

## FRÉMONT.

AN analysis of the very peculiar and noteworthy qualities that marked the late General Frémont would doubtless be a charming task for a student of psychology, if only adequate materials were at hand. As it is, the man must long remain in many respects an enigma to the public. His own Memoirs, of which but a single volume is in our hands, are disappointingly unenlightening as to what we most wished to know. And it is curious to note, as one looks back, how all through his career there has been the same indefiniteness in the popular estimate of him. His friends have been frequently enthusiastic; but they have always labored in vain to express what his great qualities were, and precisely what mighty deeds he had done. Yet just so his worst enemies, in the old days when he led the Republican canvass in 1856, had to resort to romance when they tried to give a reason for the hatred that was in them. Friends and foes alike thus knew remarkably little of him, save that, for inexpressible reasons, they loved or hated him. The most transient personal intercourse with the man gave a similar sense of his peculiarly hidden and baffling character. The charming and courtly manner, the deep and thoughtful eyes, the gracious and self-possessed demeanor, as of a consciously great man at rest, awaiting his chance to announce his deep purpose and to do his decisive deed, — all these things perplexed one who had any occasion to observe, as some did, that the deep purpose seemed always to have remained in reserve, and that there had been some reason in his life why the decisive deed never could be done. In his accounts of himself he has, moreover, frequently been hopelessly unhistorical as to what he revealed, and profoundly mysterious as to the nature of what he found it

needful to keep to himself. Unhistorical he was, in his revelations, in the most charming and incomprehensible of ways. In vain you endeavored to explain adequately his mistakes as due either to prejudice or to mere forgetfulness; his beautiful eyes and his dignity assured you that they could not be due to any less noble failing. The more you consulted him the fonder you were of him, and the less you were convinced by what he said. He grew more romantic in your eyes the more clearly you saw through his romance. This personal effectiveness of his manner was itself a quality such as ought to have graced a political genius, a born leader of men. In fact, one may say that General Frémont possessed all the qualities of genius except ability.

A confirmation of this view as to our hero's persistently puzzling character is furnished, I say, by the conflicting estimates that have been passed upon him. One of the latest of these estimates is that given of his career in Missouri by the Century biographers of Lincoln, whose effort to be impartial does not conceal the irritation which, as representatives of Lincoln's point of view, they feel toward the man who so grievously disappointed the administration. Yet they, too, have no charge to bring against General Frémont more grave and definite than that of ineffectiveness, and of hopelessly poor judgment about important public matters. It is noteworthy that this view is very far from that of many officers who were upon General Frémont's staff in Missouri. To them the "display" of which Lincoln's biographers complain, the show of power and the expensive habits of the general during his brief term of office, meant the external appearance, at least, of greatness. They were un-

able to judge more accurately of what was behind. They were sure that the general's plans were vast, and they trusted implicitly his imposing manners, as they enjoyed his friendly words. Such a subordinate it was, the late Governor Dorsheimer, who, in the *Atlantic Monthly* for 1862, published a sketch of the Springfield expedition with which the Hundred Days in Missouri closed. This sketch is rather a tribute of affection to General Frémont than an objective narrative. "The general" has "magic in his name," "ceaseless energy in his action," a spirit that nothing can daunt, a genius that creates armies, a "simple grace and poetry of expression and a tenderness of manner which are very winning," a "magnanimity" and "noble-mindedness" that his friend and staff officer never doubts. Everything suggests the depth of the general's plans. To be sure, these plans lead nowhere; but that is the fault of the jealous enemies who somehow are minded to destroy the general's fame, and to inherit, unearned, the laurels that are his due. Had he but been granted a few days more time, the deep plans, the vast ideas, which his winning countenance concealed would have begun to bear fruit.

If one looks further back, to the great canvass of 1856, one finds the same hazy atmosphere about the young Colonel Frémont's person.

