

## California in 1849. by C. F. Hotchkiss

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COMPRISING CALIFORNIA GOLD — AN AUTHENTIC HISTORY OF THE FIRST FIND,  
WITH THE NAMES OF THOSE INTERESTED IN THE DISCOVERY. *James S. Brown* (1894)  
CALIFORNIA IN 1849 *C. F. Hotchkiss*

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### CALIFORNIA IN 1849

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THE author having fitted out his two sons, Henry and Charles, for California, they left New York by steamer “Crescent City,” December 23d, 1848; crossed the Isthmus to Panama, from which place they reported themselves as waiting conveyance to San Francisco. After considerable delay they took passage in a small craft, unseaworthy and with miserable accommodations; suffered many privations, and through many risks at last arrived at San Francisco, and went immediately to the mines. Much anxiety was felt for their fate, and on the eve of my departure to look after them, we had advices as above, but not stating their destination from San Francisco. I selected 150 kegs (15,000 lbs.) choice butter; put in brine, placed each keg in another package, filled that also with brine, made up an invoice of other goods, shipped them by ship Orpheus from New York, consigned to myself. Among the goods were an old iron safe, of no particular value here, but, as will appear, of great value in California. It was about three feet square, no obstructions inside, with lid on top. Considerable many passengers went in the Orpheus round Cape Horn from New Haven—for which vessel I was the agent at that place. Your humble servant left New York by steamer Crescent City for Chagres, Sept. 15th, 1849, with a great crowd of gold-seekers, a singular compound of men, and but five women—in which both ladies and gentlemen were extremely scarce. If I touch any person's toes in this broad remark, you are at liberty to class me as you choose, though I think you cannot deny the truth of my assertion, if you were one of the 500 passengers on that trip. Gambling, rum and oaths were the circulating medium the whole trip, morning, noon and night. Gold was the absorbing topic of conversation. The day previous to our sighting the island of Cuba, where we were to touch for mails, one of the number was brought on deck, laid on a board in the waist of the ship near the quarter boat, with a view to burial. One of the passengers, with a cigar in his mouth, stood at the head of the corpse, prayer book in hand, the body, except the head, was placed in a piece of old canvas, having about 100 lbs. of coal at the feet; the skipper touched the engineer for a slow, 136 28 the board was pointed about forty-five degrees depression from the ship's rail, the man of the prayer book took his cigar from his mouth, and held

it by the thumb and fore finger, read a few short sentences, the national colors were already up “to truck” and had been since 8 o'clock in the morning, the ship not yet lost her steerage way, when the man with the book cried out: “Launcho!!” and the body slid from the board, a few bubbles remained on the surface a moment, and the ship was on her course again. No notice was given of the intended ceremonies; the colors gave no evidence of sympathy; the ship did not lose her “way;” no notice was given about the ship, nor were the gambling parties in any way disturbed, and I asked myself: “If such scenes are enacted on the Atlantic, what shall we witness on the Pacific?”

We touched at Havana, exchanged mails, and in due time arrived at Chagres, a low, miserable town, of thirty thatched huts, and the passengers got on shore as best they could, in miserable shore canoes, under an old roll of the Caribbean Sea, in which several were swamped Chagres at this time was poorly prepared for the immense emigration, and with half the canoes required to transport them up to Crusus. No eating houses or saloons, in an extremely low latitude, and every one who had not gambled away his money and ticket for up the coast, anxious to get away from the miserable hole. Our little party of four having had some experience in roughing, concluded a bargain with two brawny natives to pole us through to Crusus, took them before their alcalde (justice), paid the bill, conditioned that they should lose no time on the way, they to feed themselves, four hours per twenty-four given for rest, and forfeit a flogging if they did not perform. A wise and good arrangement, as it proved, for the rascals mutinied on us the next morning, and refused to go forward unless we gave them food. We remonstrated, took possession of the craft ourselves, shoved her off shore, held by a pole well down in the mud, and waited events. Four Yankees, with each a pistol, on even ground, against two natives, stark naked, was considerable odds in our favor, and we intended to keep it. Soon a passing canoe, with a single native, came drifting down, to whom we beckoned. He was a mongrel, and carried 137 29 quite a jolly countenance, and a native of Crusus, with a spattering of mixed Congo and English. We stated our complaint against the mutineers, referred him to them, and on hearing their story he decided against them, and yet they refused to go. By this time our patience became exhausted, when Captain Henry Thompson, of East Haven, took his revolver from under his shirt, we cast off the line, and our friend Thompson gave it to them in tall Spanish, with a pistol pointed sharp at the

