

THE PAUMA MASSACRE.

BY MILLARD F. HUDSON.

Upon the relief of General Kearny's command from the siege on San Bernardo hill, after the battle of San Pasqual, early in December, 1846, the Mexican forces disappeared and were seen no more by the Americans. Pico, failing to realize his confident expectation of capturing or destroying Kearny's whole force, saw the futility of any further aggressive operations in the vicinity of San Diego, and took the remnant of his demoralized command back to Los Angeles to aid in its defense from the expected attack. The effect on the rangers of the sudden appearance of Stockton's marines was more than disappointing; it gave them such a shock that they were transformed from vigilant besiegers into panic-stricken fugitives. The whole command broke up into small bands, scattered in flight, the little discipline which existed was forgotten, and many unwilling or half-hearted recruits took advantage of the confusion to return home at once, or to seek shelter where they might await an opportunity to do so. Naturally, the fugitives fell into small groups of relatives, friends, and neighbors, with common interests and knowledge of localities. Many of the men from San Diego had been forcibly impressed, and were among the first to break away and seek shelter among the ranches in the foothills on the western slope of that county.

A few of the local residents rode boldly into San Diego and gave themselves up, but others were afraid to do so, on account of stories which had been told them about the cruelty of the Americans. In the words of an old Spanish lady: "They had been made to believe that the Americans would butcher them." This lady was in San Diego when her uncle came in to give himself up, and remembers the scene very well: How he rode up on the plaza and was instantly surrounded by American soldiers: how his mother screamed and ran out to him, thinking he was about to be shot; and how surprised and pleased the family were when, after a few minutes, he was set free upon parole. This man afterward served the Americans as a guide; but not all the rangers were as wise as he, and while Stockton was busy with his preparations for the march on Los Angeles, many of the outlying ranches held trembling fugitives in concealment.

Eleven of these straggling rangers were seized by the Indians and put to death. This tragedy has figured as something of a historical mystery, and its causes and circumstances, so far as I can discover, have never been clearly understood and recorded. In a number of histories the episode is not even mentioned, while Bancroft gives it

only 225 words, in a foot-note, and gives a very confused and unsatisfactory account. He says "there is much mystery about this affair," and enumerates four different theories respecting it, without making any effort to sift them and arrive at the truth. These theories are: That the Indians were incited by the Americans; that they were incited by Flores indirectly—that is, instructed to attack all Mexicans attempting to quit California or to join the Americans; that there was no massacre, the victims having been killed in the fight at San Pasqual; and that they were captured by San Luiseno Indian fugitives whom they were trying to bring back to the Mission, and treacherously killed by the Cahuillas.

A careful study of the printed sources of information, followed by interviews with several relatives of the murdered men, has satisfied me that there is not the slightest foundation for a single one of these theories, and that the true explanation of the affair is a very simple one. It was impossible to secure the testimony of eye-witnesses, since the victims were all killed and the Indian participants have since passed away; but the stories told by surviving relatives of the murdered men, some of whom had accounts direct from Indians who were present, are clear and uniform, differing only in minor details. They explain in a consistent and reasonable manner the causes and circumstances of the tragedy and take it out of the realm of conjecture.

It may be well, at this point, to name those whose stories are woven into this narrative. Mr. Louis Serrano, of San Diego, had two uncles among the victims. It was at his father's ranch house near Pauma that the rangers were taken prisoner, and his father, elder brother, and a third uncle were with the unfortunate men and barely escaped their fate. Mr. Serrano was too young to remember the affair himself, and his story therefore rests upon what his relatives and Manuelito, one of the principal Indian participants, with whom he was well acquainted, told him; but he is a very intelligent man, of excellent character, and worthy of full belief. His brother, Jesus Serrano, is living at Ventura, but I have been unable to see him. Mrs. Ramona Williams, of Los Angeles, was a young woman in San Diego at the time of the massacre, and remembers it very well. Her maiden name was Alipás, and one of the victims, Santos Alipás, was her uncle. For her second husband she married William Williams, who was majordomo of the Santa Ysabel rancho at the time of the massacre, who tried to save the rangers, and afterward went over the ground with her and told her the story. Her sister, Maria Arcadia Alipás, also remembers many incidents connected with the episode; and the latter's husband, Captain Robert D. Israel, a veteran of the Mexican war who came to San Diego in 1849, was for many years keeper of the light house on Point Loma, and is now a resident of Coronado, often talked with Manuelito about the massacre, and gives a clear statement of the event and of the causes leading up to it.

