

and prosperous homesteads. Under the guidance of an intelligent and stable authority the groves of grand old oaks, and the magnificent pine forests would not have been swept away. With its advantages of climate and soil and abundant streams the whole valley would have presented a picture of agricultural beauty unsurpassed on earth.

The mountain Indians would have been reclaimed and made useful herdsmen and laborers, and the abandoned missions along the coast would have been restored on a higher level and made centres of productive labor. The Indians would have been held under the steady influence of a firm government and educated to the advantages of civilization and not left only to the degrading contact with its vices. This is not merely an opinion asserted. It had been a reality proved by the successful work of the missions when the country was very remote and the resources were only from within themselves.

I realized fully at the time what I have been here writing, for it happened that just in those days when the colonization project failed, I wrote from the quiet of the beautiful ruin of the old Carmel Mission to Senator Benton, of the events which had brought me to that date and place. The date of the letter, "Carmel Mission, July 24, 1846," carried with it, for me, a marked significance; it ended my mission as well as that of MacNamara. After the wreck of his hopes, Father MacNamara left California in Admiral Seymour's flag-ship, the *Collingwood*.

From early in '45, through to the commencement of hostilities, war with Mexico, though not begun, was accepted as imminently certain. The hostile forces faced each other on the banks of the Rio Grande. On the Pacific coast we were facing England. Her fleet there, commanded by Rear Admiral Sir George Seymour, was the largest she had ever sent to those waters. Mexico had no fleet, and her coast on the Pacific was comparatively defenceless. The chief anxiety of our Government was to be the first to seize California, and with or without war, and in no event, and under no disguise, to let England take possession of that country. The English fleet watched closely the movements of the American commodore. Being aware of this fact Commodore Sloat, upon hearing of the first battle on the Rio Grande, got under way in the frigate *Savannah*, then at anchor off Mazatlan, for the ostensible purpose of proceeding to California; an English vessel of war weighed soon after the *Savannah*, and stood in the direction of San Blas, where it was known the English admiral was; after cruising in the Gulf two days, the commodore returned to his anchorage off Mazatlan, when another English ship got under way and stood in the direction of San Blas. It is believed that this manœuvre of Commodore Sloat was intended to mislead the English admiral. On the 8th June the *Savannah* again made sail and after a passage of twenty-three days,

during which a press of canvas was carried, she arrived on the 2d of July at the port of Monterey, in Upper California. The *Collingwood* of eighty guns, flag-ship of Admiral Seymour, entered the harbor on the 16th of July.

Concurrent events make it clear that it was Admiral Seymour's intention to hoist the English flag at Monterey, but the movements of Commodore Sloat misled him and he came into the harbor too late. Still he did not admit that California was lost to England. This will be recognized in the letter by which he instructed English consuls at the different ports in the attitude they were to maintain. These instructions show that he looked upon the question as only adjourned, and that the raising of the flag of the United States operated simply as a stay of proceedings.

The cool and defiant tone of the note, with which he communicated a copy of these instructions to commodore Sloat, shows that it was in this light he wished that officer to know that he regarded the situation.

H. B. M. SHIP COLLINGWOOD.

MONTEREY, July 22, 1846.

SIR: As I think it desirable that you should be in possession of my view of the present occupation of this province by the force under your command, and the duties and conduct which I have recommended to Her Britannic Majesty's vice-consul under the circumstances, I beg to enclose, for your information, a copy of a letter I have this day addressed to Mr. Forbes; and, with every consideration, have the honor to remain

Your most obedient servant,

(Signed) G. F. SEYMOUR,

Rear Admiral and Commander-in-Chief of H. B. M.'s Squadron in the Pacific.

To Commodore Sloat, Commander-in-Chief of the United States Squadron, Pacific.

[Copy.]

H. M. SHIP COLLINGWOOD,

MONTEREY, 22d July, 1846.

SIR: On quitting the coast of Upper California, it may be useful to you that I should shortly state my views of your situation as Her Majesty's vice-consul in that Province, under present circumstances.

The squadron of the United States having taken forcible possession of the principal ports, in consequence of hostilities having occurred on the Rio Grande between the armies of the United States and Mexico, the value of the services of the consuls of the different powers is enhanced, in order that they may assist in affording or obtaining protection for their fellow-subjects, whose interests may be compromised in the distracted state of affairs which exists, or may be expected to prevail; I am, therefore, glad to have been informed by the commodore commanding the United States squadron that there is no intention to disturb the foreign consuls in the exercise of their functions.

I observe in the proclamation issued on the 7th of July, that he acquaints the inhabitants that California will henceforward be a portion of the United States.

