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EMPEROR
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Emperor Norton



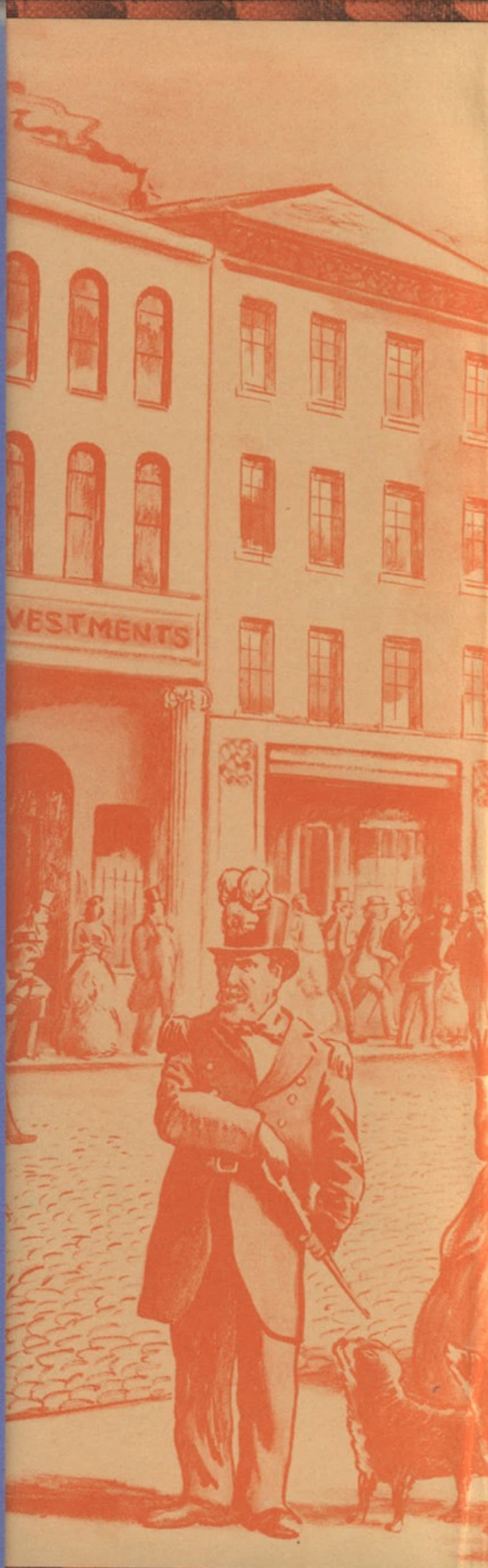
Mad
Monarch
of
America

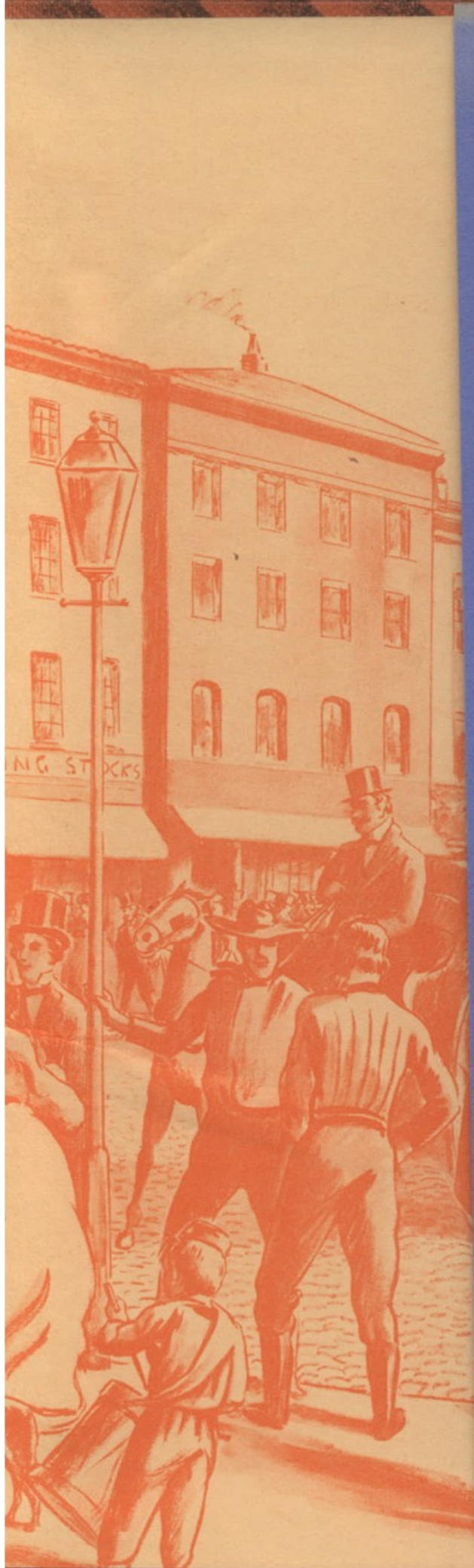
CAXTON

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Beside the Golden Gate, the doorway to his empire, lies Emperor Norton, the only royal monarch buried in American soil. Today his capital city, San Francisco, has few citizens who remember the mad ruler who proclaimed himself Emperor of the United States and Protector of Mexico. But as an early-day figure he makes almost legendary the palmy early days of the Bay City—its graceful laissez-faire manner, which made it possible for the demented monarch to rule happily in his imaginary autocracy. He levied taxes, paid as tips in quarters and half dollars by his genial subjects. His proclamations appeared in the leading newspapers. The old city flourished in his reign; and it is a reverential salute that one must deliver to the San Francisco that was lusty enough to bolster the man's strange dignity—and to laugh within itself for the sheer love of life.





Here he comes down the street! He wears a blue military uniform with shiny brass buttons on facade and cuffs, enormous gilt epaulets on the shoulders. Topping his magnificence is a tall beaver hat, from which a royal plume is draped... Emperor Norton, the mad monarch of America, is promenading his capital city, San Francisco... The crowd snickers, and with well-concealed amusement as he approaches, pays deference to this royal lunatic. He smiles with charming benevolence on his subjects. With majesty he treads into a corner saloon and stops before the free lunch, choosing with kingly deliberation from the assortment of edibles... He is again on his way, bowing graciously, courting awe sometimes, ignoring the few who are scornful... swaggering with his gleaming sword... marching... striding... strutting... into the very spirit of old San Francisco, where he will be remembered forever.