

CHAPTER III.

HISTORY.

THE word California, so familiar to our ears, and so pleasant, is of doubtful origin. There have been many speculations in regard to it, and divers discussions, which cannot be brought to any certain conclusion for want of a firm foundation on which to base the theories brought forward. A scholar, learned in Greek lore, suggests that California is derived from the Greek words *Kala-phor-nea*, which may mean either a beautiful young woman or a new country, according to the exigencies of the situation.

Whatever the name may mean, or by whom compounded, it is first met with in a romance, which was once very popular, but is now almost forgotten, and was published at Seville, Spain, in 1510, and entitled, "The Sergas de Esplandian," the Son of Amadis of Gaul. In this book the word occurs three times. One passage reads thus:

"Know that on the right hand of the Indies, there is an island called California, very near to the Terrestrial Paradise, which was peopled by black women, without any men among them, because they were accustomed to live after the manner of the Amazons. They were of strong and hardened bodies, of ardent courage, and of great force. The island was the strongest in the world, from its steep rocks and great cliffs. Their arms were of gold, so were the caparisons of the wild beasts they rode."

This romance was very popular during the quarter of a century that elapsed between its publication and the discovery of this country by Hernando Grixalva, one of the officers of Cortez. It may be that said Grixalva thought

he had found the wonderful island which was described in the romance, and, therefore, gave it the name that of right belonged to it, or he may have bestowed upon it the popular title in order to arrest attention and excite an interest in the country.

The territory which is now occupied by the State of California was discovered and partially described in the year 1542 by Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, a Portuguese by birth, but in the service of Spain at the time. He also discovered and named the Farallone Islands, which lie twenty or thirty miles outside the Golden Gate, and are known to modern dwellers in that region as immense birds' nests, where the sea-fowls go to lay their eggs, and where, at certain seasons of the year, men follow them in vessels and bring away their eggs by the hundreds of dozens. Cabrillo also named Cape Mendocino, which, however, he called Cape Mendoza, for his friend and patron the viceroy of Mexico. The name was afterward softened down to Mendocino, which it still retains.

For more than two centuries after the country was discovered by Cabrillo the beautiful bay of San Francisco, — the best harbor upon the Pacific coast and the second-best in the world, — remained a *sinus incognitus*. It is so securely land-locked, and the gate is so narrow through which it is entered, that navigators, even when searching along the coast for an inlet, passed and repassed without discovering it. And it is a somewhat singular fact that when it was finally found the discoverers came to it overland.

In 1769 Don Gaspar De Portala, governor of Mexico, in company with fifty or sixty men, started from Sonora to go overland to Monterey. The party went astray, and,

going too far northward for the point which they were seeking, came by accident upon this gem of the Pacific, the bay of San Francisco. They could not, of course, take in at a glance the full value of the prize they had found; they could not fully measure its almost unlimited capacity as a harbor in its wonderful security. But enough was revealed to the discoverers to make them desire to honor it as much as they could, by the bestowal of a name which was much to them, because it was the name of their patron saint. The new bay was therefore called San Francisco, for their great leader and unseen guide.

But the needs of the time did not even yet call into requisition this grand harbor. Six years more were allowed to pass before any use was made of the knowledge so accidentally or providentially acquired, or any steps were taken to secure possession of this important point.

With the light of the present day shining around us, the geographical notions of those who lived before us seem very crude and almost comical. Even the wisest of the men of the last century, were they now living, would need to go to school awhile to get thoroughly posted in the geography of the present day; and, going backward in the centuries, the case waxes worse and worse. In the Odd Fellows' library in San Francisco there is a copy of a map of the world, published in Venice in 1554, in which the continent of North America is represented as uniting with Asia. The river Colorado is made to rise in the mountains of Thibet, and then wander about in a bewildered sort of way till it has traveled more than fifteen thousand miles in getting across the continent, when it is allowed the privilege of emptying itself into the gulf of

California, the place for which it has been seeking so long! Knowing where the river must disgorge, and knowing scarcely more than that, these geography-makers had to do as the naturalist does with his bone when he has but one—make up a whole that will fit the part already possessed.

