

## INTERESTING DESPATCH FROM CALIFORNIA.

Among the documents received by the Secretary of War and communicated with the President's Message, is the following letter from Col. Mason, the Military Commandant of California, who presents the fullest description we have seen of the gold "placers" of that region.

So. 37.3. Received at the Military Dept. Monterey, California, Aug. 17, 1848.

Sir:—I have the honor to inform you that, accompanied by Lieut. W. T. Sherman, 3d artillery, A. A. General, I started on the 12th of June last, to make a tour through the northern part of California. My principal purpose, however, was to visit the newly discovered gold "placers" in the valley of the Sacramento. I had proceeded about forty miles, when I was overtaken by an express, bringing me intelligence of the arrival at Monterey of the United States Ship Southampton, with important letters from Commodore Shubrick and Lieut. Col. Burton. I returned at once to Monterey and despatched what business was most important, and on the 17th resumed my journey. We reached San Francisco on the 20th, and found that all, or nearly all, its male inhabitants had gone to the mines. The town which a few months before was so busy and thriving, was then almost deserted. On the evening of the 24th, the horses of the escort were crossed to Sausalito in a launch, and on the following day we resumed the journey by way of Bolinas and Sausalito. Sausalito, where we arrived on the morning of the 27th of July. Along the whole route, the fields were idle, the vineyards were open to cattle and horses, houses, vacant, and farms going to waste. At Sausalito there was more life and business. Launches were discharging their cargoes at the river, and carts were hauling goods to the fort, where already were established several stores, a hotel, &c. Capt. Sutter had only two mechanics in his employ (a way on-maker and a blacksmith) to whom he was then paying ten dollars a day. Merchants pay him a monthly rent of \$400 per room and whilst I was there, a two-story house in the fort was rented as a hotel for \$500 a month.

At the urgent solicitation of many gentlemen, I delayed there to participate in the first public celebration of our national anniversary at that fort; but on the fifth resumed the journey, and proceeded twenty-five miles up the American fork to a point on it, now known as the Lower Mines, or Mormon Diggings. The hill-sides were thickly strewn with canvass tents and brush arbors; a store was erected, and several boarding shanties in operation. The day was intensely hot, yet about two hundred men were at work in the full glare of the sun, washing for gold—some with tin pans, some with close woven Indian baskets, but the greater part had a rude machine, known as the cradle. This is on rockers, six or eight feet long, open at the foot, and at the head has a coarse grate or sieve; the bottom is rounded with small "c" clogs nailed across. Four men are required to work this machine; one digs the ground in a back close by the stream; another carries it to the cradle; a third gives a violent rocking motion to the machine; whilst a fourth dashes on water from the stream itself. The sieve keeps the coarse stones from entering the cradle, the current of water washes off the earth matter, and the gravel is gradually carried out at the foot of the machine, leaving the gold mixed with a black sand above the first clogs. The sand and gold mixed together are drawn off through a hole in a pan below, are dried in the sun, and afterwards separated by blowing off the sand. A party of four men thus employed at the lower mines, averaged one hundred dollars a day. The Indians, and those who have nothing but pans or willow baskets, gradually wash out the earth and separate the gravel by hand, leaving nothing but the gold mixed with sand, which is separated in the manner before described. The gold in the lower mines is in fine scales, of which I sent several specimens.

As we ascended the south branch of the American Fork, the country became more broken and mountainous, and at the saw mill, 25 miles above the lower washings, or 50 miles from Sutter's, the hills rise to about 1000 feet above the level of the Sacramento plain. Here a species of pine occurs, which led to the discovery of the gold. Captain Sutter, feeling the great want of lumber, contracted with a Mr. Marshall to build a saw-mill at that place. It was erected in the course of the past winter and spring—a dam and race constructed; but when the water was let on the wheel, the tail-race was found to be too narrow to permit the water to escape with sufficient rapidity. Mr. Marshall, to save labor, let the water directly into the race with a strong current so as to wash it wider and deeper. He effected his purpose, and a large bed of mud and gravel was carried to the foot of the race. One day Mr. Marshall, as he was walking down to this deposit of mud, observed some glittering particles at its upper edge; he gathered a few, examined them, and became satisfied of their value. He then went to the fort, told Capt. Sutter of his discovery, and they agreed to keep it secret until a certain quiet time of Sutter's was finished. It, however, got out, and spread like magic. Remarkable success attended the labors of the first explorers, and in a few weeks hundreds of men were drawn thither. At the time of my visit, but little more than a few months after its discov-

