

Autobiography of William Talbot Bachman 1810-1869



Chapter 2: From Rochester to San Francisco to Wickenburg Town

Autobiography of William Talbot Bachman

Upon the urgent request of my darling niece Miss Mattie Comet, daughter of my dearly departed sister Frederika, I will attempt to write the story of my life since emigrating to America.

I was a bit reluctant to undertake such a literary adventure, owing to my lack of training in the art of composition and the added thought that many whom might read this story would at times deem it incredible. But I feel sure they will agree with me that I have had a charmed life. And my narrow escapes from death have convinced me of late that a mighty power far beyond my ability to comprehend was guardian over my destiny. But it is Miss Mattie who is custodian of this homemade book she has helped me compose.

I was twelve years old in 1822 when my mother Emilie Greider Bachman took me far away from the Kingdom of Prussia in the German Confederation. We emigrated to the US to live in Rochester, New York with my mother's older brother. My uncle Han Jacob Greider was a prosperous solicitor often cited in the newspapers. One week prior to the sea voyage, my father died. Although my mother was in a family way with my sister, we had to risk the Atlantic

crossing because my father had sold all our possessions to purchase our first-class North Atlantic sailing packets. Fate had placed our lives in the hands of my uncle Han.

In 1825 the Erie Canal opened and the population of the City of Flour Mills boomed. Han Jacob provided well for my mother, me, and my baby sister Frederika. He put me through the prestigious private Canandaigua Academy hoping I would inherit his legal practice.

At age twenty, I passed the New York bar exam. By thirty, I was a prominent citizen of Rochester as well as a portly, well-rounded man with distinctive mutton chops that I've kept throughout my years. While I advocated contentious courtroom disputes, I invested in real-estate and new patents and belonged to the Rochester Athenaeum Reading Room and Gentlemen's Club, an institute that promoted literature, science, and the arts.

By way of a fellow Athenaeum member, I met Miss Josephine Huntington from Devonshire, England. I was smitten with her beauty and charm. Miss Josephine was a true lady of society and after a year of courting she agreed to become my wife.

In 1840, during a lecture by Ralph Waldo Emerson at the Athenaeum, I introduced my sister Frederika to my solicitor friend and Athenaeum brother, Conrad Johnston. The two of them soon married. I trusted Conrad. He was honest in his dealings and ever-willing to take on difficult cases.

As a man of the times, I read controversial books by Charles Darwin, Frederick Douglass, and Karl Marx. The world interested me. I kept abreast of social, scientific, and political movements. To learn about the shipping news and current events worldwide, I read *The Herald*, *The Sun*, *The Times*, the *NY Journal of Commerce*, and the *Democratic Chronicle*. I knew about the demands to reform prisons and mental health asylums and I followed the plight of Indian tribes after President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act in 1830. The

government forced Creek, Chickasaw, Seminole, and Cherokee Indians to move from their native lands to federal holdings west of the Mississippi. These native people lived in miserable conditions and many of them died during the relocation. I also kept apace of when abolitionists rallied to end the deplorable institution of slavery, but I rarely attended political rallies. I was a benefactor, a philanthropist and not an activist. If I believed in a charity or a cause, I contributed with my pocketbook. I have always supported the rights of women and greatly admired women of science and innovation.

1845 was a big year for me. The periodical *Scientific American—the Advocate of Industry and Journal of Scientific Mechanical and other Improvements* made its début. The weekly issues described cutting-edge patents like tubular boilers, pumps, windmills, steamships, and magnetics, news about the railroad heading west, and the movements and agitations occurring in society. SciAm offered my wife Josephine articles about Christian duties, religious intelligence, and fashionable prayers. Although I believed in the soul of this country and the righteousness of humanity, I was never a religious man. My wife Josephine, daughter Constance, and mother Emilie lived by the Good Book, but they never convinced me to sermonize scriptures beyond a polite word.

1848 offered me many vital matters to discuss with my brothers at the Athenaeum. The two-year war between Mexico and the US had ended. After signing the peace treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the US had gained California, the Texas boundary at the Rio Grande, and most of the Arizona and New Mexico territories. With the American frontier expanded, people began migrating west to homestead or establish commerce in the emerging boomtowns. It was an exciting, eventful era and I strove to be a part of it.

Meanwhile, in the established eastern cities, the rights of women became a hot-fire topic in the “Talk of Town” and “Who’s Who” on society pages. At a rally in Seneca, agitated women voiced their concern that “men and women are created equal and deserve the same rights” and they started the suffrage movement. Their rally cries declared that *Women are respected, favored, protected, beloved. Men are elevated by women of heart and manner. And women will be elevated by the suffrage!*

I attended the suffrage rally at the First Unitarian Church in Rochester specifically to meet Mr. Frederick Douglass, a man I greatly admired. I had been a devoted reader of his periodical *The North Star, Right is of no Sex—Truth is of no color—God is the Father of us all and we are all Brethren*. Douglass named his publication “the North Star” because runaway slaves on the road to freedom were told “Head to Canada and keep your eye on the North Star.” Mr. Douglass fought for both women and the negro to have the right to vote, own property, and receive an education. And I fully supported both causes.