With geographical knowledge in this mixed-up condition it is not strange that California was for a long time thought to be an island. After that error was exploded it was succeeded by another. The whole country was said to be a peninsula fastened to the continent by a "narrow neck of land." At length, in 1771, Father Bogart published a book on California, in which he so clearly demonstrated that it was a regular and inherent part of the American continent, that its rank as such has never since been called in question.

A high motive has wonderful power to lift up the heart and bring about the best results in action. As the stream does not rise higher than the fountain, so the result is not likely to be better than the motive. But the rule does not always prove true when applied to the efforts and actions of men. Anglo-Saxons were brought to the Pacific coast by the love of gold and the greed to gain it. Yet they have done more in the short quarter of a century during which they have been in possession, to develop the resources and uncover the hidden riches of the country, than the Spaniards did in the three centuries during which they ruled over it. Moreover, the Spaniards went to California professedly for the highest and noblest purpose—to make Christians of savages, to extend the boundaries of that kingdom whose symbol is

the cross and the very genius of which is the amelioration of the condition of the suffering sons of men, the lifting up of the hearts and lives of those who accept it and live according to its requirements. Did they fail because they mistook the genius of the hierarchy which they sought to establish, and were themselves "blind leaders of the blind?"

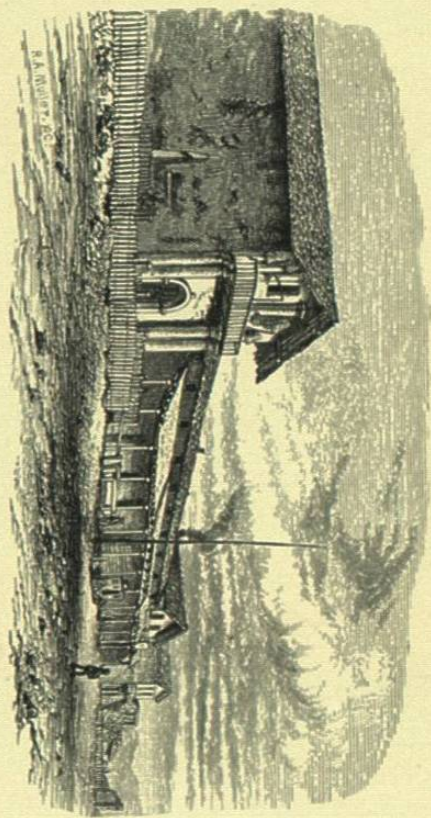
That these Spanish fathers had some of the "wisdom of the serpent" is evident, for they very wisely adapted their means to the accomplishment of their ends. These followers of St. Francis, who confessedly wished to build up a spiritual kingdom, thought it best to have a good earthly foundation for it to rest upon. So they took possession of the entire coast from the Golden Gate to San Diego, and as there was no way of access to the country except by sea, they controlled the whole. The possessions of one mission extended to those of another, so that no one could come to the coast to stay, or even to trade, without saying to the fathers, "By your leave."

Although the Spanish government was not unmindful of the desirableness of having this western coast of America attached to their dominions for worldly reasons, yet the governing motive seems to have been, the conversion of the natives to Christianity, or, perhaps it would be nearer to the truth to say, to Catholicism. Very soon after the discovery of the country efforts were made in this direction. Collections were made both in Spain and Mexico which, together with grants of land from the government, went to make up what was called "The Pious Fund of California." This fund was originally in the hands of the Jesuits. After that order had fallen