leader; but they gave in, and at it they went. At the next village we called down their alcalde, made our complaint and our fears of another outbreak; he heard their story, and if ever a native of the Isthmus got “Jesse,” these men took it in double doses. We found this alcalde's supervision worked to a charm, for the “critters” behaved themselves the rest of the voyage. On we went in our little dug-out, difficulties all adjusted, cramped up in sitting posture, with an occasional landing to boil coffee, of which we gave the mutineers all they wanted—and thus in all we occupied three days and nights, amid the rain, shine and heat of this extreme latitude. The natives, with their songs and hoots, as they approached the villages, and the answers returned gave them good cheer. During the day the scenery was truly delightful. Parrots of various kinds, and paroquets, with their constant chattering in their flight across the river, monkeys occasionally in the trees, of all sizes, only of one kind; it was no uncommon thing to see a mother and her young huddled together apparently in fright at the encroachments of the gold-hunters, and instead of fleeing from danger, would climb a tree on the river bank, within shooting distance, and scold at the passer-by. Immense quantities of flowers on the edge of the river, the great lazy alligator would occasionally slide off the bank, and a world of smaller sizes on sticks and stones, were really frightful. The Chagres River appeared to be full of these venomous creatures.

On my trip down this river there were perhaps 100 canoes in requisition for passengers, many of whom not desiring to arrive in Chagres before daybreak, hauled up at a village three miles above. We came down late, and lay on the outside the fleet, made fast, and 138 30 lay down for sleep. The moon was up, with a clear sky. I was awakened several times by a swash at the side of the canoe, and I raised up, stretched out my head, commanding a view of the swell of the canoe, the rays of the moon showing young alligators, their hind parts in the water the whole length of the canoe, and the surface of the water was teeming with them; I was quiet for five minutes, when giving the canoe a sudden roll, they all returned to their native element. But my sleep for the night was minus, and I rejoiced that tomorrow I should be well out of sight if not mind of the Chagres River—its loathsome atmosphere and venomous reptiles. But I was doomed to witness a more vivid scene in the morning. We moved opposite on the river to make up our morning's meal. I was the first ashore. Fronting me appeared a little alcove, having a beautiful grass plot of five rods square,

nicely shaded with vines and shrubs, but literally alive with snakes, lizards and guanas. It appeared to me that I stood before a moving panorama of reptiles. I was nearly paralyzed at the sight. The snakes were of various sizes and color, and some ten feet long. They made as sudden a retreat as I did. The lizards covering bushes and shrubs, would retreat only as I advanced; in size from five to twelve inches, striped, brown, yellow, and red. My blood apparently ceased to flow, and it required some effort to rouse myself, and once in the canoe, I never left her till alongside the steamer for New York. I have ever since pondered in my mind, why this great convention of reptiles? why should the "boa" congregate with the little lizard? or the poisonous rattle with the guana? and I have never satisfactorily solved these questions. Could it be that the gathering was to consider the recent encroachments of the gold-seekers, wh ere perhaps six months before the first human footstep touched that soil? Our readers must remember that the Chagres River has been used thousands of years for the transport of treasure, and seldom for a passenger, until the rush for California.

Crusus is the only place on this river giving evidence of antiquity or civilization; the arrangements for the transportation of treasure over the mountains to Crusus and thence by canoe to ship at Chagres. Panama has been the receiving warehouse for treasure ages ago, yes, 139 31 a thousand years or more before gold was discovered in California, by the American people. It did not require an army of soldiers to convoy it in its transit, any more than it does now. It was brought to Panama consigned to old established houses to for ward; they sent it on the backs of mules, through the mountain gorges, under charge of a leading muleteer, to Crusus, with his half-dozen drivers; there transferred to canoes, with but one man in each to paddle it down to ship, but in 1848 a warehouse was built at Chagres, and now an agent is kept there to transship. Formerly it was kept in Panama, till notice came of the ship's readiness to receive it. The European monarchs and money-changers have during the palmy days of the old city of Panama, received treasure through this channel, and are yet doing the same thing. The night that the author rested at Crusus, in 1849, a train of fifty mules came in from Panama, and unloaded the treasure contained in wood boxes of suitable sizes, inclosing a tin box; and in conversation with the consignee, he said not one dollar of it came from California, but it was from Peru and other mining countries, an that for ages it had come through successive forwarding houses; he had done it all his days, then 60 years old, through his