As one admirer<sup>1</sup> of those days stated the case in his favor: "Colonel Frémont is in the prime of life, and near the same age as General Washington was when he accepted the command of the American armies, and surprised the British at Trenton, one of his most brilliant exploits. Colonel Frémont is a man of great natural sagacity, and possesses a calm, clear judgment, improved by study and a large experience of human nature in all its forms, whether of savage or civilized life. He

<sup>1</sup> Mr. John M. Read in a speech at Philadelphia, September 30, 1856.

is unassuming in his manners, with a striking personal appearance and a remarkably fine eye, strongly indicative of a prominent feature in his character, a firm and vigorous will." Verily our hero's eyes had their important part to play in forming his reputation for statesmanship. As for his vigorous will, that was just what, during most of his later career, he so heroically kept in reserve.

For the rest, this young man, whose age made him comparable with Washington and suggested the surprise at Trenton, had in his favor, during the canvass of 1856, the part he had played in the conquest of California in 1846, as well as, earlier still, in the long exploring expeditions of 1841-44. The latter accomplishment was a modest but very solid basis for a topographical engineer's reputation, and was of permanent and no small service to the country, although Western exploration of the way to Oregon and California did not begin with these expeditions, and although the paths which the young engineer had found were mostly not wholly untraversed ones. But if emigrants to both Oregon and California had preceded him across the Rockies, he had done a very fine work in making the new regions known to the world at large, and the geography of the Great Basin accessible to science. As for the other feat, the conquest of California, the general public had learned what seemed a plain and even a glorious tale of patriotic devotion, — a tale which had not suffered through its presentation in the eloquent fashion of Senator Benton. What the truth of the affair was the general public, however, knew but very imperfectly. As a consequence, few public men have ever been more beautifully enveloped in romance than was the Pathfinder that year. His enemies in vain endeavored to speak the truly effective word against him.

Yet neither during the canvass of 1856 nor later was it necessary thus to

resort to artificial romancing in order to adorn the character of one whom fortune had persistently made a man of marvels. There was, as an actual fact, his gold mine on the Mariposa grant. How curious an accident this, that the "Conqueror of California" should by chance have purchased, before the discovery of gold in the territory, the only Mexican grant that covered any part of the gold region! How wondrous that this one grant should have contained so famous a gold mine! And yet this was not a mere tale invented by friends, as were those secrets of the great mind that for them lay hidden behind the deep eyes; nor was it one of the slanders of his foes. It was plain and hard outer fact. The gold mine had fallen to the hero, and, like all his other wonderful fortunes, it profited him nothing; so that he has now died, as he so long lived, a poor man. It was this wonderful caprice about his whole career, this repeated and unheard-of kindness of fortune, and yet this eternal failure and abortion of all his great enterprises, which made his whole life like a dream to his fellows. It was as if a character of pure poetry, some Jaques or some lesser Round Table knight, had escaped from romance-land, and were wandering about amongst live men on the earth. Always, as the Odyssean gods show their airy nature at the moment they vanish, this fictitious being would bear about with him, in the real world, signs of his insubstantiality. If you tried either business, or politics, or warfare in his company, he would at first seem so finely made and genuine a live creature that the artful qualities of his purely ideal and manufactured essence would escape your notice. You would fancy him to be a flesh-and-blood man, and a great one at that. Only, when you had once invested in his vast enterprises, or had entrusted your beloved cause to his care, ere long he would begin to show signs, as it were, of vanishing.

And by and by, after much puzzling on your part as to the sincerity of his purposes and the true wisdom of his schemes, you would come to observe that, after all, things never happened to him as to mortal men, and that he bore every mark of being a fictitious character, a man in a play, an entity of the footlights, a purely literary figment. You would then indeed find that you had invested your money or your trust in vain in his undertakings. They would come to naught; while as for him,—in what wise was he to blame? Can a man help it if, despite all, he is a fiction,—a creature escaped from a book, wandering about in a real world when he was made for dreamland? Of course he has his character, his fine qualities, his plans, his hopes, his thoughts. What Jaques, what Round Table knight, has not? Of course, then, he could talk with you, plan with you, undertake vast things with you, and could himself accidentally come into possession of a gold mine or play at conquering a province. But then, of course, all this would merely be play, and you could not hold him responsible for it. Nothing would come of him in the end. In all his life he would accomplish absolutely no one significant thing. A vague and ghostly industry, ended only by death, would touch upon and begin a thousand things during his career of flitting and of failing; but that would be all. He would have here no temporal mission, because his only true place would be the world of shadows. He would be subject to no ordinary human estimate of his qualities in terms of their visible fruits, because he would bear no fruits, and his qualities would be those of romance.