ery, it was estimated that upwards of four thousand people were employed. At the mill there is a fine deposit or bank of gravel which the people respect as the property of Capt. Sutter, although he pretends to no right to it, and would be perfectly satisfied with the simple promise of a pre-emption, on account of the mill which he had built there at considerable cost. Mr. Marshall was living near the mill, and informed him that many persons were employed above and below him; that they used the same machines as at the lower washings, and that their success was about the same—ranging from one to three ounces of gold per man daily. This gold, too, is in scales a little coarser than those of the lower mines. From the mill Mr. Marshall guided me up to the mountain on the opposite or north bank of the south fork, where, in the bed of small streams or ravines, now dry, a great deal of coarse gold has been found. I there saw several parties at work, all of whom were doing very well; a great many specimens were shown me, some as heavy as four or five ounces in weight, and I sent three pieces labelled No. 5, presented by a Mr. Spencer. You will perceive that some of the specimens accompanying this, hold mechanically pieces of quartz; that the surface is rough, and evidently moulded in the crevices of a rock. This gold cannot have been carried far by water, but must have remained where it was first deposited from the rock that once bound it. I inquired of many people if they had encountered the metal in its matrix; but in every instance they said they had not; but that the gold was invariably mixed with washed gravel, or lodged in the crevices of other rocks. All bore testimony that they had found gold in greater or less quantities in the numerous small gulches or ravines that occur on that mountainous region.

On the 7th of July I left the mill, and crossed to a small stream, emptying into the American, three or four miles from the saw-mill. I struck this stream, now known as Weber's creek, at the washings of Sutter & Co. They had about thirty Indians employed, whom they pay in Merchants' disa. They are getting gold of a character similar to that found in the main fork, and doubtless in sufficient quantities to satisfy them. I sent you a specimen, presented by this company, of their gold. From this point, we proceeded up the stream about eight miles, where we found great many people and Indians—some engaged in the bed of the stream, and others in the small side valleys that put into it. These latter are exceedingly rich, and two ounces were considered an ordinary yield for a day's work. A small gutter not more than a hundred yards long by four feet wide and two or three feet deep, was pointed out to me as the one where two men—William Daly and Perry McCom—had, a short time before, obtained \$17,000 worth of this gold. Captain Weber informed me that he knew that these two men had four white men and about a hundred Indians, and that, at the end of one week's work, they paid off their party, and had left \$10,000 worth of this gold. Another small ravine was shown me, from which had been taken upwards of \$12,000 worth of gold. Hundreds of similar ravines, to all appearances, are as yet untouched. I could not have credited these reports had I not seen, in the abundance of the precious metal, evidence of their truth. Mr. Neligh, an agent of Commodore Stockton, had been at work about three weeks in the neighborhood, and showed me, in bags and bottles, over \$2,000 worth of gold; and Mr. Lyman, a gentleman of education and worthy of every credit, said that he had been engaged with four others, with a machine, on the American fork just below Sutter's mill; that they worked eight days, and that his share was at the rate of \$50 a day; but hearing that others were doing better at Weber's place, they had removed there, and were then on the point of resuming operations. I might tell of hundreds of similar instances; but to illustrate how plentiful the gold was in the pockets of common laborers, I will mention a simple occurrence which took place in my presence when I was at Weber's store. This store was nothing but an arbor of bushes, under which he had exposed for sale goods and groceries suited to his customers. A man came in, picked up a box of Seidlitz powders, and asked its price. Capt. Weber told him it was not for sale. The man offered an ounce of gold, but Capt. Weber told him it only cost fifty cents, and he did not wish to sell it. The man then offered an ounce and a half, when Capt. Weber told him to take it. The prices of all things are high, and yet Indians, who before hardly knew what a breech cloth was, can now afford to buy the most gaudy dresses.