into disgrace and been expelled from Spain, the fund was passed over to the possession of the followers of St. Francis, or the Franciscans as they are generally called. There were no active measures adopted in furtherance of the great design of converting the Indians of California until 1768, when Father Juniper Serra, a devoted member of the order, was appointed president of all the missions to be established in Upper California. He lost no time in inaugurating his work. In 1769 the first mission was established in San Diego, near the southern boundary of what is now the State of California. This mission was but the entering wedge; mission after mission was planted along the coast, until they numbered twenty-two, and the whole distance from San Diego to the Golden Gate was subject to their control. The dominion of the missionaries was absolute. Both spiritual and temporal matters were under their control, and from their authority there was no appeal. They constituted both church and state, and were at the same time kings and priests. The absolutism of their sway continued for sixty years. They waxed rich and powerful in the prolific and beautiful country which they ruled. Each mission had its *présidio* or fort, in which there were, or were supposed to be, a company of soldiers for its protection. So absolutely was everything in the hands of the fathers that there was not an inn or a public table in the whole territory, even so late as when the country came into the possession of the United States. The wayfarer could stop at any of the missions or among the inhabitants of the few small towns, and his wants would be supplied. Food and lodging were given

freely, and a horse to ride to the next stopping-place. It is even said that a vase filled with silver coin was often placed in the room in which the stranger slept, from which he was expected to take what his needs required. Apocryphal as this statement seems, it is on record as a grave, historical fact. On the other hand, Dana says that, after accepting a meal or other hospitality, when the offer to pay was made, the steward uniformly answered, there was no charge, the food was the gift of the Lord. At the same time it was quite plainly intimated that the Lord would not be unwilling to receive a gift in return. The result was, that the recipient, being thrown upon his honor and his generosity, generally paid two or three times what the receipts were worth. Still, he could escape payment if he chose.

The fathers lived in all their missions in patriarchal state. The Indians were their retainers, or worse yet, their absolute and abject slaves. Some of the missions had three or four thousand natives attached to them, and each had all that dwelt in the vicinity. These shrewd old Spanish padres had rather remarkable ways of making converts to a religion the essence of which is, or ought to be, peace and love. Horsemen were sent out armed with the riata, with which cattle and horses were lassoed, and by its skillful use the savages were caught, and *compelled* to come into the church—compelled in a sense in which the Divine Teacher never meant that guests should be gathered to the feast. Eye-witnesses tell of men, women and children being marched into church for purposes of confession and worship, between guards bearing whips, by the touch of which the worshipers were persuaded to hasten to the



THE OLD MISSION CHURCH ("MISSION DOLORES"), SAN FRANCISCO.
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house of God,—which to them in this way was made, in truth, a refuge and a sanctuary.

These poor savages were thus reduced to a state of the most abject vassalage. If they believed and showed their faith by their work, they were fed and clothed; if they did not, they were beaten and starved. They were taught just so much learning and handicraft as would make them useful to their masters; but they were taught nothing on account of their own needs. The proofs of the skill they acquired remain, and are seen in aqueducts and well-built churches, in olive orchards and vineyards, in reservoirs and alamedas. All this work was done by the natives. The fathers furnished the brain, the Indians the muscle. The fathers showed themselves wise in the wisdom of the skillful general, who keeps himself out of the way of the bullets, but lets his soldiers have their fill of fighting and danger, and when the battle is over takes all the glory.

There seemed to be a natural incompatibility between the Spaniard and work,—an incompatibility that was invincible. The direst poverty, the most urgent need, could not make him willing to labor: that must be done by those less favored.

When all the disadvantages of the circumstances are considered, it seems quite wonderful that so much was done by the Indians under the supervision of the fathers, and that what was done should have been done so well. There were no saw-mills, where timber could be prepared for building the houses, and no roads by which it could be brought to the spot where it was wanted. In some cases the timber was cut and hewn on the sides of the mountains, in inaccessible places, and the poor Indians

were obliged to carry it long distances on their shoulders. The little machinery they had was of the rudest character, and yet with all these disabilities the churches they built continue until the present time to challenge the admiration of beholders.

These churches are all built very much after the same pattern. They are of adobe, or unburned brick, with tile roofs, and are from one hundred to one hundred and fifty feet in length. The width is generally about one-third of the length. They are ornamented within with rude pictures and carved images, clothed in tawdry finery, with a mixing-in of gilt and spangles, and are well calculated in their subjects and treatment to work upon the imaginations of the untutored and ignorant. The choirs of the churches were made up of Indians trained for the purpose. They were taught not only to sing, but to play upon instruments. They were never paid for their labor, and were taught that, as the fathers held in their hands the temporal interests of the Indians, so they did also those which were spiritual and eternal. If they were disobedient, there awaited them not only stripes and imprisonment in this world, but torment and burning flames in the world to come.

