

THE CENTURY MAGAZINE.

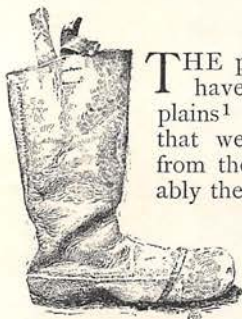
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No. 2.

LIFE IN CALIFORNIA BEFORE THE GOLD DISCOVERY.

BY JOHN BIDWELL (PIONEER OF '41).



BUTTER'S BOOT. (IN THE PIONEER SOCIETY'S ROOMS, SACRAMENTO.)

THE party whose fortunes I have followed across the plains¹ was not only the first that went direct to California from the East; we were probably the first white people, except Bonneville's party of 1833, that ever crossed the Sierra Nevada. Dr. Marsh's ranch, the first settlement reached by us in California, was located in the eastern foothills of the Coast Range Mountains, near the northwestern extremity of the great San Joaquin Valley and about six miles east of Monte Diablo, which may be called about the geographical center of Contra Costa County. There were no other settlements in the valley; it was, apparently, still just as new as when Columbus discovered America, and roaming over it were countless thousands of wild horses, of elk, and of antelope. It had been one of the driest years ever known in California. The country was brown and parched; throughout the State wheat, beans, everything had failed. Cattle were almost starving for grass, and the people, except perhaps a few of the best families, were without bread, and were eating chiefly meat, and that often of a very poor quality.

Dr. Marsh had come into California four or five years before by way of New Mexico. He was in some respects a remarkable man. In command of the English language I have scarcely ever seen his equal. He had never studied medicine, I believe, but was a great reader: sometimes he would lie in bed all

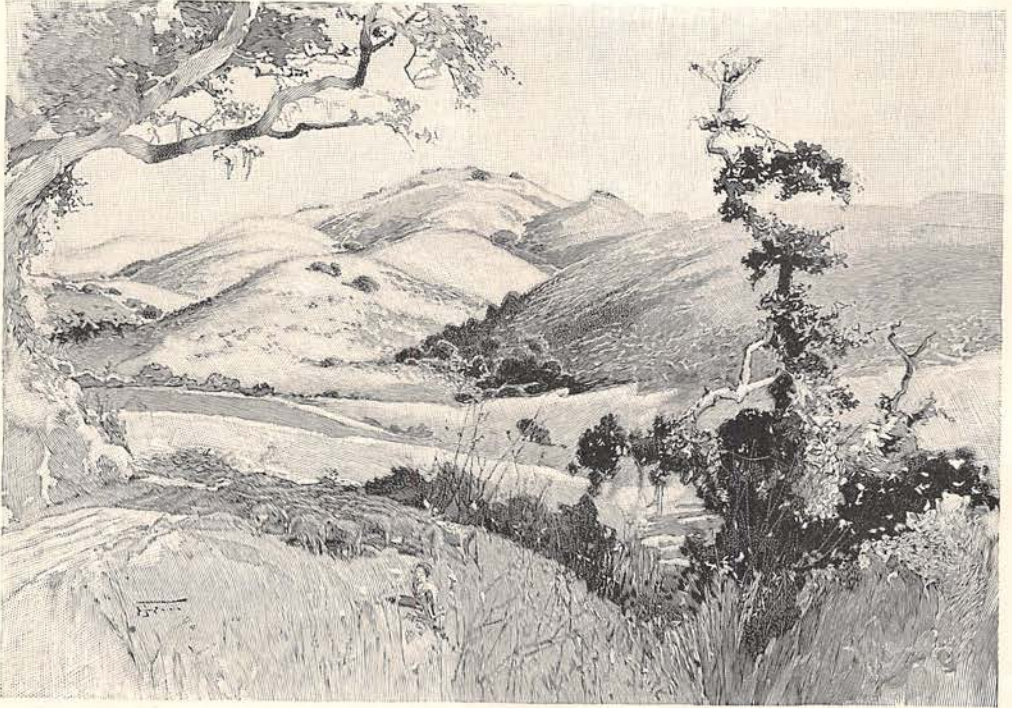
day reading, and he had a memory that stereotyped all he read, and in those days in California such a man could easily assume the rôle of doctor and practise medicine. In fact, with the exception of Dr. Marsh there was then no physician of any kind anywhere in California. We were overjoyed to find an American, and yet when we became acquainted with him we found him one of the most selfish of mortals. The night of our arrival he killed two pigs for us.² We felt very grateful, for we had by no means recovered from starving on poor mule meat, and when he set his Indian cook to making tortillas (little cakes) for us, giving one to each,—there were thirty-two in our party,—we felt even more grateful; and especially when we learned that he had had to use some of his seed wheat, for he had no other. Hearing that there was no such thing as money in the country, and that butcher-knives, guns, ammunition, and everything of that kind were better than money, we expressed our gratitude the first night to the doctor by presents—one giving a can of powder, another a bar of lead or a butcher-knife, and another a cheap but serviceable set of surgical instruments. The next morning I rose early, among the first, in order to learn from our host something about California,—what we could do, and where we could go,—and, strange as it may seem, he would scarcely answer a question. He seemed to be in an ill humor, and among other things he said, "The company has already been over a hundred dollars' expense to me, and God knows whether I will ever get a *real* of it or not." I was at a loss to account for this, and went out and told some of

¹ See "The First Emigrant Train to California," in THE CENTURY for November, 1890.

² Men reduced to living on poor meat, and almost starving, have an intense longing for anything fat.

the party, and found that others had been snubbed in a similar manner. We held a consultation and resolved to leave as soon as convenient. Half our party concluded to go back to the San Joaquin River, where there was much game, and spend the winter hunting, chiefly for otter, the skins being worth three dollars apiece. Therest—about fourteen—succeeded in gaining information from Dr. Marsh by which they

exposed than any other to the ravages of the Horse-thief Indians of the Sierra Nevada (before mentioned). That valley was full of wild cattle,—thousands of them,—and they were more dangerous to one on foot, as I was, than grizzly bears. By dodging into the gulches and behind trees I made my way to a Mexican ranch at the extreme west end of the valley, where I staid all night. This was one



SACRAMENTO VALLEY.

started to find the town of San José, about forty miles to the south, then known by the name of Pueblo de San José, now the city of San José. More or less of our effects had to be left at Marsh's, and I decided to remain and look out for them, and meantime to make short excursions about the country on my own account. After the others had left I started off traveling south, and came to what is now called Livermore Valley, then known as Livermore's Ranch, belonging to Robert Livermore, a native of England. He had left a vessel when a mere boy, and had married and lived like the native Californians, and, like them, was very expert with the lasso. Livermore's was the frontier ranch, and more

of the noted ranches, and belonged to a Californian called Don José Maria Amador—more recently, to a man named Dougherty.¹ Next day, seeing nothing to encourage me, I started to return to Marsh's ranch.

On the way, as I came to where two roads, or rather paths, converged, I fell in with one of the fourteen men, M. C. Nye, who had started for San José. He seemed considerably agitated, and reported that at the Mission of San José, some fifteen miles this side of the town of San José, all the men had been arrested and put in prison by General Vallejo, Mexican commander-in-chief of the military under Governor Alvarado, he alone having been sent back to tell Marsh and to have him come forth-

¹ The rancheros marked and branded their stock differently so as to distinguish them. But it was not possible to keep them separate. One would often steal cattle from the other. Livermore in this way lost cattle by his neighbor Amador. In fact it was almost a daily occurrence—a race to see which could get and

kill the most of the other's cattle. Cattle in those days were often killed for the hides alone. One day a man saw Amador kill a fine steer belonging to Livermore. When he reached Livermore's—ten or fifteen miles away—and told him what Amador had done, he found Livermore skinning a steer of Amador's!

with to explain why this armed force had invaded the country. We reached Marsh's after dark. The next day the doctor started down to the Mission of San José, nearly thirty miles distant, with a list of the company, which I gave him. He was gone about three days. Meanwhile we sent word to the men on the San Joaquin River to let them know what had taken place, and they at once returned to the ranch to await results. When Marsh came back he said ominously, "Now, men, I want you all to come into the house and I will tell you your fate." We all went in, and he announced, "You men that have five dollars can have passports and remain in the country and go where you please." The fact was he had simply obtained passports for the asking; they had cost him nothing. The men who had been arrested at the Mission had been liberated as soon as their passports were issued to them, and they had at once proceeded on their way to San José. But five dollars! I don't suppose any one had five dollars; nine-tenths of them probably had not a cent of money. The names were called and each man settled, giving the amount in something, and if unable to make it up in money or effects he would give his note for the rest. All the names were called except my own. There was no passport for me. Marsh had certainly not forgotten me, for I had furnished him with the list of our names myself. Possibly his idea was—as others surmised and afterwards told me—that, lacking a passport, I would stay at his ranch and make a useful hand to work.

