known to me. For our real insight into the mining life as it was, they are, of course, infinitely more helpful to us than the perverse romanticism of a thousand such tales as Mr. Bret Harte's, tales that, as the world knows, were not the result of any personal experience of really primitive conditions.

And in a foot-note on page 345 the Doctor says, in part,—

She is quite unconscious of the far-reaching moral and social significance of much that she describes. Many of the incidents introduced are such as imagination could of itself never suggest, in such an order and connection. There is no mark of any conscious seeking for dramatic effect. The moods that the writer expresses indicate no remote purpose, but are the simple embodiment of the thoughts of a sensitive mind, interested deeply in the wealth of new experiences. The letters are charmingly unsentimental; the style is sometimes a little stiff and provincial, but is on the whole very readable.

No typographical or other changes are made in printing these extracts from Dr. Royce's history, and as typographical style is involved in noticing further the Doctor's review of the Shirley Letters, it is proper to say here that his volume was printed at the Riverside Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts,—a press that, in the words of a writer on matters of typographical style, "maintained the reputation of being one of the three or four most painstaking establishments in the world." Such places are few and far between, unlike the "book and job printing establishments" that, like the poor, are always with us, and where no *book* was ever printed.

After having so fittingly introduced Shirley to his readers, it is unfortunate that the Doctor is not always accurate in his citation of the facts as printed in the Letters. Thus on page 347 of his history, he says that the wife of the landlord of the Empire Hotel at Rich Bar was "yellow-complexioned and care-worn." She does not appear to have been a care-worn person. Shirley says of her (post, p. 39),—

Mrs. B. is a gentle and amiable looking woman, about twenty-five years of age. She is an example of the terrible wear and tear to the complexion in crossing the plains, hers having become, through exposure at that time, of a dark and permanent yellow, anything but becoming. I will give you a key to her character, which will

exhibit it better than weeks of description. She took a nursing babe, eight months old, from her bosom, and left it with two other children, almost infants, to cross the plains in search of gold!

The Doctor says, "The woman cooked for all the boarders herself," and in the preceding sentence states, "The baby, six months old, kicked and cried in a champagne-basket cradle." Shirley does not use the word "boarders." The baby was only two weeks old. With the details of the birth of this baby omitted, Shirley's account of these matters is (p. 40, post),—

When I arrived she was cooking supper for some half a dozen people, while her really pretty boy, who lay kicking furiously in his champagne-basket cradle, and screaming with a six-months-old-baby power, had, that day, completed just two weeks of his earthly pilgrimage.... He is an astonishingly large and strong child, holds his head up like a six-monther, and has but one failing,—a too evident and officious desire to inform everybody, far and near, at all hours of the night and day, that his lungs are in a perfectly sound and healthy condition.

Dr. Royce (p. 347) tells of the funeral of one of the four women residing at Rich Bar at the time of Shirley's arrival, which was only a few days prior to the death, and they had not met. The funeral service was held at the log-cabin residence, which had "one large opening in the wall to admit light." The "large opening" was not, in the first intention, to admit light. Shirley says (post, p. 70),—

It has no window, all the light admitted entering through an aperture where there *will* be a door when it becomes cold enough for such a luxury.

Describing the service, the Doctor says, in part,—

After a long and wandering impromptu prayer by somebody, a prayer which "Shirley" found disagreeable (since she herself was a churchwoman, and missed the burial service), the procession, containing twenty men and three women, set out.

Shirley was not, at that time, a churchwoman, and her account of the prayer, etc., is,—

About twenty men, with the three women of the place, had assembled at the funeral. An extempore prayer was made, filled with all the peculiarities usual to that style of petition. Ah, how different from the soothing verses of the glorious burial service of the church!

It may not be inappropriate here to note that the baby referred to in the two immediately preceding pages is none other than the original of *The Luck* in Bret Harte's *Luck of Roaring Camp*. How the funeral scene as described by Shirley was adapted by this master of short-story writing, and how skillfully he combined it with the birth of *The Luck*, may be perceived in the two paragraphs following.

