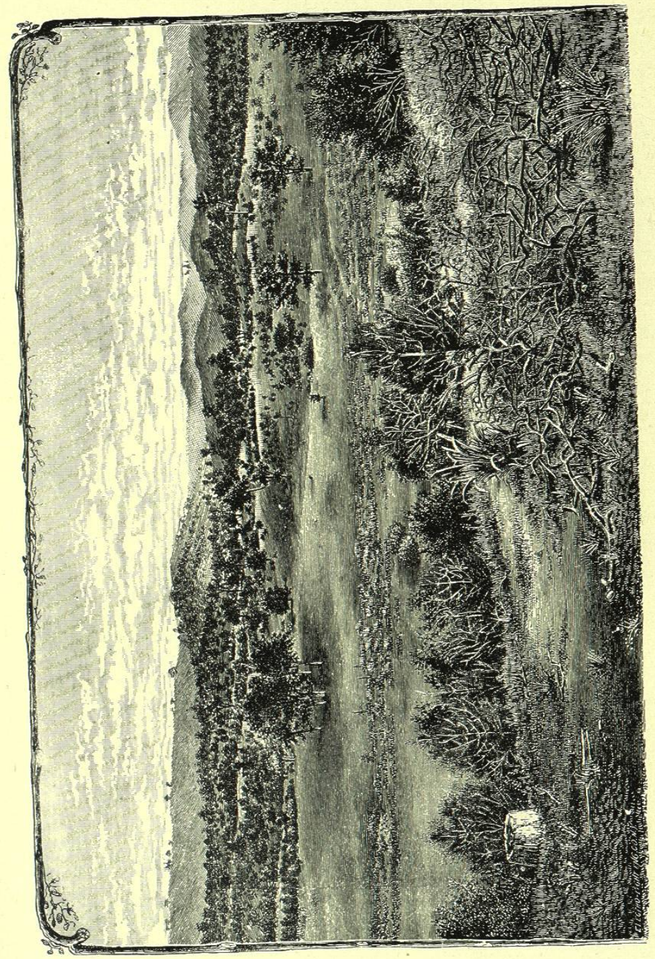
they would do with us. Many of them had been Mission Indians and spoke Spanish well. "Wait," they said. "*Esperate Carrajos*—wait until morning. There are two big villages up in the mountains close by; we have sent for the Chief; he'll be down before morning with all the people, and you will all die. None of you shall go back; we will have all your horses."

I divided the camp into two watches, putting myself into the last one. As soon as it was fully dark each man of the guard crept to his post. We heard the women and children retreating towards the mountains. Before midnight the Indians had generally withdrawn, only now and then a shout to show us that they were on hand and attending to us. Otherwise nothing occurred to break the stillness of the night, but a shot from one of the Delawares fired at a wolf as it jumped over a log. In our experienced camp no one moved, but Delaware Charley crept up to me to let me know what had caused the shot of the Delaware who, with hostile Indians around, instinctively fired at a moving thing that might have been an Indian crawling towards our horses.

The Horse-thief tribes have been "Christian Indians" of the Missions, and when these were broken up by Mexico the Indians took to the mountains. Knowing well the coast country, and the exact situation of the Missions where they had lived and the ranchos and the range which their horses were accustomed to, they found it easy to drive off the animals into the mountains, partly to use as saddle-horses, but principally to eat.

In time they became a scourge to the settlements. The great ranges which belonged with the ranchos not only supported many thousands of cattle, but also many hundreds of horses which were divided into bands, "*manadas*." The Indians were the vaqueros or herdsmen who attended to both; herding the cattle, and breaking in the colts. The Californians had great pleasure in their horses. On some ranchos there would be several hundred saddle-horses, in bands of eighty or a hundred of different colors; *Alazan* (sorrel) always the favorite color. Deprived of their regular food, the Indians took to the mountains and began to drive off horses. Cattle would not drive fast enough to avoid the first pursuit. In their early condition they had learned to eat wild horse-meat and liked it. Familiarity with the whites and the success of their predatory excursions made the Horse-thief Indians far more daring and braver than those who remained in fixed villages, whether in the mountains or on the valley streams which carried the name of the different tribes—the Cosumné, Mokelumné, Towalumné, and Auxumné Rivers. Probably all the streams if their Indian names could have been known, received their names from the small tribes who lived upon them.