The Pauma rancho was an isolated tract of mountain land on the San Luis Rey River, some eighteen miles northeast of Oceanside, taken up by Juan Antonio Serrano, of San Diego, under Mexican laws, some time before the Mexican War. The Indians in the vicinity were of the San Luiseño tribe, or San Luis Rey Indians. There was one ranchería of them on the western part of the rancho, at the place still called Pauma, known as the Pauma Indians; and another at the place called El Potrero, adjoining the Pauma rancho on the east. The Pauma Indians were a small tribe, probably not exceeding seventy-five at that time. Four miles west of Pauma, down the river, was the Pala Mission, where the Warner's Ranch Indians now live. Fifteen or sixteen miles east, on the headwaters of the San Luis Rey River, lay the Rancho El Valle de San José, or Warner's Ranch, on which lived the Cupeños or Warner's Ranch Indians, at the Hot Springs. These latter and the San Luis Rey Indians were quite friendly, intermarried, and often took counsel together. The principal chief of the Paumas was Manuelito, then a young man, whose home was at Pauma, but who sometimes lived at Agua Caliente. With him was associated Pablo Apis. Ten or twelve miles south of Warner's Ranch were the Santa Ysabel Indians, under Chief Ignacio, and in the mountains to the north, in San Bernardino County, were the Cahuillas under the well known Juan Antonio, and a minor chief called Baupista. There was also a tribe whose ranchería was at Los Coyotes, at the approach to Warner's Pass from the desert. These Indians were somewhat loosely confederated; each ranchería had its minor chief, but there were head chiefs whom it was customary to call together to consider questions of importance.

These Indians were nominally friendly, but were still unruly and gave those who took up land among them a great deal of trouble. They were what were known as the hill, or non-mission Indians; and although the friars used to send out bands of soldiers to "round them up" and bring them in to the missions by force, they never became entirely reconciled to the process and continued, to the last, to break away at the first opportunity and resume their wild life. In fact, neither the missionaries nor the Mexican soldiers ever succeeded in entirely subduing them; and from their frequent skirmishes with the latter, they came to regard them as hereditary foes. Another cause of bad feeling was the fact that many Indian servants were whipped and otherwise ill-treated by their employers, people of Spanish descent, and in consequence held grudges against them. I am aware that many old-timers, in telling about the Spanish whipping their Indian servants, always add that the latter never resented it, but feel quite certain this is an error. There is a record of the death of a priest at the San Diego Mission from the effects of poison placed in his soup by an Indian neophyte whom he had caused to be flogged excessively; and a well-informed and shrewd old American

settler once said to me: "Many of the Spanish were very cruel to their Indian servants; they used to tie them up and whip them like dogs!" And he added that, in his opinion, this was one of the causes of the Pauma massacre.

Another contributory cause of this particular disaster requires more extended statement. These Indians were not only traditionally fond of warfare, accustomed to fighting with other tribes and against the Mexicans, but they had even been allowed to take part with some of the factions among the Californians in the political troubles of the times. I now refer particularly to April, 1832, when about a thousand of them were drilled, armed, and marched from San Diego to Los Angeles by Governor Echeandia in his campaign against Zamorano. Although they had no opportunity to engage in battle at that time, the precedent was not forgotten, and it was no wonder that, with the marching and counter-marching of Mexican and American troops and the engagements at San Diego and San Pasqual, they should have become somewhat excited. The considerations which have been stated seem sufficient to have inclined them to the American side; but if any doubt remained, it was removed by the conduct of the Mexicans themselves.