Thus the fathers were supplied with faithful laborers at a very small cost. True, they were obliged to feed and clothe their vassals. But in that genial climate there was need of but little clothing, and that little, for the Indians, was of the poorest quality. The men wore a coarse cloth girt about the loins, and the women had but a single garment, a sort of gown, also made of coarse cloth. Their food was inexpensive. The only trade in the country was

in hides and tallow, and beeves were often slaughtered for the sake of these products. It therefore saved the flesh from waste if it were given to the Indians. The meat of the slaughtered cattle constituted their principal food.

At one time the twenty-two missions established between the years 1769 and 1822 had dependent upon them and subject to their control more than sixteen thousand Indians.

The palmy days of the missions were between 1800 and 1820. Their possessions in flocks and herds and horses reached an extent that seems almost incredible. The mission of San Miguel, in 1821, had ninety-one thousand head of cattle, four thousand horses, two thousand mules, one hundred and seventy yoke of oxen, and forty-seven thousand sheep. The other missions numbered nearly or quite as many.

The only exports from the country were hides and tallow. The former were called "California bank-notes." The trade was principally with Boston, though occasionally vessels came from Spain, from Australia and from the Sandwich Islands. Dry goods and groceries were brought in the vessels and exchanged for hides and tallow. Even so late as 1835-6, when Dana went to the Pacific coast "before the mast," there was no other trade the whole length of the seaboard, and yet the Spaniards had been in possession of this wonderfully productive country for nearly three centuries.

To one who is familiar with the present state of affairs—who knows the great amount of business done at different points along the coast, and has seen the flags of almost every nation under the heaven flying from the mast-heads of vessels lying at anchor in the bay of San Francisco, it

is interesting as well as strange to hear that in January, 1836—that is, only forty years ago—there was but a single vessel in the bay, and that was waiting for hides to be brought from San José, whither a part of the crew had gone for them.

Dana gives a curious account of the manner in which these cargoes were taken on board the ships. When the hide was taken from the animal it was fastened down to the ground at each of the four corners, to keep it from shrinking while drying. When loaded on board the vessel each hide was doubled lengthwise and carried on the head of a sailor to the boat that was to receive it. Sometimes this work involved wading out into the water a considerable distance. Not unfrequently a sudden gust of wind would disturb the equilibrium of this nicely balanced head-rigging, and off it would go quite away from the line marked out, taking the poor bearer along with it, if he had pluck enough to hold on, to the unadulterated enjoyment of the bystanders, but great inconvenience of the poor fellow who was most interested in the catastrophe. The sailors were obliged to have caps cushioned with padded wool, to protect their heads from the friction of the hides, and save themselves from becoming "bald-heads" before their time.

Vessels were sent out from Boston with all sorts of notions to be exchanged for hides and tallow, and large fortunes for those days were made by one or two Boston merchants in this trade.

Dana represents the Spaniards and their Mexican descendants as *shiftless* almost beyond description. There was no working class among them. "They seemed to be

a people upon whom a curse had fallen and stripped them of everything but their pride, their manners and their voices." It was a pleasure to listen to their sweet, soft tones, even though not a word could be understood. The women especially were blessed with that pleasant gift, a voice low and musical. It was no strange thing to see a Spaniard with the manners of a lord, dressed in fine broad-cloth and velvet, with a noble horse completely covered with trappings, upon which he sat with the air of a king, when he had not *in esse* and scarcely *in posse* a cent with which to bless himself.