Whatever may be the expectations of that officer, I apprehend he would not be warranted by the practice or law of nations, nor, I believe, by the Constitution of the United States, to declare that California has been annexed to that Republic; and that the tenure under which the forces of the United States at present hold this province should, therefore, be regarded as a provisional occupation pending future decisions, or the issue of the contest between the United States and Mexico; and in that light alone it should be regarded by you, until you receive instructions from the department under which you act, for your conduct.

I recommend to you to preserve the strictest neutrality between contending parties, and to conduct yourself with the prudence and circumspection which are so essential to make your services as Her Majesty's vice-consul beneficial in the present state of Upper California.

I have the honor to be, sir, your obedient servant,

(Signed) G. F. SEYMOUR,
Rear Admiral and Commander-in-Chief.

To James Alexander Forbes, Esq.,
Her Majesty's Vice-Consul in California.

The nation seems now in the humor to read its titles to its lands and its honors. In this interval of renewed prosperity, and rest from great agitations which were made personal to all, they look back, and read with comprehending interest of the men concerned in shaping affairs, judging for themselves what influence their personal character had upon national events. In reading history the time which nurses great events seems long, but the culminating moments which bring triumph or disaster, and in which men display their real character, are swift in passing and demand action equally swift.

Up to the time of the Louisiana purchase our western coast line had been the bank of the Mississippi. That great transfer of territory extended our limits to the Pacific and the settlement of the Oregon question now confirmed our title to a coast line on that ocean. With this question of Oregon the country had been made familiar by the efforts of the statesmen who had successfully defended and finally enforced our title. The great value of California in itself, and by its position commercially so advantageous, and geographically appurtenant to the United States, were until recently so little known as not to have attracted public attention in this country. Its acquisition by us was a new idea; and entertained only by the few men with whom an increase of territory, which should secure for the Republic enduring existence and with it unlimited prosperity, was a fixed idea. The history of the time shows that these men were few. Fewer still are living now to witness the marvellous result of their forethought. As its value to us became gradually recognized the idea of its acquisition by purchase from Mexico, as an outlier useless to her, took definite shape. War had interfered to prevent acquiring a title to this valuable territory by purchase alone; but the course of events had ended in possession by force, finally confirmed to us both by treaty and purchase. Now in the possession of California the country had rounded off its grand domain, and could say with Senator Benton, "We own the country from sea to sea—from the Atlantic to the Pacific—and upon a breadth equal to the length of the Mississippi and embracing the whole temperate zone."

The President had proposed to himself the acquisition of California as one of the chief measures of his administration. In his Cabinet he was energetically supported by his Secretary of the Navy, Mr. Bancroft, who had

long before had this in view as a cherished political measure; for reasons which time has singularly justified.

Outside of his Cabinet he had the powerful aid of Senator Benton, who was Chairman of the Committee on Military Affairs and the head of the Democratic party; and who, as is known, was imbued with the subject as belonging with his plan of western expansion.

The remoteness of California rendered it practically impossible to operate there by land force instantly upon the breaking out of the war, and Mr. Marcy made no preparation for such an exigency there, but occupied himself with Texas and Mexico on the Rio Grande.

To reach California by a force overland needed months of time, and required that first possession should be had of the intervening province of New Mexico which lay across the road. This was also in the nature of a midway station which could furnish supplies to an invading army, and through it and by way of the Spanish trail was the only road known at that time.

The Secretary of State, Mr. Buchanan, was a man by nature habitually courteous and conciliatory; of a temperament averse to disturbed conditions. While agreeing with Mr. Polk in this administrative measure, he naturally wished that California, if acquired, should come to us through the Department of State and by his diplomacy. But in the progress of affairs it soon became evident that the outcome would be war. The duty of taking possession of California as a war measure fell to the willing hands of Mr. Bancroft. He had ample means to know, and reason to believe, that Mexico intended to make war upon us, and every possible measure of precautionary readiness was put in motion by him. In less than four months after the inauguration, on the 24th day of June, 1845, he sent orders to the commanding officer of the naval forces on the Pacific that, if he should ascertain that Mexico had declared war against the United States, he should at once possess himself of the port of San Francisco and such other ports as his force would permit. The Secretary of the Navy repeated these orders in August and in October of 1845, and in February and March of 1846. To get these orders through Mexico was a service of danger, requiring judgment; and the naval officers carrying them were selected accordingly. These were Lieutenant Gillis, Midshipmen McRae and Beale; and, as the plan of the President became more definite and the need for action more pressing, Lieutenant Gillespie, who was well instructed in the designs of the Department and with the purposes of the Administration so far as they related to California.