The next morning before day found me starting for the Mission of San José to get a passport for myself. Mike Nye, the man who had brought the news of the arrest, went with me. A friend had lent me a poor old horse, fit only to carry my blankets. I arrived in a heavy rain-storm, and was marched into the calaboose and kept there three days with nothing to eat, and the fleas were so numerous as to cover and darken anything of a light color. There were four or five Indians in the prison. They were ironed, and they kept tolling a bell, as a punishment, I suppose, for they were said to have stolen horses; possibly they belonged to the Horse-thief tribes east of the San Joaquin Valley. Sentries were stationed at the door. Through a grated window I made a



GENERAL M. G. VALLEJO.
(FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY BRADLEY & RULOFSON, LENT
BY LOYALL FARRAGUT.)

motion to an Indian boy outside and he brought me a handful of beans and a handful of *manteca*, which is used by Mexicans instead of lard. It seemed as if they were going to starve me to death. After having been there three days I saw through the door a man whom, from his light hair, I took to be an American, although he was clad in the wild picturesque garb of a native Californian, including serape and the huge spurs used by the vaquero. I had the sentry at the door hail him. He proved to be an American, a resident of the Pueblo of San José, named Thomas Bowen, and he kindly went to Vallejo, who was right across the way in the big Mission building, and procured for me the passport. I think I have that passport now, signed by Vallejo and written in Spanish by Victor Prudon, secretary of Vallejo. Every one at the Mission pronounced Marsh's action an outrage; such a thing was never known before.

We had already heard that a man by the name of Sutter was starting a colony a hundred miles away to the north in the Sacramento Valley. No other civilized settlements had been attempted anywhere east of the Coast Range; before Sutter came the Indians had reigned supreme. As the best thing to be

done I now determined to go to Sutter's, afterward called "Sutter's Fort," or New Helvetia. Dr. Marsh said we could make the journey in two days, but it took us eight. Winter had come in earnest, and winter in California then, as now, meant rain. I had three companions. It was wet when we started, and much of the time we traveled through a pouring rain. Streams were out of their banks; gulches were swimming; plains were inundated; indeed, most of the country was overflowed. There were no roads, merely paths, trodden only by Indians and wild game. We were compelled to follow the paths, even when they were under

Moreover, our coming was not unexpected to him. It will be remembered that in the Sierra Nevada one of our men named Jimmy John became separated from the main party. It seems that he came on into California, and, diverging into the north, found his way down to Sutter's settlement perhaps a little before we reached Dr. Marsh's. Through this man Sutter heard that our company of thirty men were already somewhere in California. He immediately loaded two mules with provisions taken out of his private stores, and sent two men with them in search of us. But they did not find us, and returned, with the pro-



OLD RUSSIAN BUILDING.

FORT ROSS.

water, for the moment our animals stepped to one side down they went into the mire. Most of the way was through the region now lying between Lathrop and Sacramento. We got out of provisions and were about three days without food. Game was plentiful, but hard to shoot in the rain. Besides, it was impossible to keep our old flint-lock guns dry, and especially the powder dry in the pans. On the eighth day we came to Sutter's settlement; the fort had not then been begun. Sutter received us with open arms and in a princely fashion, for he was a man of the most polite address and the most courteous manners, a man who could shine in any society.

visions, to Sutter's. Later, after a long search, the same two men, having been sent out again by Sutter, struck our trail and followed it to Marsh's.

John A. Sutter was born in Baden in 1803 of Swiss parents, and was proud of his connection with the only republic of consequence in Europe. He was a warm admirer of the United States, and some of his friends had persuaded him to come across the Atlantic. He first went to a friend in Indiana with whom he staid awhile, helping to clear land, but it was business that he was not accustomed to. So he made his way to St. Louis and invested what means he had in merchandise, and went out as a New Mexi-

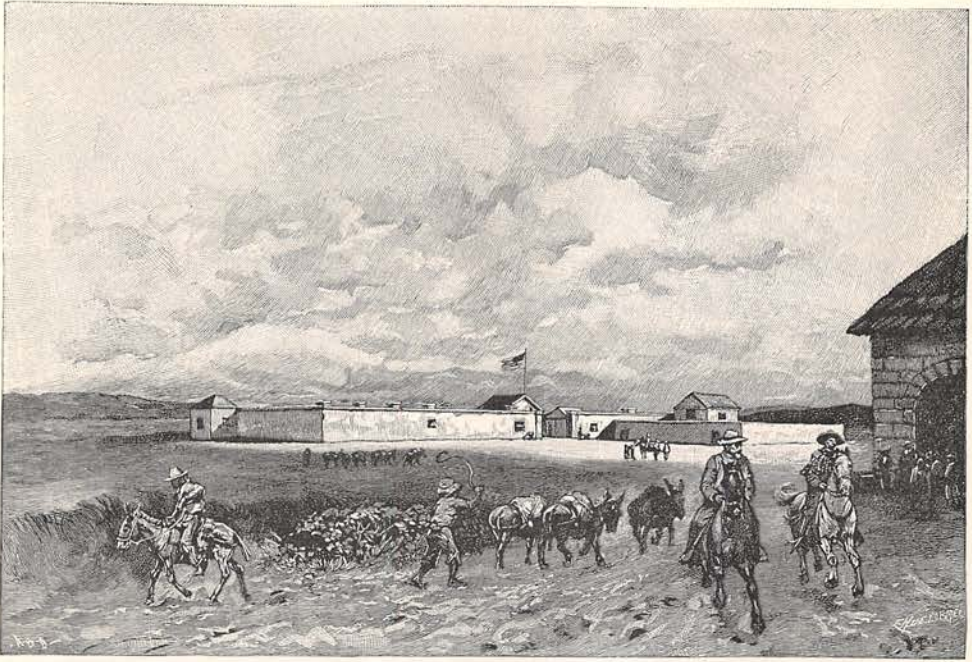


GENERAL JOHN A. SUTTER.
(FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY BRADLEY & RULOFSON.)

can trader to Santa Fé. Having been unsuccessful at Santa Fé, he returned to St. Louis, joined a party of trappers, went to the Rocky Mountains, and found his way down the Columbia River to Fort Vancouver. There he formed plans for trying to get down to the coast of California to establish a colony. He took a vessel that went to the Sandwich Islands, and there communicated his plans to people who assisted him. But as there was no vessel going direct from the Sandwich Islands to California, he had to take a Russian vessel by way of Sitka. He got such credit and help as he could in the Sandwich Islands and induced five or six natives to accompany him

to start the contemplated colony. He expected to send to Europe and the United States for his colonists. When he came to the coast of California, in 1840, he had an interview with the governor, Alvarado, and obtained permission to explore the country and find a place for his colony. He came to the bay of San Francisco, procured a small boat and explored the largest river he could find, and selected the site where the city of Sacramento now stands.

A short time before we arrived Sutter had bought out the Russian-American Fur Company at Fort Ross and Bodega on the Pacific. That company had a charter from Spain to take furs, but had no right to the land. The



SUTTER'S FORT. (REDRAWN FROM A PHOTOGRAPH OF AN OLD PRINT.)

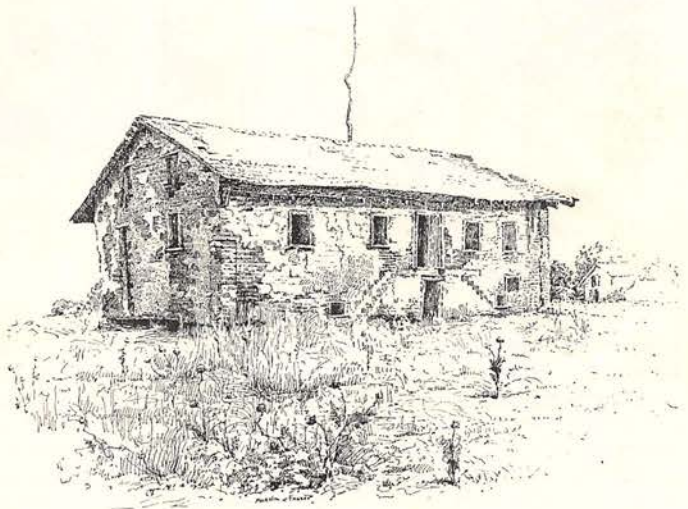
charter had about expired. Against the protest of the California authorities they had extended their settlement southward some twenty miles farther than they had any right to, and had occupied the country to, and even beyond, the bay of Bodega. The time came when the taking of furs was no longer profitable; the Russians were ordered to vacate and return to Sitka. They wished to sell out all their personal property and whatever remaining right they had to the land. So Sutter bought them out — cattle and horses; a little vessel of about twenty-five tons burden, called a launch; and other property, including forty odd pieces of old rusty cannon and one or two small brass pieces, with a quantity of old French flint-lock muskets pronounced by Sutter to be of those lost by Bonaparte in 1812 in his disastrous retreat from Moscow. This ordnance Sutter conveyed up the Sacramento River on the launch to his colony. As soon as the native Californians heard that he had bought out the Russians and was beginning to fortify himself by taking up the cannon they began to fear him. They were doubtless jealous because Americans and other foreigners had already commenced to make the place their headquarters, and they foresaw that Sutter's fort would be for them, especially for Americans, what it naturally did become in fact, a place of protection and general rendezvous; and so they threatened to break it up. Sutter had not as yet actually received his grant; he had simply taken prelim-

inary steps and had obtained permission to settle and proceed to colonize. These threats were made before he had begun the fort, much less built it, and Sutter felt insecure. He had a good many Indians whom he had collected about him, and a few white men (perhaps fifteen or twenty) and some Sandwich Islanders. When he heard of the coming of our thirty men he inferred at once that we would soon reach him and be an additional protection. With this feeling of security, even before the arrival of our party Sutter was so indiscreet as to write a letter to the governor or to some one in authority, saying that he wanted to hear no more threats of dispossession, for he was now able not only to defend himself but to go and chastise them. That letter having been despatched to the city of Mexico, the authorities there sent a new governor in 1842 with about six hundred troops to subdue Sutter. But the new governor, Manuel Micheltoarena, was an intelligent man. He knew the history of California and was aware that nearly all of his predecessors had been expelled by insurrections of the native Californians. Sutter sent a courier to meet the governor before his arrival at Los Angeles, with a letter in French, conveying his greetings to the governor, expressing a most cordial welcome, and submitting cheerfully and entirely to his authority. In this way the governor and Sutter became fast friends, and through Sutter the Americans had a friend in Governor Micheltoarena.