[Shirley, post, p. 70.] On a board, supported by two butter-tubs, was extended the body of the dead woman, covered with a sheet. By its side stood the coffin, of unstained pine, lined with white cambric.

[*The Luck of Roaring Camp*, *Overland*, vol. i, p. 184.] Beside the low bunk or shelf, on which the figure of the mother was starkly outlined below the blankets, stood a pine table. On this a candle-box was placed, and within it, swathed in staring red flannel, lay the last arrival at Roaring Camp.

Bancroft (*History of California*, vol. vii, p. 724), speaking of early California literature, says, —

Mining life in California furnished inexhaustible material;... and almost every book produced in the golden era gave specimens more or less entertaining of the wit and humor developed by the struggle with homelessness, physical suffering, and mental gloom. And when, perchance, a writer had never heard original tales of the kind he felt himself expected to relate, he took them at second-hand... Even the most powerful of Bret Harte's stories borrowed their incidents from the letters of Mrs. Laura A. K. Clapp, who under the nom de plume of 'Shirley,' wrote a series of letters published in the *Pioneer Magazine*, 1851-2. The 'Luck of Roaring Camp' was suggested by incidents related in Letter II., p. 174-6 of vol. i. of the *Pioneer*. In Letter XIX., p. 103-10 of vol. iv., is the suggestion of the 'Outcasts of Poker Flat.' Mrs. Clapp's simple epistolary style narrates the facts, and Harte's exquisite style imparts to them the glamour of imagination.

The temptation cannot be resisted, at this point, to pursue the history of *The Luck of Roaring Camp* a little further. The reader will kindly remember that no changes are made in printing extracts. Mr. T. Edgar Pemberton, in his *Bret Harte: A Treatise and a Tribute* (London, 1900), says, in referring to criticism of the story when it was first in type,—

Mr. Noah Brooks has recorded this strange incident as follows:—

'Perhaps I may be pardoned,' he says, 'for a brief reference to an odd complication that arose while *The Luck of Roaring Camp* was being put into type in the printing office where *The Overland Monthly* was prepared for publication. A young lady who served as proof-reader in the establishment had been somewhat shocked by the scant morals of the mother of Luck, and when she came to the scene where Kentuck, after reverently fondling the infant, said, "he wrestled with my finger, the d—d little cuss," the indignant proof-reader was ready to throw up her engagement rather than go any further with a story so wicked and immoral. There was consternation throughout the establishment, and the head of the concern went to the office of the publisher with the virginal proof-reader's protest. Unluckily, Mr. Roman was absent from the city. Harte, when notified of the obstacle raised in the way of *The Luck of Roaring Camp*, manfully insisted that the story must be printed as he wrote it, or not at all. Mr. Roman's *locum tenens* in despair brought the objectionable manuscript around to my office and asked my advice. When I had read the sentence that had caused all this turmoil, having first listened to the tale of the much-bothered temporary publisher, I surprised him by a burst of laughter. It seemed to me incredible that such a tempest in a tea-cup could have been raised by Harte's bit of character sketching. But, recovering my gravity, I advised that the whole question should await Mr. Roman's return. I was sure that he would never consent to any "editing" of Harte's story. This was agreed to, and when the publisher came back, a few days later, the embargo was removed. *The Luck of Roaring Camp* was printed as it was written, and printing office and vestal proof-reader survived the shock.'

It is amazing to think that, but for the determination and self-confidence of quite a young author, a story that has gladdened and

softened the hearts of thousands,—a story that has drawn welcome smiles and purifying tears from all who can appreciate its deftly-mingled humour and pathos,—a story that has been a boon to humanity—might have been sacrificed to the shallow ruling of a prudish 'young-lady' proof-reader, and a narrow-minded, pharisaical deacon-printer!

It is appalling to think what might have happened if through nervousness or modesty the writer had been frightened by the premature criticisms of this precious pair.

The "deacon-printer" mentioned by Pemberton was Jacob Bacon, a fine specimen of the printer of the latter half of the last century. He was the junior partner of the firm of Towne and Bacon, the printers of Harte's *first* volume, *The Lost Galleon*. Mr. Towne (not *Tane*, as spelled in *Merwin's Life of Bret Harte*) obtained judgment in Boston for the printing of that volume. (See further, Mrs. T. B. Aldrich's *Crowding Memories*, as to satisfaction of judgment.)

