

as weak and emaciated as themselves. They had experienced great difficulty in descending the mountains, made slippery by rains and melting snows, and many horses fell over precipices and were killed; and with some were lost the *packs* they carried. Among these was a mule with the plants which we had collected since leaving Fort Hall, along a line of two thousand miles travel. Out of sixty-seven horses and mules with which we commenced crossing the Sierra only thirty-three reached the Valley of the Sacramento, and they only in a condition to be led along. Mr. Fitzpatrick and his party, travelling more slowly, had been able to make some little exertion at hunting, and had killed a few deer. The scanty supply was a great relief to them; for several had been made sick by the strange and unwholesome food which the preservation of life compelled them to use. We stopped and encamped as soon as we met; and a repast of good beef, excellent bread, and delicious salmon, which I had brought along, were their first relief from the sufferings of the Sierra and their first introduction to the luxuries of the Sacramento. It required all our philosophy and forbearance to prevent plenty from becoming as hurtful to us now as scarcity had been before.

The next day, March 8th, we encamped at the junction of the two rivers, the Sacramento and Americanos; and thus found the whole party in the beautiful Valley of the Sacramento. It was a convenient place for the camp; and, among other things, was within reach of the wood necessary to make the pack-saddles which we should need on our long journey home, from which we were further distant now than we were four months before, when, from the Dalles of the Columbia, we so cheerfully took up the homeward line of march.

Captain Sutter emigrated to this country from the Western part of Missouri in 1838-39, and formed the first settlement in the valley on a large grant of land which he obtained from the Mexican Government. He had, at first, some trouble with the Indians; but, by the occasional exercise of well-timed authority, he has succeeded in converting them into a peaceable and industrious people.

The ditches around his extensive wheat-fields; the making of the sun-dried bricks, of which his fort is constructed; the ploughing, harrowing, and other agricultural operations, are entirely the work of these Indians, for which they receive a very moderate compensation—principally in shirts, blankets, and other articles of clothing. In the same manner, on application to the chief of a village, he readily obtains as many boys and girls as he has any use for. There were at this time a number of girls at the fort, in training for a future woollen factory; but they were now all busily engaged in constantly watering the gardens, which the unfavorable dryness of the season rendered necessary. The occasional dryness of some seasons I



understood to be the only complaint of the settlers in this fertile valley, as it sometimes renders the crops uncertain. Mr. Sutter was about making arrangements to irrigate his lands by means of the Rio de los Americanos. He had this year sown, and altogether by Indian labor, three hundred *fanegas* of wheat.

A few years since the neighboring Russian establishment of Ross, being about to withdraw from the country, sold to him a large number of stock, with agricultural and other stores, with a number of pieces of artillery, and other munitions of war; for these a regular yearly payment is made in grain.

