

**SIR  
CHARLES NAPIER**

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Sir Charles Napier by Sir William F. Butler

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**SIR WILLIAM F. BUTLER**

**SIR  
CHARLES NAPIER**





SIR CHARLES NAUPER.

NO. 1000  
1850

# SIR CHARLES NAPIER

BY

COLONEL SIR WILLIAM F. BUTLER

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THE HISTORY OF  
CALIFORNIA

## CHAPTER I

### THE HOME AT CELBRIDGE—FIRST COMMISSION

TEN miles west of Dublin, on the north bank of the Liffey, stands a village of a single street, called Celbridge. In times so remote that their record only survives in a name, some Christian hermit built here himself a cell for house, church, and tomb; a human settlement took root around the spot; deer-tracks widened into pathways; pathways broadened into roads; and at last a bridge spanned the neighbouring stream. The church and the bridge, two prominent land-marks on the road of civilisation, jointly named the place, and Kildrohid or "the church by the bridge" became henceforth a local habitation and a name, twelve hundred years later to be anglicised into Celbridge. To this village of Celbridge in the year 1785 came a family which had already made some stir in the world, and was destined to make more.

Colonel the Hon. George Napier and his wife Lady Sarah Lennox were two remarkable personages. The one a tall and majestic soldier, probably the finest specimen of military manhood then in the service of

King George the Third; the other a lady of such beauty, wit, and grace that her fascination had induced the same King George to offer her all his heart and half his throne. Fate and politics marred this proposed romantic royal union, and the lovely Lady Sarah, after a most unhappy first marriage, became in 1777 the wife of Colonel George Napier, and in the following dozen years the mother of a large family, in whose veins ran the blood of a list of knights and kings and nobles sufficient to fill a peerage all to itself; for on one side the pedigree went back to the best of the old Scottish cavaliers—to Montrose, and the Napiers of Merchiston, and the Scotts of Thirlestane; and on the other it touched Bourbon, Stuart, and Medici, and half a dozen other famous sources. It would have been strange if from such parents and with such stock the nest which was built in Celbridge in 1785 did not send forth far-flying birds.

The house in which the Napiers took up their residence in this year stood a short distance from the western end of the village. It was a solid, square building of blue-gray limestone, three-storied and basemented, with many tall narrow windows in front and rear, and a hall door that looked north and was approached by arched steps spanning a wide stone area surrounding the basement; green level fields, with fences upon which grow trees and large bushes, spread around the house to north and west, and over the tops of oak and beeches to the south a long line of blue hills lay upon the horizon. Looking south towards these hills the eye saw first a terrace and garden, then a roadway partly screened by trees, and beyond the road the grounds of

Marley Abbey sloping to the Liffey, holding within them still the flower-beds and laurel hedges amid which Vanessa spent the last sorrow-clouded years of her life. But to the boys up in the third-story nursery, looking out in the winter evenings to snowy Kippure or purple Sleve-rhue, the loves and wrongs of poor Vanessa mattered little. What did matter to them, however—and mattered so much that through a thousand scenes of future death and danger they never forgot it—was, that there stood a certain old larch tree in the corner of the pleasure-ground where the peacocks fluttered up to roost as the sun went down beyond the westmost Wicklow hill-top, and that there was a thick clump of Portugal laurels and old hollies where starves, or starlings as they call them in England, came in flocks at nightfall, and sundry other trees and clumps in which blackbirds with very yellow winter beaks flew in the dusk, sounding the weirdest and wildest cries, and cocked their fan-spread tails when they lighted on the sward where the holly and arbutus berries lay so thick.

When Colonel Napier settled at Celbridge he was still in his prime, a man formed both in mind and body to conquer and direct in camp, court, or council; and yet, for all that, a failure as the world counts its prizes and blanks in the lottery of life. He had recently returned from the American War, where he had served with distinction. He had filled important offices abroad and at home, and by right of intellect and connection might look forward almost with certainty to high military command, but he had one fatal bar against success in the career of arms, as that noble profession was practised in the reign of George the Third and for