A half-tone portrait of the "prudish 'young-lady' proof-reader" (what a lacerating taunt!) is printed in the Bret Harte Memorial Number of the *Overland* (September, 1902).

The proof-readers have not dealt kindly with *The Luck of Roaring Camp*; but the first of that ilk to mutilate the story was also the worst, to wit, the aforesaid "prudish 'young-lady' proof-reader."

Good usage in typography was utterly unknown to this young lady,—punctuation, capitalization, the use of the hyphen in dividing and compounding words. In practice she did not—perhaps could not—recognize any distinction between a cipher and a lower-case *o*. As to spelling, one may find "etherial," "azalias," "tessallated."

Noah Brooks, in the *Overland Memorial Number*, says (p. 203),—

He [Bret Harte] collected some half-dozen stories and poems and they were printed in a volume entitled "*The Luck of Roaring Camp and Other Sketches*," (1870.)

There were no poems printed in that volume. It was published in Boston by Fields, Osgood, & Co. Printed at the University Press at Cambridge, then unquestionably the best book-printing house in the United States, of course many of the typographical errors were

weeded out. This volume was reprinted in London by John Camden Hotten.

It is to be regretted that the University Press was not more painstaking in the proof-reading, for the Overland typographical perversions persist in some instances to the present day. The reader is not misled by the lubbering punctuation of the sentence, "She was a coarse, and, it is to be feared, a very sinful woman." The usage in such a construction is, "She was a coarse, and it is to be feared a very sinful, woman." But note where the sense is affected:—

Cherokee Sal was sinking fast. Within an hour she had climbed, as it were, that rugged road that led to the stars, and so passed out of Roaring Camp, its sin and shame forever.

Cherokee Sal could not possibly be the sin and shame of Roaring Camp forever; hence the sense calls for a comma after "shame," in the extract. It is gratifying to note that the comma is used in the Hotten reprint.

Another egregious blunder which has persisted is the printing of the word "past" for "passed," in the extract below.

Then he [Kentuck] walked up the gulch, past the cabin, still whistling with demonstrative unconcern. At a large redwood tree he paused and retraced his steps, and again passed the cabin.

It remained for a proof-reader at the Riverside Press to reconstruct the sentence by deleting the comma after the word "gulch"; thus, "the gulch past the cabin." That Kentuck "again passed the cabin" seems not to have been considered. Hence, in the Houghton Mifflin Company's printings of *The Luck of Roaring Camp*, the last error is worse than the first.

These errors are not venial. Those that are such have not been mentioned, as they occur in almost every book, and appear to be unavoidable. Other errors, evincing a lack of knowledge of good usage in book-typography, must also pass unnoticed.

*The Luck of Roaring Camp* having been disposed of, consideration of Dr. Royce's review of the Shirley Letters will be resumed.

The Doctor, on page 350 of his work, says, "In her little library she had a Bible, a prayer-book, Shakespeare, and Lowell's 'Fable for the

Critics,' with two or three other books." Shirley (p. 100, post) says she had a—

Bible and prayer-book, Shakespeare, Spenser, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, Lowell's Fable for Critics, Walton's Complete Angler, and some Spanish books.

The poet Spenser's name was spelled with a *c* in the Pioneer, but the article "the" was not used before "Critics," as in the extract from Royce,—an unpardonable error in a book printed in Cambridge, and at the Riverside Press too.

The Spanish books mentioned by Shirley were evidently not neglected by her, and her acquaintance with and friendship for the Spanish-speaking population scattered along the banks of the Río de las Plumas must have made her very familiar with their tongue. In reading these Letters one cannot fail to perceive how fittingly Spanish words and phrases are interwoven with her own English. At the time these Letters were written, many Spanish words were a part of the California vernacular, but to Shirley belongs the honor of introducing them into the literature of California; hence, in printing the Letters, such words are not italicized, as they usually are, by printers who should know better.