Strange to tell, a love of dress also prevailed among the women! Nor was there always shown a nice regard for the proprieties of time and circumstance. A woman who lived in two rooms on literally a ground floor might be seen issuing from her door arrayed in a silk gown, satin shoes covered with spangles, a high comb, and gilt, if not gold, ear-rings and necklace. Life was to the Spaniards a long holiday without cares or duties. The few trading-posts along the coast were in the hands of "Yankees," who "had left their consciences at Cape Horn," married California wives, abjured the Protestant religion, adopted the Catholic, and brought up their children both as Catholics and Spaniards. Their abandonment of Protestantism was compulsory if they wished to remain in the country. Protestants had no rights. They could not own real estate or transact business. There was no manufacturing done, and no work of any kind performed that could be left undone. Abounding in grapes as the country did, they bought poor wine at a high price, which was brought from Boston. They paid three or four dollars

a pair for shoes and ten or twelve for boots made out of hides they had sold, and which had been twice around the Horn. It is only by understanding to some extent the character of this people that we are able to comprehend how they could for so long have occupied a country of capacities so nearly unlimited without developing some of them, and showing how extensive they were.

Their houses were built of adobe, and generally had tile roofs. They were all constructed after one model, having but one story and one tier of rooms, without fire-place or chimney, the work being generally done in a small out-house built for the purpose; the windows were grated and without glass, save in the houses of the more wealthy. Except in these same cases the floors were the unadulterated earth. But these Spaniards had one virtue which they taught the Indians. They had great regard for cleanliness. To this day this attribute or habit is retained, and go where you will among the "greasers" you will find their houses tidy and their earthen floors swept as clean as a broom can make them, while the yards share in the same blessing.

All the work in the families, as well as in the missions, was done by the Indians. As they were not paid for their labor, and it cost so little to keep them, there was no Spaniard so poor that he could not, at least, have one or two menials to do him service.

At the time of Dana's visit, hides sold at about two dollars each, and not unfrequently articles were given in exchange worth less than half the estimated value of the skins. In enumerating the hardships of his condition, having to remain eighteen months on the coast of California,

sailing up and down in order to get hides enough to load a single vessel, Dana says: "Besides the length of the voyage and the hard and exposed life, we were at the ends of the earth, on a coast almost solitary, in a country where there is neither law nor gospel, and where sailors are at their captain's mercy, there being no American consul or any one to whom complaint could be made."

What a change since then! and that was only forty years ago! One can now make the journey in half a score of days that then seemed so nearly endless, and can find comfort and safety everywhere. Yet the writer of that lament has not had time to fall into the "sear and yellow leaf" that precludes the passing away. He may yet be in the vigor of a mature manhood. Has Aladdin been here with his wonderful lamp, or has our American civilization made the ancient fables of genii and giants seem actualities of common occurrence?

But the day of doom was nearing the followers of St. Francis. The power of their patron saint proved insufficient for their protection when the time of need came. In 1822 the people of Mexico threw off the Spanish yoke and put on one of their own making. The government being moved nearer to the missions had a better opportunity to become informed in regard to their wealth and the extent of their possessions. Self-abnegation was not a characteristic of the Mexican authority. Every party that came into power, and their name was legion, filched something from the fathers, who, in their turn, became reckless in regard to the future, and careful only to secure what good they could in the present while the means were within their reach.

Little by little their power and possessions were infringed upon until finally, in 1840, there was a grand swoop made by the Mexican government, which took possession of the missions and all that pertained to them. The fathers were then helpless and penniless. In 1845 the Mexican Congress sold the missions to the highest bidders.

As is often true, the fathers suffered from their own craftiness, and were taken in the net which they had themselves spread. As they had zealously kept out all foreigners from the country, and as the Indians, like our southern slaves, were chattels, not persons, and therefore not entitled to representation, the inhabitants were not sufficiently numerous to be properly represented in the Mexican congress. So the politicians had it all their own way, and did not consult the interests of those who had no influence in the government.