It may seem, to be sure, a trifle unfair thus to treat so prominent a figure of the past generation. But consider, once more, how previous estimates have conceived him. I have at hand a curious and charming pamphlet, published at Caen, in France, in 1868, and written

by M. Alexandre Büchner, professor of the Faculté des Lettres, and author otherwise of some brochures on the "modern novel" and kindred subjects. Why a professor of letters should have written just this pamphlet, and read it before the Académie des Sciences, Arts, et Belles-Lettres de Caen, in June, 1868, I do not know. The title is *Le Conquérant de la Californie*. The subject is — our hero. The thesis is that General Fremont is the principal cause and the leading mind whereby the abolition of slavery in the United States has been brought about, the future destiny of the republic assured, the history of our continent for the century determined. This essay, like General Frémont's good fortune in acquiring the Mariposa grant, comes, as it were, like a meteor in the darkness. One flash of our general thus illuminates French academic literature, — why, to what end, who can say? There are reasons, to which one need not here further refer, why his name has been, in later years, somewhat unhappily misused in France, — unkindly remembered, to say the least, by disappointed investors; judicially maligned, to speak no more harshly. But in 1868 our general's name had its hour and its honor in the mouth of a friendly critic of no small literary skill. One wonders at the largeness of M. Büchner's well-stated personal information about General Frémont. Can the professor have had access to people who were nearer to the general than he? And why is his interest in *le Conquérant de la Californie* so ardently aroused? Is his concern purely scientific; or is he perchance himself remotely interested in great American enterprises, say of a somewhat commercial and speculative character, so that his mind naturally turns to *le Conquérant*, who shall have made all American speculations since the abolition of slavery possible? One queries in vain. I know not why Professor Büchner wrote, or who coached him as

to what documents to consult. I find, however, that what he wrote reads in sum as follows: General Frémont, whose early life M. Büchner very pleasantly summarizes, first showed his genius by "seeing the necessity of finding ways of regular and direct communication" with the Pacific. After the great explorations between 1841 and 1845, the young officer found himself at the head of a new expedition on the borders of California. Then followed his quarrel with Castro, "le gouverneur," and the gallant Frémont's glorious defiance of the armed forces of the Californians, as he unfurled his country's flag from his temporary stronghold. Then the hero retired towards Oregon; but "*en route il reçut des ordres inattendus de son gouvernement,*" and these new orders forced him to assume a new rôle. It was, as turned out, the rôle of conqueror of California. M. Büchner makes little of the other officers who took part in this affair. His hero is solely in his mind. The later career, of the colonel, the senator, and the presidential candidate, is pursued to the outbreak of the war. "Mais ici," says M. Büchner, "les documents commencent à faire défaut, de sorte qu'il nous est impossible de préciser le rôle, d'ailleurs peu considérable, qu'il y joua." Others have felt M. Büchner's difficulty here; but the professor feels no such doubts as he continues with a summary of his hero's public services. This intrepid officer, it will be seen, has, as explorer, "given birth, so to speak," to several new States of the Union. He excluded the Mexicans (and the English) from a large part of the Pacific coast. He conquered California. But hold! This is a small thing compared with what resulted. California contained gold. That fact made California a free State. That fact, again, led to the war. The war abolished slavery. Hence the theorem: "Messieurs, by this extraordinary and almost logical sequence of events ["al-

most logical" is indeed a true word], Frémont, giving California to the United States, determined the movement which has just changed the face and the destiny of America. The problem of emancipation resolved, the future of the great federal republic guaranteed, — such are the results which have been attained; and these results, vast as they are, — the United States owe them, in part, to the knowledge, courage, and energetic perseverance of Frémont."

And now one may ask, Who but a fictitious character, a creature of shadow-land, could possibly expect to find himself made the starting-point and the hero of an "almost logical sequence of events" such as this?