These rangers foraged off the country as they went, and took some horses and other property which the Pauma Indians claimed as their own. When they heard of the arrival of General Kearny, they sent representatives who interviewed him at the Santa Ysabel Rancho and laid this and other grievances before him. The accounts of Kearny, Emory, and Dr. Griffin seem to show that the Indians became somewhat wrought up and intimated their readiness to aid the Americans; but the general advised them to keep the peace and take no part in the war, on either side. Manuelito always declared that Kearny said to them, in reply to their complaints about the acts of the Mexicans: "Well, if they do such things to you, you must try to defend yourselves." Although there is no record, official or otherwise, of this language, it seems not improbable that Kearny might have used words to that effect. He was not in a position to protect the Indians, himself, and might very properly have advised them to defend themselves, when necessary. Had he been so disposed, it is probable he could easily have incited the Indians to attack the rangers; but it is clear, both from Griffin's and Manuelito's statements, that he scrupulously refrained from doing so. The Indians, however, seem to have given this moderate language an interpretation somewhat different from Kearny's evident intent, and to have returned home persuaded that they had been given license to do as they pleased with any Mexicans they might capture.

The Indians at Warner's Ranch and Santa Ysabel interpreted Kearny's conciliatory advice correctly and remained neutral, but the Cahuillas, for some reason, sympathized with the Mexicans.

The relief of Kearny's command was effected on the morning of

December 11, 1846. A day or two after this, Serrano, who had been in the midst of the fighting and, by the way, is said to have been one of the two men who killed Captain Benjamin D. Moore, at the battle of San Pasqual, arrived at his Pauma Rancho seeking concealment. He seemed to have little, if any, suspicion of the existing unfriendly feeling on the part of the Indians. He was on terms of personal friendship with Manuelito and most of the other Indians, and had carried on his cattle business among them with success. A short time before he had built an adobe house about a mile and a half east of the ranchería, with the intention of living in it; and to this house he now led his companions. Going soon after to the ranchería to scout for news and supplies, he overheard two squaws talking in the Indian language, of which he understood a little, and thus learned that it was the intention of the Indians to attack and endeavor to capture his party that night. He did not learn their purpose, but becoming satisfied mischief of some kind was contemplated, he rode back to his ranch house and gave warning. His companions were incredulous as to their being any danger, but promised to be on their guard. They were armed with flint-lock muskets, spears, and a few old-fashioned single-barrelled horse-pistols; and if it came to a conflict, they believed they could successfully defend themselves. So little impression did Serrano's warning make upon them, despite his earnestness, that, after his departure, they did not even put out a guard. Serrano and his brother-in-law, José Aguilar, then rode away for Pala, taking with them Serrano's son, Jesus, a boy of about fourteen years.

The eleven men left in the ranch house, and who soon after lost their lives, were: Manuel Serrano, a brother of José Antonio; their brother-in-law, Ramon Aguilar, from San Juan Capistrano; Santos Alipás, a boy who had been sent from San Diego by his mother to carry provisions to his father, serving with Pico; Sergeant Francisco Basualdo, of San Diego, a gray-haired man of about sixty years, whose wife was a cousin to Governor Pico; José Mariá Alvarado, who lived and had a wife in San Diego; a man named Dominguez, better known as Dominguito; Santiago Osuna, an old man, one of three brothers from San Diego serving under Pico; José Lopez, a young man, also from San Diego; Estaquío Ruiz, related to the Picos; and Juan de la Cruz and a New Mexican of unknown name, both of whom came from the north.

Early that night, while the tired rangers were lying about in the one large room of the ranch house, there came a knock at the door. "*Quien es?*" they called; "*Es Manuelito,*" was the reply. So certain did they feel of the friendship and good faith of Manuelito that, recognizing his voice, they threw the door wide open. Instantly the room was filled with Indians and, with scarcely a struggle, the men were seized, overpowered, stripped, and their hands bound behind their backs. They were immediately carried to the Portero and kept

that night in an adobe house the remainder of the night, while the Indians passed, the time in a war dance. The next morning they were carried on to Agua Caliente.

It is believed that Manuelito was forced to take the treacherous part he did in the capture of these men. He made the statement himself, and as he consistently opposed killing them from first to last, it was probably true. At the Potrero he contrived an opportunity for the rangers to make their escape and strongly urged them to take advantage of it; but for some reason, probably because they still believed the Indians would not harm them, they refused to follow his advice.