The country on either side of Weber's creek is much broken up by hills, and is intersected in every direction by small streams or ravines, which contain more or less gold. Those that have been worked are barely scratched; and although thousands of ounces have been carried away, I do not consider that a serious impression has been made upon the whole. Every day was developing new and richer deposits, and the only impression seemed to be, that the metal would be found in such abundance as seriously to depreciate its value.

On the 8th of July I returned to the lower mines, and on the following day to Sutter's, where, on the 10th, I was making preparations for a visit to the Feather, Yuba, and Bear rivers when I received a letter from Commander A. R. Long, U. S.

Navy, who had just arrived at San Francisco from Mazatlan, and a crew for the schooner-of-war Warren, with orders to take that vessel to the La Paz. Capt. Long wrote to me that the Mexican Congress had adjourned without ratifying the treaty of peace; that he had letters for me from Commodore Jones, and that his orders were to sail with the Warren on or before the 20th of July. In consequence of these, I determined to return to Monterey, and accordingly arrived there on the 17th of July. Before leaving Sutter's I satisfied myself that gold existed in the bed of the Feather river, in the Yuba and Bear, and in many of the small streams that lie between the latter and the American fork; also, that it had been found in the Consummes, to the south of the American fork. In each of these streams the gold is found in small scales, whereas in the intervening mountainous regions it occurs in coarser lumps.

Mr. Sinclair, whose rancho is three miles above Sutter's, on the north side of the American fork, employs about fifty Indians on the north fork not far from its junction with the main stream. He had been engaged about five weeks when I saw him, and up to that time his Indians used simply closely woven willow baskets. His net proceeds (which I saw) were about \$16,000 worth of gold. He showed me proceeds of his last week's work—fourteen pounds avoirdupois of clean-washed gold.

The principal store at Sutter's (that of Brannan & Co.) had received in payment for goods \$23,000 worth of this gold from the 1st of May to the 10th of July. Other merchants had also made extensive sales. Large quantities of goods were daily sent forward to the mines, as the Indians, heretofore so poor and degraded, have suddenly become consumers of the luxuries of life. I before mentioned that the greater part of the farmers and rancheros had abandoned their fields to go to the mines. This is not the case with Captain Sutter, who was carefully gathering his wheat, estimated at 40,000 bushels. Flour is already worth at Sutter's \$30 a barrel, and soon will be fifty. Unless large quantities of bread stuff reach the country, much suffering will occur; but as each man is now able to pay a large price for it, it is believed that the merchants will bring from Chili and Oregon a plentiful supply for the coming winter.

The most moderate estimate I could obtain from men acquainted with the subject, was that upwards of four thousand men were working in the gold districts, of whom more than one-half were Indians, and that from \$30,000 to \$50,000 worth of gold if not more, was daily obtained. The entire gold district, with very few exceptions of some grants made some years ago by the Mexican authorities, is on land belonging to the United States. It was a matter of serious reflection with me, how I could secure to the Government certain rents or fees for the privilege of procuring this gold, but upon considering the extent of country, the character of the people engaged, and the small scattered force at my command, I resolved not to interfere, but to permit all to work freely, unless broils and crime should call for interference. I was surprised to learn that crime of any kind was very uncommon, and that no thefts or robberies had been committed in the gold districts. All live in tents, in brush arbors, or in the open air; and men have frequently about their persons thousands of dollars worth of this gold; and it was to me a matter of surprise that so peaceful and quiet a state of things should continue to exist. Conflicting claims to particular spots of ground may cause collisions, but they will be rare, as the extent of country is so great, and the gold so abundant, that for the present there is room enough for all. Still the Government is entitled to rents for this land and immovable sieges should be devised to collect them, for the longer it is delayed the more difficult it will become. One plan I would suggest is, to send out from the United States surveyors with high salaries, bound to serve specified periods.