The first employment I had in California was in Sutter's service, about two months after our arrival at Marsh's. He engaged me to go to Bodega and Fort Ross and to stay there until he could finish removing the property which he had bought from the Russians. I remained there fourteen months, until everything was removed; then I came up into Sacramento Valley and took charge for Sutter of his Hock farm (so named from a large Indian village on the place), remaining there a little more than a year—in 1843 and part of 1844.

Nearly everybody who came to California made it a point to reach Sutter's Fort.¹ Sutter was one of the most liberal and hospitable of men. Everybody was welcome—one man or a hundred, it was all the same. He had peculiar traits: his necessities compelled him to take all he could buy, and he paid all he could pay; but he failed to keep up with his payments. And so he soon found himself immensely—almost hopelessly—involved in debt. His debt to the Russians amounted at first to something near one hundred thousand dollars. Interest increased apace. He had agreed to pay in wheat, but his crops failed. He struggled in every way, sowing large areas to wheat, increasing his cattle and horses, and trying to build a flouring mill. He kept his launch running to and from the bay, carrying down hides, tallow, furs, wheat, etc., returning with lumber sawed by hand in the redwood groves nearest the bay and other supplies. On an average

it took a month to make a trip. The fare for each person was five dollars, including board. Sutter started many other new enterprises in order to find relief from his embarrassments; but, in spite of all he could do, these increased. Every year found him worse and worse off; but it was partly his own fault. He employed men—not because he always needed and could profitably employ them, but because in the kindness of his heart it simply became a habit to employ everybody who wanted employment. As long as he had anything he trusted any one with everything he wanted—responsible or otherwise, acquaintances and strangers alike. Most of the labor was done by Indians, chiefly wild ones, except a few from the Missions who spoke Spanish. The wild ones learned Spanish so far as they learned



SUTTER'S FORT AS IT IS NOW.
(REDRAWN FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY H. S. BEALS.)

anything, that being the language of the country, and everybody had to learn some-

¹ Every year after the arrival of our party, in 1841, immigrant parties came across the plains to California; except in 1842, when they went to Oregon, most of them coming thence to California in 1843. Ours of 1841 being the first, let me add that a later party arrived in California in 1841. It was composed of about twenty-five persons who arrived at Westport, Mo., too late to come with us, and so went with the annual caravan of St. Louis traders to Santa Fé, and thence *via* the Gila River into Southern California.

Among the more noted arrivals on this coast I may mention:

1841.—Commodore Wilkes's Exploring Expedition, a party of which came overland from Oregon to California, under Captain Ringgold, I think.

1842.—Commodore Thomas ap Catesby Jones, who raised the American flag in Monterey.

1843.—*First*. L. W. Hastings, *via* Oregon. He was ambitious to make California a republic and to be its first president, and wrote an iridescent book to

induce immigration,—which came in 1846,—but found the American flag flying when he returned with the immigration he had gone to meet. Also among the noted arrivals in 1843 was Pierson B. Reading, an accomplished gentleman, the proprietor of Reading's ranch in Shasta County, and from whom Fort Reading took its name. Samuel J. Hensley was also one of the same party. *Second*. Dr. Sandels, a very intelligent man.

1844.—*First*. Frémont's first arrival (in March); Mr. Charles Preuss, a scientific man, and Kit Carson with him. *Second*. The Stevens-Townsend-Murphy party, who brought the first wagons into California across the plains.

1845.—*First*. James W. Marshall, who, in 1848, discovered the gold. *Second*. Frémont's second arrival, also Hastings's second arrival.

1846.—Largest immigration party, the one Hastings went to meet. The Donner party was among the last of these immigrants.

thing of it. The number of men employed by Sutter may be stated at from 100 to 500 — the latter number at harvest time. Among them were blacksmiths, carpenters, tanners, gunsmiths, vaqueros, farmers, gardeners, weavers (to weave coarse woolen blankets), hunters,

corral; then three or four hundred wild horses were turned in to thresh it, the Indians whooping to make them run faster. Suddenly they would dash in before the band at full speed, when the motion became reversed, with the effect of plowing up the trampled straw to the



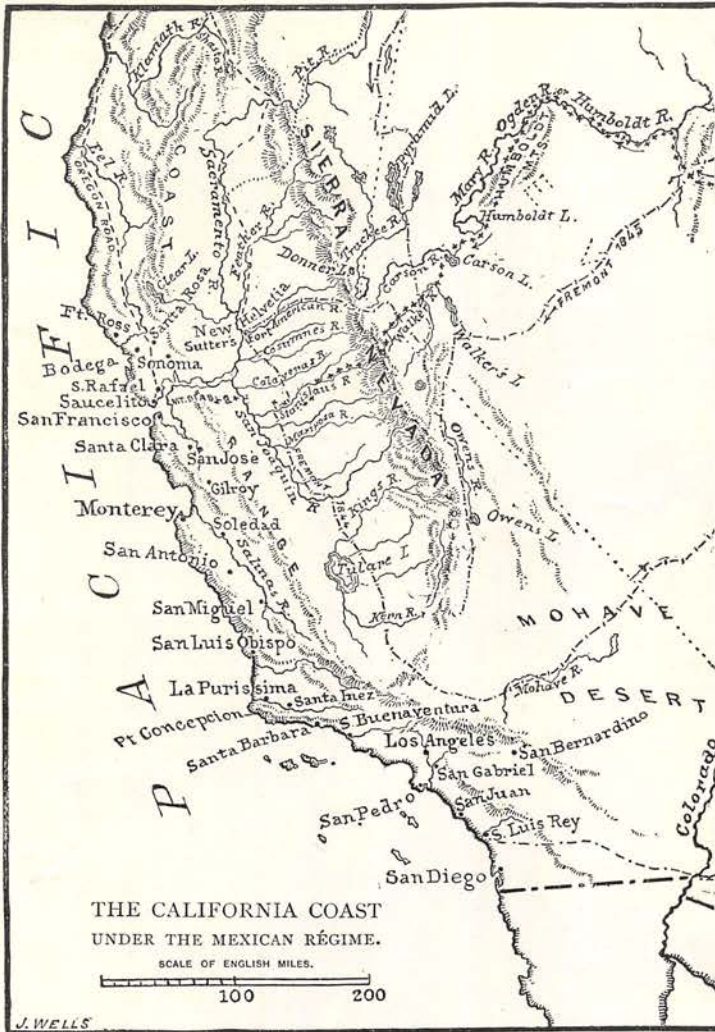
A CALIFORNIA CART.

sawyers (to saw lumber by hand, a custom known in England), sheep-herders, trappers, and, later, millwrights and a distiller. In a word, Sutter started every business and enterprise possible. He tried to maintain a sort of military discipline. Cannon were mounted, and pointed in every direction through embrasures in the walls and bastions. The soldiers were Indians, and every evening after coming from work they were drilled under a white officer, generally a German, marching to the music of fife and drum. A sentry was always at the gate, and regular bells called men to and from work.

Harvesting, with the rude implements, was a scene. Imagine three or four hundred wild Indians in a grain field, armed, some with sickles, some with butcher-knives, some with pieces of hoop iron roughly fashioned into shapes like sickles, but many having only their hands with which to gather by small handfuls the dry and brittle grain; and as their hands would soon become sore, they resorted to dry willow sticks, which were split to afford a sharper edge with which to sever the straw. But the wildest part was the threshing. The harvest of weeks, sometimes of a month, was piled up in the straw in the form of a huge mound in the middle of a high, strong, round

very bottom. In an hour the grain would be thoroughly threshed and the dry straw broken almost into chaff. In this manner I have seen two thousand bushels of wheat threshed in a single hour. Next came the winnowing, which would often take another month. It could only be done when the wind was blowing, by throwing high into the air shovelfuls of grain, straw, and chaff, the lighter materials being wafted to one side, while the grain, comparatively clean, would descend and form a heap by itself. In this manner all the grain in California was cleaned. At that day no such thing as a fanning mill had ever been brought to this coast.

The kindness and hospitality of the native Californians have not been overstated. Up to the time the Mexican régime ceased in California they had a custom of never charging for anything; that is to say, for entertainment — food, use of horses, etc. You were supposed, even if invited to visit a friend, to bring your blankets with you, and one would be very thoughtless if he traveled and did not take a knife with him to cut his meat. When you had eaten, the invariable custom was to rise, deliver to the woman or hostess the plate on which you had eaten the meat and beans — for that was about all they had — and say,



country, it prevailed in the towns too. There was not a hotel in San Francisco, or Monterey, or anywhere in California, till 1846, when the Americans took the country. The priests at the Missions were glad to entertain strangers without charge. They would give you a room in which to sleep, and perhaps a bedstead with a hide stretched across it, and over that you would spread your blankets.