Dr. Royce also says on page 350, "Prominent in the society of the Bar was a trapper, of the old Frémont party, who told blood-curdling tales of Indian fights." (See post, p. 111.) It is singular that the Doctor has failed to identify this trapper with the well-known James P. Beckwourth, whose *Life and Adventures* (Harpers, New York, 1856) was written from his own dictation by Thomas D. Bonner, a justice of the peace in Butte County in 1852. His name is preserved in "Beckwourth Pass." He first entered this pass probably in the spring of the year 1851, although 1850 is the year given in his *Life*. The Western Pacific Railroad utilizes the pass for its tracks entering California, and through it came the pioneers of whom Shirley has much to say in Letter the Twenty-second.

Among punishments for thefts, the Doctor, on page 351, speaks of a "decidedly barbarous case of hanging" for that offense. It is referred to here for the reason that in the sequel of the hanging Bret Harte found more than a suggestion for his finale of *The Outcasts of*

Poker Flat. Both are reprinted here for the purpose of comparison. Shirley says (post, p. 157),—

The body of the criminal was allowed to hang for some hours after the execution. It had commenced storming in the earlier part of the evening, and when those whose business it was to inter the remains arrived at the spot, they found them enwrapped in a soft white shroud of feathery snowflakes, as if pitying nature had tried to hide from the offended face of Heaven the cruel deed which her mountain-children had committed.

The finale of *The Outcasts of Poker Flat* follows, in part, with no other changes than those of punctuation and capitalization.

They slept all that day and the next, nor did they waken when voices and footsteps broke the silence of the camp. And when pitying fingers brushed the snow from their wan faces, you could scarcely have told, from the equal peace that dwelt upon them, which was she that had sinned. Even the law of Poker Flat recognized this, and turned away, leaving them still locked in each other's arms. But at the head of the gulch, on one of the largest pine-trees, they found the deuce of clubs pinned to the bark with a bowie-knife.... And pulseless and cold, with a derringer by his side and a bullet in his heart, though still calm as in life, beneath the snow lay he who was at once the strongest and yet the weakest of the outcasts of Poker Flat.

The phrase, "though still calm as in life," in the last sentence of the extract immediately preceding, is one that would seem to invite the challenge of a proof-reader. It is passed without further notice.

Dr. Royce is not at his best in reviewing *Letter the Nineteenth*. The suggestion for *The Outcasts of Poker Flat* was found therein by Bret Harte, as previously noted. On page 354 the Doctor says,—

A "majestic-looking Spaniard" had quarreled with an Irishman about a Mexican girl ("Shirley" for the first time, I think, thus showing a knowledge of the presence at Indian Bar of those women who seem, in the bright and orderly days of her first arrival, to have been actually unknown in the camp). The Mexican, having at last stabbed and killed the other, fled to the hills.

It does not appear from the letter that a girl of any kind was involved in this stabbing and death. Shirley distinguishes between the Spaniard and the Mexican; the Doctor does not. As to the presence of "those women," Shirley, without commenting, sheds much light upon that subject, as will be perceived from the following extracts. Dr. Royce's review does not coincide with the facts.

Seven miners from Old Spain, enraged at the cruel treatment which their countrymen had received on the Fourth,... had united for the purpose of taking revenge on seven Americans. All well armed,... intending to challenge each one his man,... on arriving at Indian Bar ... they drank a most enormous quantity of champagne and claret. Afterwards they proceeded to [a vile resort kept by an Englishman], when one of them commenced a playful conversation with one of his countrywomen. This enraged the Englishman, who instantly struck the Spaniard a violent blow.... Thereupon ensued a spirited fight, which ... ended without bloodshed.... Soon after,... Tom Somers, who is said always to have been a dangerous person when in liquor, without any apparent provocation struck Domingo (one of the original seven) a violent blow.... The latter,... mad with wine, rage, and revenge, without an instant's pause drew his knife and inflicted a fatal wound upon his insulter. [Post, p. 271.]