A superintendent to be appointed at Sutter's Fort, with power to grant licenses to work a spot of ground—say 100 yards square—for one year, at a rent of from 100 to 1,000 dollars, at his discretion; the surveyors to measure the ground, and place the renter in possession. A better plan, however, will be, to have the district surveyed and sold at public auction to the highest bidder in small parcels—say from 20 to 40 acres. In either case, there will be many intruders, whom for years, it will be almost impossible to exclude.

The discoveries of these vast deposits of gold has entirely changed the character of the people of Upper California. Its people, before engaged in cultivating their small patches of ground, and guarding their herds of cattle and horses, have all gone to the mines, or are on their way thither. Laborers of every trade have left their work-benches, and tradesmen their shops. Sailors desert their ships as soon as they arrive on the coast; and several vessels have gone to sea with hardly enough hands to fur a sail. Two or three are now at anchor in San Francisco, with no crew on board. Many desertions, too, have taken place from the garrisons within the influence of these mines; twenty-six soldiers have deserted from the post of Sonoma, twenty-four from that of San Francisco, and twenty-four from Monterey. For a few days the evil appeared so threatening that great danger existed that the garrisons would leave in a body; and

I refer you to my orders of the 21st of July, to show the steps adopted to meet the contingency. I shall spare no exertions to apprehend and punish deserters; but I believe no time in the history of our country has presented such temptations to desert as now exist in California. The danger of apprehension is small, and the prospect of high wages certain; pay and bounties are trifles, as laboring at the mines can now earn in one day more than double a soldier's pay, and afterwards for a month, and even the pay of a lieutenant or captain cannot hire a servant. A carpenter would listen to an offer of less than fifteen or twenty dollars a day. Could any combination of affairs try a man's fidelity more than this? and I really think some extraordinary mark of favor should be given to those soldiers who remain faithful to their flag throughout this tempting crisis. No officer can now live in California on his pay, money has so little value; the prices of necessary articles of clothing and subsistence are so exorbitant, and labor so high, that to hire a cook or servant has become an impossibility, save to those who are earning from thirty to fifty dollars a day. This state of things cannot last forever. Yet, from the geographical position of California, and the new character it has assumed as a mining country, prices of labor will always be high, and will hold out temptations to desert. I therefore have to report, if the Government wish to prevent desertions here on the part of men, and to secure good and the part of officers, their pay must be increased very materially. Soldiers, both of the volunteers and regular service, discharged in this country, should be permitted at once to locate their land warrants in the gold district. Many private letters have gone to the United States, giving accounts of the vast quantity of gold recently discovered, and it may be a matter of surprise why I have made no report on this subject at an earlier day. The reason is that I could not bring myself to believe the reports that I heard of the wealth of the gold district, until I visited it myself. I have no hesitation in saying that there is more gold in the country drained by the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers than will pay the cost of the present war with Mexico a hundred times over. No capital is required to obtain this gold, as the laboring man wants nothing but his pick and shovel and tin pan, with which to dig and wash the gravel; and many frequently pick gold out of the crevices of rocks with their pocket knives, in pieces from one to six ounces.

Mr. Dye, a gentleman residing in Monterey, and worthy of every credit, has just returned from Feather river. He tells me that the company to which he belonged, worked seven weeks and two days, with an average of fifty Indians (washers), and that their gross product was two hundred and seventy three pounds of gold. His share (one seventh), after paying all expenses, was about thirty-seven pounds, which he brought with him and exhibited in Monterey. I see no laboring man from the mines who does not show his two three, or four pounds of gold. A soldier of the artillery company returned here a few days ago from the mines, having been absent on furlough twenty days. He made by trading and working during that time \$1,300. During these twenty days he was traveling ten or eleven days, leaving but a week in which he made a sum of money greater than he receives in pay, clothes, and rations during a whole enlistment of five years. These statements appear incredible, but they are true.

God is also believed to exist on the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada; and when at the mines, I was informed by an intelligent Mormon that it had been found near the Great Salt Lake by some of his fraternity. Nearly all the Mormons are leaving California, to go to the Salt Lake and there surely would not do, unless they were sure of finding gold there in the same abundance as they now do on the Sacramento.