guardian in infancy, and back through his father, and his father's father also. We found Crusus quite a neat village, with a cleanly, neat, and honest people. Not well supplied with plum pudding and oyster sauce, but quite a sufficiency of Mexican beef, cut in strips, sun-dried, and sold by the yard. Monkey and guana were quite plenty and palatable, when a man is hungry, provided he does not see his toes, and these are left on in cooking, as evidence of their purity. Their coffee is good. The men are all schemers for money, and yet are honest. They carry tremendous chests and trunks on their heads, through the gorges to Crusus. The village is a dance house from dusk to midnight. The banjo is their favorite instrumental music, always accompanied by the female voice only. Your baggage put in the hands of the men at either Panama or Crusus for transit, is as safe as with the owner. The hotel was a horrid place in 1849, both in its eating and sleeping department—the latter, instead of the neat, clean South American hammock, consisted of bunks, full of vermin. Any person who should happen to require a lodging, could, if of cleanly appearance, obtain from the citizens a neat, cozy hammock swung in the open doorway, free from filth or vermin, for “doce rials” (twenty-five cents), and see the dancing free. On my return trip the same hotel existed under the same administration, but experience being a good schoolmaster, we respectfully declined, and found better sleeping, without the accompanying torture of vermin.

But let us return to our departure from Crusus to Panama, through the gorges, for the mules are ready, and as a body much resemble the horses that our worthy citizen, “Sylvester,” formerly dealt in, “none worth over ten shillings”—one of which I sold as auctioneer in New Haven for seventy-five cents, having advanced the worthy owner two dollars on it the day before. Sylvester was in the audience; State street was blocked up by the people, and always was at the sale of a horse, whether good, bad, or indifferent. The creature sold after much effort, for seventy-five cents, amid many cheers and some hisses. After getting a quiet audience, I said: “Gentlemen, this horse was sold for account of ‘Sylvester,’ under an advance of two dollars; please help me make up the account sales, for it seems to be on the wrong side of Daboll.” One of the audience as suddenly as a clap of thunder, cried out: “Gentlemen, I propose that the auctioneer pay ‘Sylvester’ the seventy-five cents, and guarantee the purchaser that the ‘old rip’ lives till he arrives at his stable, giving him twenty minutes lee way. Are you ready for the question? Those in favor will say aye”—when the whole

street responded in the affirmative, and your humble servant did as requested, paid the seventy-five cents, and bargained with the purchaser that he should have the animal without pay, if he would get him out of the street in two minutes. Well, these mules, financially, were like “Sylvester's” horses at New Haven—only that the Crusus mules were immediately absorbed, and it was found that the demand far exceeded the supply. Current price ten dollars for the ride to Panama—no reclamation on either side if he died on the journey. Acting on a hint given by a railroad official, then surveying the route for the Panama road, I rested for the crowd to mount, when he turned to a native, told him my wants, and 141 33 to bring up his “Americanus,” a large, beautiful animal, with a splendid Mexican outrig, for which I gladly paid him fifteen dollars, thanked my friend for his kindness, and after receiving instructions for the mule's care in Panama, I started with perfect assurance of my safety on the trip—I covered the rear of the great cavalcade, passed a dozen mules on the balk, and some floundering in mud holes. At the entrance of the first gorge in the mountain, about a mile from the hotel, I found several animals that refused to enter, while Americanus stepped square up to the work, entered the gorge *en miltair*, left foot first, and never stumbled through the route. These passages through the gorges are only of sufficient width for a pack animal, and on entering them from either end, a signal of a loud whistle or hoot of the man in charge of the train is given, and answered by the other, and the party omitting to give th is notice, if met in the gorge, must back out. The reader will understand that these gorges are more or less circuitous, quite uneven, varying in height from eight to twenty feet, ascending and descending with foot marks made by the animals from three to six inches deep, depending on the hardness of the rock, and evidently this rough and uncouth road has been used for many ages. The soil between these gorges is extremely muddy in the season of rain, and it is in these places where we realize the value of an able mule. Many of the poor animals here flounder and die; the riders must then foot it to Panama. “Americanus,” with the reins untouched, would pick his way through the mud, always enter a gorge left foot first, would make no halts but for water and grass, and in good heart carried me through to Panama and of his own accord, landed me at the United States Hotel, just at sunset, where I sat by his side, gave him bread and grass to his heart's content, and with a good rubbing down, kissed his homely face, bid him good-bye, and, as ordered in Crusus, turned him adrift to find his regular quarters in Panama.