The effects of the mission system upon the Indians were evil, and that continually. What was good in them as savages was crushed out by the abject slavery to which they were reduced, while they took on in very scant measure what was really good in their Christian masters. The California Indians are now classed among the lowest and most degraded specimens of the human race. But they do not always seem to have been of this type. Cabrillo, who discovered the country, spent six months in what is now Santa Barbara county, and has left on record the names of forty towns and villages, or *pueblos*, that he found in that region alone. Dwelling together in towns always indicates some knowledge in a people of trade, and regard for mutual rights. The Indians on the coast made

canoes of the tule, in which they went quite a distance out to sea; and they kept up a vigorous trade in fish, abalone and other shells with those who lived in the interior.

Father Juniper Serra, who founded the first mission in 1769, speaks of their number as being immense. He says: "All those of this coast live very contentedly upon various seeds, and fish which they catch from their canoes made of tule, in which they go out considerable distances to sea. They are very affable. All the males, both large and small, go naked; but the females are modestly clad, even to the little girls." That they had a glimmering idea of a future state is proved by their burning the ornaments and weapons of the dead with their bodies, that they might have the articles to use in the shadowy land to which they had gone. They expressed their idea of immortality by saying, that "as the moon died and came to life again, so would men come to life after they were dead." They believed that the hearts of good chiefs went up to heaven, and were converted into stars, so that they could continue to watch over their people. There is abundant evidence that they were not wanting in courage,—in the sturdiness with which they stood up for their rights, and the bravery with which they resisted the encroachments of the white man. The country seems to have been thickly populated. Kit Carson says that even so late as 1829 the valleys were full of Indians; they were plentiful everywhere. They were numbered for the first time in 1823, when there were one hundred thousand eight hundred and twenty-six. In 1863 there were only twenty-nine thousand three hundred. There are probably not more than twenty

thousand now. "They are gone; they have all passed by," leaving scarcely more than their names as mementoes. Good taste has been shown in retaining many of their pleasant titles. Colusa, Shasta, Yolo, Tehama, Napa, are specimens of these bequests received either from tribes or noted chiefs.

A mysterious law, which has within itself the power of its own execution, seems to have decreed that civilization and barbarism shall not dwell together. When civilization comes, the savage must accept it or die! The latter penalty seems to have been dealt out to the Indians with great suddenness in California. In the valleys that were so recently teeming with natives there is scarcely one now to be found. They have vanished as the mist before the clear shining of the sun. Some of them have been gathered into reservations under the pretense of taking care of them. But it is too often such care as the wolf takes of the lamb that is in his power. They are made to toil and raise crops, which are sold to put money into the pockets of those who superintend the reservation, and the poor Indian is allowed to live as he can. Even if one is not particularly sentimental in regard to the Indian, such wrong and oppression, and wholesale destruction, can scarcely be regarded without pain. Their sixty years of bondage to the fathers took from them their independence, and crushed out whatever manliness there was in their nature. Trained to depend entirely upon others, when left to themselves they were like ships without rudders, they drifted whithersoever the winds and the waves carried them, and these have borne them to sure and swift destruction.

CHAPTER IV.

GEOGRAPHY AND TOPOGRAPHY.

THERE are three ranges of mountains within the boundaries of the United States, all running in nearly the same direction, though not exactly parallel. The Appalachian range lies on the eastern border. This chain is made up "of a series of compact wrinkles of the earth's crust," having within its limits no very high peaks, the loftiest being not more than seven thousand feet. None of the different lines of the Appalachian chain are immediately on the sea-coast. In New England the nearest is fifty miles back, and the interval gains in width going southward, until in the Carolinas it has a breadth of two hundred miles. The congeries of ranges belonging to the Appalachian chain averages one hundred miles in width. Extending west from this chain are the broken foot-hills which form the eastern portion of Ohio and parts of Kentucky and Tennessee. Pittsburgh is in this foot-hill country, and is six hundred and ninety-nine feet above the sea-level. From this point to the mouth of the Ohio river the descent is three hundred and seventy-five feet, the level there being only two hundred and seventy-five feet above the Gulf of Mexico. The Ohio river forms the eastern boundary of the prairie region, the garden of the continent, of which nearly the whole State of Illinois can be taken as a type.

Crossing the Mississippi, and still pursuing a westward