The object of the Indians in taking their prisoners to Agua Caliente seems to have been, first, to exhibit them to their neighbors and give them an opportunity to participate in the ceremonies; and, second, to hold a council as to what should be done with them. Upon arriving at Agua Caliente a council was held, at which not only the Cupeños and San Luiseños were present, but several chiefs from neighboring rancherias, as far as Los Coyotes. Manuelito was in favor of setting the prisoners free, but his own tribe, and especially Pablo Apis, were against him, and stubbornly demanded that they be put to death. Being unable to agree, the Indians called in to give advice an American and a Mexican who were then living at Agua Caliente; and, strangely enough, it was the counsel of these two men whose respective nations were at war, and who thus had so singular an opportunity of doing good, which sealed the doom of the unfortunate men.

One of these men was named Yguera. He had married a Cupeño woman and lived with the Indians at Agua Caliente. The other was one William Marshall, a native of Rhode Island, who deserted from a whale-ship in San Diego harbor in 1844, married the daughter of Chief José Lacano, and took up his habitation at the Hot Springs. What persuasion the Mexican used is not known, but Marshall very cunningly worked upon the passions of the Indians. Since the Americans and the Mexicans were at war, he told them, they would do well to side with the former, who were much the stronger and sure to win. He assured them that the Americans really wished the men killed and would be greatly pleased if they would quietly and quickly put them out of the way. It is said that Marshall had an old quarrel with some of the prisoners and took this opportunity to settle the score. Whatever his motives, his arguments turned the scale and the council determined that the prisoners should be executed.

Upon returning to Pauma and learning of the capture of their companions, Serrano and Aguilar set off after the Indians, to watch them and endeavor to learn their intentions. They kept the Indians in sight all the way to Agua Caliente, and although repeatedly chased, managed to escape by reason of the superior speed of their

horses. They were somewhat alarmed, but, like the others, had confidence in Manuelito and believed the rangers would ultimately be set free. Upon reaching Agua Caliente, however, their growing fears led them to dispatch a messenger to the Santa Ysabel rancho to notify the Majordomo, Bill Williams, and the chief, Ignacio, of what had occurred and to ask for help. In later years, Serrano often expressed regret that he did not take this action sooner, as he believed that, had he done so, the lives of the men could and would have been saved.

The Santa Ysabel Indians at that day were more numerous than the Paumas. The rancho was owned by Captain Edward Stokes, the same who carried General Kearny's letter announcing his arrival in California, to Commodore Stockton at San Diego. The Majordomo, William Williams, familiarly known as Bill, or "Cockney Bill," was the same "Major Bill" who figures in Dr. Griffin's diary as having drunk too deep at the supper on the night of Kearny's arrival at Santa Ysabel, and having to be coerced into acting as a guide for the troops the following morning. He came to San Diego when about twenty, from the Sandwich Islands, and was overseer at the San Diego Mission and other ranchos, and later at the Santa Ysabel. He was known and liked by the Indians and was a man of courage, even though he did sometimes imbibe rather freely. Upon the arrival of the messenger from Serrano and Aguilar, he promptly sent an Indian to Agua Caliente with an offer to ransom the prisoners, proposing to give ten head of picked cattle in exchange for each man; this offer he afterward increased to twenty head per man, but it was refused. With growing alarm, he then mounted and rode personally, in haste, to the Hot Springs. Upon his arrival he saw the prisoners lying in a circle about a fire and recognized many of the Indians present; but he was not allowed to approach near enough to speak to the men, and was told that he came too late and had best have a care for his own safety. Returning to the rancho, he used his influence with the Santa Ysabel Indians to induce them to go to Agua Caliente without delay and prevent the massacre, by force if necessary. Ignacio led his men there in force for that purpose; but the Paumas, possibly anticipating an attempt at a rescue, had acted quickly after the decision of the council, and the rangers were already dead.