No animal without a muleteer is allowed to enter a gorge. They find a home at both ends of the route.

I turned to the hotel for my own quarters. The people continued to arrive till midnight—some on foot, weary, wet, and drunken. I consider that my investment of fifteen dollars was one of the best I 142 34 ever made. Long live “Americanus.” One incident that occurred in Panama worth relating, and we will “up the coast,” where it seems as if all the world were bound. It was Sunday; while sitting at the hotel I noticed a church edifice directly opposite, on the steps of which was a colored boy with a splendid large Spanish game cock, to which he was fastening a pair of fine pointed gaffs. On inquiry of our landlord, I found the animal and boy were the property of the priest then officiating at the altar inside the church, and at 12 o'clock the services would close, and a grand fight would come off at the cockpit, six doors below, in which the priest would be “chief cook and bottle-washer”—seats free. At the time appointed I covered the rear of the procession, the boy, the game cock, and his reverence at the head, and entered the cock pit, under cover and in form like an ampitheater. About 300 persons were present, under no order or control, everybody had their say, and on the whole “a scene of confusion worse confounded,” Bedlam let loose, and in which his reverence was as active and noisy as the rest. The only rule (said my interpreter), which they agree to enforce, is, “that no person shall enter the pit during a fight.” Money passed to the person in the rostrum quite freely, but the chatter and swearing continued without any intermission, and finally a pair of fowls were let in through the trap doors, each with steel gaffs on, and without any ceremony, at it they went—result, one dead, the other bleeding from the neck—several matches were made and closed—but your humble servant had no relish for such cruel scenes, but was much more interested with the audience, for by this time they were so clamorous that a field fight was in prospect, several clinches occurred, but results were not as plainly visible as in the case of the feathered tribe, for I soon found they were all great cowards, and made more “fuss than feathers.” These men were all well dressed in white, the rig consisted mostly of slippers, white half-hose, linen pants and shirts, with a light straw hat; every one of them as clean as if just out of a bandbox or laundry; but they were an excitable, nervous, boyish race—natural born cock-fighters and gamblers, all smoking splendid cigars, but what they lacked in fighting, they made up in confused ranting.



But to close. His reverence was now getting up his match; 143 35 he was plump six feet tall, of a sharp visage, dressed in black bombazine mantle, and black chapeau, black silk hose, and tight serge gaiters, and if never active before, was now truly “the biggest toad in the puddle,” made the most noise, and swore more than any other man in the party. The two birds were let into the arena, amid continuous shouts and screams enough to frighten the evil one himself, if not the two roosters. As before stated, I was intent on the audience not in the pit, until the first slash. I saw the “dominie” jump into the pit for his bird, but it was too late, his throat was cut clean open,—he looked the picture of despair, took his dead bird and boy and walked away, *minus*, as my interpreter said, sixteen doubloons, and I trust a wiser and a better man, though the next Sunday he was burning incense at the altar of the same church. I seated myself on the shady verandah of my hotel, and remembered an expression of my good old cook, Sam Chase, when standing at the door of a dance house at Malaga, Spain, where rum flowed freely, and the priests drank and danced till drunk, he exclaimed: “Gorra mighty, Massa Charley, what kind of consistumey is dis?”

