

The hill-top and the waving forest remain, but the commodore—where is he? Gone, like a star from its darkened watch-tower on high! But the night which quenched the beam is still fringed with light. To this surviving ray we turn in bereavement and grief. His genius lighted the objects of thought on which it touched, and glanced, with an intuitive force, through the subtle problems of the mind. His mental horizon was broad, and yet every object within its wide circle was distinctly seen, and seen in its true position and relative importance. The trifling never rose into the great, and the majestic never became tame. Each stood, in his clear vision, as truth and reason had stamped it. He was cool and collected without being stoical, and immovably firm without being arbitrary. He had that courage which could never be shaken by surprise, made giddy with success, or quelled by disaster. Whatever subject he assayed, he mastered. He has left but few behind him, out of the legal profession, more thoroughly versed in questions of international law and maritime jurisprudence. Had not his early impulses taken him to the deck, he might have been eminent at the bar, in the cabinet, or hall of legislation. He had all the clearness and comprehensiveness of a great statesman. Gratitude twines this leaf of remembrance and respect into that chaplet which the bereavement of the service has woven on his grave.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE GOLD REGION.—ITS LOCALITY, NATURE, AND EXTENT.—FOREIGNERS IN THE MINES.—THE INDIANS' DISCOVERY OF GOLD.—AGRICULTURAL CAPABILITIES OF CALIFORNIA.—SERVICES OF UNITED STATES OFFICERS.—FIRST DECISIVE MOVEMENT FOR THE ORGANIZATION OF A CIVIL GOVERNMENT.—INTELLIGENCE OF THE DEATH OF GEN. KEARNY.

THURSDAY, APRIL 26. The gold region, which contains deposits of sufficient richness to reward the labor of working them, is strongly defined by nature. It lies along the foot hills of the Sierra Nevada—a mountain range running nearly parallel with the coast—and extends on these hills about five hundred miles north and south, by thirty or forty east and west. From the slopes of the Sierra, a large number of streams issue, which cut their channels through these hills, and roll with greater or less volume to the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers. The Sacramento rises in the north, and flowing south two hundred and fifty miles, empties itself into the Suisun, or upper bay of San Francisco. The San Joaquin rises in the south, and flowing north two hundred miles, discharges itself into the same bay. The source of the San Joaquin is a narrow lake lying still further south, and extending in that direction about eighty miles.

The streams which break into these rivers from

the Sierra Nevada, are from ten to thirty miles distant from each other. They commence with Feather river on the north, and end with the river Reys on the south. They all have numerous tributaries; are rapid and wild on the mountain slopes, and become more tranquil and tame as they debouch upon the plain. Still their serpentine waters, flashing up among the trees which shadow their channels, give a picturesque feature to the landscape, and relieve it of that monotony which would otherwise fatigue the eye. But very few of these rivers have sufficient depth and regularity to render them navigable. Their sudden bends, falls, and shallows would puzzle even an Indian canoe, and strand any boat of sufficient draft to warrant the agency of steam.

The alluvial deposits of gold are confined mainly to the banks and bars of these mountain streams, and the channels of the gorges, which intersect them, and through which the streams are forced when swollen by the winter rains. In the hills and tablelands, which occupy the intervals between these currents and gorges, no alluvial deposits have been found. Here and there a few detached pieces have been discovered, forming an exception to some general law by which the uplands have been deprived of their surface treasures. The conclusion at which I have arrived, after days and weeks of patient research, and a thousand inquiries made of others, is, that the alluvial deposits of gold in California are mainly confined to the banks and bars of her streams,

and the ravines which intersect them. The only material exception to this general law is found in those intervening deposits, from which the streams have been diverted by some local cause, or some convulsion of nature. Aside from these, no surface gold to any extent has been found on the table-lands or plains. Even the banks of the Sacramento and San Joaquin, stretching a distance of five hundred miles through their valleys, have not yielded an ounce. The mountain streams, long before they discharge themselves into these rivers, deposit their precious treasures. They contribute their waters, but not their gold. Like cunning misers they have stowed this away, and no enchantments can make them whisper of its whereabouts. If you would find it, you must hunt for it as for hid treasures.