The top news of 1848, however, happened when the *California Star* distributed a special edition in New York that headlined *The Wonders of California’s Bounteous Gold*. The *New York Herald* quoted President Polk as saying “there is an extraordinary abundance of gold in California.” I read the signs of my time. I had always hungered for news about the western frontier and engaged in lengthy conversation with any man who had ventured there. I viewed them as men with spirit, guts, and courage. They were not courtroom clerks who filed case pleadings and whose burdensome work had no adventure to it. No prospects. No fresh air. The western frontier appeared magnificent to me, a vast expanse of territory with gold and opportunity stretching along the mighty Pacific Coast.

In the spring of 1848, my dear mother passed away and I knew my destiny was to move west as a tribute to her memory. She had always encouraged me to seek opportunity. Her own emigration to America echoed this resolve. With Josephine and my seventeen-year-old daughter Constance, I left New York City and sailed on the Gray Eagle passenger line. This was the quickest and easiest route to California although it became costly in many ways. In Panama, we left the ship and trekked across the isthmus to board the New World Steamer bound for San Francisco on the Pacific side. It was a treacherous five-day trek and many emigrants and rich prospectors lost their lives due to tropical hazards and diseases.

After one hundred thirteen days of travel, on December 31, 1848, our steamer arrived at the Golden Gate port of entry. The temperature was a chilling thirty-seven degrees and snow covered the eastern hills. About two hundred abandoned ships floated in the harbor, including the *Nightingale Clipper*, the *Julia* from Chile, the *USS Ohio*, the *USS Lexington*, and the steam sloop *Niagara*. Crews and captains alike had fled their vessels and headed to the gold fields. Even the *California Star* had shut down its news operation because its staff had abandoned their posts to mine the precious ore.

At the crowded wharfs, wagons loaded and unloaded cargo. Each dock charged a toll from every passenger. The vast and crowded boom city had streets made of red brick, cobblestones, and planks. Near Jackson and Dupont was the Chilean district. The California Volunteers of Colonel Stevenson lived in tents on Montgomery Street. They called their shanty community Tammany Hall after the New York democratic movement to help Irish immigrants.

I lodged my family at the Bush House on Clay and Pike. Room and board cost us fifteen dollars per week. Within days, Josephine fell sick with fever probably contracted from our trek across Panama. In less than a month, I lost my lovely Anglican wife and my new life in the

Golden Bay suddenly become a burden. I was alone with a daughter near the age of marriage, one I had to arrange. Constance, however, proved herself more fit than I imagined. She immediately took her mother's place and managed all of our domestic affairs. Josephine had prepared our daughter to be a lady of poise and virtue, like Queen Victoria herself.

1849 brought tremendous wealth to the Golden Bay City and to my own business endeavors. As a well-read man with connections back east, I became a mercantile jobber allocating and selling ship cargo to wealthy miners. I regretted that my dear English wife couldn't share in my success and I often missed her, but she was gone and my life moved on.

With the abundant wealth I accumulated, I built a mansion on Rincon Hill in a scenic and salubrious part of the city. The house was a gothic castle of Italian design, pea green with a strong green trim. It had a coal cellar, four bathrooms with drainage, and piped-in water for sinks, tubs, and Quincys. In the front parlor was a grand chandelier of cut crystal glass from Paris lit by piped-in gas. I would often stand on the widow's walk to view the Golden Bay Harbor, count the incoming ships, and feel an enormous sense of pride about all that I had achieved by coming out west.

1850 was an even bigger year for the boomtown. On September 9, California became the thirty-first state in the Union. Constance and I were at the gala where Elizabeth Maria Wills was singing the national anthem when the steamer *Saga* exploded in Golden Gate Harbor. Later that year, I became an elected member of the Legislative Assembly and the shipping and mercantile news cited my name many times. The "Talk of the Town" mentioned my appearances at the city's fine arts and social events that I attended with my daughter. At the Metropolitan Theater on Washington Street, we saw Hamlet, at the Music Hall we listened to the Orphean Vocalists, and at the National Theatre we heard the Philadelphia Minstrels.

I spent nearly each day at the Mercantile Library Association on the second floor of the California Exchange building. When cargo ships arrived in the harbor, watchmen alerted me and my fellow members who were traders, financiers, merchant wholesalers, and associates from WB Hooper and Company, the City of Paris, Ghirardelli, Wells Fargo, and Levi Strauss. Most members were Anglo-Saxon gentlemen, a few came from France and Germany, and I often had dealings with the one Chinese member at the Exchange. Jon Ling was owner of the Celestial Restaurant and head businessman of Chinatown's imports of silk, rice, and tea.