The steamer Panama was ready, her passengers got on board as best they could, and we left for San Francisco, or rather, those of us who had not sold or gambled away our money or tickets. The ship was cleanly and under good discipline and command of Captain Bailey, whose orders were to touch off and on at Mazatlan, at Acapulco for coal, and San Diego for passengers, and then for San Francisco, but to use up twenty-one days on the passage. Nothing of interest occurred during the passage, and we arrived the twenty-first day, all well. I landed next morning, foot of Jackson street, and entered an eating room on Montgomery, ordered cup of coffee, two eggs, and beef steak, no butter, paid \$2.50, and consoled myself that I had 15,000 pounds of choice butter in the ship Orpheus, which somebody would be obliged to pay one dollar a pound for. I stepped out on the street—everything was in a crude state; I spent a portion of the day in the examination of San Francisco as it then was. At Happy Valley I found about 200 people, “squatters,” some in tents, some in crockery hogsheads and dry-goods boxes, as their shelter. It was sufficient for 144 36 their purpose, if the head was protected from the storm, while their legs were left out. What better could they do? A few buildings on the Plaza had been roughly thrown together. One public house, one old “adobe” shanty, the rest used as gambling houses. Lumber, if to be found, was worth \$1,000

per one thousand feet. All vessels arriving were boarded for this necessary article. Cotton goods and tacks were wanted for tents, as a substitute, the latter two dollars a paper. Long boots were in great demand at fifty dollars; bread, pork and nails were plenty; molasses, none; sugar, any price demanded; Mexican beef and salmon plenty; flour, forty dollars. People constantly arriving by vessels, and streets quite lively. Well, the day was far spent, and it was time for me to make a dive for a shelter. A plain board shanty was being erected on the corner of Montgomery and a street leading to the Plaza. The roof was on, but no partitions. I bargained for ten feet square on first floor for 150 dollars per month, to be put in order, and I put in possession in one hour, for which I paid the gold, and it was quite amusing to notice the way that nails were crowded into boards. Everything in the carpenter line was “by the job”—and true to the bargain, my shelter was finished, and at dusk I rolled into my bunk, a blanket for a bed, and slept as soundly as a king till morning. “Cash paid for everything,” was my chalk sign, and by 8 o'clock A.M. I was an old resident, ready for business. Vessels were constantly arriving, and from them we gleaned many articles, never questioning price. The cry was, goods! goods!! from every quarter. “Big-sized boots” were my favorites. I found three cases, and before night all sold at fifty dollars a pair. Anything portable was what I aimed at, because ten feet square could not hold much coarse staples. Tacks for tents were another favorite, and every vessel would spare a few. The simple rule in merchandising was, pay the price named, and ask what you choose. The influx of people was a curiosity, many of whom were dumped ashore from vessels without money or food. Pilot bread in large quantities had fortunately been shipped from Boston, and this gave some relief, but vegetables were out of the question. The want of these necessities caused much sickness. Scurvy and diarrhoea were the universal complaints; every 145 37 potato and onion that ships would part with was hoarded up for the sick; no sound man could obtain one for his own eating. A cask of bread and barrel of pork stood at the door of every merchant, free to the sick.

The miners began to arrive from the mines to recruit. They had gold and scurvy both—the former worthless, without a potato or an onion. These two articles were the only antidote for their complaint, and it was amusing to see with what avidity they would scrape them with a knife, costing half their weight in gold. This state of things was soon remedied by the arrival of vessels

from Chili; but for six months these articles sold for one dollar the pound. With onions or potatoes raw, the worst case of scurvy could be cured in ten days. But I must not give the reader much more of this melancholy picture.

It was calculated that the increase of population in San Francisco was over 1,500 persons average per day from February 1st to June 1st, 1850, and that over 400 vessels of various nations and sizes, in May, were at anchor in the bay, deserted by their crews, but generally with a single ship-keeper on board. Had there been a sufficiency of lumber and carpenters in the market we could with truth say, "A city could be built in a day." But trade went on swimmingly, and with good margins.

I was comfortably surprised one morning to welcome my old neighbor, Wm. Fuller, Esq., having arrived from Sacramento to recruit, and bringing me news from my two sons, who were then with his friends on the "American Fork"—and in my little quarters of ten feet square he was made as comfortable in his severe sickness, and during the season of rains, as we could control. His was chronic diarrhœa, caused by exposure in the Sacramento salmon fishing. Friend Fuller will tell you of his narrow escape and suffering, but now hale and hearty, dealing largely piscatorially on Long Wharf, New Haven, Ct. It was evident that Mr. F. was not improving in health with the crude accommodations under my roof, and the constant chilly rains of the season, and I solicited Captain William Bowns, then lying at anchor in the bay, to take Mr. F. on board his vessel, 146 38 being sanguine that it would save his life, and the writer is happy to place on record the hearty response received from the Captain, who immediately welcomed him on board, gave him every attention and care, under which Mr. Fuller immediately began to mend, and in three weeks went on his way rejoicing, a well man.