Mr. George Ticknor Curtis, in his memoir of Mr. Buchanan, gives, in Chapters 21 and 22, Volume 1, a compact and clear view of English policy towards the United States at this time. He says: "In the meantime,

Mr. Buchanan had not only to manage the relations between the United States and Mexico, under circumstances of great delicacy, with firmness as well as conciliation, but also to keep a watchful eye upon the course of England and France in reference to this measure. It must be remembered that Mr. Buchanan had succeeded, as Secretary of State, to the management of the Oregon question with England, as well as to the completion of the arrangements for annexing Texas to the United States. He was informed, both privately and officially, by the Ministers of the United States at London and Paris, of the danger of an intervention by England and France in the affairs of Mexico. . . .

THE PRESIDENT TO MR. BUCHANAN.

WASHINGTON CITY, August 7, 1845.

MY DEAR SIR: I enclose you a letter from Mr. Bancroft, and will add, to what he has said, that the information from Mexico comes in so authentic a shape as to entitle it to entire credit. . . .

You may consider me impatient on this subject. I do not consider that I am so, but still I have a great desire that what is contemplated should be done as soon as it may suit your convenience. I have felt great reluctance in saying this much, because I desired not to interfere with your arrangements during the short recreation which you have taken from your arduous labors.

I am, very faithfully and truly, your friend,

JAMES K. POLK.

P.S.—If you determine to anticipate the period of your return to Washington, you will see the propriety of leaving Bedford in a way to produce no public sensation as to the cause of your departure. That it may not be known that you leave on receiving a letter from me, I will not place my frank on this letter.

Yours, etc.,

J. K. P.

The letter of Mr. Bancroft, enclosed by the President to Mr. Buchanan, and in which he asks his immediate return to Washington, has been already given. From exceptional sources of information in the City of Mexico Baron Gerolt gave the same warning concerning the danger of intervention by European powers of which Mr. Buchanan was informed, both "privately and officially," by our Ministers at London and Paris.

"In 1845, when the war between the United States and Mexico was impending, there was reason to believe that England was aiming to obtain a footing in the then Mexican province of California, by an extensive system of colonization. Acting under Mr. Buchanan's advice, President Polk, in his first annual message of December 2, 1845, not only reasserted the Monroe doctrine in general terms, but distinctly declared that no future European colony or dominion shall, with the consent of the United States, be planted or established on any part of the American continent. This declaration was confined to North America, in order to make it emphatically applicable to California.

July 5, 1846.

What are you going to do with the Mexican War? I hope there will be no treaty without the acquisition of California. The loss of California to Mexico will be nothing, as it will aid in consolidating her Government, and finally strengthen it, while its acquisition will be immense to us. . . .

If we had California, with its vast harbors, in the next fifty years we could control the commerce of the Pacific and the wealth of China and India, and the future destiny of our glorious Republic would be to accumulate as vast wealth and power on the Pacific as we have on the Atlantic. Some people seem to have very tender consciences of late as to conquests. I should like to know if half the earth is not now owned by the rights of conquests?

F. W. PICKENS,*

Edgewood, S. C.

What Governor Pickens says here is in the philosophy of history. From the brother of Esau down to Bismarck the story is the same of the acquisition of lands. It is an inherent desire; and, whether by arts of diplomacy or by the strong hand, makes a continuous chain in the world's story.

Upon current knowledge it was believed by the men concerned in watching over the interests of the country that England, having failed in Oregon, was intending to gain a foothold in California. A year later, after the experience of California, Mr. Buchanan, in the instructions prepared for the Chargé to Guatemala, Mr. Hise, speaking of England's "encroachments," says: "Her object in this acquisition is evident from the policy which she has uniformly pursued throughout her past history—of seizing upon every valuable point throughout the world, wherever circumstances have placed this in her power."†

But upon Mr. Bancroft's distinctly military plans Mr. Buchanan now intervened. His desire to avert war led him to send the Slidell mission with its offer to purchase California. In the angry condition of the political atmosphere this mission resulted only in the affront from Mexico of refusing to receive our Minister. In the same clinging to peace when events showed that the time for peace was past, the State Department ordered its Consul in California to make a tentative effort to induce California to offer herself to us. The object proposed to be accomplished by this eleventh-hour effort was, to conciliate the people of California in favor of the United States, so as to induce them to ask its protection against Mexico. But the rapid progress of affairs had already rendered this inapplicable; there was no time for such an experiment—no time now left for a gradual acquisition of California. It only remained to carry out the ultimate purpose of the Government.