Regarding my Daughter Constance

1850 was the year I arranged for my daughter to marry a business associate at the Exchange. John Cunningham was Master Mariner on the Nevada Steamer. His ship brought to the city lumber from Oregon, whale oil from Alaska, and bananas, coffee, and coconuts from Panama. I knew he would be away part of the year importing and exporting cargo but I felt the arrangement would suit my daughter. Constance had an active social life and would not become lonely during his long absences. I had my own selfish reasons, I admit. I appreciated my daughter's domestic efficiency and I didn't want that to change. Besides, John planned to retire from his ship in a few years and become a merchant and jobber working with me. But most of all, I wanted John's solid connections to the major ports around the globe.

My daughter Constance was tall and slender when she married John Cunningham. Her silk, satin, and lace wedding gown came from Paris and had a four-tier skirt and trumpet sleeves. Most of my daughter's wardrobe came from Paris, London, and New York, dresses she found in Godey's and Harper's magazines. She had gowns for all occasions including morning, day, and low-neck evening dresses.

As daughter of a wealthy merchant and wife to a shipping engineer, Constance often appeared in the “Talk of the Town” by her own accord. She belonged to the Ladies Protection and Relief Society and was a lady founder of the Orphan Asylum Society which helped children orphaned from cholera outbreaks or those found abandoned and wandering the city’s streets.

During the week, Constance had many visits with her dearest chuckaboo friends, as she called Sophia Swain, Phoebe Ann Tucker, Janes Elizabeth Fry, Patience Newcomb, Hetty Brown, and Magdalena Hauser. All of them were the daughters or the wives of my associates at the Exchange. In the front parlor of our mansion, Constance and her lady friends sat on rosewood chairs with red velvet cushions under the gas light of our crystal chandelier and they discussed novels by George Elliot, George Sand, and Elizabeth Gaskell, as well as advice books by Catherine Beecher and Sarah Josepha Hale, the first woman editor of Godey’s Lady’s Book. They all admired Miss Hale who advocated education for women and penned the famous ditty “Mary Had a Little Lamb.”

Constance and her friends viewed slavery as appalling but like me, my daughter wasn’t an activist. Her mission in life was to render aid and not make trouble like the rabble-rousing miners and brawlers of the streets. Contrary to my personal views, however, Constance and her friends thought the women’s suffrage movement was an affront against the natural order of God. At their teas and social gatherings, they asked each other *What do such agitated women want? Liberation from men? What would a woman do without a man’s support and protection?* They believed that women didn’t need to vote because they live in the domestic sphere, not the public realm of men. They saw husbands and fathers as the backbone of the family and believed that a virtuous woman was pious, pure, submissive, and domestic. They were fond of quoting Frederic Douglass as saying *It is easier to build a strong child than repair a broken man.*

I never argued with Constance about her strong religious views and she never contradicted me when I elevated women who had ventured into the spheres that men traditionally ruled. It seems we both maintained a healthy relationship as father and daughter by keeping certain matters from our discussions. In truth, we mostly spoke about her managing the house or about the performing arts and other matters we agreed upon, such as the abomination of the slave institution and her charitable work to help orphans. In the same way, I never discussed my business matters with my beloved daughter.

Constance was twenty-three when John Cunningham left her a widow with two boys, my grandsons Mathew Lemont and Eugene Scott. After a fierce storm, the harbor captain had found John's floating body beside the wharf along the Golden Gate waterfront. The coroner's jury declared John's death an accidental drowning. At the same time, newspapers were quoting John's shipmates as saying "Master John's propensity for drinking contributed to his accident because he always carried a silver Tiffany flask of imported whiskey." Despite how dearly Constance cherished her chuckaboo friends, she never permitted such talk about her late husband. Some things she simply refused to believe and John's drinking was one of them. Even when he lived, she never listened to such scuttlebutt. As for the cause of his death, Constance believed what his obituary stated, that her husband had missed his footing in a storm.

I knew my son-in-law and good friend John was a heavy drinker but I said nothing about it, not caring to upset my daughter. Gentlemen do not distress ladies. But gentlemen drink. Men on the frontier drink. And unless drinking leads a man to brawl or strike a lady, I find no problem with it. As far as I am concerned, John was nothing but a good husband to my daughter and a good father to my grandsons, despite his lengthy absences at sea.

I arranged the funeral five miles out from the harbor that took his life. Clad in her black mourning gown, my daughter, the widow of John Cunningham, graciously stood on the deck of the Nevada Steamer and watched her husband's corpse, wrapped and stitched in canvas, plunge into the Pacific Ocean. John Cunningham had sailed up and down the coast and across the ocean itself. Constance had grown used to his long absences and after he passed away, it seemed to her that he was merely off on one of his many seafaring voyages and she easily moved on with her life and continued to manage my household.