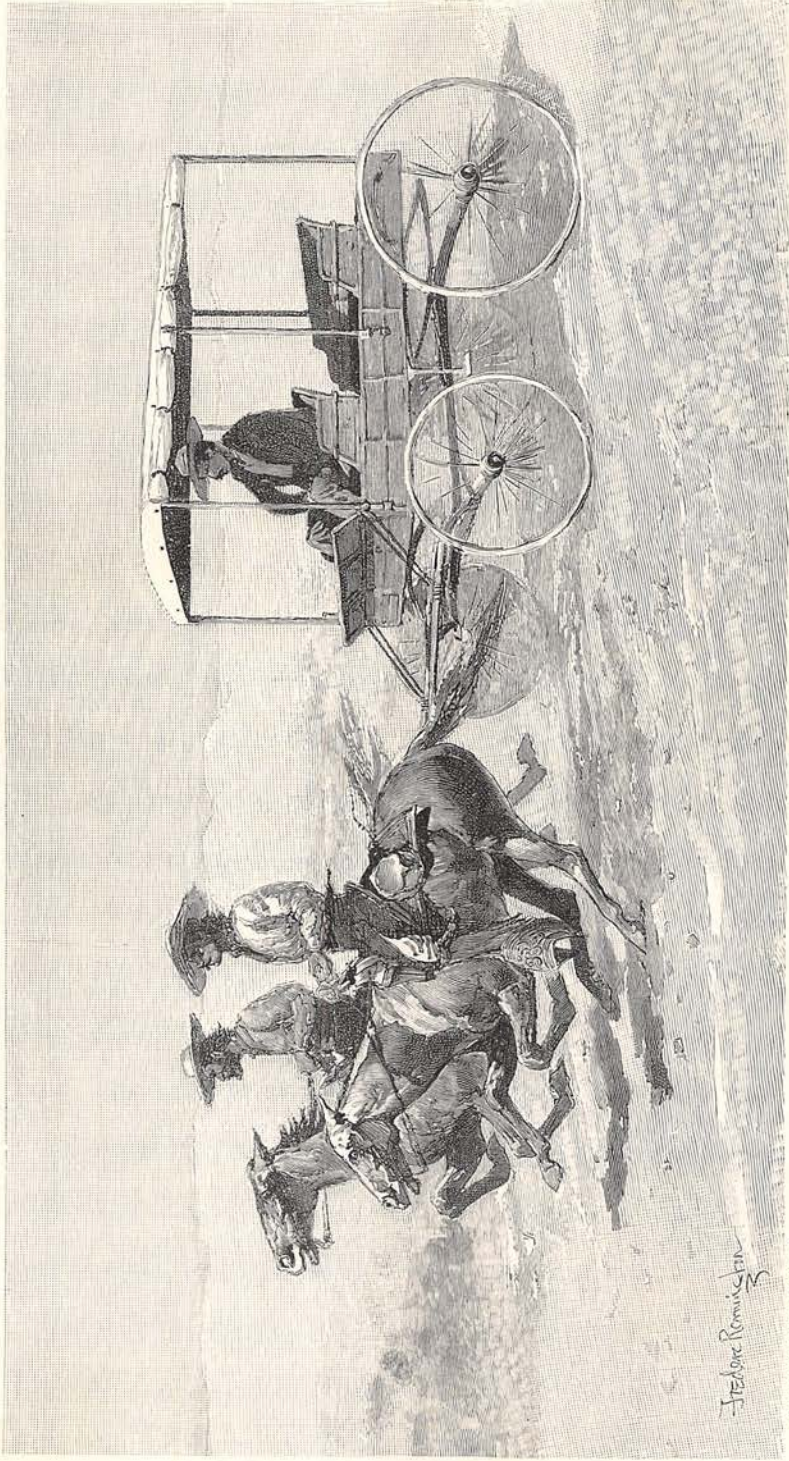
At this time there was not in California any vehicle except a rude California cart; the wheels were without tires, and were made by felling an oak tree and hewing it down till it made a solid wheel nearly a foot thick on the rim and a little larger where the axle went through. The hole for the axle would be eight or nine inches in diameter, but a few years' use would increase it to a foot. To make the hole, an auger, gouge, or chisel was sometimes used, but the principal tool was an ax. A small tree required but little hew-

"Muchas gracias, Señora" ("Many thanks, madame"); and the hostess as invariably replied, *"Buen provecho"* ("May it do you much good"). The Missions in California invariably had gardens with grapes, olives, figs, pomegranates, pears, and apples, but the ranches scarcely ever had any fruit.¹ When you wanted a horse to ride, you would take it to the next ranch — it might be twenty, thirty, or fifty miles — and turn it out there, and sometime or other in reclaiming his stock the owner would get it back. In this way you might travel from one end of California to the other.

The ranch life was not confined to the

¹ With the exception of the tuna, or prickly pear, these were the only cultivated fruits I can recall to mind in California, except oranges, lemons, and limes, in a few places.

ing and shaping to answer for an axle. These carts were always drawn by oxen, the yoke being lashed with rawhide to the horns. To lubricate the axles they used soap (that is one thing the Mexicans could make), carrying along for the purpose a big pail of thick soapsuds which was constantly put in the box or hole; but you could generally tell when a California cart was coming half a mile away by the squeaking. I have seen the families of the wealthiest people go long distances at the rate of thirty miles or more a day, visiting in one of these clumsy two-wheeled vehicles. They had a little framework around it made of round sticks, and a bullock hide was put in for a floor or bottom. Sometimes the better class would have a little calico for curtains and cover. There was no such thing as a spoked wheel in use then. Somebody sent from Boston a wagon



DRAWN BY FREDERIC REMINGTON.

THE GOVERNOR'S EQUIPAGE.

ENGRAVED BY T. SCHUSSLER.

as a present to the priest in charge of the Mission of San José, but as soon as summer came the woodwork shrunk, the tires came off, and it all fell to pieces. There was no one in California to set tires. When Governor Micheltorena was sent from Mexico to California

across the plains with the express purpose of finding gold. When he got into the Rocky Mountains, as I was told by his friend Dr. Townsend, Stevens said, "We are in a gold country." One evening (when they camped for the night) he went into a gulch, took some



HUNTING A RUNAWAY SAILOR.

he brought with him an ambulance, not much better than a common spring wagon, such as a marketman would now use with one horse. It had shafts, but in California at that time there was no horse broken to work in them, nor was there such a thing known as a harness; so the governor had two mounted vaqueros to pull it, their reatas being fastened to the shafts and to the pommels of their saddles. The first wagons brought into California came across the plains in 1844 with the Townsend or Stevens party. They were left in the mountains and lay buried under the snow till the following spring, when Moses Schallenberger, Elisha Stevens (who was the captain of the party), and others went up and brought some of the wagons down into the Sacramento Valley. No other wagons had ever before reached California across the plains.¹

Elisha Stevens was from Georgia and had there worked in the gold mines. He started

¹ Mr. Schallenberger still lives at San José. He remained a considerable part of the winter alone with the wagons, which were buried under the snow. When the last two men made a desperate effort to escape over the mountains into California, Schallenberger tried to go with them, but was unable to bear the

fatigue, and so returned about fifteen miles to the cabin they had left near Donner Lake (as it was afterward called), where he remained, threatened with starvation, till one of the party returned from the Sacramento Valley and rescued him.

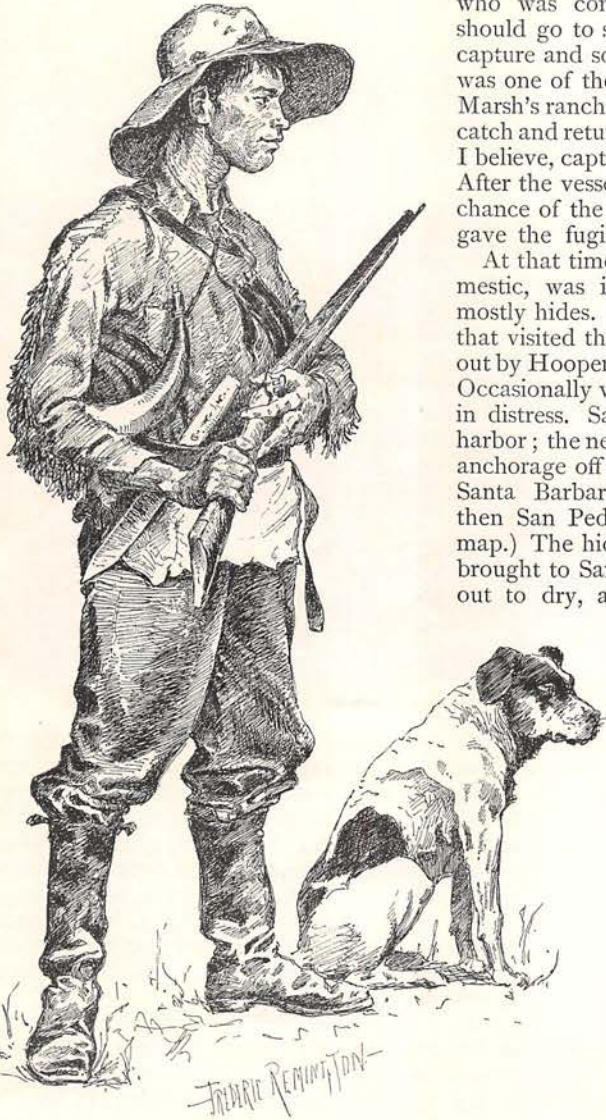
gravel and washed it and got the color of gold, thus unmistakably showing, as he afterwards did in Lower California, that he had considerable knowledge of gold mining. But the strange thing is, that afterwards, when he passed up and down several times over the country between Bear and Yuba rivers, as he did with the party in the spring of 1845 to bring down their wagons, he should have seen no signs of gold where subsequently the whole country was found to contain it.

