

THE
HISTORY OF MEXICO
AND ITS WARS.

COMPRISING AN ACCOUNT OF

*THE AZTEC EMPIRE, THE CORTEZ CONQUEST, THE
SPANIARDS' RULE, THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION,
THE TEXAN WAR, THE WAR WITH THE
UNITED STATES, AND THE MAX-
IMILIAN INVASION.*

TOGETHER WITH AN ACCOUNT OF

MEXICAN COMMERCE, AGRICULTURE, MANUFACTURES,
EXPORTS, IMPORTS, DUTIES, MINES, CITIES, RAIL-
ROADS, TREATIES, TOPOGRAPHY, POPULA-
TION, AND THE SOCIAL CONDITION
OF THE PEOPLE.

BY

JOHN FROST, LL.D.,
AUTHOR OF "HISTORY OF THE WORLD," "HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES," "BOOK OF THE
ARMY," "BOOK OF THE NAVY," ETC., ETC.

THE REVISIONS AND ADDITIONS

UP TO THE PRESENT TIME

By THE PUBLISHER.

Embellished with 350 Engravings,
FROM DESIGNS OF W. CROOME AND OTHER DISTINGUISHED ARTISTS.

WITH

A COLORED MAP.

SHOWING ALL THE RAILROADS AND PROPOSED ROADS.

EMBRACING

A DIRECTORY OF EVERY CITY AND POST-OFFICE IN MEXICO.

NEW ORLEANS, LA.:
ARMAND HAWKINS.

1882.

the safe guardianship of the hardy western pioneer and his trusty rifle.*

* The glowing accounts of California, published by all who had visited it, and of which we attempted to give some idea in the first pages of this chapter, afforded ample ground for the opinion that the country would be rapidly filled up by emigrants from the United States. Since those pages were written, there has been added to the very many advantages of the country, there enumerated, one which throws them all into the shade; and which of itself would be sufficient in this money-getting age, to populate a desert. Scarcely had the treaty been completed by which California was ceded to the United States, when the enterprising, observant, inquisitive Yankee settlers discovered that the country from the Ajuba to the San Joaquin rivers, a distance of about one hundred and twenty miles, and from the base towards the summit of the mountains, for a distance of seventy miles, was a mine of gold.

It is said that gold mines were discovered in California by the Jesuits, about the middle of the last century. The Jesuits concealed their discovery from the government, and the suspicion that they had done so perhaps had something to do with their expulsion from Mexico. In 1769, Don Jose Galvez, Marquis of Sonora, undertook an expedition into California to ascertain the truth of the reports respecting the gold "in the rivers, in the soil, and in the rocks." He was accompanied by the celebrated Don Miguel Jose de Arenza, who, discouraged by the fruitless search of a few weeks, recommended the abandonment of the enterprise; and for contending that the marquis was insane for proceeding, was thrown into prison, where he remained several months. Nothing at all satisfactory, however, appears to have resulted from the search of Galvez, though the Jesuits afterwards disclosed, in Spain and France, that the charges of discovery and concealment, made against them, were true.

Thus the matter rested until the new discovery by the Americans in the commencement of the year 1848, since which time every day has disclosed some new deposit. It has been found in large quantities on the Sacramento, Feather river, Yerba river, the American Fork, north and south branches, the Cosamir, and in many dry ravines, and on the tops of high hills. On the streams where the gold has been subjected to the action of water and sand, it is found in fine grains; on the hills and among the clefts of the rocks, it is found in rough, jagged pieces, of a quarter or half an ounce in weight, and sometimes two or three ounces.

The manner in which it has hitherto been collected is extremely wasteful, yet the yield has been enormous. A variety of means are used for obtaining it, a few of which we give from a letter of the Rev. Walter Colton, alcalde of Monterey. "Some wash it out of the sand with bowls, some with a machine like a cradle, only longer and open at the foot, while at the other end, instead of a squalling infant, there is a grating upon which the earth is thrown, and then water; both pass through the grating, the cradle is rocked, and being on an inclined plane, the water carries off the earth, and the gold is deposited in the bottom of the cradle. So the two things most prized in this world—gold and infant beauty, are both rocked out of their primitive state, one to pamper pride, and the other to pamper the worm. Some forego cradles and bowls as too tame an occupation, and, mounted on horses, half-wild, dash up the mountain gorges, and over the steep hill, picking the gold from the clefts of the rocks with their bowie knives—a much better use to make of these instruments than picking the life out of men's bodies. Monterey, San Francisco, Sonoma, San Jose, and Santa Cruz are emptied of their male population. A stranger coming there would suppose he had arrived among a race of women. But not a few of the women have gone too, especially those who had got out of tea; for what is woman without her tea-pot—a Pythoness without her shaking tripod—an angel that has lost his lyre. Every bowl, tray, warming-pan, and piggin has gone to the mines. Every thing, in short, that has a scoop in it, that will hold sand and water. All the iron has been worked up into crowbars, pickaxes, and spades. Over a million of gold is taken from the mines every month; and this amount was expected to be more than doubled when the emigration from the states, the Sandwich Islands, Oregon, and the southern republics should arrive.