The gold "placer" near the mission of San Fernando has long been known, but has been little wrought for want of water. This is in a spot that puts off from the Sierra Nevada (see Fremont's map), the same in which the present mines occur. There is, therefore, every reason to believe, that in the intervening spaces of five hundred miles (entirely unexplored), there must be many hidden and rich deposits. The "placer" gold is now substituted as the currency of this country; in trade it passes freely at \$10 per ounce; as an article of commerce its value is not yet fixed. The only purchase I made was of the specimen No. 7, which I got of Mr. Neligh at \$15 the ounce. This is about the present cash value in the country, although it has been sold for less. The great demand for goods and provisions, made by this sudden development of wealth, has increased the amount of commerce at San Francisco very much, and it will continue to increase.

I would recommend that a mint be established at some eligible point of the Bay of San Francisco; and that machinery, and all the necessary apparatus and workmen, be sent out by sea. These workmen must be bound by high wages, and even bonds to secure their faithful services, else the whole plan may be frustrated by their going to the mines as soon as they arrive in California. If this course be not adopted, gold to the amount of many millions of dollars will pass yearly to other countries, to enrich their merchants and capitalists.

I consider the address indispensable. Whatever action is taken must proceed from the slaveholding States. If the Con-

stitution be violated, and their rights approached upon it, it is for them to determine the mode and measure of redress. We can only suggest and advise. We are on the theatre of action—the witnesses of the alarming encroachments which have been going on upon the rights of the slaveholding part of the country—we see them plainly, we feel them deeply; they are rapid and alarming for—who believes that propositions which have, within a few days past, commanded the support of the Lower House of Congress, would even three years ago have been tolerated by any respectable portion of either House.

We are in the midst of events scarcely of less import than those of our revolutionary era. The question is, are we to hold our position in this confederacy upon the ground of equals, or are we to content ourselves with the condition of colonial dependence. Sir, it will be worse than colonial dependence for who would not prefer to be taxed and governed, without pretence of representation, than, under the forms of representation, to be grievously oppressed by measures over which we have no control, and against which our remonstrances are unavailing. It is undeniable that the encroachments upon our rights have been rapid and alarming. They must be met.

Frederick, that no Southern man can entertain, for one moment, the idea of tam submission. The action of the South must be united, temperate, but decided—our positions must be taken deliberately, but held at every hazard. We were no-war-of aggression. We ask only for the constitution and union and government of our fathers. We ask of our Northern brethren to learn in their rights and privileges which our fathers held, and, without securing which for their children, all know they would not have entered into this Union. These we must maintain.

It appears to me proper that we who are here on the theatre of action, should address our constituents of the slaveholding States, briefly and accurately pointing out the progress of usurpation and aggression, and exhibit the measures which threaten, and leave it in their hands to mark out the proper line of action. What that should be is needless here to discuss; whatever it is, it should be temperate, and decided.

Having expressed these views, I have to say that I make no objection to the motion of the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. Stephens) to refer the whole matter to a select committee, to consider maturely and report to a future meeting. But I would rather prefer an earlier day than the 15th of January. I am, above all, for union, but money and decision on the part of the South.

Mr. Pendleton's remarks (which were made some time previously to Mr. Calhoun's) was also understood to have been very sensible and effective. He expressed his general acquiescence in the resolutions of his colleague (Mr. Bayley). He did not so well, however, like the expression in them "measures of redress." That seemed to contemplate that the South should wait until the wrongs had been committed, and then undertake to redress them. He preferred rather measures of "power and precaution." He was willing at once to lay down a line, and let their Northern brethren know that they must not cross it. He subsequently, however, acquiesced in the proposition of Mr. Stephens.

The substance of Mr. Poole's remarks was, I am informed, that he was ready for instantaneous action, and was willing at once to vote on the resolutions submitted by Mr. Bayley.

The only point of difference between the members in the discussion, was as to whether this was a proper time for any action. Some held that the South should wait until the measures lately threatened should become laws—that they ought first to resort to all constitutional means of opposition to defeat those measures. If all these should be unavailing, then the time for separate action on the part of the South would have arisen.