The early foreign residents of California were largely runaway sailors. Many if not most would change their names. For instance, Gilroy's ranch, where the town of Gilroy is now located, was owned by an old resident under the assumed appellation of Gilroy. Of course vessels touching upon this coast were liable, as they were everywhere, to lose men by desertion, especially if the men were maltreated. Such things have been so common that it is

not difficult to believe that those who left their vessels in early days on this then distant coast had cause for so doing. To be known as a runaway sailor was no stain upon a man's character. It was no uncommon thing, after

my arrival here, for sailors to be skulking and hiding about from ranch to ranch till the vessel they had left should leave the coast. At Amador's ranch, before mentioned, on my first arrival here, I met a sailor boy, named Harrison Pierce, of eighteen or twenty years, who was concealing himself till his vessel should go to sea. He managed to escape recapture and so remained in the country. He was one of the men who went with me from Marsh's ranch to Sutter's. Californians would catch and return sailors to get the reward which, I believe, captains of vessels invariably offered. After the vessels had sailed and there was no chance of the reward the native Californians gave the fugitives no further trouble.

At that time the only trade, foreign or domestic, was in hides, tallow, and furs; but mostly hides. With few exceptions the vessels that visited the coast were from Boston, fitted out by Hooper to go there and trade for hides.¹ Occasionally vessels would put in for water or in distress. San Francisco was the principal harbor; the next was Monterey. There was an anchorage off San Luis Obispo; the next was Santa Barbara, the next San Buenaventura, then San Pedro, and lastly San Diego. (See map.) The hides were generally collected and brought to San Diego and there salted, staked out to dry, and folded so that they would lie compactly in the ship, and thence were shipped to Boston. Goods were principally sold on board the vessels: there were very few stores on land; that of Thomas O. Larkin at Monterey was the principal one. The entrance of a vessel into harbor or roadstead was a signal to all the ranchers to come in their little boats and launches laden with hides to trade for goods. Thus vessels went from port to port, remaining few or many days according to the amount of trade. When the people stopped bringing hides, a vessel would leave.²



TWO PIKE COUNTY ARRIVALS.

¹ See Dana's "Two Years before the Mast" for a description of the California coast at this period.

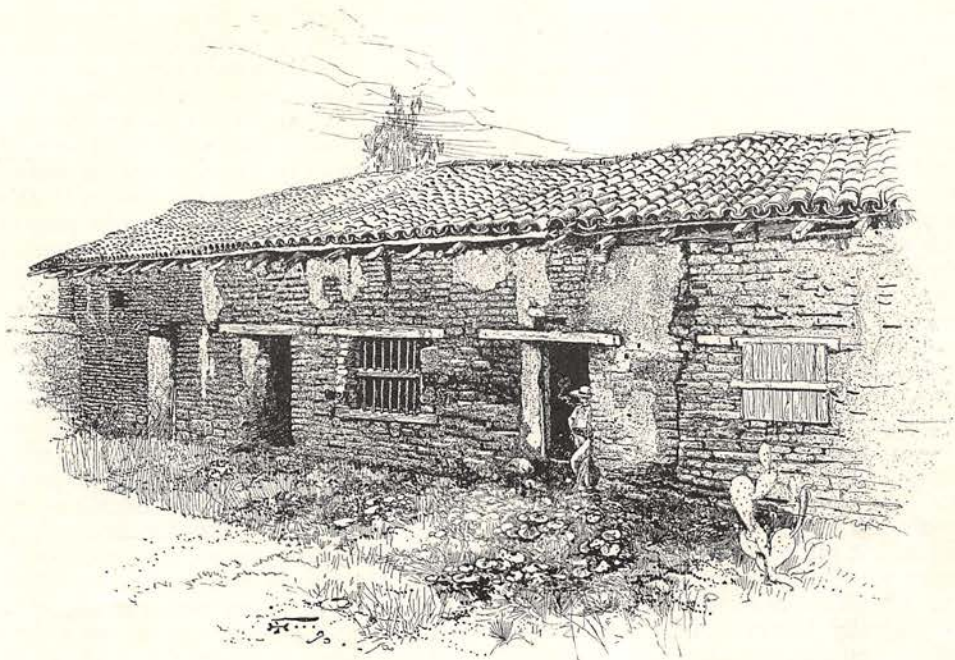
² My first visit to the bay of San Francisco was in the first week of January, 1842. I had never before seen salt water. The town was called Yerba Buena, for the peppermint which was plentiful around some springs, located probably a little south of the junction of Pine and Sansome streets. Afterward—in 1847—when through the immigration of 1846 across the plains, and through arrivals around Cape Horn, the place had become a village of some importance, the citizens changed the name to San Francisco, the name

of the bay on which it is situated. With the exception of the Presidio and the Aduana (custom-house), all the buildings could be counted on the fingers and thumbs of one's hands. The most pretentious was a frame building erected by Jacob P. Leese, but then owned and occupied by the Hudson Bay Company, of which a Mr. Ray was agent. The others belonged to Captain Hinckley, Nathan Spear, Captain John J. Vioget, a Mr. Fuller, "Davis the carpenter," and a few others.

Monterey, when I first saw it (in 1844), had possibly 200 people, besides the troops, who numbered

I have said that there was no regular physician in California. Later, in 1843, in a company that came from Oregon, was one Joe Meeks, a noted character in the Rocky Mountains. On the way he said, "Boys, when I

binding it in a poultice of mud, and it grew on again. The new governor, Micheltorena, employed him as surgeon. Meeks had a way of looking and acting very wise, and of being reticent when people talked about things which



THE FIRST CALIFORNIA JAIL, MONTEREY.

get down to California among the Greasers I am going to palm myself off as a doctor"; and from that time they dubbed him Dr. Meeks. He could neither read nor write. As soon as the Californians heard of his arrival at Monterey they began to come to him with their different ailments. His first professional service was to a boy who had a toe cut off. Meeks, happening to be near, stuck the toe on,

he did not understand. One day he went into a little shop kept by a man known as Dr. Stokes, who had been a kind of hospital steward on board ship, and who had brought ashore one of those little medicine chests that were usually taken to sea, with apothecary scales, and a pamphlet giving a short synopsis of diseases and a table of weights and medicines, so that almost anybody could administer relief to

about 500. The principal foreigners living there then were: Thomas O. Larkin, David Spence, W. E. P. Hartnell, James Watson, Charles Walter, A. G. Toomes, R. H. Thomas, Talbot H. Green (Paul Geddes), W. Dickey, James McKinley, Milton Little, and Dr. James Stokes. The principal natives or Mexicans were Governor Micheltorena, Manuel Jimeno, José Castro, Juan Malarine, Francisco Arce, Don José Abrego. Larkin received his commission as American consul for California, at Mazatlan, in 1844. On his return to Monterey the woman who washed his clothes took the small-pox. Larkin's whole family had it; it spread, and the number of deaths was fearful, amounting to over eighty.

When I first saw Santa Barbara, February 5, 1845, the old Mission buildings were the principal ones. The town — probably half a mile to the east — contained possibly one hundred persons, among whom I recall Captain Wilson, Dr. Nicholas Den, Captain Scott, Mr. Sparks, Nibever; and of natives, Pablo De la Guerra, Carlos Antonio, Carillo, and others.

Los Angeles I first saw in March, 1845. It then had probably two hundred and fifty people, of whom I recall Don Abel Stearns, John Temple, Captain Alexander Bell, William Wolfskill, Lemuel Carpenter, David W. Alexander; also of Mexicans, Pio Pico (governor), Don Juan Bandini, and others. On ranches in the vicinity lived William Workman, B. D. Wilson, and John Roland. At San Pedro, Captain Johnson. At Rancho Chino, Isaac Williams. At San Juan Capistrano, Don Juan Foster.

I went to San Diego, July, 1846, with Frémont's battalion, on the sloop of war *Cyane*, Captain Dupont (afterwards Admiral). The population was about one hundred, among whom I recall Captain Henry D. Fitch, Don Miguel de Pedrorena, Don Santiago Arguello, the Bandini family, J. M. Estudillo, and others. Subsequently, after the revolt of September, 1846, San Diego was the point from which, in January, 1847, the final conquest of California was made.

sick sailors. Meeks went to him and said, "Doctor, I want you to put me up some powders." So Stokes went behind his table and got out his scales and medicines, and asked, "What kind of powders?" "Just common powders—patient not very sick." "If you will tell me what kind of powders, Dr. Meeks—" "Oh, just common powders." That is all he would say. Dr. Stokes told about town that Meeks knew nothing about medicine, but people thought that perhaps Meeks had given the prescription in Latin and that Dr. Stokes could not read it. But Meeks's reign was to have an end. An American man-of-war came into the harbor. Thomas O. Larkin was then the United States consul at Monterey, and the commander and all his officers went up to Larkin's store, among them the surgeon, who was introduced to Dr. Meeks. The conversation turning upon the diseases incident to the country, Meeks became reticent, saying merely that he was going out of practice and intended to leave the country, because he could not get medicines. The surgeon expressed much sympathy and said, "Dr. Meeks, if you will make me out a list I will very cheerfully divide with you such medicines as I can spare." Meeks did not know the names of three kinds of medicine, and tried evasion, but the surgeon cornered him and put the question so direct that he had to answer. He asked him what medicine he needed most. Finally Meeks said he wanted some "draps," and that was all that could be got out of him. When the story came out his career as a doctor was at an end, and he soon after left the country.