MONDAY, MAY 14. Much has been said of the amounts of gold taken from the mines by Sonorians, Chilians, and Peruvians, and carried out of the country. As a general fact, this apprehension and alarm is without any sound basis. Not one pound of gold in ten, gathered by these foreigners, is shipped off to their credit: it is spent in the country for provisions, clothing, and in the hazards of the gaming-table. It falls into the hands of those who command the avenues of commerce, and ultimately reaches our own mints. I have been in a camp of five hundred Sonorians, who had not gold enough to buy a month's provisions—all had gone, through their im-

provident habits, to the capacious pockets of the Americans. To drive them out of California, or interdict their operations, is to abstract that amount of labor from the mines, and curtail proportionably the proceeds. If gold, slumbering in the river banks and mountains of California, be more valuable to us than when stamped into eagles and incorporated into our national currency, then drive out the Sonorians: but if you would have it *here* and not *there*, let those diggers alone. When gold shall begin to fail, or require capital and machinery, you will want these hardy men to quarry the rocks and feed your stampers; and when you shall plunge into the Cinnebar mountains, you will want them to sink your shafts and kindle fires under your great quicksilver retorts. They will become the hewers of wood and drawers of water to American capital and enterprise. But if you want to perform this drudgery yourself, drive out the Sonorians, and upset that cherished system of political economy founded in a spirit of wisdom and national justice.

TUESDAY, MAY 22. I was in possession of a fact which left no doubt of the existence of gold in the Stanislaus more than a year prior to its discovery on the American Fork. A wild Indian had straggled into Monterey with a specimen, which he had hammered into a clasp for his bow. It fell into the hands of my secretary, W. R. Garner, who communicated the secret to me. The Indian described the locality

in which it was found with so much accuracy that Mr. G., on his recent excursion to the mines, readily identified the spot. It is now known as "Carson's diggings." No one who has been there can ever forget its wild majestic scenery, or confound its soaring cliffs or sunless chasms with the images projected from other objects. It was the full intention of Mr. G. to trail this Indian at the first opportunity, and he was prevented from doing it only by the imperative duties of the office. His keeping the discovery a secret, proceeded less from any sinister motive than an eccentricity of character. He had another mineral secret which has not yet transpired—the existence of a tin mine, near San Louis Obispo. The extent is not known, but certainly the specimen shown me was very rich. Mr. Garner is now dead: it was his melancholy fate to fall with five others by the wild Indians on the river Reys. To that party I should have been attached had I remained in California another month. How narrow those escapes which run their mystic thread between two worlds! On the grave of my friend, gratitude for important services, and a remembrance of many sterling virtues, might well erect a memorial.

THURSDAY, MAY 24. The capabilities of the soil of California for agricultural purposes involve a question of profound interest, and one which is not easily answered. There are no experimental facts of sufficient scope to warrant a general conclusion. Where

the soil itself leaves no doubt of its richness, its productive forces may be baffled by local circumstances or atmospheric phenomena. Some of the largest crops that have ever rewarded the toil of the husbandman, have been gathered in California; and yet those very localities, owing to a slender fall of the winter rains, have next season disappointed the hopes of the cultivator. The farmer can never be certain of an abundant harvest till he is able to supply this deficiency of rain by a process of irrigation. This can be done, in some places, by the diversion of streams, and must be accomplished in others through artesian wells. It will be some years before either will be brought into effective force in the agricultural districts.

The lands on which cultivation has been attempted occupy a narrow space between the coast ranges and the sea; it seldom exceeds in width thirty miles, and is often reduced to ten by the obtrusion of some mountain spur. East of this range no plough has ever travelled; no furrow has ever been turned in the long valley of the San Joaquin; and if the other sections of this valley correspond to those over which I passed, there can be very little encouragement for the introduction of husbandry. The soil is light and gravelly; the grass meagre and sparse; even the wild horses and elk seek its margin, as if afraid to trust themselves to the Sahara of its bosom. Still, in some of its bays, the evidences of fertility exist,

but as a district it will never add much to the agricultural wealth of California.

The valley of the Sacramento has many localities of great fertility; but few of them, as yet, have been subjected to the plough and harrow; their adaptation to agriculture is inferred from their vigorous vegetation. The same evidences of productive force cover several tracts north of San Francisco, on the Russian river, and in the vicinity of Sonoma. But the most fertile lands in California, as yet developed, lie around the missions of Santa Clara and Santa Cruz, through the long narrow valleys of San José and San Juan, along the margin of the Salinas, through the dells of San Louis Obispo, and in the vicinity of Los Angeles. These, and other insular spots, may be made perfect gardens; but take California as a whole, she is not the country which agriculturists would select. Her whole mining region is barren; nature rested there with what she put *beneath* the soil. You can hardly travel through it in midsummer without loading your mule down with provender to keep him alive. The productive forces of such a state as New York, Ohio, or Pennsylvania, sweep immeasurably beyond the utmost capabilities of California. It is the *golden* coronet that gives this land her pre-eminence, and puts into her hand a magic wand, that will shake for ages the exchanges of the civilized world.

TUESDAY, JUNE 12. At the return of Gen. Kearny,

the command of the military posts of the country, the suppression of popular disturbances, the protection of property from the incursion of the Indians, and the collection of the custom-house revenues have devolved on Gen. Mason. To these complicated duties he has surrendered his energies with an unwearied fidelity and force. No one great interest confided to his indomitable activity has languished. He has derived indispensable aid from the intelligent services of Col. Stevenson, Maj. Folsom, Capt. Halleck, and Lieut. Sherman, of the army, and Lieut. Lanman, of the navy. These officers, and others that might be named, without any increased compensation, and subjected to heavy expenses, have cheerfully discharged the onerous duties devolved upon them by the condition of the country.