Others held on the contrary, that action now, in the form of precaution, was advisable. It would be well, said they, to lay down the line beyond which they should conceive it wrong to submit to the aggressions of the majority in order thus to warn their northern brethren against any aggression beyond that line. If afterwards they resolved to make that aggression, the responsibility of the consequences would be theirs. The South, in that case, would have done every thing in their power to avert any serious discord.

All sides, however, held that when the proper time should arrive, if it had not already arrived, the South take firm and decided measures to maintain its constitutional rights.

Mr. GARREY, of New York, a member of the House of Representatives, makes frequent complaints of loss of time by the House in the despatch of business. He has also published a table giving the name of every member of Congress, and showing the amount of mileage drawn by each, a statement of what would be due if each travelled by the shortest post route. The difference amounts to more than sixty thousand dollars.

Value of boots and shoes manufactured in Massachusetts in 1846, was fifteen millions of dollars; in 1847, seventeen millions of dollars.

During a visit, I made last spring, for such ovens were in operation, and yielded in the two days I was there 653 pounds of Quicksilver worth a Mazatlan \$1.80 per pound. Mr. Walkinshaw, says the veins are improving, and that he can afford to keep his people employed even in these extraordinary times. This mine is very valuable of itself, and becomes more so as mercury is extensively used in obtaining gold. It is not at present used in California for that purpose, but will be at some future time. When I was at this mine last spring other parties were engaged in searching for veins; but none have been discovered that are worth following up, although the earth in that whole range of hills is highly discolored, indicating the presence of this ore. I send several beautiful specimens, properly labelled. The amount of quick silver in Mr. Forbes's vat on the 15th of July was about 2,500 pounds.

I enclose you herewith sketches of the country through which I passed indicating the position of the mines, and the topography of the position in the vicinity of those I visited.

Some of the specimens of gold accompanying this were presented for transmission to the department by the gentlemen named below. The numbers on the topographical sketch corresponding to the labels of the respective specimens, show from what part of the gold region they were obtained.

1. Captain J. A. Sutter.  
2. John Sinclair.  
3. William Glover, R. C. Kirby, Ira Blanchard, Levi Field, Franklin H. Ayres, Mormon Diggings.  
4. Charles Weber.  
5. Robert Spencer.  
6. Smit & Co.  
7. Robert D. Neligh.  
8. C. E. Pickett, American Fork, Co. Lucania.  
9. E. C. Kemble.  
10. T. H. Green, from San Fernando near Los Angeles.  
A 2 oz. purchased from Mr. Neligh.  
B. Sand found in washing gold which contains small particles.

11. Captain Frisbie, Dry diggings, Weber's creek.  
12. Consummes.  
13. Consummes, Hartwell's ranch.  
I have the honor to be your most obedient servant.

R. B. MASON,  
Colonel First Dragoon Commanding,  
Brig Gen. R. Jones,  
Adj. Gen. U. S. A., Washington.

D. C.

Washington, Dec. 25, 1848

In my letter of yesterday I alluded very briefly to the remarks of Mr. Calhoun, at the meeting of Southern members of the two Houses on Friday evening. To-day I am enabled to give you a more elaborate report, which may be relied upon as substantially correct. He said:

The resolutions of the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. Bayley) are good, and, considering the length of time which he has had to prepare them, do him great credit; but they are not perfect. They are defective in several particulars—I am, therefore, less unwilling to agree to the motion of the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. Stephens). Another consideration strongly impels to the same course; I am thoroughly impressed with the necessity of harmonious and united action, both on our part and on the part of the Southern community.

I am opposed, however, to too great delay, and consequently would prefer that the committee should report at a meeting to be held on the 10th instead of the 15th of January. The Legislatures of several of the Southern States are now in session, and it would be well that our address should reach them in time to be acted upon by them before their adjournment.

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stitution be violated, and their rights approached upon it, it is for them to determine the mode and measure of redress. We can only suggest and advise. We are on the theatre of action—the witnesses of the alarming encroachments which have been going on upon the rights of the slaveholding part of the country—we see them plainly, we feel them deeply; they are rapid and alarming for—who believes that propositions which have, within a few days past, commanded the support of the Lower House of Congress, would even three years ago have been tolerated by any respectable portion of either House.

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