In 1841 there was likewise no lawyer in California. In 1843 a lawyer named Hastings arrived *via* Oregon. He was an ambitious man, and desired to wrest the country from Mexico and make it a republic. He disclosed his plan to a man who revealed it to me. His scheme was to go down to Mexico and make friends of the Mexican authorities, if possible get a grant of land, and then go into Texas, consult President Houston, and go East and write a book, praising the country to the skies, which he did, with little regard to accuracy. His object was to start a large immigration, and in this he succeeded. The book was published in 1845, and undoubtedly largely induced what was called the "great immigration" of 1846 across the plains, consisting of about six hundred. Hastings returned to California in the autumn of 1845, preparatory to taking steps to declare the country independent and to establish a republic and make

himself president. In 1846 he went back to meet the immigration and to perfect his plans so that the emigrants would know exactly where to go and what to do. But in 1846 the Mexican war intervened, and while Hastings was gone to meet the immigration California was taken possession of by the United States. These doubtless were the first plans ever conceived for the independence of California. Hastings knew there were not enough Americans and foreigners yet in California to do anything. He labored hard to get money to publish his book, and went about lecturing on temperance in Ohio, where he became intimate with a fellow by the name of McDonald, who was acting the Methodist preacher and pretending, with considerable success, to raise funds for missionary purposes. At last they separated, McDonald preceding Hastings to San Francisco, where he became bartender for a man named Vioget, who owned a saloon and a billiard table—the first, I think, on the Pacific coast. Hastings returned later, and, reaching San Francisco in a cold rain, went up to Vioget's and called for brandy. He poured out a glassful and was about to drink it, when McDonald, recognizing him, leaned over the bar, extended his hand, and said, "My good temperance friend, how are you?" Hastings in great surprise looked him in the eyes, recognized him, and said, "My dear Methodist brother, how do you do?"

It is not generally known that in 1841—the year I reached California—gold was discovered in what is now a part of Los Angeles County. The yield was not rich; indeed, it was so small that it made no stir. The discoverer was an old Canadian Frenchman by the name of Baptiste Ruelle, who had been a trapper with the Hudson Bay Company, and, as was not an infrequent case with those trappers, had drifted down into New Mexico, where he had worked in placer mines. The mines discovered by Ruelle in California attracted a few New Mexicans, by whom they were worked for several years. But as they proved too poor, Ruelle himself came up into the Sacramento Valley, five hundred miles away, and engaged to work for Sutter when I was in Sutter's service.¹ Now it so happened that almost every year a party of a dozen men or more would come from or return to Oregon. Of such parties some—perhaps most of them—would be Canadian French, who had trapped all over the country, and these were generally the guides. In 1843 it was known to every one that such a party was getting ready to go to Oregon.

¹ New Mexican miners invariably carried their gold (which was generally small, and small in quantity as well) in a large quill—that of a vulture or turkey buzzard. Sometimes these quills would hold three or

four ounces, and, being translucent, they were graduated so as to see at any time the quantity in them. The gold was kept in by a stopper. Ruelle had such a quill, which appeared to have been carried for years.



CAÑON OF THE AMERICAN RIVER.

Baptiste Ruelle had been in Sutter's employ several months, when one day he came to Sutter, showed him a few small particles of gold, and said he had found them on the American River, and he wanted to go far into the mountains on that stream to prospect for gold. For this purpose he desired two mules loaded with provisions, and he selected two notably stupid Indian boys whom he wanted to go into the mountains with him, saying he would have no others. Of course he did not get the outfit. Sutter and I talked about it and queried, What does he want with so much provision — the American River being only a mile and the mountains only twenty miles distant? And why does he want those two stupid boys, since he might be attacked by the Indians? Our conclusion was that he really wanted the outfit so that he could join the party and go to Oregon and remain. Such I believe was Ruelle's intention; though in 1848, after James W. Marshall had discovered the gold at Coloma, Ruelle, who was one of the first to go there and mine, still protested that he had discovered gold on the American River in 1843. The only thing that I can recall to lend the least plausibility to Ruelle's pretensions would be that, so far as I know, he never, after that one time, manifested any desire to go to Oregon, and remained in California till he died. But I should add, neither did he ever show any longing again to go into the mountains to look for gold during the subsequent years he remained with Sutter, even to the time of Marshall's discovery.

Early in the spring of 1844, a Mexican working under me at the Hock Farm for



ON THE SUMMIT OF THE SIERRA.

Sutter came to me and told me there was gold in the Sierra Nevada. His name was Pablo Gutierrez. The discovery by Marshall, it will be remembered, was in January, 1848. Pablo told me this at a time when I was calling him to account because he had absented himself the day before without permission. I was giving him a lecture in Spanish, which I could speak quite well in those days. Like many Mexicans, he had an Indian wife; some time before, he had been in the mountains and had bought a squaw. She had run away from

him, and he had gone to find and bring her back. And it was while he was on this trip, he said, that he had seen signs of gold. After my lecture he said, "Señor, I have made an important discovery; there surely is gold on Bear River in the mountains." This was in March, 1844. A few days afterward I arranged to go with him up on Bear River. We went five or six miles into the mountains, when he showed me the signs and the place where he thought the gold was. "Well," I said, "can you not find some?" No, he said, because he must have a *batea*.

faithfully kept his promise. It would have taken us a year or two to get money enough to go. In those days there were every year four or five arrivals, sometimes six, of vessels laden with goods from Boston to trade for hides in California. These vessels brought around all classes of goods needed by the Mexican people. It would have required about six months each way, five months being a quick passage. But, as will be seen, our plans were interrupted. In the autumn of that year, 1844, a revolt took place. The native chiefs of Cali-



THE ANCHORAGE OF MONTEREY FROM THE OLD BURIAL-GROUND.

He talked so much about the "batea" that I concluded it must be a complicated machine. "Can't Mr. Keiser, our saddle-tree maker, make the batea?" I asked. "Oh, no." I did not then know that a batea is nothing more nor less than a wooden bowl which the Mexicans use for washing gold. I said, "Pablo, where can you get it?" He said, "Down in Mexico." I said, "I will help pay your expenses if you will go down and get one," which he promised to do. I said, "Pablo, say nothing to anybody else about this gold discovery, and we will get the batea and find the gold." As time passed I was afraid to let him go to Mexico, lest when he got among his relatives he might be induced to stay and not come back, so I made a suggestion to him. I said, "Pablo, let us save our earnings and get on a vessel and go around to Boston, and there get the batea; I can interpret for you, and the Yankees are very ingenious and can make anything." The idea pleased him, and he promised to go as soon as we could save enough to pay our expenses. He was to keep it a secret, and I believe he

fornia, José Castro and ex-Governor Alvarado, succeeded in raising an insurrection against the Mexican governor, Micheltorena, to expel him from the country. They accused him of being friendly to Americans and of giving them too much land. The truth was, he had simply shown impartiality. When Americans had been here long enough, had conducted themselves properly, and had complied with the colonization laws of Mexico, he had given them lands as readily as to native-born citizens. He was a fair-minded man and an intelligent and good governor, and wished to develop the country. His friendship for Americans was a mere pretext; for his predecessor, Alvarado, and his successor, Pio Pico, also granted lands freely to foreigners, and among them to Americans. The real cause of the insurrection against Micheltorena, however, was that the native chiefs had become hungry to get hold again of the revenues. The feeling against Americans was easily aroused and became their main excuse. The English and French influence, so far as felt, evidently leaned towards the side

of the Californians. It was not open but it was felt, and not a few expressed the hope that England or France would some day seize and hold California. I believe the Gachupines — natives of Spain, of whom there were a few — did not participate in the feeling against the Americans, though few did much, if anything, to allay it. In October Sutter went from Sacramento to Monterey, the capital, to see the governor. I went with him. On our way thither, at San José, we heard the first mutterings of the insurrection. We hastened to Monterey, and were the first to communicate the fact to the governor. Sutter, alarmed, took the first opportunity to get away by water. There were in those days no mail routes, no public conveyances of any kind, no regular line of travel, no public highways. But a vessel happened to touch at Monterey, and Sutter took passage to the bay of San Francisco, and thence by his own launch reached home. In a few days the first blow was struck, the insurgents taking all the horses belonging to the government at Monterey, setting the governor and all his troops on foot. He raised a few horse as best he could and pursued them, but could not overtake them on foot. However, I understood that a sort of parley took place at or near San José, but no battle, surrender, or settlement. Meanwhile, having started to return by land to Sutter's Fort, two hundred miles distant, I met the governor returning to Monterey. He stopped his forces and talked with me half an hour and confided to me his plans. He desired me to beg the Americans to be loyal to Mexico; to assure them that he was their friend, and in due time would give them all the lands to which they were entitled. He sent particularly friendly word to Sutter. Then I went on to the Mission of San José and there fell in with the insurgents, who had made that place their headquarters; I staid all night, and the leaders, Castro and Alvarado, treated me like a prince. The two insurgents protested their friendship for the Americans, and sent a request to Sutter to support them. On my arrival at the fort the situation was fully considered, and all, with a single exception, concluded to support Micheltorena. He had been our friend; he had granted us land; he promised, and we felt that we could rely upon, his continued friendship; and we felt, indeed we knew, we could not repose the same confidence in the native Californians. This man Pablo Gutierrez, who had told me about the gold in the Sierra Nevada, was a native of

