

Scharmamm's overland journey to California, from the pages of a pioneer's diary

SCHARMANN'S OVERLAND JOURNEY TO CALIFORNIA

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TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF H.B. SCHARMANN by Margaret Hoff Zimmermann, A. B. and Erich W. Zimmermann, Ph. D.

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PREFACE

NOT long ago, by a mere chance, a copy of the Sunday edition of the New Yorker Staats Zeitung is sued during the year 1852 came into my possession. On looking: over it I was pleasantly surprised to find it contained my father's own description of his overland journey to California. Fifty-five years have elapsed since that time, yet vividly and distinctly all the details of that infinitely sad trip rise before my eyes. My father took the entire family with him, consisting of my mother, my little three-year-old sister, my elder brother, and myself. My poor mother and my little sister did not return with us, for they met an untimely death in a strange land while I was reading it was only natural that I should ask myself whether or not this modern generation would be interested in this unassuming narrative. I did not want to undertake a republication ⁴ on my own responsibility, so I asked a friend, Mr. Carl Schurz, who is a judge of human character to be good enough to look over these pages. Shortly after this, Mr. Schurz returned them to me accompanied by the following letter:

4 East 91st Street, December 17, 1904.

DEAR MR. SCHARMANN:

Many thanks for your kind letter. The notes from your father's diary containing a description of his trip from the East to California were read from the first to the last word with the keenest interest by my whole family. You afforded us a veritable pleasure. They present & most clear and lifelike picture of a period in the cultural development of America which already lies far behind us; and whose adventurous character we would hardly be able to visualize if we did not have such descriptions as the one in question.

Your query whether a publication of your father's travelling experience might be of interest to the general public I can only answer by saying that in my opinion there can hardly be a doubt about it. Of course I am judging by the impression which the reading of the Journal made on my family-circle and myself. It was the impression of a very sympathetic and highly thrilling narrative which, at the same time, is very entertaining and instructive. I must add here that such an exposition possesses & cultural and historical value provided that it is as faithful to truth and vivid in its details as in the present instance. It ought, therefore, to be preserved in as lasting and accessible a form as possible, and I sincerely hope that this will be the case.

With friendly greetings,

Yours, CARL SCHURZ.

Acting upon the advice of this competent, if friendly and sympathetic critic, I venture to submit the story of the journey as nearly as may be as it was written by my father.

HERMANN B. SCHARMANN.

February 22nd, 1918.

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H. B. SCHARMANN, SR. H. B. SCHARMANN JACOB FREDERICK SCHARMANN

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Scharmann's Overland Journey to California

CHAPTER I

DEPARTURE FROM NEW YORK--CANAL TRIP--PITTSBURG--A STORM ON THE OHIO--
CINCINNATI--THE MISSISSIPPI---ST. LOUIS--INDEPENDENCE.

A German company attracted to the new Eldorado by a spirit of Wanderlust and by a desire for gold, had chosen me as its president. It was on the twentieth of March, 1849, that we started from New York for the gold regions of California, 4,750 miles away. Truly: "To travel often gives much pleasure, But the gods, who are wise, stay home."

Through Mr. Gubert, the agent of Bingham's Transport Line in Philadelphia, an agreement was made for our transportation as far as St. Louis,--a distance of about 1600 miles,--at \$10.50 per person. The trip began at six o'clock in the evening, and at seven 8 o'clock the next morning we reached Philadelphia. Our company numbered sixty people. Violent rainstorms detained us in Philadelphia so that we did not board the train until the twenty-second of March at eight o'clock in the morning. We travelled all of that day and the greater part of the night. In dense darkness we arrived at Columbia where, together with our baggage, we were packed so tightly into a canal boat that I almost despaired of living through a night in such a condition. But where there is a will, there is a way. Thus, we managed to spend four entire days on the canal skirting the Susquehanna River until we reached the foot of the Alleghany Mountains. Here we again boarded trains which were moved up and down the mountain by machinery. In the evening, once more subjected to the hardships of cramped quarters on a canal boat which was even smaller than the first, we felt that our spirit was put to a hard test, until on the first of April, at seven o'clock in the evening, Pittsburg, the city of smoke, lay before us. We had no time for a closer inspection of this active and 9 flourishing factory town, for, at ten o'clock, only three hours after our arrival, we boarded the steamer "Enterprise" which was to carry us down the Ohio to St. Louis.

Pittsburg has a beautiful waterfront. As we passed by, I counted fifty-seven

THE CARAVAN DESCENDING GRAND ROUND

steamers. The trip on the glorious Ohio recompensed us for all earlier inconveniences. Its romantic banks bear witness to the capabilities of man, which develop when he is given an unrestricted opportunity to achieve his happiness by means of his own labor. For, all along 10 the river prosperous farms produce a strong and healthy type of man. Our steamer was filled to overflowing with emigrants who like ourselves were moving to California. On the deck oxen and mules stood in close files, and many persons had to camp between or beneath them. Charming little villages, trim towns rolled past our eyes in this splendid panorama. Every emigrant ought to be advised to spend his money for a home on the Ohio rather than to chase after California gold.

Cincinnati, the queen of the West, soon rose up before us. Her business and trade, her stores and her laborers leave a pleasant impression upon the mind of the traveller and justify her claim to royalty.

In Louisville we stopped for several hours, which gave me an opportunity to inspect this pretty city. It shows a certain compactness and gives the impression that here any kind of labor that is at all adapted to the country is assured of a more than adequate compensation. Prices of all commodities ranged very low; thus a dozen eggs cost five cents. I bought three dozen, but while absorbed in the sights I did not notice where I was going, and stumbled, breaking the eggs. I was lucky to get off with a slight limp.

On the eighth of April we reached the junction of the Ohio and the Mississippi, and sailed up the "Father of Waters" toward St. Louis. The land on either side is level and is barely cultivated. Yet here the best soil is found both for settlement and agriculture, as is proved by the strong growth of the trees, especially the oak. Further up, as the land becomes more hilly and undulating, more settlements and brick farmhouses are seen. On the eleventh of April, at seven o'clock in the evening, we arrived at St. Louis. Urged by the captain, we started a German song and amidst singing and the firing of our guns we steamed on toward the city.

Here we tarried a few days in order to lay in a store of provisions for the long trip. On the fifteenth of April I concluded an agreement with the master of a steamship to take us up the Missouri as far

as Independence for \$2.50 per person. The distance to Independence is 360 12 miles. We arrived there on the twentieth of April, pitched our tents, made other preparations, and then waited for the arrival of the committee which was to bring the cattle. The Missouri region may be called a veritable paradise. The dark soil of unsurpassable quality has allured many German settlers, and at the first glance their farms give evidence of their prosperity. Here, in the sunshine of political and civic freedom, work becomes pleasure, and its proceeds, instead of enriching the princely drone, are the reward of the worker.

CHAPTER II

DEPARTURE FROM INDEPENDENCE--THE PRAIRIE--THE WAGONS--THE KANSAS RIVER--INDIANS--THE CROSSING--FORT KEARNEY--THE PLATTE RIVER--THE HUNT.

After a four weeks' stay we struck our tents, harnessed the horses to our four wagons, each of which was loaded with a minimum of three hundred pounds, and on May twentieth, with 13 forty cows and four to five yoked oxen we started toward the prairie.

This overland journey is one of the most unfortunate undertakings to which man may allow himself to be lured, because he cannot possibly have any conception before starting of this kind of travelling. To be sure, there is a beaten path which you see clearly before you but there are no stopping-places with even the slightest signs of civilization. Everyone is going and no one is coming back. You leave your camp in the hope of finding water, and a grazing place for the cattle a few miles further on; but sometimes it happens that you are forced to halt in a place where neither grass nor water can be found. This means intense suffering for the cattle and often an irretrievable loss. In our case, some very serious blunders had been made in securing the wagons, the oxen, and the mules. An ox suitable for the journey over the prairies must not be under four nor over six years old, and must be well accustomed to the yoke. Every yoke must be of the same strength and quality, so that one ox does not pull ahead of or pull down the 14 other. The mules must also be young and well broken; whoever intends to break them in on the trip will surely not make any headway and will only ruin the animals. Horses are entirely useless.

The wagons deserve special attention. They should be made of dry and firm wood, and tongue and axle should be so strong that it would be almost impossible to break them. The wagon must be able to carry 6,000 pounds on a level road, and yet it must not be massive, and must run very easily. Four yokes of well-trained oxen or six mules should form the equipment for such a wagon, and it should not be loaded with more than 2,000 pounds. If you fall into holes, as is the case a dozen times a day when a wagon crosses a swamp, the oxen in front which have reached firm ground must help the others by giving them room to turn.

On some occasions I have seen the axles break in two, as though they were mere twigs. This happened with a wagon which was made for me by Mr. Ringelmann, a blacksmith and wheelwright in New York. I had the good 15 luck to be able to choose the best one of ten or twelve wagons which had been abandoned near the spot by other travellers. To this I harnessed seven oxen, and was thus able to ride over hedge and ditch without any danger.

From Independence to the Kansas River, a distance of 130 miles, there is only a boundless prairie of the best grass land, but this landscape is so novel that you never tire of looking at it.

Along the Kansas River I saw Indians for the first time in their primitive condition. Men and women ride; they wrap themselves in woollen blankets, wear beads on hands and feet, and put them around their horses' necks; they paint their faces red and blue. But notwithstanding all their barbarous customs, they act in a fairly decent way. These Indians live mainly on the money which the United States pays them for their ceded territory.

The Kansas River at the crossing is too deep for a wagon to ford it, so a boat has been placed on which they may be taken over. The cattle have to swim. My son Frederic mounted Bill, the 16 trusty leader of the oxen, and started across. Immediately the whole herd followed him.

From the Kansas to Fort Kearney, a distance of 180 miles, the land is one large meadow with gently undulating hills and valleys. On June twenty-second we reached Fort Kearney, where we

INDIAN VISITORS

rested for two days. The fort, like all the other buildings around here, is built of dried bricks. It is garrisoned by three companies of soldiers and guarded by several guns, in order to keep a check on the numerous Indians of this neighborhood. The site is on an immense plateau thickly covered with grass which could serve as a dwelling-place ¹⁷ for an almost unlimited number of human beings, since the cultivation of this land and the raising of cattle would amply recompense them all within a few years.

I went to the commander of the fort and asked him for some fresh bread to satisfy my wife's longing. In the most accommodating and courteous way he supplied me with an order on the quartermaster's department, where I obtained fifteen pounds of fresh bread very cheaply.