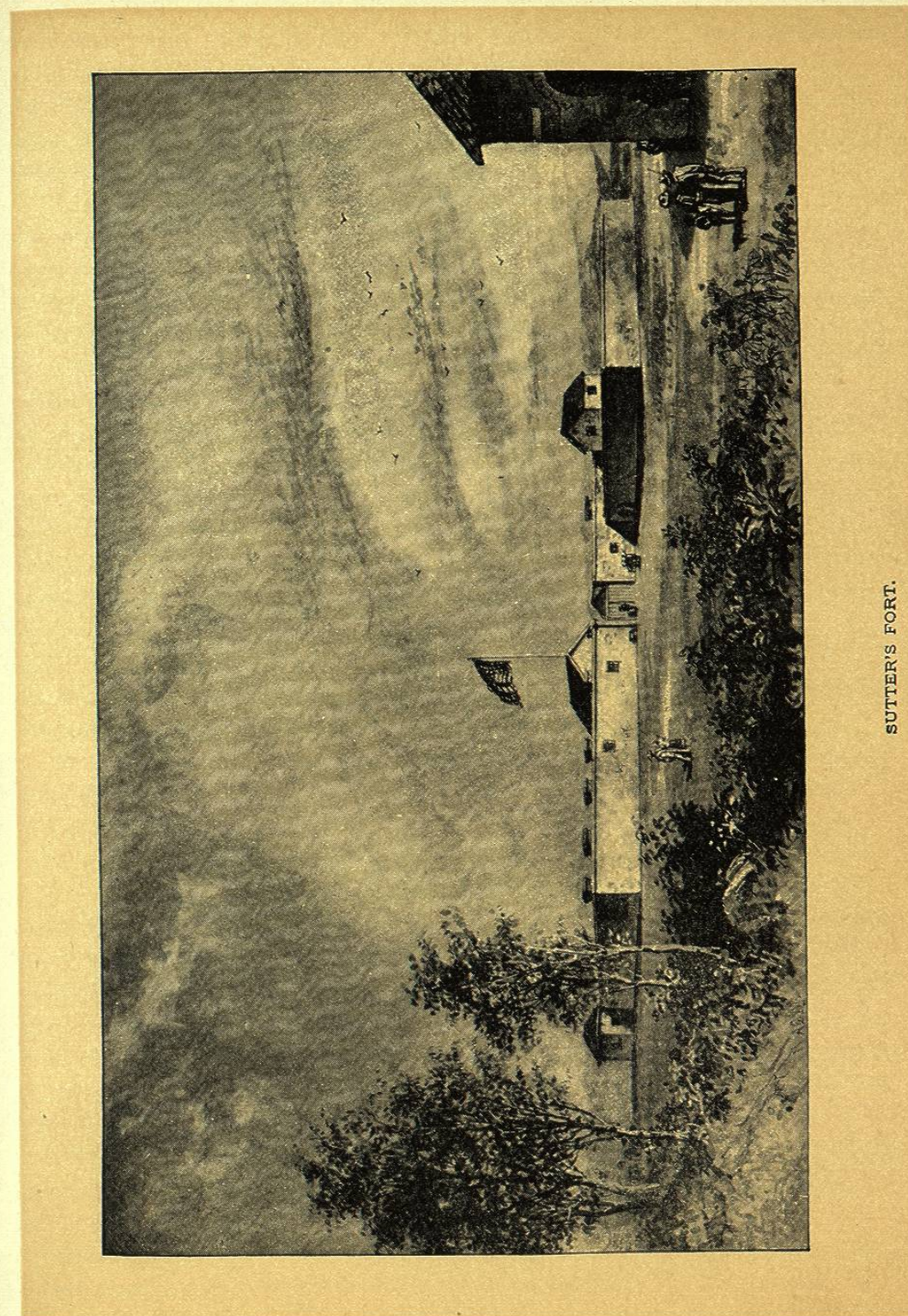
The fort is a quadrangular *adobe* structure, mounting twelve pieces of artillery (two of them brass), and capable of admitting a garrison of a thousand men; this, at present, consists of forty Indians, in uniform—one of whom was always found on duty at the gate. As might naturally be expected, the pieces are not in very good order.

The whites in the employment of Captain Sutter, American, French, and German, amount, perhaps, to thirty men. The inner wall is formed into buildings comprising the common quarters, with a blacksmith's and other work-shops; the dwelling-house, with a large distillery-house, and other buildings, occupying more the centre of the area.

It is built upon a pond-like stream, at times a running creek communicating with the Rio de los Americanos, which enters the Sacramento about two miles below. The latter is here a noble river, about three hundred yards broad, deep and tranquil, with several fathoms of water in the channel, and its banks continuously timbered. There were two vessels belonging to Captain Sutter at anchor near the landing—one a large two-masted lighter, and the other a schooner, which was shortly to proceed on a voyage to Fort Vancouver for a cargo of goods.

Since his arrival, several other persons, principally Americans, have established themselves in the valley. Mr. Sinclair, from whom I experienced much kindness during my stay, is settled a few miles distant, on the Rio de los Americanos.

Mr. Coudrois, a gentleman from Germany, has established himself on Feather River, and is associated with Captain Sutter in agricultural pursuits. Among other improvements, they are about to introduce the cultivation of rape-seed (*Brassica rapus*) which there is every reason to believe is admirably adapted to the climate and soil. The lowest average produce of wheat, as far as we can at present know, is thirty-five *fanegas* for one sown; but, as an instance of its fertility, it may be mentioned that Señor Vallejo obtained, on a piece of ground where sheep had been pastured, eight hundred *fanegas* for eight sown. The produce being different in various places, a very correct idea cannot be formed.



SUTTER'S FORT.



An impetus was given to the active little population by our arrival, as we were in want of everything. Mules, horses, and cattle were to be collected; the horse-mill was at work day and night, to make sufficient flour; the blacksmith's shop was put in requisition for horse-shoes and bridle-bits; and pack-saddles, ropes, and bridles, and all the other little equipments of the camp were again to be provided.