I purchased the cargo of Captain Bowns, and paid the bill in full; never had a dispute with him with regard to reclamations for shorts or damage, but found him to be the same noble-hearted man as in boyhood, a kind, generous play and schoolmate of mine all my younger days, from three years old, and with whom the writer enjoyed many a "piscatorial" excursion in middle life. All our intercourse at San Francisco was genial, pleasant and friendly, and I challenge the world to find one who more keenly mourned his decease than I did, not excepting his wife. It is said that "murder will out in

time,” and this is a good opportunity to prove the application of the old adage. After the decease of Captain William Bowns, the author was considerably annoyed by reports emanating from one who stood high in the family of the Captain, that “she was made poor by reason of C. F. Hotchkiss having CHEATED the Captain out of the cargo sold him in San Francisco.”

*Remarks.*—The only cargo bought by the writer of Captain Bowns was that alluded to above, and for the payment of which I hold a receipt in full, and, furthermore, I respectfully refer my friends or enemies, who swallowed and repeated the unqualified lie to my injury, to Charles Peterson, Esq., President of the New Haven Security Insurance Company, the owner of said vessel and cargo, who will tell you that the good Captain did not own a penny of the cargo, nor did he in the settlement of that voyage report any balance due from your humble servant. My quarters in my little office on Montgomery street were too strait, and I rented a two story building in course of erection, located on the flats, foot of Jackson street, sixty feet square, the lower floor for goods, three doors opening to the sea, a dock on the south side for landing goods and passengers. The upper story was converted to bunks, three tiers high, making about 100 147 39 bunks. The approach to the city was by a bridge. It was the first building erected below Montgomery street, and its rent was 32,500 dollars per year, payable monthly in advance, privileged to vacate in four months. Here we had a good, roomy place for goods. Lodgings one dollar each person, they finding bedding. I boarded many friends, lodged many strangers, making it a rule never to turn the poor away. Vessels continued to arrive. Lumber fell to 500 dollars per thousand; buildings rose in every direction like magic. Men off a long voyage were dumped ashore like cattle, at least 100 miles from the mines, and passage to Stockton or Sacramento twenty-five dollars. Stout hearts quailed,—the robust and the strong were the first to succumb. My store,

without rum (thank God), was the great thoroughfare for the living and the dead. It was difficult to tell whether less or more of the sick came from the mines or landed from vessels. Scurvy from the mines and ship fever from the vessels.

Our only law was a Vigilance Committee—they not considering the dead and dying as coming within their jurisdiction. Gold, gold, gold, could well be the epitaph of thousands. Thus far for

the dark side, not half told. The bright side to me was the arrival of my two sons—both sick—but vegetables were getting plenty, and with the care and council of Doctor Beers, formerly of New Haven, Charles, the youngest, recruited sufficiently, and by advice of the doctor was sent home in company with Mr. W. J. Clark, of Southington, who kindly volunteered to care for him. Henry remained with me.

The ship Orpheus arrived safe, and her invoice paid a round margin; butter on its arrival was one dollar per pound. The busy scenes of life began to tell on me. Those strong, cold winds of San Francisco were too much, and I heeded the admonition, began to prepare for a removal to Stockton, but before I go let me describe the scenes on the Plaza. Post office first— every day a string of people three deep, twenty rods long, waiting a chance at the delivery. Two days often passed before the party at the rear could get a chance at the window; many times have I seen a line forming in the night, to insure a chance next day; five dollars was often paid for a chance near 148 40 the window, the party retiring must go to the rear. The office facilities were of course imperfect. These men were mostly miners, and they represented all their friends in the mines, and these were easily distinguished by a bag of gold, large or small, slung over the neck, the bag resting in their bosom. The newly arrived generally had on a good shirt, but the others more likely no shirt at all, an unshaven, careworn, hard-looking set of men, of all countries, nations, and tongues. Some good natured, some ugly looking, and an occasional tall, lank, gray-eyed Vermonter, and down to the poor Chilian, half-naked. At the side of this string could be seen 500 to 1,000 newcomers, seeking information of the mines and how to get there, and an occasional recognition of friends would take place. Then those who had passed the Rubicon were scattered in all directions, reading letters from “sweet-hearts and wives.” On the opposite side of the Plaza were the gambling hells, in full blast, with piles of gold, which the uninitiated would buck against in vain.