On the twenty-fourth of June we set out once more, this time toward Fort Laramie, which is situated at the foot of the Rockies, about 340 miles from Kearney. In a short time we had reached the Platte River, which has a breadth of a quarter of a mile and whose water is always muddy because its bed consists of a very fine quicksand, constantly stirred up by the strong current. Eighty miles from Fort Kearney, the Platte divides into two branches, the southernmost of which we had to cross. The various parties of emigrants helped each other, and furnished the relays of horses in turn, ¹⁸ so after great labor we safely reached the other side. The water came up to the body of the wagon and threatened to soak our provisions.

As we left the river and passed on toward the west, we came into the region of wild buffaloes. We were almost fifty miles from the south fork when we suddenly noticed some figures on a nearby hill. It was a herd of thousands of buffaloes. It is a most difficult and usually a futile undertaking to chase after these animals on foot. Huge and heavily built, they are nevertheless swift runners, and it is just barely possible that a fast Indian horse may overtake them in a long run. One day I saw three buffaloes and a calf behind a bluff not more than three hundred feet away from me, so that I could inspect them at short range. As soon as they caught sight of me they stared at me with their fiery eyes so that even the devil, if I had still believed in one, could scarcely have frightened me at that moment. I took to flight, but the animals also started to run. When I saw that we had a mutual dislike for each other's society, I ¹⁹ stopped running and watched them gallop off. The buffalo has a

very broad chest, its front legs are slightly longer than the hind legs, its head is broad and long, with crisp dark brown locks circling over the forehead. Its flesh is similar to that of an ox.

In my company there were several good marksmen, who crept up stealthily upon the herd in due form and carried

A BUFFALO HUNT

off some booty. The air is so clear here that a slice of meat will dry in twenty-four hours, only the traveller has no time to wait for it. Other hunting is not to be thought of. I have not seen a single stag or deer, and there are no fish in the streams. Wolves, smaller than the European ones and quite harmless, come in hordes and in the evening. 20 They deafen your ears with their howling roundabout the camp. There are mosquitoes here, especially near the streams, and they are so plentiful that man and beast are continually harassed by them.

Thus the journey went on, always through the midst of the buffalo herds. One stray herd came running into the midst of our cattle, so that our huntsmen took aim and brought down one of them, but unhappily they also killed one of our best cows. That certainly was an expensive buffalo!

Horses and buffaloes are the mainstay of the prairie Indians. The buffalo meat serves as their nourishment; the skins they use for utensils or they give them to the traders, who pass through the prairie every summer, in exchange for woollen blankets, carmosine red and indigo blue, and fine pearls which the squaws use for artistic embroidery on dresses and shoes. Buffalo skins and rare deer skins are dyed most delicately and used to make dresses and shoes.

About 115 miles from Fort Laramie we met a band of Indians which, counting 21 women and children, numbered 230 persons. The chief handed us a document, signed by the commander of the fort, which stated that the Indians of this branch of the Sioux were Rot hostile, but most friendly, and that therefore every traveller should avoid insulting them. We soon learned that they had come in order to get some of our provisions, but our company was not very abundantly provided and could give them very little. I camped about fifty yards away from the general camp, with my wagon of provisions. Soon I counted thirty-six Indians around my wagon. Among them was the chief,

with his squaw and three children. Naturally I was curious to learn something of their customs. So I gave orders that the wash-kettle should be filled with tea and all other available vessels with coffee; also I had three large pancakes baked. My cows still gave quite a bit of milk, and so a supper was prepared for the Indians. The chief thought that he had more rights than the others, so he and his family sat close to the wagon. The others lay around the fire in a circle.

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When the other Indians saw that these were being feasted, they all came running up. I indicated to the chief that this was unwelcome to me, whereupon he immediately arose, held up his hand and cried aloud: "Womeski!" As though struck by lightning, the approaching Indians stopped short and then turned back.

After the meal my guests left with many expressions of gratitude; only the chief and his family remained. I was very much drawn to this man, because of his unusual physiognomy and behavior. We sat together some time and smoked. Our conversation consisted of silence and signs. Meanwhile his wife brought my wife a pair of deerskin shoes, finely embroidered in pearls. I made them a few presents in return.

The following morning, before we resumed our journey, I visited their camp. My youngest son drove the wagon and my oldest son accompanied me. Here I verified the truth that all good deeds are rewarded, for these savages strive earnestly to repay everything that they had received at my hands. Their huts are round, narrowing toward the top and covered with large skins; the camp is circular and in the midst of it is the chief's dwelling.

As soon as the chief caught sight of me he shook hands and then took me into his tent and presented to me some dried buffalo meat. All the women that I saw were busily making shoes and embroidering dresses with pearls. The chief's daughter, who was about nineteen years old, threw a rope of pearls around my son's neck while I gazed at her long and admiringly. My son was fifteen years old, of a strong, manly stature, yet he did not seem to guess at the thoughts which one might

surmise were running through the girl's head. I experienced real regret at having to leave these savages who appeared to me to be more civilized than many so-called civilized men.

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CHAPTER III

FORT LARAMIE--SOUTH PASS--FLAX--SNAKE INDIANS--THE HUMBOLDT RIVER--
FALSELY DIRECTED--DESERT--HARDSHIPS.

At Fort Laramie we remained for three days, caring for the cattle and repairing our wagons. As I wished to hurry ahead as much as possible, I felt that it was advisable for me to leave the company which was making far too slow a progress. I had to drive along the right bank of the Platte River for about 150 miles before I came to a place where the Mormons had constructed a ferry which carried me across the river. From Fort Laramie to the South Pass the land is only sparsely covered with grass, in altogether insufficient quantity for the countless crowds of emigrants that must pass over it. In addition to this, the road is rough and rocky, although it passes between the mountains instead of over them. Finally, without any climbing, the South Pass is reached. There a brook splashes merrily over the rocks and a good-sized grassy expanse greets the traveller's weary eyes. The brook is called Pacific Creek. On my arrival I found five thousand oxen and numerous mules and wagons, besides their human owners. These separated here, some to go to the Mormon City, others to join the California travellers. I attached myself to this latter division and so had plenty of company.

At the Big Santee River we rested for a day. Then we went on over a forty-mile desert to the Green River. Here pieces of shattered wagons were scattered all around; but several in good condition were among them, so we had a good chance to replenish our stock. After this I drove on over steep mountains and through deep valleys, continually wondering whether it would be possible to climb over them.

The mountains in this region are called Peak Basement and form a dome in a circle of about one hundred square miles. All are covered by low brushwood and grass, and present a very pleasant aspect. The most curious thing in this region is the fact that flax grows everywhere in among the

grass. I examined a stalk and discovered that it was very like the European flax in quality. Thus the soil proclaimed its own fertility. The only drawback is that it does not rain here during the Indian summer.

This is the only region during this part of the voyage that seems worthy of a farmer's notice. The land for the rest of the way from Fort Laramie to California is not worth a cent, I think. It consists of nothing but desert-land and bare mountains covered with boulders and red soil which make them resemble volcanoes. The best thing the traveller can do is to hurry on as fast as possible from one river to the other.

At the Bear River, in a valley from three to four miles wide, we gave our cattle a two days' rest. Here there was no lack of grass, but such grazing places are quickly traversed, and it is not possible to remain near them for any length of time. In a beautiful valley along the Snake River I met Snake Indians, who are closely related to the Sioux Tribe. ²⁷ Their chief occupations are bunting and fishing. They came up to us and begged, but we discovered that if you give something to one of them all the others come running to you. Their intellectual faculties are probably of the very lowest, as their language consists of an extremely limited vocabulary. They wore feathers behind their ears, and many also used them to decorate their heads. We did not bother very much with them, simply giving them something and then going on.

All of us most earnestly desired to reach the Humboldt River as soon as possible, and then to follow its course for about three hundred miles. Truly, many of our longings were now satisfied; for in some parts this valley is very beautiful. On the north and south it is enclosed by mountains, and for the most part it is overgrown by a wild, useless mass of brushwood which looks and smells very much like the wormwood plant. The mountains here are apparently volcanic, reddish in color, bare and covered with boulders and rocks which have been burned by the heat of the sun. This gives the region ²⁸ a desolate, uncanny appearance. The winds hereabout form such clouds of dust on an already dusty road that the wayfarer is soon as black as a negro.

The poor oxen suffered intensely on this journey as we plodded on and on. We were still five hundred miles from California; two hundred and forty of these were to take us along the Humboldt River. Until we reached the spot where the road turns off toward Oregon our slogan was, "Fifteen miles a day!" At the crossroads many signs told us to take a new road, because it was one hundred and fifty miles nearer. For the sake of a handful of gold one man will oft cause another man's misfortune. That was the case here.

Captain Palmer, who was accompanying a government supply train from Oregon to Fort Hall, advised us to follow the Oregon road, saying that it would take us over the Sierra Nevada, a California mountain range, just as the South Pass of the Rocky Mountains would take us there, but that it was much nearer. He deceived us. From the spot where the road turns off we had two hundred and sixty miles to go by the Kansas River Road. By this new road it was a distance of five hundred miles, although he had assured us that it was only seventy-five miles. In the hope of speedily ending the journey many thousands of emigrants followed this road.

As soon as we left the Humboldt River we came into a new desert, seventy miles wide, although it had been represented to us as only thirty. Wells had been dug in the midst of this desert, but nowhere was there any grass for the cattle. During the day we rested, and at night, when it became a little cooler, we drove on. Even though we exerted all our strength, we took a day and two nights to cross the first part of the desert, where nothing but volcanic mountains on all sides could be seen. We had to travel thirty-three miles more before we could regard our cattle as saved. The heat was oppressive and clouds of alkaline dust enveloped us. I examined the soil and found it to consist of a mixture of salt, chalk and ashes. Both in front and in back of us was a long train of wagons, so that at least I had company in my misery. Now 30 we came to a place where we saw a neatly arranged row of wagons. All of them were empty and abandoned. In order to save as much as possible, the owners had unharnessed the cattle and had driven them on rapidly. Those who had no families took their bundles on their shoulders and proceeded on foot. The families were all the more to be pitied.

I covered seventeen miles from eleven in the morning until eight in the evening, then I rested. My whole water supply barely sufficed to make a cup of tea or coffee for my wife. This was our whole

supper. On the road over which I had travelled during the day I had counted eighty-one shattered and abandoned wagons, and 1,663 oxen, either dead or dying, but no mules.

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CHAPTER IV

A SAD NIGHT'S JOURNEY--LOSS OF OXEN--THE RESCUE--HOT SPRINGS--ILLNESS--SIERRA NEVADA--CROSSING THE MOUNTAINS--CALIFORNIA INDIANS--THEIR CUSTOMS.