In the bakeshop, which stands next door to our cabin, young Tom Somers lay straightened for the grave (he lived but fifteen minutes after he was wounded), while over his dead body a Spanish woman was weeping and moaning in the most piteous and heartrending manner. [Post, p. 264.]

Domingo, with a Mexicana hanging upon his arm, and brandishing threateningly the long, bloody knife,... was parading up and down the street unmolested.... The [Americans] rallied and made a rush at the murderer, who immediately plunged into the river and swam across,... and without doubt is now safe in Mexico. [Post, p. 263.]

A disregard of exactness is not peculiar to Dr. Royce. Secondary authorities are generally open to criticism. Of the authenticity of Shirley's facts there can be no question. Dr. Royce recognized this, while subjecting the work of other writers to severe scrutiny. But Shirley's printer did her much evil. It is not necessary here to say

much concerning trade usages in making an author's manuscript presentable in type,—the essentially different ways of and differences between the job, the newspaper, and the book printer. Shirley's letters, not having been written for publication, required exceptional care while being put in type, and especially so since the manuscript was not prepared for the press. It is amusing to read what the printers of the Pioneer have to say of themselves.

Our facilities for doing fine book work, are very great, possessing as we do, large founts of new type, and an Adams power press. We refer to the Pioneer Magazine, as a specimen. We have in use a mammoth press, which gives us a great advantage in the execution of the largest size mammoth posters, in colors or plain.

In the estimation of the printers, the matériel was the principal thing; the personnel, not worthy of mention,—and it so happened that it wasn't, for, judging from the typographical inaccuracies of the Pioneer, the compositors were of a very low order of intelligence, and if a proof-reader was employed, he assuredly stood high in their estimation, as he evidently caused them but little trouble.

Much has been said by writers on matters typographical as to what is meet and necessary in the reprinting of a book, and much more on literary blunders and mistakes. Some printers are rash, and perpetrate a worse blunder than that attempted to be corrected in reprinting. Worse than such people are the amateur proof-readers, who generally run to extremes, that is, they either cannot see a blunder, and hence pass it unchallenged, or else they manifest a disposition to challenge and "improve" everything they do not comprehend, and, knowing nothing of typographical usages or style, they are a decidedly malignant quantity.

Every old printer knows, what is often said, that English is a grammarless tongue, and that no grammarian ever wrote a sentence worth reading. No proof-reader, with the experience of a printer behind him, will change a logically expressed idea so as to make it conform to grammatical rules, nor will he harass the author thereof with suggestions looking to that end.

Critical readers of these Letters must ever bear in mind the fact that Shirley was not writing for publication, and that the printer of this edition had no desire to and did not alter Shirley's text to suit

his ideas of what was fitting and proper, further than to smooth or round out in many instances rugged or careless construction. Punctuation, hyphenization, capitalization, italicizing, spelling, required much, and of course received much, attention.

In some instances where Shirley does not express her meaning clearly, and reconstruction seemed necessary, no change was made. Singularly, this was the case in the first sentence of the first letter.

I can easily imagine, dear M., the look of large wonder which gleams from your astonished eyes when they fall upon the date of this letter.

M. could be astonished but once, but the language used conveys the idea of wonder arising each time the letter is read; then, again, it is the place-name, and not the date, that is to cause wonder to gleam from astonished eyes, as the context shows.

Where reconstruction was not needed to make the meaning clear, and this could be done by the insertion of a word or phrase, or by some other simple emendation, changes were generally made. The extract (post, p. 11) following is printed just as it appeared in the Pioneer.

As a frame to the graceful picture, on one side rose the Buttes, that group of hills so piquant and saucy; and on the other tossing to Heaven the everlasting whiteness of their snow wreathed foreheads, stood, sublime in their very monotony, the glorious Sierra Nevada.

Besides changes in capitalization and punctuation, the words, "the summits of," are inserted before "the glorious Sierra." Compare Bret Harte's lines, —

Above the pines the moon was slowly drifting,  
The river sang below;  
The dim Sierras, far beyond, uplifting  
Their minarets of snow.

By the word "Sierras" the mountain-range called the Sierra Nevada is not meant, but merely teeth-like summits thereof, which uplift