Chapter 4: Mattie's Captivity and Childhood in San Francisco

From the Autobiography of William Talbot Bachman

After I establish myself in San Francisco, my brother-in-law and former law partner Conrad Johnston moved his family to Chicago. He took a job at a small real estate speculation firm on Weaver Street and helped me with my mail-order business. In 1852 I sent a letter to him and Fredericka via "Adams Express Mail Service" which had steamers on each side of the Panama Isthmus. In that letter I described San Francisco as being as progressive and prominent in the west as Chicago or Rochester are back east. I mentioned that I was helping to organize an Academy of Natural Science, was benefactor of the California Historical Society, and on the Committee of Vigilance. I described my mansion on Rincon Hill and boasted that San Francisco

had shipped thirty-four million dollars in gold to the States that year alone. I wrote that the City was a Babel of immigrants and a beehive of activity with many fashionable and respectable neighborhoods, parks, churches, and bakeries that sell sourdough bread. I mentioned that Alcatraz Island in the harbor had a new lighthouse with a revolving lantern from France and that much of the city was landfill piled atop sunken ships deserted by the “gold fever” of ‘49. My letter ended emphasizing that San Francisco needed a good solicitor like my dear brother Conrad and that I could use my beloved sister as a civilizing force.

After receiving my letter, my friend Conrad concluded his business dealings in Chicago and sold everything he owned. With their two sons and two-year-old daughter, Conrad and Fredericka caught the steamboat to Independence, Missouri, the point of departure for the Oregon, California, and Santa Fe trails. Conrad purchased a wagon and a team of oxen and signed onto a wagon train heading west. Fredericka’s last letter to me arrived two months past the postmarked date at Independence. She wrote that the long treacherous days ahead filled her with fretful anticipation and that she prayed for a happy reunion with her dear brother “William of California,” as she referred to me.

Within the month I received a telegram from the Commander at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas Territory. The wire brought me tragic news. A tornado had killed my sister and her family in Kansas Territory. Soldiers located their scattered possessions and the bodies of Frederika, Conrad, and their two sons, but they could not locate the little daughter.

Guilt and melancholy shattered my spirit even more than the death of Josephine. I felt I had caused my sister’s tragic end, just as I had brought about Josephine’s death by bringing her out west. At least Josephine arrived in California whereas my sister barely left Independence when calamity struck her down.

A year passed and I received a telegram from Governor Andrew Reeder, a man President Pierce had appointed for the newly establish Kansas Territory. Governor Reeder resided in rookery quarters at Fort Leavenworth's Government Depot. His wire specified that dragoon soldiers had recaptured from the Pawnee a young Anglo girl who matched the description of Fredericka's daughter. Governor Reeder stated that he would place the little girl in the care of an officer's wife until I arrived.

In March 1854 a cavalry regiment escorted me from outpost to outpost across the frontier to Fort Leavenworth. It was the year of the Kansas-Nebraska Act which repealed the 1820 Missouri Compromise and gave territorial settlers the choice of owning slaves. The US became a hornet in a beehive over the issue of slavery ten years before a full-blown war of rebellion.

In his rectory office, Governor Reeder explained that when the Kansas dragoon soldiers found my niece, she was wearing a fringed buckskin dress and moccasins with turquoise beads. "Her hair was tied in two beaded braids," Reeder added. "She is lucky we rescued her when we did, Mr. Bachman. This group of Pawnee have a tradition called 'the Morning Star Ceremony,' named for the planet Mars. They believe that when their medicine man has a vision about Mars as the morning star, their braves must capture an innocent young girl from an enemy village. In a ritual to appease their spirit world, they strip the captive child, tie her to a stake, burn her, shoot her with arrows, and rip out her heart. It is pure savagery and I believe it's what they intended for your niece. Kansas is a rugged territory, Mr. Bachman, at the crossroads of a vast frontier. Nearly twenty-five years ago the federal government relocated ten thousand Indians here. We are known for amassing lost and unclaimed children, guttersnipes who don't fare well on the streets of Wichita or Topeka. Your niece is lucky to have you."

I was horrified by what the governor told me and decided on the spot to keep the shocking abomination from the newspapers. I feared that when I met little Mattie, she would be clad in rawhide and her behavior would be wild and unruly. That the horror of her captivity would have tainted her forever.

But when Governor Reeder called for the officer's wife to escort Fredericka's daughter into the room, all my concerns vanished. The darling little girl was wearing a proper dress to her knees and lacy pantaloons and her chestnut hair hung in tiny ringlets with ribbons. The officer's wife told me she had tried to civilize the little captive as best she could.