Toward midnight I again harnessed the oxen, hoping to reach grass and water by six o'clock. I led the horse, my son carried the whip, Mr. August Hill, an excellent young man from New York, was my travelling companion. The horizon seemed bathed in a sea of blossoms. The night was calm and quiet. We had gone on about seven miles; I was walking behind the wagon which was moving more slowly every minute. My son halted and joined his mother, who was weeping, mingling his tears with hers. The two leading oxen had lost their last ounce of strength and fell down.

“Yes,” my son said to me, “if you and I were alone, we would do as the 32 other travellers did--take our knapsacks on our backs and go on foot.”

I stood still for a few minutes, pondering and asking myself what could be done in this moment of dire distress. There was no longer any hope for the exhausted oxen. I have often seen these

LAKE TAHOE, NEVADA, AND THE SNOW COVERED PEAKS OF THE SIERRA RANGE

poor animals still alive when wagons, coming after, drove over them. I did not want my oxen to share this fate, so, obeying my wish, my travelling companion took out his gun and freed them from their last struggle. With a heavy heart I continued the journey.

I had only five oxen or two and a 33 half yokes left now, and these, half dead with hunger, barely dragged themselves on until six o'clock in the morning. We could not look ahead of us because a smoky mist, something like dry fog, permeated the atmosphere. Suddenly my oxen stopped

once more. One of them which I had used as the leader collapsed. I took the remaining four out of harness, left the wagon with my family inside of it standing by the roadside, and drove the cattle before me, hoping in this wise sooner to reach the haven of safety. On account of the peat-smoke which darkened the region until noon, we could see no further than a ten minutes' drive ahead. I had vessels with me in which to carry back water to man and beast, who alike were dying of thirst. I had crept on scarcely more than fifteen minutes, when a valley with bubbling springs and pleasant grazing places revealed itself to me. The springs proved all to be hot because they lay under volcanoes whose craters were plainly visible. But about three hundred yards away from their source these springs changed into the finest drinking water. At this spot of 34 deliverance We rested a few days and then again proceeded westward.

Up to this point we had all experienced some of the illnesses that are inevitable to such a trip. The most common are dysentery, intermittent fever, cholera, and scurvy, all of which are the result of the unhealthful food and water, especially the latter, besides the change of climate. Often we suffered all day from the terrific heat, while the night was so cold that a three- or four-inch layer of ice covered the ground in the morning.

We left this place and journeyed on for fifty miles. For a distance of fifteen miles there was no trace of any water nor of anything else but shrivelled grass, withered by the burning sun. We were all the happier, therefore, when, toward evening, we saw a large crack in the ground, which proved to be a waterhole, probably dug by some former travellers. Here we first of all allowed our cattle, which were almost dead with thirst, to have their share. Afterwards I prepared coffee, for the water that remained to us was so muddy that we could not drink of it otherwise without vomiting. From now on the road was fairly smooth and full of travellers, most of them carrying their utensils on their backs because their cattle had died and they had had to leave their wagons. Provisions were very expensive and at Muddy Lake, where I took the precaution to buy a hundred pounds of flour, I had to pay seventy-five dollars for it.

About eighty miles further on the scenery suddenly changed. In the distance we saw an extended mountain chain and huge dark pine forests which stretched from south to north as far as the eye

could see. Our hearts beat for joy at the thought that the rich and longed-for land lay just beyond these mountains. The next morning we started out joyfully to cross the last barrier which separated us from the gold field valleys. Because only four of my oxen remained to me, I left my wagons behind me, and from the many abandoned wagons which stood round about I chose a light two-wheeled cart which would be a lesser burden for the animals to drag over the mountains.

These mountains, which are called the Sierra Nevada, present a majestic aspect. ³⁶ They are covered with the highest and the most beautiful fir trees that I have ever seen, and in the future they will furnish excellent shipbuilding material. In front of them lies a magnificent valley covered with evergreen grass, through which a clear and sparkling brook winds its way. In the morning several travellers, including myself, started with the few remaining wagons to climb a peak on this chain, which was estimated to be about three miles high. The first half of the way was fairly easy travelling, but then after a short walk along the shelf of the mountain we had to climb up the steep shoulder of the height. Turn by turn we furnished each other with relays, so that only the empty wagons would have to be taken in tow. We had to unpack our provisions and utensils and drag them up on our backs. In this way, after much struggling, we succeeded in reaching the summit, from which we had a wonderful view. The long mountain chain extends in both directions; all the peaks are round at the bottom and taper toward the top. After we had rested for a while on the summit ³⁷ and had had some black coffee and dried bread, thus reviving our strength, we packed up and slid down the mountain into a valley where we wished to stay overnight. I camped with the Washington City Company, whose captain had gone a two days' journey ahead of them, and now on his return from the Pitt River, fifty-five miles from our present camp, brought back the news that the Sacramento Valley was still three hundred miles away.

The company, because of a shortage of provisions, abandoned all its wagons. Every one loaded a mule and thus continued his journey, while I was left behind with my miserable cart. My feelings, therefore, were not of the pleasantest, especially as my oxen grew weaker day by day, and still I could not deny that I was lucky in comparison with some of my travelling companions who had lost their cattle altogether. Finally, we also started our preparations for the next stage of our journey, but were interrupted by the sudden appearance of visitors, as unwelcome as they were unexpected.

They were five of the original natives of California, 38 armed with bows and arrows, but without any clothing. They succeeded in making us understand that they Would not mind receiving a few gifts, but when they saw that we were not possessed of great riches, they were satisfied with the portions of bread that I distributed among them.

Although their country is so rich, there are no poorer Indians than the Californians. They possess literally nothing, the hunting and fishing does not amount to much; their chief nourishment consists of acorn bread and worms which they dig out of the ground. Their dwellings, which are made of a heap of earth, something like a haystack in shape, have a hole in the middle in order that they may climb in and out; this hole at the same time serves as the chimney.

The Indians that I saw were not clothed at all, and that is the general condition prevailing among them. In the autumn they gather acorns, from which they make bread. They hollow out a stone until the hole will contain about a quart of acorns. These they grind with another stone which fits into 39 the hole, then they pour the flour into water-proofed willow baskets, and by adding water make a soft, limp dough. Next they carry the filled basket into the sun and let the dough dry completely. This forms almost their only nourishment during the winter.

CHAPTER V

A MOUNTAIN JOURNEY--DAYS OF NEED--THE WESTERN TRAIN--A STRANGE WAY OF BUYING--LACK OF FOOD--HELP FROM CALIFORNIA--TWO OXEN SLAUGHTERED--THE LONGED-FOR SACRAMENTO VALLEY--A DANISH SETTLER.

After we reached the Pitt River we followed the stream for about eighty miles, crossing it no less than eleven times, until we finally had to go up into the mountains again. One day, toward evening, I met ten wagons, composing the Western Train, and we went up into the mountains in their company. Before this, however, I had once more been forced to abandon an ox, and I could only proceed slowly with three 40 oxen and the horse as a reserve force. While climbing up the steep mountains we only covered eight or nine miles a day, and our stock of provisions became low. Up to this time we had suffered no lack of food, but now I discovered that we had only seven

pounds of flour, ten pounds of bacon, and the same amount of dried apples. I asked the servants attached to the Western Train whether they had any provisions to spare, and I found out that they still had live wagons heavily loaded with flour, bacon and beans, but that the company did not wish to sell this on the trip, preferring to take it all to the gold fields. This train belonged to a Missouri company, the drivers, about twenty in number, having been hired on the condition that they would work for two years in California on half their present pay, and their leader was a Mr. Kelle, whom they called captain and who had been appointed as agent by the company. Mr. Kelle was a very shrewd speculator, but he had miscalculated; for if he found any gold in California, he had to dig for it himself, as all his drivers soon ran away.

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I sent my son to ask Mr. Kelle if he would sell a little flour. He flatly refused. The following day my wife went to him, explained our condition and begged him earnestly to sell us the necessary flour at a high price. She obtained the same curt refusal.

On the following morning I myself accidentally met him, and when he answered my plea by saying that he had firmly decided not to sell any provisions during the journey, I took out my pistol and swore that I would shoot him like a dog before I would let my family die of hunger. I told him that if he did not agree to sell me the flour, he did not need to live any longer and that I did not care what happened to me afterwards. This threat worked. In the evening, when we were once more encamped next to each other, Mr. Breking, a former editor of a St. Louis paper, who had been my travelling companion for fifteen hundred miles, came to me and said that I might have the necessary flour if I would go to Mr. Kelle and get it. I was still too excited to do this, so I asked Mr. Breking to send his slave to get it for me. I obtained seventy-one 42 pounds at thirty-five cents a pound, and so this trouble was over.

This was on the eighteenth of October and we were still seventy-five miles from the first settlement in the Sacramento Valley. On the nineteenth we started again, but could only cover seven or eight miles a day because of the bad condition of the road. Round about were unusually high mountains, stony soil, thickly covered with huge pine and fir trees, eight to twelve feet in diameter, but there

was no trace of any grass. The oxen had soon eaten the little fodder that we had been able to carry with us, and almost fell from sheer weakness, barely sustaining them selves by nibbling at a few dry bushes.

Meanwhile the Governor of California had sent out wagons with provisions to save the travellers from death by starvation to which many must otherwise have succumbed. As I was making a little detour in the valley, I suddenly saw five such wagons pass on my left. I immediately surmised the nature of their errand and was much annoyed that I had not driven directly toward them. Their humane captain, whose address 43 I have unfortunately lost, evidently saw through his field glass that we, too, were in need of his help, and so he rode swiftly toward me. We certainly were in a bad way; my wife and I were walking next to the two-wheeled cart which our three oxen, as weak as ourselves, could scarcely drag; my youngest son rode on the emaciated pony which was proceeding with careful steps, and held his little sister in front of him.

After a brief greeting the captain asked me how we were situated as to provisions, whereupon I showed him our stock. He thought that it would last us until we had travelled the fifty miles to the first settlement, where we could buy food. All the same he offered to help out with a few crackers and said that if we wished to wait a while he could give us a good piece of beef. They were only going to travel three miles further before slaughtering a young fat ox. The captain took my son with him and gave him seven pounds of crackers and twelve pounds of pork, since we did not wish to wait for the slaughtering of the ox. I cannot let 44 this opportunity pass by without publicly thanking the California Government for its humane action.