The Indians of this country finding their food where they lived were



SCENE OF FREMONT CAMP, 1845.

not nomadic. They were not disposed to range, and seemed unaccustomed to intrude upon the grounds which usage probably made the possession of other tribes. Their huts were easily built and permanent ; the climate was fine, they lived mostly in the open air, and when they died they were not put in the ground but up in the branches of the trees. The climate is such that a dead animal left on the ground simply dries up and only the eye gives knowledge of its presence.

The springs and streams hereabout were waters of the Chauchiles and Mariposas Rivers and the Indians of this village belonged to the Chauchiles tribe.

On some of the higher ridges were fields of a poppy which, fluttering and tremulous on its long thin stalk, suggests the idea of a butterfly settling on a flower, and gives to this flower its name of *Mariposas*—butterflies—and the flower extends its name to the stream.

The encounter I had here with the Indians was a premonitory symptom of the contests I afterward had with the State and Federal governments when the place became my property.

We were only sixteen men. Keeping in the oak belt on the course I was pursuing would bring us farther among these villages, and I would surely have lost the cattle and perhaps some men and horses in attacks from these Indians. In the morning therefore I turned down one of the streams and quickly gained the open country of the lower hills. We had gained but a little distance on this course when an Indian was discovered riding at speed towards the plain, where the upper San Joaquin reaches the valley. Maxwell was ahead and not far from the Indian when he came into sight, and knowing at once that his object was to bring Indians from the river to intercept us, rode for him. The Indian was well mounted but Maxwell better. With Godey and two of the Delawares I followed. It was open ground over rolling hills and we were all in sight of each other, but before we could reach them a duel was taking place between Maxwell and the Indian—both on foot, Maxwell with pistols, the Indian with arrows. They were only ten or twelve paces apart. I saw the Indian fall as we rode up. I would have taken him prisoner and saved his life, but was too late. The Delawares captured his horse.

Riding along the open ground towards the valley after a mile or two we discovered ten Indians ahead going in the same direction. They saw us as well, but took no notice and did not quicken their gait. When we were about overtaking them they quietly turned into a close thicket which covered about eight acres. We gave the thicket a wide berth; for ten Indians in such a place were more dangerous than so many gray bear.

Turning now to the southward we continued on our way, keeping a few men towards the mountain to give early notice of the approach of any Indians. At evening we encamped in a spring hollow leading to the upper San Joaquin where it makes its way among the hills towards the open valley. We were at an elevation of 1000 feet above the sea; in latitude by observation 37° 07′ 47″. The day had been mild with a faint sun and cloudy weather; and at sunset there were some light clouds in the sky and a northeasterly wind, and a sunset temperature of 45°; probably rendered lower than usual by the air from the mountains, as the foot-hills have generally a warmer temperature than the lower valley.

During the day elk were numerous along our route, making at one time a broken band several miles in length. On the 21st the thermometer was at sunrise 33°; the sky slightly clouded, and in the course of the morning clouds gathered heavy in the southwest. Our route lay in a southeasterly direction, still toward the upper Joaquin, crossing among rolling hills, a large stream, and several sandy beds and affluents to the main river. On the trees along these streams as well as on the hills I noticed *mosses*. In the afternoon we reached the upper San Joaquin River, which was here about seventy yards wide and much too deep to be forded; a little way below we succeeded in crossing at a rapid made by a bed of rock below which, for several miles, the stream appeared deep and not fordable. We followed down it for six or eight miles and encamped on its banks on the verge of the valley plain.

At evening rain began to fall, and with this the spring properly commenced. In November there had been a little rain, but not sufficient to revive vegetation.