Sorrow jabbed my heart and I instantly knew the delicate little creature was my niece. Her green eyes were identical to Fredericka's; they were eyes a man could never forget.

The taciturn girl politely sat on my lap, her tiny hands took hold of my mutton chops, and she called me, "Ipa."

"That's Pawnee for Great Father," the Governor told me. "She speaks only Pawnee. Not a word of English."

This was another stunning revelation to me, something I never foresaw, although it made perfect sense. *Constance will set her right* I kept telling myself as I held the darling child on my lap.

Under the escort of the First Cavalry Regiment, I took Mattie back to the City in an Army ambulance carriage. Each day and into the night, our coach crossed Indian land through Kansas and Nebraska Territories, through the Rockies to South Pass, Utah and Washington Territories to Fort Hall, then we traveled on the California Trail to San Francisco.

Much of the time I held little Mattie on my lap. She was dearer to me than any shipment of gold. At night, Mattie would point to the Great Comet that was passing over the prairies at that

time, a bright star with a long tail in Pegasus. The sight delighted her and the first English word she uttered was “comet” and I began calling her “Miss Mattie Comet” after the lady astronomer Miss Maria Mitchell who discovered the ‘47 comet coined “Miss Mitchell’s Comet.”

I told Constance about what Mattie’s captors intended to do to her in their Morning Star ceremony and my daughter immediately understood that her God given duty was to rehabilitate and properly educate her poor orphaned cousin. “I’ll put this unfortunate child on the path of becoming a lady of good breeding and faith,” Constance declared to me as we put Mattie to bed the night of her arrival. “She’ll become a self-sacrificing wife and mother versed in domestic manners. One day our cousin Mattie will marry a prosperous man of note who will love her as Christ loves the church. But Mattie must speak nothing but English,” my daughter was sure to emphasize.

“I like Miss Mattie Comet calling me Ipa,” I argued back. “It’s the first thing she said to me.”

“It’s heathen to speak words of the Devil,” Constance persisted. “We need to cleanse her ‘bruised soul’ and help her adjust to her new life.”

“Ach, nonsense daughter!” I scolded my daughter as I often did when she went too far with her religious talk.

After Mattie’s arrival in the city, weekly, daily, morning, and evening newspapers covered her story. The headlines read *Mr. William Bachman Retrieves Niece, an Orphaned Captive of Indians in Kansas Territory*. I allowed the newsmen to interview me but kept them away from my fragile niece.

During her first few months with us, Mattie never left the mansion on Rincon Hill. Constance and a governess that I'd brought over from England for my grandsons, helped Mattie adjust and speak English. Mattie obediently buried her Pawnee words and uttered only English when replying to her cousins and the governess. Mostly, she kept quiet and politely smiled. However, she enjoyed impressing me with her progress. When I held her on my lap in my parlor chair, as I did every day, Mattie felt safe and protected. I was everything to her and she became the apple of my eye.

"There, there now," I often whispered to my niece, my large hands gently patting her tiny shoulder, "Miss Mattie Comet doesn't cry." I understood she had endured a traumatic year that she didn't talk about or seem to remember. Which was a blessing. No telling what her captors had put her through. I was just grateful my little niece survived the ordeal unharmed, at least physically. In my mind, Mattie was the rebirth of my beloved sister, a gift to my heart, and that is why I gave her my own family name.

One sunny summer day, after the morning fog had cleared, I convinced Miss Mattie Comet to go for a ride in my chauffeured black carriage so I could present her to friends and associates around town. I was very proud of my beautiful niece who had survived untoward peril. Despite her reserve, Mattie curtsied and said pretty English phrases when I introduced her to people. She enjoyed making me happy. But after a few days of making these visitations, I realized they caused Mattie much distress because she told me about a haunting dream. It concerned an old medicine man who emerged from a cave to speak to his tribe. Mattie didn't understand his words because she had forgotten Pawnee. Of course, she told no one else about the dream, including my daughter and grandsons. Early on, Mattie understood that it was an abomination to even mention her captivity.

Eventually, Mattie refused to leave the mansion on Rincon Hill. She wouldn't even attend church with my daughter and the boys. Once or twice, Constance insisted that Mattie attend the services but I put my foot down. I wouldn't allow Constance to force Mattie from the house if she didn't want to leave. "I don't attend church," I told my daughter. "So why should Mattie?"

On her first Christmas morning Mattie's emerald eyes sparkled with delight when I gave her a magnificent dollhouse modeled after our mansion and a mahogany rocking horse with flowing yellow mane and a leather saddle. Mattie named the horse Thunder. While I sat on my parlor chair to read or to meet with associates, I enjoyed watching Mattie in the corner of the room riding Thunder or rearranging her doll house furniture while playing with the two China dolls I had given her when I brought her home. I had suggested she name the dolls after the sisters Miss Emily and Miss Elizabeth Blackwell, the first women to earn medical degrees. I wanted Mattie to know about notable women in a society based on the traditions of men. I explained to her that Miss Elizabeth had graduated first in her class, but when the sisters tried to practice medicine, people sought them out only for midwifery and preventive care. "It is a difficult world for brilliant women," I told my little niece. "But one day you will outshine us all."