The remaining fifty miles were the most dangerous, for not even a blade of grass could be found. We could scarcely get the animals to go because of their weakness and hunger. When we were about half-way, the road led down such a steep mountain that we could only proceed by sliding. I feared lest the cart with our few provisions would slide down over the heads of the cattle into the valley. The ravine at the bottom of this valley was so narrow that there was just barely enough room for the carts and ourselves to pass the night. On the opposite side the road led over a mountain steeper than the first and entirely covered with boulders.

Here many persons had abandoned their wagons and cattle. I followed their example when I realized that it would be impossible to drive through this chaotic sea of boulders. I had two oxen killed and the best part of their meat cut out. The next morning we took as many things as we ourselves could carry, and besides we loaded our 45 best ox with about seventy pounds. Then we climbed up the mountain, picking our way among the boulders. Our breath sometimes gave out, but our patience never. In this laborious fashion we covered seven miles during the day and spent the night in the open.

The following morning I placed our

ON THE WAY FROM SACRAMENTO TO THE MINES

most valuable articles on the horse's back in order to be sure of getting them to the settlement. Then I rushed ahead of my family in order to get help somewhere. When I had gone twelve miles further the longed-for Sacramento Valley spread out before me. At four 46 o'clock in the afternoon of November first I arrived at the first settlement. The owner was Mr. Lassen, a Dane. He did no farming, but confined himself to the raising of cattle. Evidently he had chosen his abode with a view to the gains afforded by the emigrant traffic. His dwelling was made out of rough limestone, transparent on all sides. In a civilized land this would not have suited the farmer even for the housing of his pigs. His grocery and general store had the same appearance, and yet Mr. Lassen piled up great riches.

I have never seen a more covetous and heartless man than was this Dane. I unloaded my horses and asked Lassen to take the baggage into his house. He did this, but made it clear to me that I would have to pay for the privilege. I obtained a drink of brandy and asked him the price of flour, meat, and other provisions. Imagine my alarm when this man coolly informed me that Sour cost one dollar a pound; zwieback, salt pork, salt, coffee, and sugar the same, while a pound of beef cost fifty cents, as did also the brandy with which I had just moistened my parched throat! I 47 stood there spellbound with astonishment, but I had to buy, so I took just enough to keep us alive and then hurried back with my horse to call for my family and give them some refreshments.

CHAPTER VI

NEW TROUBLES--DEATH OF MY CHILD--MY WIFE'S ILLNESS--A LENGTHY STAY--MISERY OF THE EMIGRANTS--HIGH PRICES--DEPARTURE--THE SECOND SETTLEMENT--ARRIVAL IN THE GOLD REGION--MY WIFE'S DEATH.

Three days had gone by. When I had retraced my steps eight miles, I found my family in a heart-rending plight. My wife was sick, and could scarcely bear the rough driving. When I inquired after my two-and-a-half-year-old daughter, mother and sons began to cry. Amidst tears they told me that my darling little girl had died from an illness caused by teething. I was deeply stirred by this unexpected misfortune, but I tried to speak words of comfort and hope while my own heart was almost breaking. 48 When we came to the settlement, I pitched my tent and had my wife treated by one of the two doctors who were stopping there for a time. She was suffering from diarrhoea; I did not think this was dangerous, but I was mistaken My wife's condition obstinately refused

OVER HILL AND DALE

to improve, and rainy weather had set in which made travelling impossible. So I had to stay here for five weeks. There are no words to express the misery which I had to live through during these five weeks. Snow had fallen in the mountains, and the emigrants came pouring in from all sides. Prices rose, 49 and almost every one had to spend his last cent. A meal cost \$1.50, and it consisted of almost raw meat, saleratus bread, and tea only.

Many of the travellers suffered from diarrhoea, and a number died of it, for

SUTTER'S MILL AT COLOMA, WHERE GOLD WAS FIRST DISCOVERED

few bothered about them. Nowhere else have I ever seen such absolute heartlessness as among these crowded sufferers. But Mr. Lassen surpassed all the others in this respect. He, a fifty-year-old bachelor, short and fat, was possessed of an unrestrained desire for gold. In 50 the strip of land which belonged to him he had about a hundred horses and five hundred horned cattle. Besides these, an almost equal number of wild cows and oxen were running about in the nearby woods. Mr.

Lassen had all the wild animals driven into his enclosure, where they were branded with his mark to indicate his ownership. Some of the emigrants had brought along their wagons and a few oxen. They would have liked to go on to the Feather River, fifty miles away, but this was impossible because of the rainy weather and the resulting deep swamps. These people went about shooting the wild oxen, and it really was a pleasure to see them. They said the wild cattle belonged to the government and not to Mr. Lassen. He kept quiet and let them do it, because he could not help himself. During the five weeks of my stay here I sold drygoods for seven hundred dollars, which was ten times as much as I had paid for them.

Since my wife's condition did not seem to improve, I decided to leave this unhealthful, expensive place for the Feather River. I bought a wagon and five oxen, loaded all with provisions and placed my sick wife in the wagon. I left the settlement on December second.

Hardly a mile from this settlement the road became swampy and the leading ox sank so deeply into the mud that it was almost impossible to pull him out again. I finally harnessed the other four oxen to the back of the wagon and in this way pulled him out. I struggled with these four oxen for twenty-five miles more until I finally reached the second settlement on December sixth. The owner kept the same kind of a place as Lassen. He was an American with a family and had lived here for four years. His settlement lay along a mountain stream. He had eighty horses, three hundred tame oxen and about two thousand wild cattle. The prices in his store were the same as those charged by Lassen. On account of illness and the bad condition of the road I stayed here seven days, and like the other emigrants ate the meat of the wild oxen. On December thirteenth I set out once more, eight miles over smooth grass to the third settlement, which I found very similar to the other two.

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Many things have been written and printed about the Sacramento Valley, but very few tell the truth. The valley is about six hundred miles long, forty to fifty miles wide, and bounded on the east by the Sierra Nevada, on the west by another mountain chain. Both of these chains extend north from the Pacific Ocean.

The lower part of the valley, which borders on the Pacific Ocean, has fairly good soil, but the upper and middle part, with the exception of a few places along the river, are composed of practically useless land. The volcanic nature of this soil renders it unfit for cultivation. In the winter the rainy season lasts four months, and even though it does not rain every day, the ground remains swampy during the entire period. In the summer, on the other hand, there is no rain at all. As early as the middle of June everything is dry and withered. The continuous heat, sometimes 124 degrees, so burns the ground that all the brooks and small rivers are completely dried up.

On the fifteenth of December, I left this settlement for the Gold River, 53 which was still twenty-five miles away. The ground was so moist here that I sank into a swamp several times. I

HYDRAULIC MINING

managed to extricate myself twice by unloading the wagon and carrying my poor sick wife across. In the third hole the wagon had sunk too deeply and the oxen were not able 54 to take another step. I myself lost my rubber boots. I was glad that I managed to get out and so could reach the wagon. I unharnessed the oxen and drove them to the edge of the road where they could keep their foothold. So we passed the night.

The next morning a man with four mules passed by on his way to bring meat to the next settlement on the Feather River. I made an agreement with him to take my wagon to the Gold River. My oxen I never saw again. Finally, on the twentieth, we arrived in the gold region, pitched our tents as a protection against the rain and awaited better times. Here the hardest blow befell me. My faithful wife grew worse and on the twenty-eighth, a week after our arrival, she died in my arms. Farewell, my loving companion on life's hard journey! You have gone home where no earthly ills can oppress you. Sleep calmly on in undisturbed eternal peace! May you continue to be a comforting guardian angel to your sons and to your husband!

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CHAPTER VII

THE GOLDDIGGERS--THEIR LIFE AND THEIR GAINS.

Since we had now used up all our resources, we felt that the time had come to look for the gold. We had reached the first gold ditch, which was called Long's Point. Three hundred and fifty tents had been pitched here, all of them clinging to the mountain sides so that they looked like swallows' nests. My curiosity to see the inexhaustible treasure and my hope to carry away a good part of it for myself grew stronger from day to day. But I was disappointed. There was trading in plenty, but little gold in the ditches. The bit that there was was only obtained after hard work, and then the greedy shopkeepers used it to swell their immense profits. A pound of flour cost \$1.25, as did also coffee, sugar, salt pork, zwieback, and rice, although in Sacramento City, only 125 miles further down the river, a hundred 56 pounds of flour cost only \$9.00, with everything else in proportion.

Because there have been so many misrepresentations of this gold region, I shall attempt to describe it faithfully. Gold is found just about where the mountains begin; there is nothing in the Valley. The mountains are almost perpendicular, and a mountain a mile or more in height is a frequent sight. Nearer to the river there are rocks which are sometimes fifty yards high, all more or less steep, and often perpendicular. In the cracks of these volcanic mountains the gold gravel is found. It has been washed down from the mountains by heavy rainstorms. Wherever these rocks do not exist, there is no gold. The gold hunter must creep around among these rocks and has to scrape together the gold gravel with a hatchet or a shovel. Then he pours it into his sack and carries it to the river. He has to be very careful to jump from one rock to another in just the right way, otherwise he might easily break his legs or his neck. When he has carried his sack up to the river, one hundred to two hundred and fifty feet away, he must wash the gravel. The washer looks just about like a cradle; the upper part consists of a box, mounted on rockers and provided with a perforated bottom of sheet iron, the holes being about as large as a three or six cent piece. The gold digger pours the gravel from the sack into the box—a weight of about forty pounds. Then water is poured on the dirt and the rocking motion imparted to the cradle causes the finer particles to pass through the perforated bottom. The stones which cannot pass through this sieve are thrown out when the machine is lifted up. After the gravel and sand have been made to flow off by the constant rocking and pouring on of water,

the gold is found in the bottom of the machine. The gold washers, which had been transported to California from the east, are not worth a cent.

Now the question arises, how much can a man earn by this dirty and Exhausting work? When I arrived at the river, everything had been dug up and the best part of the gold was already gone. We scraped until our knuckles were sore, and each person could only make from three to five dollars a day. 58 From this pitiful sum, gained only by the most arduous labor, and from the terrifically high cost of living it is easy to gauge the small amount of wealth which the gold diggers are able to capture even though they reduce their own necessities and luxuries to a minimum.

When I consider how many thousands find an early grave here, far from their homes and their loved ones, I would like to curse those miserable liars from the bottom of my heart who raised such a great hue and cry about the inexhaustible riches of the new Eldorado. They did this because of their covetousness and their desire for speculation. By these methods they lured many people who were blinded by the hope of quickly gained riches, only to be made miserable afterwards.

In this region everyone lives in tents and sleeps on hard beds which are often soaked by the downpour of rain. All sorts of diseases develop in consequence. For two hundred miles along the river the region swarms with settlers, but almost all are ill, the most frequently recurring diseases being diarrhoea and scurvy.

