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When about eleven years of age, James was seized with an irresistible desire to go to sea, but failing to get the permission of his parents, and meeting with only strenuous opposition in that direction, he determined to run away from home, and not a great while elapsed before he had an opportunity afforded him for carrying out this design. A whaling vessel was about to sail from a neighboring port on a cruise to the northern ocean, for oil and whalebone. Young Peace left the parental roof without waiting to receive a blessing from father or mother, and hid himself away on board of the vessel the day before she was to sail. When she weighed anchor he was snugly stowed away in the locker, where he remained until the ship was one day out to sea. Then he crawled from his hiding place and exhibited himself to the captain, who had no alternative but to take the little fellow with him on the voyage. While they were on the whaling coast the ship was wrecked, and the whole crew lay on the ice for fourteen days before they were rescued. "Jimmy," as he is even now best known, was absent from home about nine months on this voyage. Shortly after his return he bound himself to a shipowner named Popelwell, of North Shields, for a period of four years, and was a sailor on a vessel that was employed in trade between North Shields and London, England. After the expiration of his term of apprenticeship, he indentured himself for another period of four years on board of the ship Mountaineer, of Glascow, sailing from London to Calcutta. When his time was out, he was discharged at Liverpool, but shipped almost immediately, before the mast, for a ten month's voyage to the West Indies.  The roving disposition which had impelled him at the tender age of eleven years to leave home, father and mother, and all that was dear to him in childhood, and choose the hard life of a seaman, now that he had nearly reached the age of twenty, filled him with a desire to see the new world. He, therefore, upon returning from the West Indies, signed articles for a voyage on the Hudson Bay Fur Company's ship Neriad for the Columbia river, Oregon, and left Liverpool in 1818. Nothing except what is usually incident to the passage around Cape Horn occurred until the ship arrived at Monterey on the coast of California. Here she put in for repairs. The next port she made was San Francisco, which was then but an embarcadero of the missions. The Neriad came to anchor under the brow of Telegraph Hill, almost where the sea-wall is built, in early days a considerable distance out in the stream. At that time there was not a habitation or a living soul about, except the Spaniards who lived around the Mission Dolores. During the passage up the coast, Peace had a difficulty with the captain and one of the mates of the ship, and he determined to leave their service. One night, being on the first watch, he quietly lowered a boat at the fore of the vessel, and soon had let down into it all his earthly possessions. The relief watch came in due time, and the sailor who took Jimmy's place, luckily for him, fell asleep. Peace improved his opportunity, and dropping himself down into the small boat, rowed to the shore without having disturbed the slumbers of the watch on the deck. He got his things safely landed, and carried them to the highest point on Telegraph Hill a designation given in later years to the then nameless little mountain where he hid himself in the dense and tangled undergrowth. His hiding place was discovered by an old Spanish woman named Juanita Byeronlys, and although Peace could not understand a word of her language, he made her understand by signs that he had fled from the ship that was moored out in the stream, and that his chief anxiety then was not to be seen by any one who might be interested in getting him on board again. The woman regarded his wishes with prudent care, but supplied him with food and water. Jimmy's retreat gradually became known to others, who were in the habit of climbing to the hill-top to look out for vessels, or to enjoy the scenery, and among those who visited him were relatives of William Smith's wife. Some of these could speak a few words of English, and they gave Peace to understand that Smith was residing at the redwoods. The hiding place on Telegraph Hill was becoming too generally known for security so long as the Neriad remained in the harbor. He had been there now about six days, and he began to feel an apprehension that at any moment he might be surprised by his old officers and taken back to the ship as a deserter. In view of this possibility, he enlisted the good offices of his faithful friend, the Spanish woman who first discovered his hiding place, and through her traded some broadcloth for a pony. At his request, she took charge of his effects, and he set out in the direction that had been indicated to him to find Smith, a man who at least spoke his own language. The route was not an easy one to follow; roads, there were none; trails ran in every direction, and at the close of the first day's travel, Peace found himself among the timber on the coast range. The forests were full of grizzly bears and other wild animals, and it required no little amount of courage for one unaccustomed to the wilds of a new country to face the dangers that existed all around him here, with no companion save his little Mexican pony. Peace wandered for four days through the mountains sometimes scaling a ridge, sometimes threading through a wild and almost inaccessible canon making a zig-zag journey, back and forth, between the ocean and bay, before he found Smith's camp. The principal edifice here was Smith's residence a shake shanty which stood near where Mr. Copinger afterward built his adobe house. Jimmy took up his abode with Smith, and worked a year with him; then he put up a shake house for himself near that of Smith. When Peace first came to the redwoods, there was no white man, save Smith, in the vicinity. He distinctly remembers John Gilroy, then living at San Ysidro, and Robert Livermore, who lived at San Jose from 1816 to 1820.  Here, then, among the Indians, this sailor made his home, and being skillful with tools, the Fathers at Santa Clara Mission placed under his charge a large number of the native tribe that occupied this part of the country. He instructed them in the use of such tools as they had, and taught them the art of squaring timber before placing it over the pit to be sawed. The plows used in those days were modeled as described in the first part of this chapter, and the improvements Peace made in this important implement of agriculture so pleased the Fathers, that they employed him to superintend the construction of several of their primitive wagons. Although retaining most of the anatomical components, so to speak, of the Spanish carreta, the wheels being sawed off the end of a redwood log, and bored through the middle for the axletree to enter, these vehicles produced by Peace were considerably lighter than those the Fathers had before, though equally strong. Peace continued his home here for years without experiencing anything to seriously disturb the peaceful flow of events that made up the daily history of his life. At length, an event occurred which for the time made it a serious question with him as to whether his enjoyment of personal liberty and even his life itself was not about to be terminated. In the year 1840, he, with some other foreigners, and about forty Americans, were seized by the Mexican authorities, put in irons, and sent on the bark Gobernadm- Gurpuzcoama, Captain Snooks, to San Bias, as prisoners. From San Bias they were taken to Tepic, where, through some instrumentality, they were released, and Jimmy found his way back to his old home and wards in the redwoods. In 1847, about the close of the Mexican war, he removed to Half Moon Bay, and on an election day in 1849 he raised the first American flag at that settlement. He obtained the flag from Dr. Tripp, at Woodside, and still has it in his possession, but like all other relics of its kind, it bears strongly the marks of having seen its best days. Naturally and properly, Peace cherishes it as a sacred memento of the past. In 1835 he married Guadalupe, daughter of Pedro Valencia, and by her has two sons now living�James and Antonio�the elder of whom is now over forty -three years old.  Many years ago Peace possessed a considerable amount of property, but it has all passed out of his hands, and his only wealth now consists of a fishing boat and its unimportant equipment. The boat was built at San Mateo, on Mr. Howard's land, a fact that has no significance except that the only piece of property he can now call his own was constructed so near the spot where sixty years ago he erected his cabin and started to work, with his spirits buoyant in the prospect of being some day the proprietor of a lordly manor, where he could end his days in ease and peace. His little boat cruises the bay, and his experienced hand guides the helm. He sets his nets for fish, and digs clams from the mud flats, and thus in the sere and yellow leaf, he earns a subsistence. Jimmy is a slight-built man of medium height, light complexion, and like most bold, adventurous and honest spirits, he has grey eyes. But his form is bent with age, and it is altogether likely that before the sun shall have completed many more cycles, the now oldest surviving pioneer of San Mateo county will have gone to his rest. | |