Sinaloa in Mexico, and sympathized with the Mexican governor and with us. Sutter sent him with despatches to the governor, stating that we were organizing and preparing to join him. Pablo returned, and was sent again to tell the governor that we were on the march to join him at Monterey. This time he was taken prisoner with our despatches and was hanged to a tree, somewhere near the present town of Gilroy. That of course put an end to our gold discovery; otherwise Pablo Gutierrez might have been the discoverer instead of Marshall.¹

But I still had it in my mind to try to find gold; so early in the spring of 1845 I made it a point to visit the mines in the south discovered by Ruelle in 1841. They were in the mountains about twenty miles north or northeast of the Mission of San Fernando, or say fifty miles from Los Angeles. I wanted to see the Mexicans working there, and to gain what knowledge I could of gold digging. Dr. John Townsend went with me. Pablo's confidence that there was gold on Bear River was fresh in my mind; and I hoped the same year to find time to return there and explore, and if possible find gold in the Sierra Nevada. But I had no time that busy year to carry out my purpose. The Mexicans' slow and inefficient manner of working the mine was most discouraging. When I returned to Sutter's Fort the same spring Sutter desired me to engage with him for a year as bookkeeper, which meant his general business man as well. His financial matters being in a bad way, I consented. I had a great deal to do besides keeping the books. Among other undertakings we sent men southeast in the Sierra Nevada about forty miles from the fort to saw lumber with a whipsaw. Two men would saw of good timber about one hundred or one hundred and twenty-five feet a day. Early in July I framed an excuse to go into the mountains to give the men some special directions about lumber needed at the fort. The day was one of the hottest I had ever experienced. No place looked favorable for a gold discovery. I even attempted to descend into a deep gorge through which meandered a small stream, but gave it up on account of the brush and the heat. My search was fruitless. The place where Marshall discovered gold in 1848 was about forty miles to the north of the saw-pits at this place. The next spring, 1849, I joined a party to go to the mines on and south of the Cosumne and

¹ The insurrection ended in the capitulation—I might call it expulsion—of Micheltorena. The causes which led to this result were various, some of them infamous. Pio Pico, being the oldest member of the Departmental Assembly, became governor, and Castro

commander-in-chief of the military. They reigned but one year, and then came the Mexican war. Castro was made governor of Lower California, and died there. Pio Pico was not a vindictive man; he was a mild governor, and still lives at Los Angeles.



THE OLD CUARTEL AT MONTEREY.

Mokelumne rivers. The first day we reached a trading post—Digg's, I think, was the name. Several traders had there pitched their tents to sell goods. One of them was Tom Fallon, whom I knew. This post was within a few miles of where Sutter's men sawed the lumber in 1845. I asked Fallon if he had ever seen the old saw-pits where Sicard and Dupas had worked in 1845. He said he had, and knew the place well. Then I told him how I had attempted that year to descend into the deep gorge to the south of it to look for gold.

"My stars!" he said. "Why, that gulch down there was one of the richest placers that have ever been found in this country"; and he told me of men who had taken out a pint cupful of nuggets before breakfast.

Frémont's first visit to California was in the month of March, 1844. He came *via* eastern Oregon, traveling south and passing east of the Sierra Nevada, and crossed the chain about opposite the bay of San Francisco, at the head of the American River, and descended into the Sacramento Valley to Sutter's Fort. It was there I first met him. He staid but a short time, three or four weeks perhaps, to refit with fresh mules and horses and such provisions as he could obtain, and then set out on his return to the United States. Coloma, where Marshall afterward discovered gold, was on one of the branches of the American River. Frémont probably came down that very stream. How strange that he and his scientific corps did not discover signs of gold, as Commodore Wilkes's party had done when coming overland from Oregon in 1841! One morning at the breakfast table at Sutter's, Frémont was urged to remain a while and go to the coast, and among other things which it

would be of interest for him to see was mentioned a very large redwood tree (*Sequoia sempervirens*) near Santa Cruz, or rather a cluster of trees, forming apparently a single trunk, which was said to be seventy-two feet in circumference. I then told Frémont of the big tree I had seen in the Sierra Nevada in October, 1841, which I afterwards verified to be one of the fallen big trees of the Calaveras Grove. I therefore believe myself to have been the first white man to see the mammoth trees of California. The Sequoias are found nowhere except in California. The redwood that I speak of is the *Sequoia sempervirens*, and is confined to the sea-coast and the west side of the Coast Range Mountains. The *Sequoia gigantea*, or mammoth tree, is found only on the western slope of the Sierra Nevada—nowhere farther north than latitude $38^{\circ} 30'$.

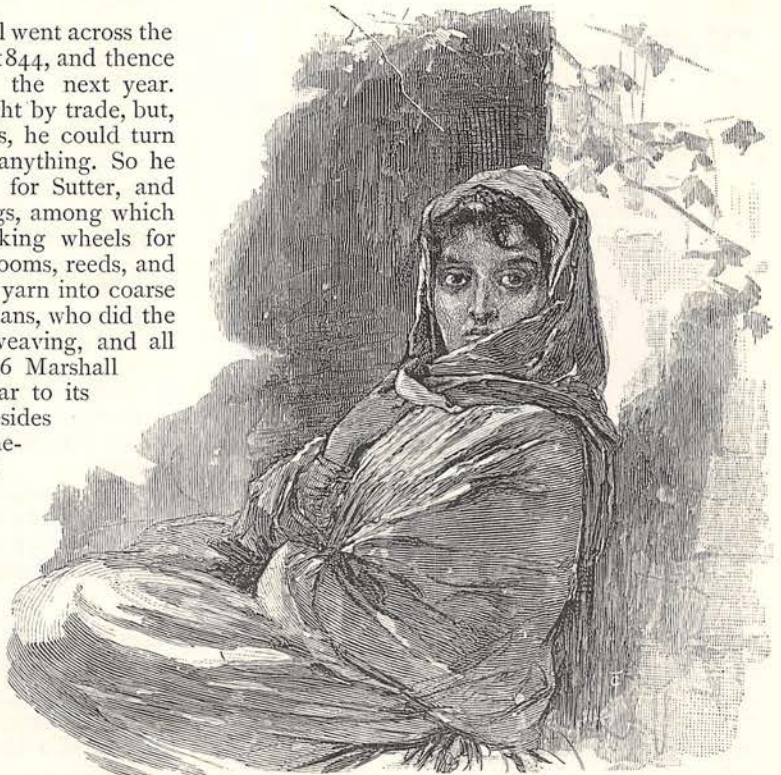
Sutter's Fort was an important point from the very beginning of the colony. The building of the fort and all subsequent immigrations added to its importance, for that was the first point of destination to those who came by way of Oregon or direct across the plains. The fort was begun in 1842 and finished in 1844. There was no town till after the gold discovery in 1848, when it became the bustling, buzzing center for merchants, traders, miners, etc., and every available room was in demand. In 1849 Sacramento City was laid off on the river two miles west of the fort, and the town grew up there at once into a city. The first town was laid off by Hastings and myself in the month of January, 1846, about three or four miles below the mouth of the American River, and called Sutterville. But first the Mexican war, then the lull which always follows excitement, and then the rush

and roar of the gold discovery, prevented its building up till it was too late. Attempts were several times made to revive Sutterville, but Sacramento City had become too strong to be removed. Sutter always called his colony and fort "New Helvetia," in spite of which the name mostly used by others, before the Mexican war, was Sutter's Fort, or Sacramento, and later Sacramento altogether.

Sutter's many enterprises continued to create a growing demand for lumber. Every year, and sometimes more than once, he sent parties into the mountains to explore for an available site to build a sawmill on the Sacramento River or some of its tributaries, by which the lumber could be rafted down to the fort. There was no want of timber or of water power in the mountains, but the cañon features of the streams rendered rafting impracticable. The year after the war (1847) Sutter's needs for lumber were even greater than ever, although his embarrassments had increased and his ability to undertake new enterprises became less and less. Yet, never discouraged, nothing daunted, another hunt must be made for a sawmill site. This time Marshall happened to be the man chosen by Sutter to search the mountains. He was gone about a month, and returned with a most favorable report.