These scenes, mixed with the hundreds in the streets of poor, sickly and emaciated men with scurvy and diarrhoea, more like moving ghosts, was sufficient to make one cry out, “All for gold.” Yes, all this and more, and yet not a female to be seen, except, perhaps, an occasional Digger squaw. This was the panorama of the winter of 1850 and spring of '51. Oh! what degradation for gold!

But let us look around near the corner of the Plaza, where the national colors are flying, and where the Vigilance Committee, in the absence of all statute or territorial law, take in hand the administration of justice, and where it swiftly followed arrests. Nothing else would seem to answer the purpose, for if they were without organization, our lives would not be worth a brass farthing. No crowd of anxious information-seekers or curiosity-hunters are ever seen in that room, though the national emblem tails to the breeze night and day. It is empty now, but perhaps in half an hour a private duplicate key will admit eight men of business with a tyler, but there will be no formal crier to open the court. The gavel strikes the table, and the prisoner is brought in from a side door, the witnesses confront him; 149 41 there is no sick juror to wait for, the judges are business men, there are no pettifoggers to worry the judge; time is precious in San Francisco now; men have immense rents to pay; they move quick; there is no superfluity of words; jurors cannot be bribed nor witnesses befogged. The story is told, and it is told to honest men—men without a salary—men who are sick of the intricacies of law, and men who will administer justice, though the heavens were on fire. “What is your opinion, gentlemen?” The answer comes by signs. “The prisoner is guilty.” There is no long roll of talk from the bench, to harrow up the soul of the guilty wretch. He is told his doom; he is not (*vide* the Spanish Inquisition) put to the rack in order to extract information as to his accomplices. He is plainly told what he knows to be true, “You are guilty of murder. You have twenty minutes to prepare for death.” The scaffold is in the room—the time is up—he swings, a sharp piece of steel enters his heart—the tyler does his duty, and the body is taken to “the hill” in the evening, where all the dead are buried. The flag still floats; the protectors of the people's interests have resumed their business, and for the sake of example, it may or may not be said that another murderer has paid the penalty of his crime, but his name is never mentioned.

Now, reader, I have closed my interest at San Francisco, which I found to be a very easy matter. Newcomers were plenty, and away for Stockton. The climate and surroundings being much more congenial to my constitution and feelings, but I shall remember the howling morning winds that with a cold, dense fog, roll over the city of San Francisco. The trade of Stockton is mostly with muleteers, who run trains of pack mules with supplies for the miners.

The old steamer *Sutter* made regular trips from San Francisco three times a week; fare twenty-five dollars. Stockton then had about 1,200 inhabitants, and only one female, except three poor, degraded Digger squaws; with five wood buildings, the other shelter was tents. The wood buildings were occupied for gambling, where “monte” was the favorite game. The town was regularly laid out, with a street leading up from the landing seventy feet wide. Goods were generally displayed in front of the tent in the street, exposed to view and thieves, during four months of the year, without danger from dews or rains. Lots then occupied on this street cost 5,000 dollars cash. The old iron safe, before mentioned, was now in its position, it being but the third in the place. It was a cheap sheet iron safe, and yet its shape was just suited to not only our wants but also the miners and muleteers, each of whom in coming from the mines would deposit their bag of gold—the former to recruit, and the latter to purchase goods. We seemed to be the treasury for the whole country, and during the time we were there we never weighed or counted a single bag, and never had a word of difficulty with a depositor. Not a bag during the time was sealed. It was marked with the owner's name, and it was no uncommon thing to have on hand 150 bags, valued at from twenty to one thousand dollars each. We made no charge for deposits, and the acquaintance and reputation in the mines brought a large trade. The muleteers, with from five to thirty pack mules, would arrive about noon, the head mule rode by the boss, carried the bag or bags of gold on the pommel of the saddle, and if for a large purchase, the assistant on the rear mule carried gold in the same way. The train would halt at our tent, the principal would take off the gold, lay it in the safe, hand us a list of his wants, to be ready to pack the second day—not a word of price—if the articles were not in the place, we could send by steamer *Sutter*; in that case and that only, would he be satisfied to hold over. When all was ready, the mules would be at the door; ask for the bill, take out his gold from the safe, and weigh out the sum required, and away for the mountains. Our tent was called the “cure-all,” for we aimed never to be short on onions or potatoes. Ours was also an exchange office, and those returning to the States would exchange dust for coin. Wholly unused to such unlimited confidence, I trembled at the result at the beginning, but in a fortnight's time became accustomed so as to sleep soundly in my hammock, directly over the old safe, with a right and left hand supporter under my pillow.