When the afternoon sun burned off the morning fog, Constance assigned Mattie to play in the backyard with the children whose mothers had come for a social visit and with Matthew Lemont and Eugene Scott who were two and four years older than Mattie. My daughter felt Mattie needed to socialize with other children to become a "normal" child. I was generally at the Exchange during these times but when I returned home, Mattie often told me that her cousins had called her an Indian. She did not like playing with them or any of the children. I believed my daughter was probably right, however, and that Mattie needing to socialize, so I encouraged my

niece to enjoy the afternoon sunshine and try to play along with the children, if she could. At the same time, I reprimanded my grandsons but I could never be sure how they were behaving when out of my sight and Constance was always busy socializing with her dear friends to pay close attention to the boys.

Eventually, Mattie avoided playing with other children altogether, Constance informed me, by sitting alone under a towering manzanita tree in our back yard and reciting nursery rhymes to Miss Emily and Miss Bess. My daughter opposed this behavior but I again put my foot down and told Constance to let Mattie be as she would be. “We don’t know what trauma she endured during her year of captivity,” I said. “Certainly, it was nothing you have ever experienced, and in my opinion, our little Miss Mattie Comet is doing remarkably well.”

When Mattie was eight, her first premonition occurred while she was sitting under the manzanita tree. A five-year-old neighbor boy named Timothy McNamee was busy playing with hoop sticks in the backyard while his mother was visiting Constance for afternoon tea. Timothy asked Mattie what she was doing and Mattie didn’t respond so the boy loudly repeated his question.

“Go home Timmy,” Mattie said. “Your daddy is taken with gout.” The words simply fell from her lips, Mattie later told me, before she even realized what she had said.

Timothy began crying uncontrollably until his mother appeared and gathered him in her arms.

Mattie didn’t mean to frighten the boy but she couldn’t explain this to my daughter so she remained under the tree without uttering a word, not even an apology. She simply stared at the distant ships bobbing up and down in the Golden Gate Harbor until my daughter made her sit in the parlor and wait for my return home.

When Constance learned that Timothy's father had succumbed to a serious attack of gout and died, she concluded that Mattie had somehow overheard talk of the illness and that the prediction was merely a coincidence. Constance continued to instruct Mattie with dedication, but I could see that my daughter was becoming increasingly impatient. She never quite knew how to react to Mattie's peculiarities, other than to send her to the parlor until I returned home.

In time, Constance couldn't deny that Mattie had premonitions that mostly came from dreams she'd reveal to us at the breakfast table. Her predictions concerned tragic events, such as a fire, a brawl, or a drowning in the harbor, and then I'd read about these events in the next day's newspaper. Even I began to realize that my niece was clairvoyant, but I did not find this too unusual. A great aunt back in Prussia possessed a similar nature. Constance, however, was convinced that Mattie's forebodings came from her captivity and that the "savages" had bewitched her while they had been preparing her for their sacrificial ritual.

Mattie was eleven in 1860 when lifelong bachelor James Buchanan became president of 31 million people in the United States. San Francisco had a population of nearly 57,000. During the year, the City held yacht races along the Pacific coast, the California Regiment of New York Volunteers arrived, civil engineers finish the railroad from Market Street to the Mission, and the Pony express brought news of Illinois congressman, Abraham Lincoln, campaigning for the ticket of the Republican party.

By this time, thanks to my daughter Constance, Mattie was well versed in social manners, Christian morality, English and French literature, and she played the piano. But she never left the mansion on Rincon Hill. Playing the piano replaced the enjoyment she once found with her doll house, rocking horse, and Misses Emily and Bess. In the evenings, I sat in my rosewood parlor chair before the brick fireplace, smoked my pipe of cherry tobacco, drank Port wine from a

crystal glass, and listened to Mattie's recitals of Stephen Foster songs and other sheet music of the times--*Listen to the Mocking Bird, Jeannie with the Light Brown Hair, and O Give me a Home by the Sea.*

Mattie also enjoyed reading to me items serialized in *Harper's Weekly: Journal of Civilization*, the premiere illustrated newspaper in the country. Issues included articles and stories by Charles Dickens, Brigham Young, and Anthony Trollope, and Walt Whitman's "Leaves of Grass," and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "Sonnets from the Portuguese."