The delay thus occasioned was one of repose and enjoyment, which our situation required, and, anxious as we were to resume our homeward journey, was regretted by no one. In the meantime, I had the pleasure to meet with Mr. Childs, who was residing at a farm on the other side of the River Sacramento, while engaged in the selection of a place for a settlement, for which he had received the necessary grant of land from the Mexican Government.

It will be remembered that we had parted near the frontier of the States, and that he had subsequently descended the Valley of Lewis' Fork, with a party of ten or twelve men, with the intention of crossing the intermediate mountains to the waters of the Bay of San Francisco. In the execution of this design, and aided by subsequent information, he left the Columbia at the mouth of *Malheur* River; and, making his way to the head-waters of the Sacramento with a part of his company, travelled down that river to the settlements of Nueva Helvetia. The other party, to whom he had committed his wagons and mill-irons and saws, took a course farther to the south, and the wagons and their contents were lost.

On the 22d we made a preparatory move, and encamped near the settlement of Mr. Sinclair, on the left bank of the Rio de los Americanos. I had discharged five of the party: Neal, the blacksmith (an excellent workman, and an unmarried man, who had done his duty faithfully and had been of very great service to me) desired to remain, as strong inducements were offered here to mechanics. Although at considerable inconvenience to myself his good conduct induced me to comply with his request; and I obtained for him, from Captain Sutter, a present compensation of two dollars and a half per diem, with a promise that it should be increased to five if he proved as good a workman as had been represented. He was more particularly an agricultural blacksmith. The other men were discharged with their own consent.

While we remained at this place, Derosier, one of our best men, whose steady good conduct had won my regard, wandered off from the camp and never returned to it again; nor has he since been heard of.

*March 24th.*—We resumed our journey with an ample stock of provisions and a large cavalcade of animals, consisting of one hundred and thirty horses and mules, and about thirty head of cattle, five of which were milch cows. Mr. Sutter furnished us also with an Indian boy, who had



been trained as a *vaquero* and who would be serviceable in managing our cavalcade, great part of which were nearly as wild as buffalo; and who was, besides, very anxious to go along with us.

Our direct course home was east; but the Sierra would force us south, above five hundred miles of travelling, to a pass at the head of the San Joaquin River. This pass, reported to be good, was discovered by Mr. Joseph Walker, of whom I have already spoken, and whose name it might, therefore, appropriately bear. To reach it, our course lay along the valley of the San Joaquin—the river on our right, and the lofty wall of the impassable Sierra on the left. From that pass we were to move southwardly, having the Sierra then on the right, and reach the "*Spanish trail*," deviously traced from one watering place to another, which constituted the route of the caravans from *Pueblo de los Angeles*, near the coast of the Pacific, to *Santa Fé* of New Mexico. From the pass to this trail was one hundred and fifty miles. Following that trail through a desert, relieved by some fertile plains indicated by the recurrence of the term *vegas*, until it turned to the right to cross the Colorado, our course would be northeast until we regained the latitude we had lost in arriving at the Utah Lake, and thence to the Rocky Mountains at the head of the Arkansas.

This course of travelling, forced upon us by the structure of the country, would occupy a computed distance of two thousand miles before we reached the head of the Arkansas; not a settlement to be seen upon it; and the names of places along it, all being Spanish or Indian, indicated that it had been but little trod by American feet.

Though long, and not free from hardships, this route presented some points of attraction, in tracing the Sierra Nevada—turning the Great Basin, perhaps crossing its rim on the south—completely solving the problem of any river, except the Colorado, from the Rocky Mountains on that part of our continent—and seeing the southern extremity of the Great Salt Lake, of which the northern part had been examined the year before.

Taking leave of Mr. Sutter, who, with several gentlemen, accompanied us a few miles on our way, we travelled about eighteen miles, and encamped on the *Rio de los Cosumnes*, a stream receiving its name from the Indians who live in its valley. Our road was through a level country, admirably suited to cultivation, and covered with groves of oak-trees, principally the evergreen oak, and a large oak already mentioned, in form like those of the white oak. The weather, which here at this season can easily be changed from the summer heat of the valley to the frosty mornings and bright days nearer the mountains, continued delightful for travellers, but unfavorable to the agriculturists, whose crops of wheat began to wear a yellow tinge from want of rain.



sparse; the surface showing plainly the action of water, which, in the season of flood, the Joaquin spreads over the valley.