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Under these conditions I found it almost impossible to be satisfied with my lot. I heard that a fortune might still be made by following the river to its source in the mountains. I decided to try my luck, and well supplied with the necessary utensils, my sons and I travelled seventeen miles northward. On this trip I saw how people work in the regions where every crack between the mountains contained gold; their gains however, were no more than those of the people working along the main river. Toward evening we reached the north fork. We had to climb down a mountain which was half a mile high, and so steep that it was necessary to tie our utensils to a rope and lower them in front of us. Sitting down, we slid down after them. During the night we rested and the next

morning we started our investigations. I found no trace of gold. The most disagreeable part of the affair was that we had to leave our gold washer here. We had to exert all our strength in order to reach the top of the mountain with sound limbs. I had paid sixty-five dollars for this gold washer. On the return trip to Long's 60 Point I met many gold seekers who were in the same boat as myself. There was nothing else to be done except to return to camp and take courage.

CHAPTER VIII

DEPARTURE FOR THE MIDDLE FORK--GAINS--CASTLES IN SPAIN--ILLNESS--CURE--MINERS' EXPENSES--NEW TRAVELS.

On March tenth, 1850, a period of fair weather set in. I broke camp with bag and baggage and transported everything to the South Fork. I had to pay fifty dollars rent for a mule which carried two hundred pounds for thirty miles. On the twelfth, we reached the new Eldorado, and the result was again nil, absolutely nil. The place swarmed with people; all of whom were occupied in building dams and digging canals in order to change the course of the river. This was done to expose the original river-bed in which the gold was supposed to lie. I packed up and crossed the mountains diagonally in order to get to the Middle Fork. My 61 gold dust, collected at the Feather River, had by this time gone the way of all flesh, although there was nothing fleshy about it, and therefore I had to be my own beast of burden. I carried about eighty pounds, leaving the rest

SAN FRANCISCO'S FIRST POST OFFICE

for my sons. The journey over the steep mountains was a severe trial. Although my life had not been a bed of roses, still this seemed to me to be the hardest burden that fate had as yet imposed upon me.

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At the Middle Fork, I found a bank which had already been partly turned over, but still yielded twelve to sixteen dollars a day. Everywhere travellers were crossing the mountains and following the rivers until they were stopped by the snow. The gold digger goes on his way, his blankets in a strap and some zwieback in his pocket. He carries a pack containing a shovel, a leaden bowl, a

frying pan, and a piece of salt pork. It is true that gold has been found in this mountain region, but not enough to pay all these people for their trouble and their sacrifices. Those who came in the first period after the discovery found something and we dug up that which they had not considered worth while. A few of course found nuggets, valued at one thousand to five thousand dollars, but to look for such treasures or even to expect to find them would be just as stupid as to try to find a new road while blindfolded. The same thing is true of those rich gold regions which are only found by rich men. The chief work consists in washing the gravel, and this means hard labor and a miserable existence. Thousands⁶³ of disappointed gold seekers pursue this task because they cannot find anything else to do. They would go home if they had the necessary funds

Here I worked three weeks, and picked up a few hundred dollars. But the luck did not last long. My eldest son and I fell ill of scurvy and I was in such a serious plight that I had to remain in bed for five weeks. My son cured himself by eating sliced potatoes soaked in vinegar; but my scurvy was of a more malignant kind and necessitated a doctor's attendance. Three of them did not seem to understand enough about medicine to give a cat an enema, much less to treat a human being. However, they knew how to get at my purse.

A Dutch doctor practiced in the mountains, five miles away. I sent for him and the old man had much trouble to reach my camp on the mountain top. I asked him whether he would help me and he answered that if he did not cure me he did not wish any pay, but he also told me in advance that a successful cure would cost me seventy-five dollars. He remained with me one night and within fifteen hours I could walk again.⁶⁴ I took his medicine for three weeks and my sickness left me altogether.

In the mountains and along the rivers, thousands of miserable adventurers have fallen a prey to one sickness or another. Truly you can see more misery than happiness in this much-praised gold region!

On May twelfth, 1850, I left this place because I could no longer earn two dollars a day. The reason for this was that the multitude of people who had come here, had soon dug up the place which only comprised five acres. I left all my utensils here which had cost me the following sum:

One quicksilver machine \$300.00 One smaller quicksilver machine 75.00 Cost of transportation 50.00 One tent (including pitching) 50.00 Two shovels 20.00 One pick ax 7.00 One ax 10.00 Kitchen utensils 17.00 One baking pan 19.00 One coffee mill 5.00

Total \$553.00

My companions were all in the same plight, for it would have cost more than they were worth to transport these utensils 65 to another mine. We travelled down from the mountain region towards the Sacramento Valley. A man had to walk at a goose's pace here and it took me three days to reach the valley.

CHAPTER IX

A CHARMING VALLEY--MARYSVILLE--THE YUBA RIVER--SACRAMENTO CITY--
GAMBLING AND DRINKING--THE AMERICAN RIVER--A NEW ATTEMPT.

As yet I had come to no decision about my future enterprise, and my purse was in a bad way, \$170.70 being the extent of my wealth, and that did not signify much in California where gold had become as plentiful as hay.

Romantically charming views rapidly succeeded one another during our trip over the mountains. The hills were covered with fortress-like rocks and the valleys were one vast sea of flowers, bright with beautiful colors. There were some spots in the valley where the grass grew abundantly and here and there the soil was being cultivated, but I do not believe that the native farmers 66 will make much progress, because the dry summer spoils everything, and only necessities are raised in the few available damp spots along the river.

After a sixty-five mile trip, I reached Marysville on May eighteenth. My son

THE FIRST CALIFORNIA STATE CAPITOL--IN SAN JOSE

and I went into a restaurant for dinner, our first hearty meal since we arrived in California. The dinner cost one dollar per head, and the only thing which distinguished it from our mountain dinners was that here we could get 67 plenty of potatoes. A bit of fire-water, which was humorously called a drink for teetotallers, cost twenty-five cents. Marysville is the meeting-place for the surrounding region and has rapidly turned into a city. But it is a city where only the spirit of barter and usury prevails. It is excellently situated as a business centre for the northern mining district. I counted 170 houses which had been imported from the Atlantic states, and were well built; the rest were all tents.

The city is built on a delta where the Feather and Yuba Rivers meet. About twenty-five miles further on the Feather River flows into the Sacramento. Sail and steam boats come in daily. The Yuba has its origin in the mountain which contains gold dust, but not enough to cure the gold fever. Like the Feather River, the Yuba divides into three branches before it comes down from the mountains, and the descent is even steeper than any I have previously described. Towards the north there are more gold ditches; Rodding's mine lies 136 miles further up the river. I met many people coming from there, but not 68 one of them had had any luck. In the Coast Range Mountains, 217 miles from Marysville, there is a place called Trinity Mine, but it causes more misfortune than good luck. The traders get everything that the gold diggers can scrape together, and it is their business loudly to advertise the merits of the place, so that people will go there and will then have to buy half-spoiled provisions at enormous prices.

I decided to go to Sacramento City, sixty miles south of Marysville, and to find clerical positions for my two sons. I myself determined to trade in needles and thread rather than to look for gold again. But there is no market for needles or thread here. The steamer asked fifteen dollars a person for the sixty mile trip, making a total of \$45 for the three of us. My oldest son, however, obtained

passage for all of us in a skiff. This only cost fifteen dollars for the three, but my son had to help with the rowing for the greater part of the time.

We embarked at noon on the twentieth and anchored outside of the city on the morning of the twenty-second. ⁶⁹ To my great surprise I saw seventeen three-masters and about a hundred smaller ships lying at anchor here. Sacramento City already had about a thousand well built houses, and trading and improvements of all kinds were in progress. Soon we saw that it would be impossible to get a job, since everyone was able to look after his own business. There was an abundance of dance-halls and gambling-places; the lowest stake was five dollars and they even played card games which the police in Germany had long ago forbidden. I saw many a poor gold digger giving up his bit of hard-earned dust, deceived by the hope of rapidly increasing it. The banker never plays. Disgusted by this profligate life, I packed up again as quickly as possible, and, with my two sons, fled from the city. Hundreds of wagons covered the road in front of me, all laden with provisions for the gold mines. I took the path along the American River which was my guide and provided me with a refreshing drink whenever I suffered from thirst. After I had gone twenty-five miles I found a great bank, also ⁷⁰ called a bar, where three hundred men were busily washing gold. There was a prospect here for a diligent worker to earn five dollars a day.

On the first of June, I set to work. I paid a hundred dollars for my outfit and for the necessary utensils. The situation was quite different from my former experiences, for this is the region where gold was first discovered, and my camp was only twenty-five miles from Sutter's Mill where the first nugget was found. I have talked with many persons who were present at the discovery, but not one of them could give an accurate account of the event. A German who had worked with Sutter for a long while, told me that an Indian was the first to find a bit of gold, worth about a hundred dollars, and that this had been the cause of future investigations.

The American River, like all the other California rivers, has its source in the Sierra Nevada Mountains; it flows into the Sacramento River near Sacramento City. About fifteen hundred people are busily seeking gold along the banks of this river. Most of them are so inert

GENERAL JOHN A. SUTTER

72 and exhausted that they soon renounce all hope of making a fortune.

On the twelfth of June, elections were held for a judge and a constable. New gold diggers arrived constantly. I had again collected one hundred dollars and fervently hoped that I would soon be able to increase this little sum; for gold rules the world-without it even the

SUTTER'S FORT IN SACRAMENTO

most talented man is but a poor wretch. Up to June twenty-eighth, nothing of any importance occurred. Illnesses were frequent and I witnessed many deaths, chiefly from diarrhea and the ague. The heat which sometimes reached one hundred and twenty degrees, was unbearable during the day, but the nights were cool and gave us a chance to get a strengthening and reviving sleep. 73 Thank God, there were no mosquitoes They are only found in the valleys.

Here we lived, sheltered by the trees; many had no tents and built themselves "tabernacles," that is, huts made of leaves, as did the Jews when they celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles. The payment of rent has always annoyed me, and I had often wished that I could turn into a snail and carry my house on my back. In California, my wish came true; for everyone arrives with his blankets slung over his shoulder and immediately sets up his hotel wherever he pleases.