If one drops all such matters for more serious and historically significant ones; if one lays aside the hopeless effort to estimate our hero's true quality, and undertakes rather to find what actually important deeds were behind this romance of his lifetime, one sees forthwith that M. Büchner has so far rightly judged as he has made General Frémont's effective reputation mainly dependent upon his work as "Conqueror of California." Was he or was he not entitled to this distinction? As a matter of fact, the true "conquest of California" involved several conflicts with armed forces, during a revolt which the native Californians, irritated by maltreatment, made against the forces that had formally seized their territory in July, 1846, and that had displaced their local officers, in many cases, by alcaldes or by military officials, set over them without their entire consent. In no one of these armed conflicts did the young Captain Frémont bear any part. Marines under Commodore Stockton, soldiers under General Kearny, did the fighting. Captain Frémont raised indeed a battalion for service; marched far to the southward; endured, together with his command, some bad weather very patiently; and received the capitulation of the already

defeated revolters, who while in flight encountered him, and without contest submitted to him. This whole revolt itself, as it happened, had resulted from friction mainly caused by his own earlier disturbances in the north, brought to pass in June before he had any news of the outbreak of war, and in violation of express instructions, which had been received from home, to conciliate the Californians, and to encourage them to a course of neutrality in case of war with Mexico. These operations in the north themselves constitute his only title to the name of "Conqueror," and they were distinctly the unauthorized operations of a filibuster. From the first day of his engagement in them until the very publication of his Memoirs, at the close of his life, he never told the unromantic and historical truth about them, in public or for publication, to any living soul. Fortune made them appear to all men in a false light. His own government was obliged to ignore wholly his disobedience. His family set forth the tale to the world in colors of Senator Benton's own choosing. And so a reputation was made whose only foundation was a culpable blunder and a perversion of history. I cannot here dwell long upon a tale to which I have elsewhere devoted much attention, in a special study of the early history of the Americans in California,<sup>1</sup> and of which a fuller, and in some few matters of detail a more accurate, version has, since my own, been published in Mr. Hubert Howe Bancroft's California. I return to the subject here once more, partly because General Frémont's death brings it afresh to mind, and partly because, in his Memoirs, the general himself, some time after my own book was published, sought in vain to give the ancient affair its old romantic coloring. A member of his family, Professor William Carey

<sup>1</sup> California. From the Conquest in 1846 to the Second Vigilance Committee in San Francisco. (American Commonwealths Series.)

Jones, has also attempted to defend General Frémont's conduct in an elaborate but to my mind unconvincing essay in the Papers of the California Historical Society, published in 1887. But the present is no place for argument. I can only restate the essential facts.

The seizure of California, in 1846, was one of the least creditable affairs in the highly discreditable Mexican war. Especially was it discreditable in view of the fact that it might have been accomplished as a mere incident to the whole criminal enterprise, while the action of a few officers of the government resulted in giving it the character of a separate and independent crime, — a crime not so much against Mexico, whom the whole war robbed, as against the native Californians, who, but for our mismanagement, would have had no share in the war. The territory of California was known to our government, in 1845, as a half-independent province, or so-called "department," under a Mexican rule that was more nominal than effective. The few American settlers in the Sacramento Valley hoped for an early occupation of the land in the name of our government. The few thousand Californians themselves, a proud, helpless, and decidedly provincial people, absorbed in local politics, dreamed often of the entire independence of their land, and were jealous of all foreign interference. But they were also much influenced by our traders, who visited the coast constantly; and they were by no means likely, if properly treated, seriously to resist our occupation of the land in case, upon an outbreak of war with Mexico, we quietly seized their defenseless posts and annexed their province. To fight for Mexico was not their general intent. So judge those who knew them best, and so events indicate. Under these circumstances, it was surely by no means good policy for our government to undertake to harass them in advance of the outbreak of the intended war with

Mexico. In fact, when, in 1845, Lieutenant Frémont's third expedition was sent out to survey the passes to the Pacific through California, it was no part of the plan of the Polk cabinet that the young engineer should engage in aggressively hostile operations in California, even if the war should break out before his return. On the contrary, the cabinet plan, as fully set forth in the known dispatches of Secretary Bancroft and of Secretary Buchanan to officers of the government on the Pacific coast, was to conciliate the inhabitants of California, to encourage them to adopt a "course of neutrality" in case of war, and so to get California without fighting. It has of late become important for General Frémont's friends to assert, as he himself did in his Memoirs, and as Professor Jones does in his paper above mentioned, that there was some sort of opposition between the instructions given by the two secretaries, and that Secretary Bancroft favored a bolder and in substance a more hostile policy in California than did the wily Secretary of State. No assertion could be more hopelessly indefensible in view of the documents as known to us. The cabinet policy was harmonious and perfectly intelligible. In case of war, the Californian ports were to be seized and held by an irresistible naval force. But by sea and by land the Californians themselves were to be well treated, conciliated, and induced, if possible, to help us as against Mexico.