Had there lived in California such a man as Magoffin was in Santa Fé, with his will and intelligence, his wealth, and long close relations with leading men, the successful experiment made by him soon after in New Mexico might have been equally successful in California.

* Afterwards Governor of South Carolina under the first period of Secession.

† Curtis' Memoir of Mr. Buchanan.

California was already semi-independent, setting aside the authority of the home Government when it suited its chiefs to do so. Among its leading men—leaders, because of large property and strong personal force—were some who had also within themselves ideas and influences resulting from their foreign education, and which made them feel disapprobation and resentment against the capricious and inadequate policy pursued toward California by the home Government. Had these leading men decided upon a separation from Mexico, with the aid of the immigrants already in the country, a strength might readily have been drawn together sufficient to render abortive any attempt from Mexico to reclaim it when the time came to declare independence. The certain immigration that would have taken place would have made a background of constantly increasing strength.

When Commodore Sloat arrived at Monterey, affairs had reached a culminating point. England had then just failed in Oregon. California remained open to her. Mexico, resolved on war, had determined that foreign powers also should settle the terms of its close. In this intervention England would have had the first voice.

California could be made an English colony and the debts of Mexico paid through that outlying province. The intended colonization is proved. So much of the history of the day as can be gleaned from London, Paris, and Mexico, and California, goes to show the intention of England to occupy that territory.

At the critical moment, when the squadrons of the two nations were watching each other, when the moment had arrived which would force California into the arms of the boldest, Mr. Buchanan sends to his consul at Monterey the despatch which had no place in the occurring events, but which influenced the American Commander to pause in the execution of his strict orders, making a delay that left the field broadly open to England; and brought upon himself a severe reprimand, and which might have cost him his commission. Had those two, the Commodore and the Consul, been the only two men acting for the United States a page in our history would have been left open for a story to be written upon it very different from that which we read there to-day.

A few words may here well be used to show how sometimes the turn given to great events is narrowed down at the decisive moments.

At this time, as the shifting uncertainties settled into the realities of war, it chanced that four men had been drawn into such positions that the result for California was centred in them. All power to this end on land and sea was in the will of Mr. Bancroft. His executive officer was Commodore Sloat, and upon him the Secretary mainly depended for the carrying out of his plans. There being no land force available, Mr. Bancroft sent Mr. Gillespie to me. He reached me after a land journey from Monterey of

more than six hundred miles, the greater part of which was through the country of the Modocs and Tlamaths, the most daring and savage Indians of the continent. Had he been killed on that journey—as it nearly chanced—the communications which he bore for me from the President, the Secretary of the Navy, and Senator Benton would not have reached me.

And on the night when I found him on the lake shore and the Tlamaths attacked us, the chance was even that I might have been killed—or both of us—instead of Basil and the Delaware. There would then have been no act of mine in northern California to furnish Commodore Sloat his reason for raising the flag at Monterey.

I write here only of such scenes and incidents as had connection with the current of my own life, and which were chiefly directed by me; which occupied my mind at the time and so stand out prominent in my memory now; holding so far as possible to my own path among the events of the time, and dwelling only upon those which had for myself some personal interest.

Renouncing my independent position by taking service under Commodore Stockton, I was no longer burdened with responsibilities; but also I had no longer that initiative in which there is always the necessity for the thought and resource that in difficult situations gives the highest pleasure and rouses the mind into the highest excitement, while it calls for the exercise of its best powers.

The plan of campaign on which I had been acting was very different from that which Commodore Stockton had conceived. Under the plan of operations which I had proposed to myself I had intended to travel down the coast road through that part of the country which was occupied by towns and ranchos; drawing into my force, or into my support, the foreigners already settled in the country and the incoming emigrants from Oregon and our West; meantime getting into communication with the Californians on their ranchos, paying, or arranging to pay, for what supplies we needed from them; and "conciliating" the rancheros in favor of the new order of things, not by promises but by acts which would give assurance of friendly intentions. In this way I was satisfied I could keep open my communication with the Sacramento valley, through a country that would be not ill-disposed, but of necessity friendly. It had been arranged with Captain Montgomery that he would meet me at Santa Barbara with the *Portsmouth*. Looking back over events, it is clear they would have justified this plan by complete success, had Commodore Sloat not arrived. The news of the battles on the Rio Grande would have authorized us to raise the flag at Santa Barbara. Now with Commodore Stockton the same plan of campaign would have brought me to Los Angeles at the head of a strong and efficient, and constantly increasing force, well mounted and