December 22d. Temperature at sunrise was 39°. During the night there had been heavy rain, with high wind, and there was a thick fog this morning, but it began to go off at 8 o'clock when the sun broke through. We crossed an open plain still in a southeasterly direction, reaching in about twenty miles the *Tuláre Lake* River. This is the Lake Fork; one of the largest and handsomest streams in the valley, being about one hundred yards broad and having perhaps a larger body of fertile lands than any one of the others. It is called by the Mexicans the *Rio de los Reyes*. The broad alluvial bottoms were well wooded with several species of oaks. This is the principal affluent of the Tuláre Lake, a strip of water which receives all the rivers in the upper or southern end of the valley. In time of high water it discharges into the San Joaquin River, making a continuous water-line through the whole extent of the valley. The lake itself is surrounded by lowlands and its immediate shores are rankly overgrown with bulrushes.

According to the appointment made when I left my party under Talbot, it was a valley upon the Lake Fork to which the guide Walker was to conduct him. Here I expected to find him. The men, as well as the cattle and horses, needed rest; a strict guard had been necessary, as in the morning Indian sign was always found around our camp. The position was good in the open ground among the oaks, there being no brush for cover to the Indians, and grass and water were abundant. Accordingly we remained here a day and on the 24th entered the mountain, keeping as nearly as possible the valley ground of the river. While in the oak belt the travelling was easy and pleasant, but necessarily slow in the search for our people, especially here in this delightful part of the mountain where they should be found. Several days were spent here. At the elevation of 3500 feet the ridges were covered with oaks and pines intermixed, and the bottom-lands with oaks, cottonwoods, and sycamores. Continuing upward I found the general character of the mountain similar to what it was in the more northern part, but rougher, and the timber perhaps less heavy and more open, but some trees extremely large. I began to be surprised at not finding my party, but continued on, thinking that perhaps in some spread of the river branches I was to find a beautiful mountain valley. Small varieties of evergreen oaks were found at the observed height of 9840 feet above the sea, at which elevation *pinus Lambertiani* and other varieties of pine, fir, and cypress were large and lofty trees. The distinctive oak belt was left at about 5000 feet above the sea.

Indians were still around the camp at night and the necessity of keeping the animals closely guarded prevented them from getting food enough and, joined with the rough and difficult country, weakened them. For this, I usually made the day's journey short. I found the mountain extremely rocky in the upper parts, the streams breaking through cañons, but wooded up to the granite ridges which compose its rocky eminences. We forced our way up among the head springs of the river and finally stood upon the flat ridge of naked granite which made the division of the waters and was 11,000 feet above the sea. The day was sunny and the air warm enough to be not only very agreeable, but with exercise exhilarating, even at that height. Lying immediately below, perhaps 1000 feet, at the foot of a precipitous descent was a small lake, which I judged to be one of the sources of the main San Joaquin. I had grown, by occasional privation, to look upon water as a jewel beyond price, and this was rendered even more beautiful by its rough setting. The great value to us of the first necessaries of life made a reason why we so seldom found gold or silver or other minerals. Ores of iron and copper, and gold and silver, and other minerals we found, but did not look for. A clear cold spring of running water or a good camp, big game, or fossils imbedded in rock, were among the prized objects of our daily life. Owens, after the discovery of the gold in California, reminded me that he had once on the American Fork noticed some little shining grains

which he could see from his horse and which afterward we decided was gold, but we were not interested enough at the time to give it attention; and Breckenridge too reminded me that he brought me in his hand some large grains which I carelessly told him were sulphurets of iron. These too were probably gold. As I said, this bed of summit granite was naked. Here and there a pine or two, stunted and twisted, and worried out of shape by the winds, and clamping itself to the rock. But immediately below we encamped in the sheltering pine woods which now were needed, for towards evening the weather threatened change. The sky clouded over and by nightfall was a uniform dull gray, and early in the night the roar of the wind through the pines had at times the sound of a torrent. And the camp was gloomy. We had ridden hard, and toiled hard, and we were all disappointed and perplexed, wondering what had become of our people. During the night the Indians succeeded in killing one of our best mules. He had fed quietly into one of the little ravines, wooded with brush pines, just out of sight of the guard near by, and an Indian had driven an arrow nearly through his body. Apparently he had died without sound or struggle, just as he was about to drink from the little stream.