We worked hard; everyone was busy with wheel-barrow, shovel and hoe, digging into the gold-containing earth. Everyone carries two pails on his shoulder, suspended from a yoke. The yoke, pails and soil together weigh a hundred and twenty-five pounds. This burden is carried for two hundred and sixty-five paces up to the river. In order to spare myself the weight of the yoke and the pails, I filled a sack with the soil and carried it to the river where my younger son daily washed about two hundred and fifty pailfuls. This quantity 74 was worth from twelve to fifteen dollars. Provisions were somewhat cheaper here, and conditions in general rather better than near my previous camp. Potatoes cost twenty cents a pound, beef twenty-five cents, flour sixteen cents, and everything else in proportion. Here, too, people were beginning to take the earth to the river in carts.

My wagon was still standing at the first station on the Feather River, one hundred and twenty-five miles away. I decided to go there, buy a horse and then drive back.

At the Feather River the gold diggers were occupied in building dams and digging canals. This was done to lead the river away from its main channel and to expose its original bed, so that they could get at the gold—a huge laborious task, but the hope of rich gain spurred them all on. The banks were now all dug up and stripped of their golden contents.

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CHAPTER X

SPECULATORS--RUMORS--GOLDLICK--A DISAPPOINTMENT--RETURN TO MARYSVILLE--SACRAMENTO CITY--A FRIEND--ARRIVAL AT THE MINE--A DAM BUILDING COMPANY.

Within an incredibly short time a rumor became current here that new gold ditches had been discovered at a place between the Yuba and Feather Rivers. It was said that the place had been named Goldlick, and that the veins were big enough to allow each man to earn about twenty-five dollars a day. I could not use my wagon any longer, because the heat of the sun had warped the wooden rims to such an extent that the iron hoops were loosened. A blacksmith wanted forty dollars to put them on again. Rather than pay this, I left the wagon and continued my journey toward the glorified Goldlick with my horse, which had cost me a hundred and fifty dollars. I was forced to make a detour of about thirty miles. I took this 76 journey because I thought that if anything was to be gained at the Lick, I had just as much right as anybody else to have a share in it.

On the twenty-eighth of June, I arrived and found a crowd of grocers all plentifully supplied with flour, meat, coffee, sugar, etc. Everything cost one dollar a pound. The gold diggers began to look at each other suspiciously and to ask, "Where are these much praised gold ditches?" The gold here appeared in such small quantities that, if you wished to prospect, you would have to use a glass

which would magnify to the size of a cart-wheel. Otherwise you would be apt to overlook some of the diminutive particles of gold which lie so thinly in the earth.

I asked myself whether deceptive and covetous speculation ruled the world, and being convinced that they did spurred my horse and galloped off.

After an absence of two weeks I arrived in Marysville on July nineteenth at five o'clock in the afternoon. I perceived a great crowd and on investigating I found out that a thief was about to be whipped. He had broken into a tent ⁷⁷ from which he had stolen a thousand dollars worth of goods. They tied him to a tree and executed the verdict of Judge Lynch. I did not care to watch, because I have no taste for such scenes. On the thirtieth of July I was again in Sacramento City, about sixty miles from Marysville. There is a certain charm about the trip through the valley. In all directions roads lead to the gold ditches in the mountains. Every three or four miles the traveller finds an inn, built of canvas and poles, wherein a regular cut-purse system holds sway. A sip of brandy costs twenty-five cents, a meal, consisting of nothing but saleratus, tea and half raw meat costs \$1.50. If the traveller stays overnight he must pay fifty cents for the privilege of lying on a plank bed wrapped in his own blankets.

In Sacramento City I bought a cart. With this I halted for a few minutes in front of Sutter's Hotel and was lucky enough to meet several old acquaintances. Among them was my most intimate business friend, Mr. Louis Haart, a former resident of New York, who was carrying on a trading business here. ⁷⁸ Greatly surprised, I shook hands and asked him: "Is it you, or is it only your ghost?" Laughingly he answered: "It is I, your old friend!" I spent the night with him and proceeded on my journey the next morning.

On August second, I got back to Negro Bar, and was delighted to see my sons well and working busily. I now had the advantage of being able to transport the soil to the river in my cart, but my profits were small. My horse's food cost fifteen dollars a week, which meant that it was even more expensive to feed a horse than a man. I paid eight dollars for 100 pounds of hay, barley or oats. On August fourteenth, a company of 260 people was formed to change the course of the river and to

lead it into a canal, as had been done elsewhere. The work was calculated to take six weeks and the company expected to reap a rich harvest from the dried river bed. I allowed my two sons to join the company in order to see whether anything would come of it.

In the meanwhile conditions began to change decidedly. Traders became more amenable; the drivers going to the 79 mines grew more polite and it was easily seen that the gold was giving out, so that a lucky find was a rare occurrence. A man coming directly from the Middle Fork of the Feather River, a place which I knew very well, told me that a company of five had dried about five hundred yards of the river bed and had staked all their hopes on it. On the very first day that they were digging, they found forty dollars worth of gold in one quarter of an hour between two rocks. Encouraged by this find, they dug on assiduously and tirelessly, but did not find another grain of gold. Others had also been working in vain, and had gone on empty-handed.

CHAPTER XI

CONTINUATION OF THE DIGGING--SACRAMENTO CITY--SPECULATIONS--AN UNFORTUNATE CAVE-IN.

So life goes on in the California gold mines. The digger laboriously scrapes together a hundred dollars in one place and then leaves it for another in the hope of having better luck there. While on his journey, he uses up the previously earned hundred dollars and has to begin all over again. I took care not to leave Negro Bar, for I was tired of travelling, and my sons were busily occupied. It was a pleasure to see them dig the gold earth and earn about twenty dollars a day. In the meanwhile the company was paying six dollars a day to two laborers who were to dam the river. I could not work much myself, for the many hardships that I had suffered had considerably weakened me.

The company's progress was satisfactory, but many were exhausted by the oppressive heat. Sixty or seventy people fell ill at the same time. This was caused by their immoderate use of water and by their irregular life. Those who ate in public houses where they had to pay fourteen dollars a week

were better off. In the latter part of August, I went to Sacramento City and bought a cart-load of provisions.

The prosperity of Sacramento City is built on a weak foundation. Although the city grows every day, still everywhere you go, you hear complaints ⁸¹ about the bad business conditions. I easily discovered the cause of these complaints. They are simply due to the fact that no one will show himself in his true colors; all wish to be merchants. There are just as many traders as miners, and everything is based on a cut-purse system. Even the price of real estate has fallen considerably. I was watching an auction of lots, and no one bid as much as the owner had to pay in taxes. Frankly, I must admit that this gave me a secret pleasure.

This time the speculators had overlooked something in their calculations. If they had first inspected the gold mines they would not have paid from two to four thousand dollars for a lot, and Mr. Sutter would not suddenly have turned into a strutting member of the aristocracy of wealth. Business and high prices are now waning just as quickly as they once rose. For instance, the steamer plying between Sacramento City and San Francisco, a distance of one hundred miles, had formerly charged twenty-five dollars per person; now her owners were satisfied with one dollar. The trader who had formerly ⁸² demanded two hundred per cent was now happy to get fifty. But the gold diggers were not benefited by this change, for while in the first year a man earned eighty dollars or more per day, there were many now searching in the dug-up gold field who had to be satisfied with two or three dollars a day, and out of this they had to pay at least one dollar a day for board.

California will never be agriculturally prosperous, because the places suitable for farming are very few and far between. At present it is only a land of vice and gruesomeness. There are almost as many thieves as honest men; one will murder the other for the sake of gold, they rob and steal whenever they can, and the only thing which preserves a semblance of justice is the Lynch Law. If a murderer is caught, his captors make short work with him, and hang him on the spot.

Towards evening on October eighth our dam and also our one mile canal were completed. On the following morning the dam broke, and our two months' labor was all for nought. I felt like

kicking myself when I thought of the 83 \$580 which I had paid for wages. The conventional words of consolation: "Be not disturbed by fortune's ills; Things often turn out better than you think. Therefore, o child of man, do not despair!"

had to do duty again. There were 260 people, in the same predicament as myself, and each one could read sympathy in the face of the other.

The company decided to cease building until the first of May of the following year. It was a sad sight to see these men go their several ways in deep vexation. Like snails, everyone took his house on his back, and went away to seek his fortune elsewhere. In southern California there are also some gold mines which extend into the higher parts of the Nevada Mountains. Twenty-seven miles above Sacramento City, the American River divides into three branches, and the gold diggers worked for twenty miles up each of those branches. The Mocolumne, a good-sized brook, also comes down from these mountains and formerly contained much gold. The best part of it has been taken now, and there is nothing left for 84 the future, since gold, unlike grass, is not perennial in its growth. Forty miles below Sacramento City, the Mocolumne flows into the Sacramento. Another river is the Stanislaus whose valley really deserves the name of a gold region. The Stanislaus River lies a hundred and forty-five miles south of my former camp. The gold is found along the sides of the ravines and also is embedded in the river bed. Wherever it is possible, the river is damned and then the gold is scooped out. According to all reports, the diligent gold digger can earn four dollars a day along this river.

On the eleventh of October, my eldest son complained of feeling ill, and I also did not feel well. On the same day we both took to our beds. I do not know what was the matter with me, and the two doctors who treated us did not know either, but my son Frederick had catarrhal fever. On New Year's day, 1851, we felt strong again for the first time, but we had spent four hundred dollars and some one had stolen my horse.

In the meanwhile an epidemic of 85 cholera had broken out in California. It did not extend to the mines, but in Sacramento about fifteen hundred people died, among them Mrs. Haart, my friend's

wife. I visited him, and told him of all my troubles. He presented me with one of his mules, and obtained a cart-load of provisions for us, since I had no more money. With these gifts I returned to my camp at Negro Bar.

This region proved to be one of the most fruitful, and by February first, the number of gold diggers had reached eight hundred. Fortune at last smiled on me, and allowed me to earn thirty dollars a day. My hands grew so stiff that it was hard for me to write. The candle in my tent was continually flaring because of the wind, but still I kept up my diary, in order to complete this modest, but truthful account. While I was still in the Atlantic States I once read something that Senator Benton had said, namely, that it would be a good thing if as many people as possible would go out to the California gold fields and would entirely empty the gold region within a year, because this chasing after gold would cause more misery than happiness. I think this man spoke the truth. Thousands of fathers who left wives and children in the hope of making their fortunes in California, gained only graves, and thousands would love to return to their homes, if they could only get enough money to pay the expense of the journey.

CHAPTER XII

THE DAM COMPANY--THE GOLD OF THE KLAMETH AND SCOTCH RIVER--ROUGH AND READY DITCH--LACK OF WATER--QUARTZ GOLD--DEPARTURE FROM NEGRO BAR--BEAR RIVER--NEVADA CITY.