Stockton had its Vigilant Committee, and in the middle of the street on an elevation, say about twenty rods from us, they had 151 43 erected a gallows, and at its foot were four mounds of fresh-made graves. Your humble servant was, soon after his arrival, by request of the Committee, made a member of that important arm of the law. The jurisdiction of this Committee was unlimited, but it generally refused to act in cases outside the township. Society in Stockton was a curious compound. Gold was the only god it worshiped then. The one white female before named, was a lady commanding the respect of every person in the place. The Diggers were poor, miserable brutes. My mule, "Americanus," that carried me over the mountains to Panama, was a queen in comparison. Men were, in the absence of society, slovenly and undignified, and we naturally fell into these habits, still (throwing your humble servant out), they were gentlemen of integrity, noted for neighborly acts of kindness, and as prompt as the hand of time. There were no lazy ones in the settlement, and while at Stockton I never saw a person worse off for liquor, except the "Diggers." Notwithstanding the country was flooded with genuine Bordeaux brandy, in cases, three cargoes of which had been landed in San Francisco in 1848, at the instant the gold was discovered, the crews of the ships having left the vessels, and the whole was forced on the market at a song's price.

Woman was a curiosity, as was evidenced one day about 8 o'clock, when a great uproar was made, commencing at the landing, and gaining strength as the sound reached us; every occupant was in the street, the cheer was long, loud, and strong—and behold, it was a woman, backed on a beautiful horse, richly dressed in a long riding habit, a neat jockey cap, white feather, face highly painted, and she escorted by a man well dressed, also on a beautiful bay charger. The men swung their hats, and it was a universal cheer on cheer. On the 10th day after her majesty and her pimp went through this great and wonderful ovation, the Vigilant Committee, through their tyler, served a notice on them both to leave by the *Sutter* next day, without fail. The mandate was obeyed, and they took ten thousand dollars with them. I make no comment—the reader has the floor.

The climate at Stockton was beautiful. The plain extended 44 twenty miles to the mountain—this was by one road, used entirely by miners and pack trains, and early in its being traveled was the scene of two murders and two robberies, of which fact the scaffold in Stockton bears testimony.



The writer was satisfied that chronic diarrhœa was no respecter of persons, and if life was worth more than gold, it was time for him to nurse his health, and with his son, Henry, after closing up our business, took steamer for home. We had a beautiful run down the coast; crossed the Isthmus, joined the steamer for New York, and arrived safe at New Haven, August 7th, 1850, with two good-sized bags of gold, showing a balance against the enterprize of \$23,000.

The account stood thus:

To Dr.

Cash outfit to California, including self and two sons \$7,000  
Wear and tear, body, soul, and breeches 10,000

Privations (non-society) 5,000

Do., morning winds and fogs in San Francisco 2,000

Risk of life in various ways 10,000

“Rolling stone” process 5,000

\$39,000

Cr.

By two bags gold, containing \$16,000

“ balance to new account 23,000

E. E. \$39,000

New Haven, August 7th, 1850. C. F. HOTCHKISS.

Pope speaks my sentiment relative to gold-hunting: “To either India see the merchant fly, Scar'd at the spectre of pale poverty! See him, with pains of body, pangs of soul, Burn through the tropic, freeze beneath the pole! Wilt thou do nothing for a nobler end, Nothing, to make philosophy thy friend? To stop thy foolish views, thy long desires, And ease thy heart of all that it admires? Here, wisdom calls: ‘seek virtue first, be bold! As gold to silver, virtue is to gold.’”