In March of 1861 Harper's Weekly illustrated Lincoln's inauguration with the great man riding in a carriage procession before the Capitol. In response to Lincoln's win, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Texas seceded from the Union and Jefferson Davis became the president of the Confederate States of America Republic. On April 12, 1861, the Confederates shot the first bullet at Ft. Sumter and the issue of slavery divided the nation in conflict and chaos. As brother fought brother, Harper's Weekly brought the war to life in San Francisco. The publishers supported Lincoln and the Union but took a moderate stance regarding slavery to continue reaching readers of the south.

During the conflict, Thomas Nast illustrated for Harper's Weekly. His sketches included Lady Liberty weeping over the flagged coffin of a fallen Union soldier and Lady Columbia with colored soldiers forcing Rebels into retreat. His illustrations also celebrated the contributions of women nurses during the war. Sisters Emily and Elizabeth Blackwell helped train volunteer nurses such as Clara Barton, Florence Nightingale, and novelist Louisa May Alcott. The freed slave Susie King Taylor tended wounded black troops and Mary Edwards Walker served as the only female surgeon during the war, although much of her volunteer service was as a Union nurse.

For Lincoln's second inauguration on March 4, 1865, Harper's centerfold illustrated an enormous crowd before the Capital. At Appomattox courthouse in Virginia, a month later, General Robert E. Lee surrendered to General Ulysses S Grant. Harper's then headlined *Lincoln, our Great Leader, is Victorious! We extend an olive branch to our misguided brethren of the Southern States*. Everyone believed that peace and victory blessed our nation, as Thomas Nast so beautifully illustrated with Ladies Columbia and Liberty together in his sketch titled "Our Blessed Victory. . . the war has ended."

The news of the Union's victory had barely reached San Francisco when Mattie had her most powerful premonition ever. It was mid-morning when she appeared at the threshold to the dining room wearing her bed garment and coat. I was sitting at the head of the long oak table, reading a Harper's Weekly over a strong cup of coffee and a plate heaping with eggs, potatoes, and bacon. Constance was sitting with her sons Matthew and Eugene who were then thirteen and fourteen.

"Guten Morgen, Miss Mattie Comet." I stood and greeted my niece. Fresh sea-air was drifting through the open windows along with the chirping of robins and the sound of a milk cart wheeling down the street below. Victory was in the air and it seemed like the start of a wonderful day.

But Mattie appeared gloomy as she gripped the threshold, looked at me, and said, "I had a bad dream. He's going to die. Ipa is going to die."

Constance led Mattie to her seat across from the boys and called for the house girl to bring a glass of milk with a little opium powder. She tenderly felt Mattie's forehead and asked if she was feeling ill.

“No,” Mattie replied, sitting stiffly at the table, her hair tousled. “My dream was about our Mr. Lincoln. The south will rise again and kill Ipa, our Great Father.”

“Mattie! Please,” Constance exclaimed. “General Lee surrendered at Appomattox four days ago. The war is over. The Silver Age is upon us. No more talk of doom and gloom. It’s improper behavior for a young Christian lady.”

Eugene and Matthew couldn’t suppress their giggles. Mattie had always been a strange curiosity to them, worthy of much teasing no matter how often I punished them for this behavior.

Mattie said nothing more and she refused to eat her breakfast. Then, for the rest of the day, she sulked around the house, worrying Constance and me.

Nobody believed her dreadful foreboding until early the next morning when the ominous news cannoned through the Golden Gate City. It arrived at the mansion on Rincon Hill by way of a Blacksmith named Horatio Flint. He rode his buggy through town announcing, “The President Mr. Lincoln is dead.” April 14, 1865 was a dark day in America. The next issue of Harper’s Weekly announced *In the joyous prospect of coming peace, our chosen leader was stricken down by a coward.*

I was more stunned by Mattie’s prediction than by the assassination itself. But I chose not to discuss it, finding some things were best left unsaid. Constance, on the other hand, became agitated by the eerie and devastating premonition. For days, she kept distant from her young cousin, but the boys couldn’t hold back from bragging that Mattie predicted Mr. Lincoln’s death.

Shops closed and draped their windows and doors and flags fluttered at half-staff on ships in the harbor. People wore black ribbons with Lincoln’s photograph. Black banners hung across Union, Montgomery, and Washington Streets. And our large house on Rincon Hill filled with sadness. Because Booth shot Lincoln on Good Friday, churches adulated our great leader as

Moses who had led his people to freedom. It was not the sentiment of the South, however. They felt avenged and said *The man we hated most has met his proper fate!*

For a week, Mattie refused to leave her room, fearing taunts from the boys. She kept saying to me the words of her beloved poetess *And mighty beings come and pass away, like the comets* and she swore to never allow her thoughts to bring about notions of tragedy. She cried endlessly, desperately trying to control her mind so another premonition would never touch her again. She even asked me if she herself had brought about the death of Mr. Lincoln.