Of this cabinet plan the young topographical engineer was, of course, very imperfectly informed when he set out for California in 1845. But, as his own account shows, he was much impressed by the fact that his father-in-law was influential with the cabinet; that the Mexican war was imminent; that he had a fine chance to win glory for himself and for his family; and that, whatever happened in so distant a region and in the carrying out of so complicated a

business, he would pretty surely escape censure in the end if California was somehow won, if he somehow connected his name with the enterprise, and if he avoided any misconduct for which he could be openly called to account by the government. The business was a delicate one, but for once our hero succeeded; not, to be sure, in obeying his orders or in serving his country, but in making for himself a great name, and in so handling the affair that the very government which intrigued for California in secret could do nothing in public against one who made its intrigues of no avail.

The cabinet plan, I have said, was not known to Frémont when he set out on the expedition of 1845. Before it was made known to him, he had reached California, and had managed to have a bitter and unnecessary quarrel with General Castro, a local official in charge of the northern half of the department, near Monterey; in fact, our hero had defied, with his whole party, the Californian authorities, after a fashion that was sure to offend the pride of all the Californian people, and to make future war with them a little easier. That at the outset the quarrel was deliberately provoked by the young engineer, I do not know. What I do know is that it was carried on in the spirit of a man who hoped soon to be authorized to meet the Californians as their conqueror, and who was anxious early to begin acquiring whatever glory the coming war might be destined to bring to American officers in that particular region. Of the quarrel nothing came at the moment but ill feeling. The engineering party retired northward up the Sacramento Valley, only to return, and to begin the unprovoked troubles of June.

The immediate cause of this return was the fact that Lieutenant Archibald Gillespie, bearer of a secret dispatch from the government to its agent in California, traveled northward after the

engineering party, overtook it, repeated his instructions to Frémont, and acquainted him with the desire of the government that he should give aid in carrying out the instructions. The instructions themselves were addressed by Secretary Buchanan, not to Lieutenant Frémont directly, but to Consul Larkin at Monterey, the agent just mentioned. Lieutenant Frémont, who was not favored with any special dispatch or independent instruction, heard the Larkin dispatch repeated to him by Gillespie, a fact which is known to us through the latter's sworn testimony, given before an official body at Washington but a short time later. Orally, moreover, Gillespie informed our hero of the desire of the government that, if within reach, he should remain near with his party to cooperate in the peaceful intrigue by which California was, if possible, to be won over before the Mexican war began, or, in case the war began too soon, was to be preserved neutral during the hostilities, ready for cession at the end. This, as is demonstrable, was the only official message that Gillespie brought.

The young "Conquérant" considered the situation, as he himself tells us, somewhat carefully. He has never told us, however, what he must really have thought. What the government proposed no doubt must have seemed to him absurd. Had he not already quarreled with the Californians? Would not the war soon come? What glory was there in waiting while Consul Larkin "urged the Californians to adopt a course of neutrality," as the dispatch from Buchanan ordained? Why not rather fight the Californians at once, and get the glory? They were defenseless, but this was unknown at home in Washington. One could plead all sorts of necessities as an excuse for the onslaught. One could say that the Californians were hostile, that they were dangerous, that they forced the fight, and what not. So, in fact,

Senator Benton later said in print, at Washington. Meanwhile, the intrigue proposed by the government to win them over would require a little time. Were it once interrupted by violence, it would never be revealed by that cabinet which thus, somewhat discreditably, had undertaken to carry it out through a consul. Here, then, was a safe chance to win glory.