About March fifteenth many people left our bar for the Klameth and Scotch Rivers where they hoped for richer gains. The last-named mining region lies along the coast and is two hundred and seventy miles from the bar. This means a four weeks' trip. For a distance of 150 miles everything has to be carried over the mountains, because the path is too steep for a wagon. In March too, the deep snow still causes much trouble.

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According to a previous announcement made in all the camps, our dam company reassembled on March twentieth. It was decided to renew the operation along the river and canal on May first.

I sold one of my shares in the undertaking to Mr. Haart, of Sacramento City, for two hundred and ninety dollars. Then I decided to risk another share. I calculated that I would have to pay one hundred and twenty-five dollars more before we could have any idea of the success of our project.

On April first I met two Frenchmen who had just come from the Klameth and Scotch River regions. They told me that gold was being found there and that a man could easily make from eight to ten dollars a day. They also said that because of the existing conditions men soon tired of the work. Provisions are so high that daily board costs four to five dollars. A pound of flour or of salted meat costs \$1.25, a bottle of brandy, five dollars. After paying such prices the gold digger had very little left. A few, of course, had made lucky finds. The greater mass of the people, 88

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however, were reduced to the worst possible condition.

I removed my tent from its former place in order to dig there, and found it yielded a considerable amount. My sons found from thirty-five to fifty dollars worth of gold dust. Too bad that this place was only an acre in size.

Spring had come. The meadows were once more resplendently decked with young grasses. Many miners left us again, for the gold fever was raging with renewed vigor. Now that these men were in the gold region and had no other means of support, gold hunting was their only refuge. They had to sacrifice everything in order to extract the precious metal from the soil.

Seventy-five miles from Sacramento City, not far from the Yuba River, there is a gold mine called the Rough and Ready. There are no less than thirty thousand people working there. The water necessary to their task is artificially led from the river into the ditches. The river is called Deer Creek. It is too far away to have the gold soil transported there, and besides water is very scarce, for there was very little rainfall 90 during the winter. Those gold diggers who had their machines near the river and could thus get clear water were the best off, because they lost no gold. The first comer

pays fourteen dollars for the water and the last one four. The latter gets it in a muddy condition and consequently loses much gold.

Some entirely new gold sources have been discovered here, but no individual worker can get at them, for they are found in rocks, here called quartz. Steam engines have to crush these rocks in order to wash the gold out of the resulting powder.

All this stimulated my curiosity and I decided to go there in a few weeks. There are many such quartz mines in Lower California. They have a bare bleak appearance and in summer there is no water for fifty miles around. Therefore up to the present time no steam engines have been put in use. I am firmly convinced that a man working alone has no more chance of making his fortune in California than in the Atlantic States, although the wages are higher here.

My entries in my diary on April tenth 91 and eleventh were gloomy observations on this miserable life, full of wretchedness and sacrifices. While I was writing, the rain came through my tent and soaked my rickety desk. I wished that I had never seen this much-praised gold region.

On April seventeenth, I left Negro Bar because the best places had been dug up, and therefore I thought I would try my luck twenty miles further up in the ravines. There you have to dig down twelve feet before you get to the gold earth, and then the pail holds about ten cents worth. The highest gains amounted to three to six dollars a day, and all the places had already been claimed.

I went back to Sacramento City and then decided to go to Nevada City to see whether I could manage to scrape a few dollars together there. People were continuously talking about new rich discoveries, and rumor quickly carried these reports into the Atlantic States. In Sacramento City I obtained a copy of the New Yorker Staatszeitung which gave an account of the finding of many new gold veins reported 92 by the steamer Pacific. It was said that the older mines were constantly yielding the customary amount. Speculators always know how to entice people and then empty their purses.

On the evening of April twenty-first, I arrived at the Bear River. This is a brook with a strong current, usually much swollen by rain. The road leads over a bridge where I had to pay three dollars toll for my cart, horse and three persons. The bridge was private property and if five dollars had been asked I would have had to pay it without a murmur. The bridge guard was the only man who benefited by this arrangement. He made fifty dollars a day and the traveller had to go on with an empty purse. I saw three machines swinging on the river bank; so I surmised that this too was a gold region. My sons went prospecting and I awaited their report. They found nothing. Four miles further out in Grass valley there was another fine gold region, but more persons had already gone there, suffering from gold fever, than could be cured by the medicinal qualities of the place.

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Here I saw the first quartz ditches and found that a few of them were really treasure coves, yielding about a hundred dollars a day. This is the highest gain that I ever heard of in California. Some only yielded fifteen dollars. The owner of the steam engine gets the quartz out of the ditch for thirty-two dollars, then he throws the stones into a mortar which crushes them into fine sand. I got information everywhere and then walked about in order to discover something on my own account, but wherever the existence of gold was suspected, claims had already been staked. Quartz is not apparent on the surface, it has to be sought by uncertain digging. I spoke to people who had been working here steadily without finding anything, and I saw several holes about a hundred feet deep, which looked like wells, but did not yield any quartz. I perceived that nothing could be gained here without exertion. Everyone had to work hard, only to be rewarded by vain hopes or very meagre gain.

I mounted my donkey and rode off to Nevada, hoping to find something better there. Here, too, important looking 94 gold ditches were seen, but they were out of all proportion to the accumulated mass of people waiting around. This Nevada City was a curious sight, not easily described. On account of the gold fever, all business dealings were conducted on a fraudulent basis. The streets swarmed with horse and gold thieves, traders and speculators, gamblers and rascals. There were saloons in abundance where a few drops of brandy were sold for twenty-five cents to the men who

were waiting for some gold dust to turn up. The gold diggers ran about, searching, hacking, picking, digging, scooping and washing from morning till night until they looked like animals who had been wallowing in the mud. Expressions of vexation and discontent were stamped on their faces because their profits had not been satisfactory and because the treasure which they had so laboriously taken from the earth was not sufficient for their needs.

All this drove me away from the place. A German baker who visited me in my tent told me that a few days ago he had been robbed of twelve mules. I 95 took the precaution to fasten my mule by means of a locked chain to the ironbound wheels of my cart so that no one could steal him without making a noise.

CHAPTER XIII

DEER CREEK--THE YUBA--RETURN TO SACRAMENTO--NEGRO BAR--EXECUTION OF THREE THIEVES IN SACRAMENTO.

May first: Here I am in Deer Creek. The road first followed the Sacramento and then from Marysville on the Yuba River. A bridge has been laid across the latter river and every person has to pay twenty-five cents for the privilege of crossing it. I will not waste time by washing any more gold, for my sons just met a man who told them that he had earned five dollars yesterday and that this was a rare occurrence. There are seven saloons here and about thirty miners. I did not even unload my wagon, but drove right on.

May fifth: This evening I arrived here on a mountain top over which the road through the Sacramento valley leads into Sacramento City. From Deer 96 Creek I went on seven miles over hills and valleys down into the main Yuba valley. One of the mountains I had to cross was so steep that I had to trig both my cart wheels. In addition to this the axle broke and it cost me twelve dollars to have it repaired. Along the

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river bank all the gold yielding earth had already been scraped, and the only possible way of getting any gold was to dam the river. This, of course, I could not do. After this I visited various other mines along the Yuba, but everywhere I found more miners and 97 traders than gold. Formerly people may have reaped a rich harvest here, but now I found only a few isolated miners who managed to scrape together a few dollars, which, however, never stayed in their pockets for any length of time.

The reader may well ask how it happened that I found the conditions in the gold regions to be so miserable, and perhaps he may think that fortune was especially hostile to me. But I can affirm without any exaggeration that thousands of gold diggers are literally starving; they would gladly return home, but have no money to pay their travelling expenses. Of course, there are a few in every hundred who make their fortunes or at least become tolerably wealthy, but with the majority it is as I have said. I will not deny that a man may earn two or three dollars a day, but even by practicing the most rigid economy, he cannot spend less than a dollar a day for board. The work is so hard and exacts such an amount of patience and perseverance that many have to cease or, at least, rest for a time after a few weeks of 98 effort. In that case the gold that they have saved disappears so quickly that in a short time they are forced to begin all over again.

May seventh. Yesterday evening i got back to Sacramento City, after a two hundred and twenty mile round trip. I will shortly have to return to Negro Bar in order to scrape together three hundred dollars more and then I will leave immediately. Sacramento has rapidly grown into a city; it seems as though it had been built on the wings of the wind. There is scarcely any other place that is so lively and so full of trading, bargaining and usury. Every third house is a saloon and the owner uses every means in his power to attract guests. You hear music all about you and a few unhappy women are kept as a principal drawing card. People here talk about the gold region as though a man had only to stoop, in order to pick up the nuggets, and the papers publish the most absurd tales in order to attract new people. What do the speculators care whether the miners grow poorer or richer as long as they themselves grow rich by means of their 98 victims' toil? For all they care thousands of miners may perish in misery and despair. On account of this, I considered it my duty to warn my compatriots as much as I could, so that they would not be deceived by these false tales. All that

glitters is not gold, and I can truthfully say that California deserves to be called the land of misery, rather than the land of fortune.

Yesterday evening I reached Negro Bar once more and I can honestly say that every one was glad to see me. If a person is straight and upright in his dealings, he is always welcome. The company which had been ruined here in the previous year was reorganized yesterday. To-morrow we will begin again to dam the river and repair the canal. They hope to make their fortune by leading the river through this canal. I still have a share in the company, so I will help and see how it will turn out.

June first. The work with the company goes on ceaselessly. I have one laborer working in it and have to pay him five dollars a day. These people are so lazy, that one person always puts the work on another; so not much is accomplished. 100 Moreover, the heat is so great that no work can be done from eleven A.M. to four P.M.

July second. I have not made any entry for a long time, because although there has never been a lack of noteworthy happenings, still there was never anything pleasant to write about. You hear of nothing but murders and thefts which are of daily occurrence. The legislative power has adopted execution by hanging and it was put into effect immediately, so in the last two weeks twelve horse thieves have been hanged. A short time ago, a miner entered a saloon in Sacramento; he was joined by three men; they had a drink together; the miner paid and no sooner had he gone out than these rascals followed him. They knocked him down and wanted to rob him right there on the public highway, but the screams of the victim collected a crowd and the three thieves were caught in the act. The people were so exasperated by this horrible deed that they wanted to hang the thieves on the spot. Mayor Hardenburg intervened, telling the people that this was contrary to the laws of the 101 country and that the criminals would have to be brought before a jury. He promised not to let the thieves out of his sight and not to allow them to escape justice. The people were satisfied. Later this case came before the assizes and the men were hanged.