Towards the end of 1865, the Secretary of State proclaimed that the 13th Amendment abolished slavery and the era of Reconstruction had begun. It was the year President Andrew Johnson awarded Mary Edwards Walker a Medal of Honor, although she wanted an Army commission for her heroic efforts to treat the wounded during the War. Miss Edwards Walker was the only woman to receive the coveted medal.

A year after the assassination, my friend Henry Wickenburg sent me a letter inviting me to Arizona Territory to help him manage the Vulture Mine and establish a dry goods business in his town along the Hassayampa River. Henry Wickenburg was an Austrian emigrant who lived in California for several years before he ventured to the Hassayampa valley a year before the War. He had discovered one of the largest gold strikes in the west and named it the Vulture Mine. When he was prospecting, he told me, his stubborn mule refused to budge and vultures circled above believing the beast had died. Henry threw a rock to move the mule along but missed the beast and struck an outcropping that possessed the fortuitous vein of gold.

The Vulture Mine launched its operation during one of the roughest periods in territorial history, when General George Crook's Pima, Papago, and Apache scouts fought alongside the cavalry to protect settlers and prospectors. After the War of Rebellion, additional troops

reinforced the Army posts and relative peace prevailed except for the occasional band of renegades who fled their reservation to bushwhack, torture, and massacre the unwary homesteader or traveler.

My friend's offer intrigued me. I had always trusted Mr. Wickenburg and felt the two of us could skillfully manage the mine and develop a thriving town. And I needed a return to life. I had lived in one place for fifteen years and this was an intolerably long time for a man whose spirit hungered for adventure and new opportunities. I fondly recalled the thrill of emigrating to America, then journeying to San Francisco, except for my poor Josephine's death of course. I craved this new prospect of mining for gold and establishing a trade in the rugged new territory of Arizona. But my spirit was torn. My main hesitation was Mattie. I felt obligated to see her married to a respectable man. How could I possibly desert Fredricka's only living child? It would be cruel to leave her behind but it made no sense to drag a young lady, a child in fact, into uncivilized territory.

A few months following Wickenburg's letter, a business associate sought permission to marry Constance. Herman Andrews was also a dry goods jobber and had paid several social visits to the mansion on Rincon Hill to meet with me and to see my daughter. When Constance agreed to the proposal, I felt encouraged to head for Arizona. In the parlor I talked to my daughter and niece about the notion. Mattie insisted on going with me but I was reluctant to bring her along and Constance wildly opposed the idea saying that Arizona Territory was wrought with wild animals and savage Indians. She urged me to stay in San Francisco until Mattie married a man of good standing and wealth.

Despite my daughter's protests and my own concerns, I felt driven to see this new territory at any cost. Perhaps if Josephine had lived, I would have felt differently. But her death

had made me a bachelor for life, free to seek my own challenges and create my own destiny. Not one my daughter determined.

In a matter of weeks, I turned over my business interests to Herman and took the stage to San Bernardino then on to Ehrenburg. Once in Wickenburg, I sent weekly letters to the house on Rincon Hill describing my mercantile business and work at the Vulture Mining Company. I had built a two-story wood frame building on Frontier Street for my living quarters and dry goods store. Constance often wrote about Mattie's tormented disposition and she implored me to return home.

Soon after Mattie turned 16, I finally returned to San Francisco, prosperous and full of enthusiasm. Mattie was overjoyed to see me, pleased that the venture had given me a resurgence of spirit.

"Why you're a young woman Miss Mattie Comet," I remember saying to my niece who was then dressed like my daughter in a gown with bare shoulders and a full green striped skirt of silk, satin and lace.

I was happier to see Mattie than my own daughter and grandsons. This would have bothered Constance but she was too busy urging me to move back into the mansion and see Mattie married-off. To her chagrin, I had no intention of staying in San Francisco. I had returned only to import merchandise to the town named after my friend and to fetch Miss Mattie Comet. I had missed her more than expected. And I wanted her to live with me in Wickenburg Town. I believed she'd be more comfortable there. She could help run the store and live far from the crowds and chaos of the city. A bustling life in San Francisco's society wasn't meant for Mattie and I believed the dry desert climate would suit her better than the city's drizzle and fog. I felt certain Mattie would be safe living with me. She was strong, her spirit was hardy, more so than

Constance, Josephine or even myself. She would survive Arizona. She had lived through a tornado and a year of captivity. Besides, there wasn't much danger in the territory since the Army reinforced its troops. At least, I hadn't experienced any problems in Wickenburg or at the Vulture Mine.

In 1867 Mattie happily traded her fancy gowns from Constance for the simple calico costumes of the frontier. After she arrived in Wickenburg Town, she felt secure living with me again. Her Ipa. And I knew she was happy to be far away from the ever-booming City and from her less than tolerant cousins.