As is well known, the Southern California Indians, before the coming of white men, were accustomed to torture their prisoners of war. In this orgy of blood, the Paumas seem to have reverted, for the first time in many years and also for the last time, to some of their primitive savagery. Most of these prisoners were put to death by thrusts with spears heated in the fire which had been kept burning in the midst of the council-circle; but a few were killed by being mutilated, as the newspapers sometimes say, "in a horrible and nameless manner." When the first man was taken out of the circle

and killed, and the survivors realized their impending fate, they broke down and began to weep and beg that their lives might be spared. It is said that young Alipás, alone, remained calm and comforted his companions, saying: "What is the use of crying? We can only die once; let us die like brave men!" At his request, the Indians granted him a death by shooting through the forehead. When they were all dead, the Indians piled the bodies up in a heap and danced around them all that night.

There is some conflict as to the burial of the bodies. One account is that they were buried at Agua Caliente by the Santa Ysabel Indians, under the direction of Williams. Another story is that they were all thrown into one trench by the other Indians, except the bodies of Osuna and Alvarado, which were begged by an old Indian woman who had been a servant in those two families, and buried separately and afterward removed to San Diego. This Indian woman was the first to bring the news of the massacre into San Diego, bringing a *serape* and rosary which had belonged to some of the men.

Marshall's advice proved, in the end, as bad for the Indians as it had been for their victims. The news of the massacre reaching the Mexican commander, he dispatched José del Carmen Lugo and Ramon Carrillo to co-operate with the Cahuilla Indians in an expedition to punish the Paumas. Early in January, 1847, they caught them in an ambush, in a little valley called Temecula, twelve miles from the Hot Springs, at a place called Ahuanga, and killed thirty-eight of them—probably more than half the small tribe. It has proven extremely difficult to learn any of the particulars of this fight, but it was a savage punishment, and subdued the Paumas for all time. Serrano, while reticent about it, is known to have expressed regret at the escape of Pablo Apis, whom the rangers were particularly anxious to kill; they killed his horse, but he himself managed to escape. When Colonel Philip St. George Cooke reached Warner's Ranch with his Mormon Battalion, late in January, 1847, he found there a number of the Pauma Indians who had taken refuge at that place, and who begged permission to accompany his command to the scene of the ambush and bury their dead, being afraid to venture without an escort. At this time and place, Colonel Cooke had a serious talk with Baupista, of the Cahuillas, concerning the folly of taking part against the Americans. The petition of the Paumas was granted, and they marched with the Mormons and buried their dead.

Serrano never occupied his ranch house as a dwelling, but some years later built a new one at a short distance, in which he and his sons lived, at times, for many years. Their relations with Manuelito were always friendly, although some of the Indians were incorrigible cattle-thieves and made the business unprofitable. Manuelito rose from a minor chief to be the general of all the Indians in the region, owned land, lived in a well-furnished house, and was much respected.

When the Garra Insurrection broke out at Agua Caliente, in 1851, he had sufficient influence to prevent his tribe from taking part in it, and they never again engaged in organized hostilities.

There was much indignation in San Diego, among both army officers and citizens, over the conduct of Bill Marshall. In 1851 this renegade became one of the leaders in the Garra Insurrection, and helped the Indians murder four defenseless Americans at the Hot Springs. For this he was hanged, at San Diego, with a right good will, in January, 1852. When his time came, he sent for the widow of José María Alvarado. Her maiden name was Lugarda Osuna, and she was married again, to Jesus Machado, of San Diego. To her Marshall voluntarily acknowledged that he had been the cause of the death of her first husband, and begged her forgiveness. This she freely granted, and promised to stay with him to the end, and to pray for him. She stood as *madrina* at his baptism, and walked with him beside the priest to the gallows and saw him hanged.

In gathering these materials and turning them into a narrative, I have been far more concerned by the demands of historical accuracy than any other consideration; but now that it is done, I am struck by the powerful dramatic elements of the story so baldly told. Is it not possible we may sometime have a powerful and successful drama, wherein shall appear, Indians, rangers, dragoons, marines, Kearny, Kit Carson, Ned Beale, Major Bill, and all the rest, with the Sierra Madres for a background?