The next day, December 31st, I made a short camp, the cattle being tender-footed and scarcely able to travel. To descend the mountain we chose a different way from that by which we had come up, but it was rocky and rough everywhere. The old year went out and the new year came in, rough as the country. Towards nightfall the snow began to come down thickly, and by morning all lay under a heavy fall. The chasms through which the rivers roared were dark against the snow, and the fir branches were all weighed down under their load. This was the end of the few remaining cattle. It was impossible to drive them over the treacherous ground. The snow continued falling, changing the appearance of the ground and hiding slippery breaks and little rocky hollows, where horse and man would get bad falls. Left to themselves cattle could easily work their way to the lower grounds of the mountain if not killed by Indians. We had great trouble in getting out from the snow region. The mountain winter had now set in, and we had some misgivings as we rode through the forest, silent now without a sound except where we came within hearing of water roaring among rocks or muffled under snow. There were three ridges to surmount, but we succeeded in crossing them, and by sunset when the storm ceased we made a safe camp between 9000 and 10,000 feet above the sea. The temperature at sunset when the sky had cleared was between eight and nine degrees.

The next day we reached the oak region, where spring weather, rain and sunshine, were found again. At an elevation of 4500 feet the temperature at the night encampment of the 3d of January was 38° at sunset and the

same at sunrise; the grass green and growing freshly under the oaks. The snow line at this time reached down to about 6000 feet above the sea. On the 7th of January we encamped again on the Lake Fork in the San Joaquin valley. Our camp was in a grove of oaks at an Indian village, not far from the lake. These people recognized the horse of the Indian who had been killed among the hills the day after our encounter with the Horse-thief village, and which had been captured by the Delawares. It appeared that this Indian had belonged to their village and they showed unfriendly signs. But nothing took place during the day and at night I had a large oak at the camp felled. We were unencumbered and its spreading summit as it fell made a sufficient barricade in event of any sudden *alerte*.

We found the temperature much the same as in December. Fogs, which rose from the lake in the morning, were dense, cold, and penetrating; but after a few hours these gave place to a fine day. The face of the country had already much improved by the rains which had fallen while we were travelling in the mountains. Several humble plants, among them the golden-flowered violet (*viola chrysantha*) and *erodium cicutarium*, the first valley flowers of the spring, and which courted a sunny exposure and warm sandy soil, were already in bloom on the southwestern hill slopes. In the foot-hills of the mountains the bloom of the flowers was earlier. Descending the valley we travelled among multitudinous herds of elk, antelope, and wild horses. Several of the latter which we killed for food were found to be very fat. By the middle of January, when we had reached the lower San Joaquin, the new grass had covered the ground with green among the open timber upon the rich river bottoms, and the spring vegetation had taken a vigorous start.

We had now searched the San Joaquin valley, up to the head-waters of the Tuláre Lake Fork, and failed to find my party. They were too strong to have met with any serious accident and my conclusion was that they had travelled slowly in order to give me time to make my round and procure supplies; the moderate travel serving meanwhile to keep their animals in good order, and from the moment they would have turned the point of the California Mountain the whole valley which they entered was alive with game—antelope and elk and bear and wild horses. Accounting in this way for their failure to meet me I continued on to Sutter's Fort, at which place I arrived on the 15th of the month, and remaining there four days I sailed on Sutter's launch for San Francisco, taking with me eight of my party. From Captain Sutter, who was a Mexican magistrate, I had obtained a passport to Monterey for myself and my men. At Yerba Buena, as it was then called, I spent a few days, which Leidesdorff, our vice-consul, and Captain Hinckley made very agreeable to me. With Captain Hinckley I went to visit the quicksilver mine at New Almaden, going by water to