James W. Marshall went across the plains to Oregon in 1844, and thence came to California the next year. He was a wheelwright by trade, but, being very ingenious, he could turn his hand to almost anything. So he acted as carpenter for Sutter, and did many other things, among which I may mention making wheels for spinning wool, and looms, reeds, and shuttles for weaving yarn into coarse blankets for the Indians, who did the carding, spinning, weaving, and all other labor. In 1846 Marshall went through the war to its close as a private. Besides his ingenuity as a mechanic, he had most singular traits. Almost every one pronounced him half crazy or hare-brained. He was certainly eccentric, and perhaps somewhat flighty. His insanity, however, if he had any, was of a harmless kind; he was neither vicious nor quarrel-

some. He had great, almost overweening, confidence in his ability to do anything as a mechanic. I wrote the contract between Sutter and him to build the mill. Sutter was to furnish the means; Marshall was to build and run the mill, and have a share of the lumber for his compensation. His idea was to haul the lumber part way and raft it down the American River to Sacramento, and thence, his part of it, down the Sacramento River, and through Suisun and San Pablo bays to San Francisco for a market. Marshall's mind, in some respects at least, must have been unbalanced. It is hard to conceive how any sane man could have been so wide of the mark, or how any one could have selected such a site for a sawmill under the circumstances. Surely no other man than Marshall ever entertained so wild a scheme as that of rafting sawed lumber down the cañons of the American River, and no other man than Sutter would have been so confiding and credulous as to patronize him. It is proper to say that, under great difficulties, enhanced by winter rains, Marshall succeeded in building the mill—a very good one, too, of the kind. It had improvements which I had never seen in sawmills, and I had had considerable experience in Ohio. But the



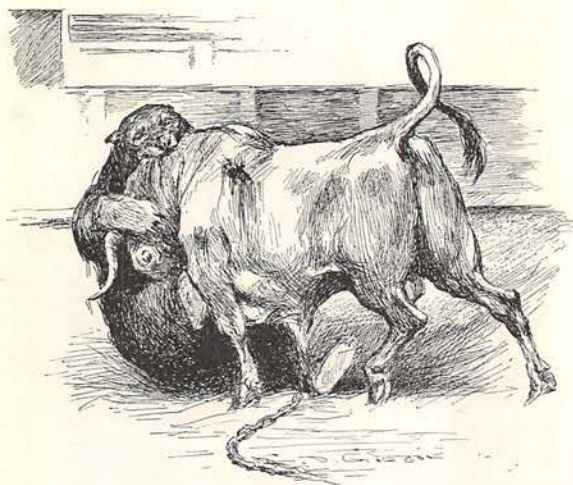
A SPANISH-CALIFORNIAN TYPE.

mill would not run because the wheel was placed too low. It was an old-fashioned flutter wheel that propelled an upright saw. The gravelly bar below the mill backed the water up, and submerged and stopped the wheel. The remedy was to dig a channel or tail-race through the bar below to conduct away the water. The wild Indians of the mountains were employed to do the digging. Once through the bar there would be plenty of fall. The digging was hard and took some weeks. As soon as the water began to run through the tail-race the wheel was blocked, the gate raised, and the water permitted to gush through all night. It was Marshall's custom to examine the race while the water was running through in the morning, so as to direct the Indians where to deepen it, and then shut off the water for them to work during the day. The water was clear as crystal, and the current was swift enough to sweep away the sand and lighter materials. Marshall made these examinations early in the morning while the Indians were getting their breakfast. It was on one of these occasions, in the clear shallow water, that he saw something bright and yellow. He picked it up—it was a piece of gold! The world has seen and felt the result. The mill sawed little or no lum-

ber; as a lumber enterprise the project was a failure, but as a gold discovery it was a grand success.

covery to San Francisco; how the same year I discovered gold on Feather River and worked it; how I made the first weights and scales to weigh the first gold for Sam Brannan; how the richness of the mines became known by the Mormons who were employed by Sutter to work at the sawmill, working about on Sundays and finding it in the crevices along the stream and taking it to Brannan's store at the fort, and how Brannan kept the gold a secret as long as he could till the excitement burst out all at once like wildfire.

Among the notable arrivals at Sutter's Fort should be mentioned that of Castro and Castillero, in the fall of 1845. The latter had been before in California, sent, as he had been this time, as a peace commissioner from Mexico. Castro was so jealous that it was almost impossible for Sutter to have anything like a private interview with him. Sutter, however, was given to understand that, as he had stood friendly to Governor Micheltorena on the side of Mexico in the late troubles, he might rely on the friendship of Mexico, to which he was enjoined to continue faithful in all emergencies. Within a week Castillero was shown at San José a singular heavy reddish rock, which had long been known to the Indians, who rubbed it on their hands and faces to paint them. The Californians had often tried to smelt this rock in a blacksmith's fire, thinking it to be silver or some other precious metal. But Castillero, who was an intelligent man and a native of Spain, at once recognized it as quicksilver, and noted its resemblance to the cinnabar in the mines of Almaden. A company was immediately formed to work it, of which Castillero, Castro, Alexander Forbes, and others were members. The discovery of quicksilver at this time seems providential in view of its absolute necessity to supplement the imminent discovery of gold, which stirred and waked into new life the industries of the world.



BULL AND BEAR FIGHT.

There was no excitement at first, nor for three or four months—because the mine was not known to be rich, or to exist anywhere except at the sawmill, or to be available to any one except Sutter, to whom every one conceded that it belonged. Time does not permit me to relate how I carried the news of the dis-

It is a question whether the United States could have stood the shock of the great rebellion of 1861 had the California gold discovery not been made. Bankers and business men of New York in 1864 did not hesitate to admit that but for the gold of California, which monthly poured its five or six millions into that financial center, the bottom would have dropped out of everything. These timely arrivals so strengthened the nerves of trade and stimulated business as to enable the Government to sell its bonds at a time when its credit was its life-

blood and the main reliance by which to feed, clothe, and maintain its armies. Once our bonds went down to thirty-eight cents on the dollar. California gold averted a total collapse, and enabled a preserved Union to come forth from the great conflict with only four billions of debt instead of a hundred billions. The hand of Providence so plainly seen in the discovery

of gold is no less manifest in the time chosen for its accomplishment.

I must reserve for itself in a concluding paper my personal recollections of Frémont's second visit to California in 1845-46, which I have purposely wholly omitted here. It was most important, resulting as it did in the acquisition of that territory by the United States.

John Bidwell.

RANCH AND MISSION DAYS IN ALTA CALIFORNIA.



IT seems to me that there never was a more peaceful or happy people on the face of the earth than the Spanish, Mexican, and Indian population of Alta California before the American conquest. We were the pioneers of the Pacific

coast, building towns and Missions while General Washington was carrying on the war of the Revolution, and we often talk together of the days when a few hundred large Spanish ranches and Mission tracts occupied the whole country from the Pacific to the San Joaquin. No class of American citizens is more loyal than the Spanish Californians, but we shall always be especially proud of the traditions and memories of the long pastoral age before 1840. Indeed, our social life still tends to keep alive a spirit of love for the simple, homely, outdoor life of our Spanish ancestors on this coast, and we try, as best we may, to honor the founders of our ancient families, and the saints and heroes of our history since the days when Father Junipero planted the cross at Monterey.

The leading features of old Spanish life at the Missions, and on the large ranches of the last century, have been described in many books of travel, and with many contradictions. I shall confine myself to those details and illustrations of the past that no modern writer can possibly obtain except vaguely, from hearsay, since they exist in no manuscript, but only in the memories of a generation that is fast passing away. My mother has told me much, and I am still more indebted to my illustrious uncle, General Vallejo, of Sonoma, many of whose recollections are incorporated in this article.

When I was a child there were fewer than fifty Spanish families in the region about the bay of San Francisco, and these were closely connected by ties of blood or intermarriage. My father and his brother, the late General Vallejo, saw, and were a part of, the most important events in the history of Spanish Cali-

fornia, the revolution and the conquest. My grandfather, Don Ygnacio Vallejo, was equally prominent in his day, in the exploration and settlement of the province. The traditions and records of the family thus cover the entire period of the annals of early California, from San Diego to Sonoma.

What I wish to do is to tell, as plainly and carefully as possible, how the Spanish settlers lived, and what they did in the old days. The story will be partly about the Missions, and partly about the great ranches.

The Jesuit Missions established in Lower California, at Loreto and other places, were followed by Franciscan Missions in Alta California, with presidios for the soldiers, adjacent pueblos, or towns, and the granting of large tracts of land to settlers. By 1782 there were nine flourishing Missions in Alta California—San Francisco, Santa Clara, San Carlos, San Antonio, San Luis Obispo, San Buenaventura, San Gabriel, San Juan, and San Diego. Governor Fajés added Santa Barbara and Purissima, and by 1790 there were more than 7000 Indian converts in the various Missions. By 1800 about forty Franciscan fathers were at work in Alta California, six of whom had been among the pioneers of twenty and twenty-five years before, and they had established seven new Missions—San José, San Miguel, Soledad, San Fernando, Santa Cruz, San Juan Bautista, and San Luis Rey. The statistics of all the Missions, so far as they have been preserved, have been printed in various histories, and the account of their growth, prosperity, and decadence has often been told. All that I wish to point out is that at the beginning of the century the whole system was completely established in Alta California. In 1773 Father Palou had reported that all the Missions, taken together, owned two hundred and four head of cattle and a few sheep, goats, and mules. In 1776 the regular five years' supplies sent from Mexico to the Missions were as follows: 107 blankets, 480 yards striped sackcloth, 389 yards blue baize, 10 pounds blue maguey cloth,