This our young lieutenant may well have thought. At all events, what he did, after having thus received orders to conciliate the Californians, was to return at once to the Sacramento Valley, for the purpose of making war upon them, and of setting the instructions at defiance. He returned to make war, and to this end he used the American settlers of the Sacramento Valley as his cat's-paws, — arousing them to the hostile operations of the "Bear Flag" affair by various false rumors as to how Castro was coming against them in force to drive them out. In this fashion he soon put the north country in an uproar, and caused trouble that, in view of his small and irregular forces, could not possibly have ended in anything but anarchy save for the coming of the American fleet to seize the land formally. Thus he continued, with much noise and a little bloodshed, until, on July 7th, Commodore Sloat, in pursuance of his instructions, seized Monterey, having received news of the outbreak of actual war on the Rio Grande. And here the glories of the "conquest" terminate, while its later, wholly lamentable bickerings, marchings, and ultimate bloodshed begin. They, in all their painful details, with all their wearisome after-effects, which embittered the life of California for years, were, however, the fruit of these earlier operations of the north, by which the peace of the territory had been disturbed, and all hopes of a successful intrigue for a "neutrality" of the Californians had been cut off.

Upon this foundation, I repeat, our hero's whole reputation as "conqueror" rests. It is well, after all these years, and after what we have recently heard of the "unique services" of our general, that the romance should at last cease for good. General Frémont was simply *not* the conqueror of California. All that he did up to July 7th was a distinct hindrance to our seizure of the land, was of no effect except to alienate its people, and was the outcome of a deliberate determination to prefer personal glory to obedience, and to take advantage of the secrecy of a cabinet intrigue in order to commit a serious and reckless crime against the Californians. All that the same leader did after July 7th was to march twice to the southward with his battalion against a foe whom he never met in the field, but whom others finally fought and defeated, and thenceforward to pose as hero of his own romance.

Curious, furthermore, are our hero's subsequent explanations, both of his behavior with regard to his instructions, and of the nature of these instructions themselves as Gillespie brought them. At first, in letters sent home to Senator Benton and printed by the latter, he represented that Castro's hostility had justified him in acting as he did. Later, before the court-martial at Washington, which tried him on charges growing out of his relations with General Kearny in the south, he maintained, as he did afterwards for years, that the hostility of Castro, *added* to certain mysterious instructions given him "to watch over the interests of the United States in California," had put him in a position where, in his judgment, it was necessary to act as he did. As years went on, the secret instructions, whose real nature long remained unknown to the public, gained more prominence in this ambiguous account. To me, as historical inquirer, when, in 1884, I asked him for an account of his behavior

in California, for publication and for criticism, General Frémont laid most stress upon the instructions, which he then, very correctly, still attributed to Buchanan. I warned him, when I first approached him, of the serious difficulty of defending his singular assault upon the Californians in a time of profound peace. I offered him throughout nothing but a plain statement of his views in print, and a free criticism of the whole when once I should have the evidence before me. I obtained for publication, and wholly without any offer on my part to accept or to treat favorably his statements, a tolerably full account of his whole action as conqueror. This account I took down from his lips, and submitted to him in manuscript for approval. It was later published as part of a lengthy research. The account was perfectly clear as to the nature of the instructions, which General Frémont declared to be such as made him secret agent of the government in California, and as fully warranted his conduct. He denied absolutely that these instructions were addressed to Consul Larkin; and he proved to me somewhat elaborately that Larkin could not possibly have been employed by the government as agent. When I hereupon acquainted him with the text of the actual dispatch, repeated to him by Gillespie, — a text which, although then unpublished, was in my possession, — General Frémont had no resource but to deny that he had ever heard of such a dispatch. He did so deny the fact, and persisted that Secretary Buchanan had sent him a private and separate dispatch by Gillespie, — a paper of which, of course, he had preserved no record. Herewith our intercourse ended.