The regiment of volunteers under Col. Stevenson arrived too late for any active participation in the war. The insurrection had been suppressed, and the country was in the peaceful occupation of the Americans. Still they were with great propriety retained in the service, and their presence at different points tended to discourage any attempts at revolutionary movements. They were, many of them, youth who had not been reared under the most auspicious circumstances, and the adventures of a camp life were but little calculated to supply the defects of education. They gave the colonel and his officers some trouble, and the communities where they were stationed some solicitude. But they are now in a condition, where

every one is thrown upon his own resources, where every thing good in a man may be developed. They have been sowing their wild oats, and will now go to planting corn.

SATURDAY, JUNE 16. The primary movements in California for the organization of a civil government had no connection with any instructions from Washington. The first great meeting on the subject was held in Monterey in January, 1849. At this meeting I was called upon to draft a preamble and resolutions, setting forth the condition of the country, the necessity of a civil organization, and providing for the election of proper delegates to a convention, to be held at San José on the 27th of February, in which all the districts of the Territory were to be represented, and where a suitable constitution was to be framed. These resolutions were sent to all the principal towns, and adopted. But upon more mature reflection, it was deemed expedient, in order to prevent any collision with the possible action of Congress, to postpone the assembling of the convention to the first of May, that the proceedings of that body might be known. This is the true history of those primary and decisive measures which have resulted in that noble constitution which now throws its sacred ægis over California. The friends of the last and present administration, instead of contending for the honor of an active participation in the origin and progress of this instrument, deftly box back and forth the

responsibility of its provisions. But their political timidity is without any just grounds; for neither afforded any countenance or aid till the rubicon had been passed: so that all this shuttlecock business between the last and present administration, is a superfluous exhibition of dexterity and skill. Much good may it do the players, only let not California suffer too much while the sport is going on.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 20. The causes which exclude slavery from California lie within a nut-shell. All here are diggers, and free white diggers wont dig with slaves. They know they must dig themselves: they have come out here for that purpose, and they wont degrade their calling by associating it with slave-labor: self-preservation is the first law of nature. They have nothing to do with slavery in the abstract, or as it exists in other communities; not one in ten cares a button for its abolition, nor the Wilmot proviso either: all they look at is their own position; they must themselves swing the pick, and they wont swing it by the side of negro slaves. That is their feeling, their determination, and the upshot of the whole business. An army of half a million, backed by the resources of the United States, could not shake their purpose. Of all men with whom I have ever met, the most firm, resolute, and indomitable, are the emigrants into California. They feel that they have got into a new world, where they have a right to shape and settle things in their own way. No mandate, unless

it comes like a thunder-bolt straight out of heaven, is regarded. They may offer to come into the Union, but they consider it an act of condescension, like that of Queen Victoria in her nuptials with Prince Albert. They walk over hills treasured with the precious ores; they dwell by streams paved with gold; while every mountain around soars into the heaven, circled with a diadem richer than that which threw its halo on the seven hills of Rome. All these belong to them; they walk in their midst; they feel their presence and power, and partake of their grandeur. Think you that such men will consent to swing the pick by the side of slaves? Never! while the stream owns its source, or the mountain its base. You may call it pride, or what you will, but *there* it is—deep as the foundations of our nature, and unchangeable as the laws of its divine Author.

TUESDAY, JUNE 26. The intelligence of the death of Gen. Kearny has been received here with many expressions of affectionate remembrance. During his brief sojourn in California, his considerate disposition, his amiable deportment and generous policy, had endeared him to the citizens. They saw in him nothing of the ruthless invader, but an intelligent, humane general, largely endowed with a spirit of forbearance and fraternal regard. The conflict which arrested his progress at Pasquel, and the disaster in which so many of his brave men sunk overpowered, were contemplated, by the more considerate of the

inhabitants, rather with a sentiment of regret than an air of triumph. They seemed to regard these events as a waste of life—as a reckless resistance on their part, which, if successful for a time, could only have the effect to continue, for a brief period, the sway of leaders in whose prudence and patriotism they had no confidence. They took leave of him with regret, and have received the tidings of his death with sympathy and sorrow. It is not for me to write his eulogy; it is graven on the hearts of all who knew him. His star set without a cloud; but its light lingers still: when all the watch-fires of the tented field have gone out, a faithful ray will still light the shrine which affection and bereavement have reared to his worth.

“Still o'er the past warm memory wakes,
And fondly broods with miser-care;
Time but the impression deeper makes,
As streams their channels deeper wear.”