

FIRST FAM'LIES OF THE SIERRAS

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First families of the Sierras by Joaquin Miller

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JOAQUIN MILLER

**FIRST FAM'LIES
OF THE SIERRAS**

FIRST FAM'LIES

OF THE

SIERRAS.

BY JOAQUIN MILLER,

AUTHOR OF "SONGS OF THE SIERRAS," "SONGS OF THE SUN-LANDS,"
"THE SHIP IN THE DESERT," ETC.

CHICAGO:
JANSEN, McCLURG & CO.

1876.

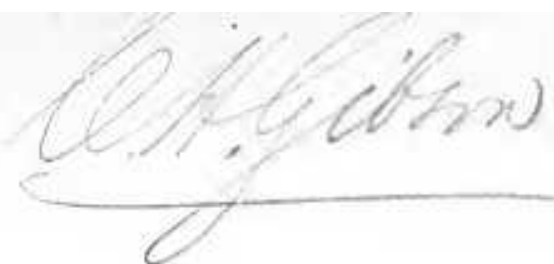
C. H. Brown

TO
MY OLD
COMPANION IN ARMS,
PRINCE JAMIE TOMAS,
OF
LEON, NICARAGUA.

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A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "O. P. Gibson", is positioned at the top of the page. The signature is written in dark ink and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

FIRST FAM'LIES OF THE SIERRAS.

CHAPTER I.

IN THE FORKS.

NOW there was young Deboon from Boston, who was a very learned man. He was in fact one of those fearfully learned men. He was a man who could talk in all tongues—and think in none.

Perhaps he had sometime been a waiter.

I am bound to say that the most dreadfully learned young men I have ever met are the waiters in the Continental hotels.

Besides that he was very handsome. He was, indeed, almost as handsome as a French barber, or a first-class steward.

Another thing that helped to defeat him in this hurried election was his love of animals and his dislike of hard work. The handsome fellow stood for election this day with a bushy-tailed squirrel frisking on his shoulder, and a

pair of pink-eyed white mice peeping out like a handkerchief from the pocket of his red shirt.

Then there was Chipper Charley — smart enough, and a man, too, who had read at least a dozen books; but the Forks did n't want him for an Alcalde any more than it did Deboon.

Then there was Limber Tim, and Limber certainly could write his name, for he was always leaning up against trees and houses and fences, when he could find them, and writing the day and date, and making grotesque pictures with a great carpenter's pencil, which he carried in the capacious depths of his duck breeches' pocket. But when Sandy proposed Limber Tim, the Camp silently but firmly shook its head, and said, "Not for Joseph."

At last the new camp pitched upon a man who, it seemed, had been called The Judge from the first. Perhaps he had been born with that name. It would indeed have been hard to think of him under any other appellation whatever. It had been easier to imagine that when he had first arrived on earth his parents met him at the door, took his carpet-bag, called him Judge, and invited him in.

As is usually the case in the far, far West, this man was elected Judge simply because he was fit for nothing else.

The "boys" did n't want a man above them who knew too much.

When Chipper Charley had been proposed, an old man rose up, turned his hat wrong side out with his fist, twisted his beard around his left hand, spirted a stream of tobacco juice down through an aisle of rugged men and half way across the earthen floor of the Howling Wilderness saloon, and then proceeded to make a speech that killed the candidate dead on the spot.

This was the old man's speech:—

"That won't go down. Too much book larnin."

But the new Judge, or rather the old, bald-headed, dumpy, dirty-faced little fellow, with the dirty shirt and dirty duck breeches, was not a bad man at all. The "boys" had too much hard sense to set up anything but a sort of wooden king to rule over them in this little isolated remote camp and colony of the Sierras. And they were perfectly content with their log too, and never once called out to Jupiter for King Stork.

This old idiotic little Judge, with a round head, round red face, and round belly, had no mind—he had no memory. He had tried everything in the world almost, and always had failed. He had come to never expect anything