July fifteenth. Our canal is completed and we are only taking the precaution of waiting until the water has subsided a little more, so that no harm can be done to the ditch. I have again paid \$240 in wages as my share and I am anxious to see what will happen.

July twentieth. Yesterday I visited my friend Haart. Here, far away from our native country where we first became friends, it is doubly pleasant to embrace an old friend.

July twenty-first. The heat is almost unbearable. I am satisfied if it is only 100 degrees; but usually it is 100 to 118 degrees in the shade, and in this heat we have to work without even a refreshing drink.

August first. To-day we had bad news. The canal has broken again. It takes at least a week to repair it, and if the company does not guard it most 102 carefully, it will be broken again, for we have rascals aplenty around here. Only a few days ago, there was another murder; four robbers killed a man and then took \$140 from him. To be sure, the rascals were caught and will shortly be hanged as they deserve. But still there are plenty more at liberty.

THE FIRST CALIFORNIA HOTEL, MONTEREY

August second. This burning heat continues constantly. For several weeks the thermometer has registered 108 degrees from 12 till 5 o'clock in the afternoon. Everything is shrivelled and burned up. Not a blade of green grass is to be seen, not a drop of rain has fallen for several months, and none can be 103 expected for three months to come. Truly, California is a miserable country, for here man lives at odds with nature, and must constantly be on his guard against his fellow-men. The industrious man would gladly work if only to escape boredom, but the unbearable heat robs him of all his strength. Now it is five o'clock in the afternoon and I am scarcely able to write although I am sitting under the tree which affords the most shade. But even here, the dry leaves cannot keep off the piercing rays of the sun, and since 2 o'clock I have been constantly bathing my head with cold water.

August fourth. To-day the heat has somewhat abated. We have also been made happy by the news that those people who succeeded in drying the river bed, have hopes of a rich harvest. Well, tomorrow we will see whether our work will be rewarded and whether the river bed really is as rich as has been reported. I will rejoice only when I have convinced myself of the truth. Besides our canal represents a great amount of work; it is fully a mile long and the actual river bed is now 200 feet wide, 104 so that our half year's work ought to be rewarded.

August fifth. At last I have succeeded in scraping together my three hundred dollars. God forbid that I should ever collect a like sum under similar circumstances. My good spirits have returned together with the prospects of soon being able to leave the country, but I am still bothered by illness. I have not been entirely well since I came to California. As soon as the scurvy left me, another sickness took its place. This one no doctor could diagnose. Anyway the doctors here are worth nothing. They scarcely know enough to cure a cat. Woe to him who falls into their power, for their ignorance is only exceeded by their covetousness! I will name only one doctor with a feeling of respect and gratitude. That is Doctor Klein who saved my son's life.

I have fulfilled the task which I set myself, when I began to write these notes, namely to give a true account of my experiences on the overland journey to California and during my sojourn there, as well as an accurate description 105 of existing conditions in California. While it is true that I undertook this trip more because of a desire for adventure and to satisfy my curiosity than from necessity, still the fact remains that it has been a hard lesson for me. The things I learnt from this experience I will never forget, and I would like to convince my friends so that my know]edge, gained by many sacrifices, might also benefit them. If they do not heed my words, they, too, will be lured to the distant Pacific coast by the deceptive glitter of gold, and once more the old proverb: "Adversity makes a man wise," will hold good.

August sixth. As yet I have said nothing about the wild Spanish cattle. Just now I was forcibly reminded of them, because I had to flee from a wild ox. A butcher has a corral quite close to my tent into which he drives his cattle and keeps them until he is ready to slaughter them. One of these oxen was not satisfied with his prison, so he got out and ran straight for my tent. At the approach of

my unexpected guest I ran as quickly as possible behind a tree which shelters my tent. These oxen 106 and cows are as beautiful and well proportioned as any in the country, but they are entirely wild. They run about without any cowherd or other supervision. The lazy Spaniard does not bother about his cattle until he wishes to slaughter or sell it, which happens very often nowadays because of the increasing population. When a group of Spaniards wish to catch their cattle, they ride out to the pastures on swift, trained horses. Every rider has his lasso, a rope made out of animal hide. Thus equipped the rider chases the ox which he wishes to catch until he is within fifty feet; then he throws his lasso around the animal's horns and in an instant he has tied the end of the rope to his pommel. The horse is trained to gallop off in the opposite direction from the ox, and a second rider throws his lasso around the feet of the captured animal so that it can no longer move. The Mexican is much too lazy to catch and train the cows. He would rather do without any milk.

August ninth. Our splendid feat of engineering is completed at last. It really is a pleasure to see how the water 107 is held up by the dam and how it runs off through the new canal. Unfortunately, however, this huge work which took six months to build, is in vain. Our time and money have been wasted, our trouble is all for nothing, for there is no gold in the river bed. It is hard to imagine the feelings of these people who have been working patiently in the unbearable heat for more than half a year, and now when they believed their gold was reached and hoped to find a reward for their almost superhuman exertion, they suddenly see all their hopes and wishes dashed to the ground. This afternoon there was a meeting of the entire company. Farewells were said, and each one went sorrowfully on his way to begin anew somewhere else and to face an uncertain future. I lost \$290 in this speculation, and I have no idea how I am going to replace it.

August tenth. To-day a deathlike silence broods over our Negro Bar, for all the other industrious miners have left the place. I, too, am going to-morrow to the Coastal Mountains, where my friend Haart has some oxen grazing. As I am concerned in this venture, I 108 will bring them to the mines and sell them there.

August twenty-fifth. Yesterday morning at 10 o'clock, my friend Haart and I came back here with our herd of oxen. We will have to stay here for a few days, because my friend's son has an attack

of burning fever. It will have to be cured by Doctor Klein. Then we are going to drive the oxen 70 miles further into the mines situated higher up. There we hope to get a better price for them, and afterwards I have decided to take my sons and leave this country as soon as possible.

September first. Yesterday evening we got back, "the money for one ox in my pocket. It was a disagreeable journey and I am heartily tired of being a cattle driver, especially in these mountains where nothing but wild oats grow and even this is almost all burned up by the sun. It is used chiefly as hay; the kernels are very small, but the stalks are extraordinarily strong and tender. During our trip we saw thousands and thousands of tons of this oats, mowed down and dried to make hay. This country, because of the very dry climate, is not suitable for farming, but cattle raising is a little more successful.

At Devil's Gap, not far from the Middle Fork of the American River, we sold our oxen for \$80 a head and I was heartily glad to get rid of them. During

AROUND THE CAMP-FIRE

the trip we passed through several mines and I made inquiries everywhere as to the miner's luck, but found none had fared better than ourselves. I found mostly empty money bags among the miners. The teamsters, grocers, saloon-keepers and gamblers were always ready to deprive the diggers of their last cent. Because of the present great drought of water which prevented gold washing, many miners had stored up big heaps of earth in order that they might be able to wash them as soon as the rainy season should start in. The best places for digging here, as everywhere else, have already been claimed or worked out.

After I had made all arrangements for our homeward journey on October first, my sons wanted to make a little more pocket money, and I had to wait a while anyway for some money which I had lent. Since the mines have become so much poorer, provisions have also become much cheaper. Sauerkraut, for which I paid \$1.00 a pound last year at the Feather River, is now selling for 8c. a pound and everything else is in proportion. Even freight and cartage have become cheaper. Where you formerly paid 4c. a pound for a 25 mile distance, you now pay only 1 1/2 c.

October fifteenth. A week ago my son Frederick and I had an attack of intermittent fever, which has only just left us. Very few people in this region 111 have escaped it. My son Hermann has had it three times. It is not surprising that this terrible heat here brings on such sicknesses. Not for all the riches of California would I like to stay here for another year like the one just past. If ever--which God forbid!--a court were to condemn me and I were to be given the choice of being banished to California or of working as a galley-slave, I would unhesitatingly choose the latter punishment.

October eighteenth. We are still suffering from the same heat. To-day some steam-engines arrived here for the purpose of pumping the water for 600 yards from the river to the mountain mines, so that the miners should no longer have to carry the soil to the river. But I believe that the miners will abandon machines and everything else as I did last year at the Feather River. Newspapers are already proclaiming that quartz machines are Worked by steam--all lies and pretty stories calculated to entice the Eastern speculators into forming mining companies which will later go up in smoke. Some time ago, through a friend of mine in 112 San Francisco, I received the New Yorker Staats Zeitung, and I must say to its credit that this paper has kept aloof from these exaggerations and has come nearer to telling the truth about the California gold-mines than all the English papers.

San Francisco, October thirtieth. I left the glorified gold region on October 24th and for five days I have been roaming about this city, observing the activities of the people, which thoroughly disgust me. Everyone is chasing after gold. Most of the people spurn a regular, useful occupation and only seek to outwit their fellowmen. They indulge in sensual pleasures and lead a life of drink, gambling and lascivity. I took passage for my two sons and myself on the steamer "Paktolus," which leaves to-morrow for San Juan del Sud. For the three of us I paid \$100. My God, how relieved I am, finally to be able to turn my back on this much-praised and yet miserable country! I wish that all my readers would take my experiences to heart and would not let themselves be led astray by treacherous appearances and by the lying tales of a few editors, 113 backed up by speculators, to forsake their careers in the United States in order to chase after the phantom treasures of California.

After a forty-two days' journey, we reached San Juan del Sud on December 20th. This city has no harbor, only a bay, so we had to land in small boats. From here we journeyed partly by land

on mules, partly by miserable canoes on the Nicaragua Sea to San Juan del Nord, on the Gulf of Mexico. The land trip was very expensive and unpleasant. If I had to do it over again, I would rather take Vanderbilt's steamer, al though in that way the same trip would cost \$50 a person. In both San Juans there are only saloon-keepers and traders, who lie in wait for the travellers and rob them wherever possible. Everything is terribly expensive, almost as much so as formerly in California and much more so than it is there now. From San Juan on I made the trip in one of Vanderbilt's steamers via Havana and New Orleans. But the boat was so dirty and the food so bad, that I thanked God when we finally stepped out on solid ground at New Orleans.

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This last trip was one of the most unpleasant of all my experiences and only strengthened my resolve never again to seek the Pacific coast. My curiosity is satisfied and my gold fever has disappeared. Now I will be content to assure for myself a care-free existence in a civilized country, by means of industry and activity. Finally, I would like to add that I will be very glad to give my advice or any information about the trip to those of my fellow citizens who are attacked by the gold fever which can only be cured by their own experiences, but the best advice that I can give to anyone is this: "Tarry at home, and honestly earn thy daily bread!"