As it happens, however, General Frémont, at the time of the "conquest," recorded, in one of his published letters to Senator Benton, his surprise at receiving *no* dispatch from Buchanan addressed personally to himself; while

Gillespie's sworn evidence, given at a time when he was testifying in our hero's own behalf, shortly after the events in question, proves that he did repeat to the latter the Larkin dispatch. All this I set forth in print, along with General Frémont's own statement, in 1886. I waited thereafter, with some interest, to see what the general would say in his Memoirs concerning this curious discrepancy. With a courage worthy of so great a reputation, our hero, in this last work of his life, altered his tale. No longer was it Buchanan, but Secretary Bancroft, as he now asserted, who had "sent Gillespie to" him with special instructions, — instructions which, to be sure, are no longer preserved. But, as he now avers, they were wholly at variance with the instructions which Buchanan sent to Consul Larkin. Secretary Bancroft shall, in substance, have authorized his "vigorous action" towards the Californians; he shall have permitted him to make war even in advance of the news of actual hostilities; while Buchanan, in his inefficiency, ordained a peaceful intrigue with these same Californians. It is the fashion of cabinets to send out such conflicting orders to various agents by the same messenger! But, unfortunately, the instructions which Secretary Bancroft *did* send, *not* to Frémont, to whom he sent nothing personal, but to Commodore Sloat, are extant, and they are in perfect harmony with the dispatch which Buchanan sent to Larkin, which Gillespie repeated to the young Frémont, which the latter disobeyed, and which, at the close of his life, he obstinately denies having ever known or received. There was, in fact, as I am perfectly sure, after the most careful study, but *one* cabinet plan. Frémont thwarted that plan. In doing so he wrought only confusion and sorrow to the land, but glory to himself. To the government at home he explained his disobedience by a false tale of imminent danger from

Castro and the Californians, — a danger which, as he said, forced him to act in self-defense. To other men he explained his conduct, at first in ambiguous fashion, later more plainly, as due to instructions from the government. When his real instructions were shown him, he died persisting that he had never received them. And upon the foundation of these "unique services" was the romance of his wondrous life built.

And yet, after all, one whose destiny was so marvelous, so shadowy in its splendors, so obscure in its intrigues, so paradoxical in its contrasts between the truth and the fiction of the whole, will very long remain a puzzle and a delight

to his history-reading countrymen. Of his true character, I insist, I can form only the halting and problematic estimate that the foregoing pages embody. In private family life the man was plainly the faithful knight and hero that his winning eyes and gentle voice promised. Those were, indeed, long, healthy, and charming years whereof his *Memoirs* speak, when they describe, with a noble literary touch, his intercourse with those who were nearest to him in life. But it is only of his public life that I have had to treat. The real man behind that public life it is that I find so curious and baffling an enigma, as all others have found him.

*Josiah Royce.*

---

#### AN ARTIST'S IDYL.

IF in reading this desultory but charming volume,<sup>1</sup> by an artist whose pictures are known and loved in our country as in his own, we are reminded in the earlier pages of an Ereckmann-Chatrion novel, and in certain later passages of that *Idylle d'un Savant* which told the life of André Marie Ampère, and which, if it had not chanced to be fact, would have ranked among the most exquisite discoveries of fiction, neither comparison impugns the veracity of M. Breton's recollections or the originality of his treatment. For artist and chronicler there exists the same truth, which is the spirit of truth. The genial Alsatian novelists hardly attempted to lower their bucket to the depths of the well, but in devising the well-knit narratives related by their boy heroes they undoubtedly drew upon a fund of incident and impression accumulated in boyhood, and they had the art of reproducing its at-

mosphere as viewed from the standpoint of maturity, of portraying scenes and characters as the man thinks he saw them when a boy. M. Breton's reminiscences take him to a different region, the Pas-de-Calais, but to the same land of childhood, though of a more conscious and highly endowed sort; seen, too, through the same medium of affection and playful poetry, that unconscious fiction of memory which is a part of its truth.

But while the material of a very fresh and pleasing story lies ready at hand in the life which M. Breton has to relate, and is regarded by him with the tenderness of the artist, he has made no attempt to arrange it even so far as to produce a consecutive narrative. Inside the chronological grand divisions of childhood, youth, and later life, which are indicated clearly enough without being too distinctly outlined, there is little order or sequence, events omitted in their due time being brought up elsewhere in some indirect connection. In

<sup>1</sup> *La Vie d'un Artiste. Art et Nature.* Par JULES BRETON, Membre de l'Institut. Paris: Alphonse Lemerre. Boston: Carl Schoenhof.