The amount collected by each man ranges from ten dollars to three hundred dollars daily. The publisher of "The Californian" newspaper states that on a tour to the mining district, with the aid of a shovel, pick, and tin pan, twenty inches in diameter, he collected from forty-four to one hundred and twenty-eight dollars a day, averaging about one hun-

dred dollars. Previous to the discovery of the gold wages of labour ranged from one to three dollars per day; but the workingmen all became gold-hunters, and common labour could not be had for less than fifty cents per hour, while carpenters and other mechanics refused the offer of fifteen dollars per day for work. Whalers and trading-vessels coming into the Bay of San Francisco lost all their crews by desertion. The volunteer regiment of U. S. soldiers was mustered out of the service, and all of them went gold-hunting. Much sickness prevailed among those engaged in the work, but the number was constantly increasing, and at the latest accounts, large numbers were providing themselves with an outfit for five or six months, intending, as they could not traverse the country between the settlements and the mines during the rainy season, to spend that part of the year in the gold region. Mr. Larkin, formerly U. S. consul at Monterey, writes to Mr. Buchanan, that he passed two nights at a tent occupied by eight Americans,—two sailors, one clerk, two carpenters, and three daily workmen. They were in company, having two machines, each made from one hundred feet of boards, (worth there one hundred and fifty dollars, in Monterey fifteen dollars, being one day's work,) made similar to a child's cradle, ten feet long without the ends. On two evenings he saw these men bring to their tent the labours of the day. He supposes they made each fifty dollars per day. Their own calculation was two pounds of gold a day—four ounces to a man—sixty-four dollars.

The effect upon property in San Francisco and Monterey was astonishing to its owners. Three-fourths of the houses were deserted, and many could be bought at the price of the ground lots. All business ceased, except perhaps, that of the blacksmiths, whose forges proved to be placers in themselves, in consequence of the great demand for shovels, picks, and similar articles. Soldiers, sailors, clerks, alcaldes, and justices, all abandoned their employment, and resorted to the gold lands. Mr. Larkin states that he saw there a lawyer who was attorney-general of the king of the Sandwich Islands, the previous year, digging and washing out his ounce and a-half a day, while near him could be found most of his brethren of the long robe, working in the same occupation.

Governor Mason's despatch to the government at Washington, accompanied by very valuable specimens of the gold obtained by this rude system of mining, confirms in all particulars, the accounts received by private letters. He states that the entire gold district, with the exception of a very few grants made by the Mexican authorities, is public land. The large extent of country, the character of the people engaged, and the small force at his command, made it impracticable to adopt any means to secure to the government rents or fees for the privilege of mining the gold, and he therefore resolved to let all work freely. Crime was very rare, and no thefts or robberies had been committed in the gold district. The gold received from Governor Mason and others has been assayed at the United States Mint, and by eminent chemists, and proves to have an average fineness equal to that of standard American coin.

The route from the western states to California, via St. Louis and Santa Fe, we have had occasion to speak of in the preceding pages of this work, and the accounts given by Colonel Fremont and others who have travelled it, have been often repeated in public journals. From the Atlantic seaboard, the most usual passage to the coast of California has heretofore been by sailing vessels round Cape Horn. In order to shorten the time required by this passage, many resort to the route across the isthmus of Panama. The passengers by this route are landed at Chagres, a town situated at the mouth of the river of that name, in the midst of a swamp, where logs have to be laid along the streets at all times, to enable the inhabitants to pass from one of their mud huts to another. Its climate has long been famous as the very worst in the world, and travellers never stop there over night who can avoid it. The passage up the river is performed in canoes to Cruces, or Gorgona, forty or fifty miles, and then by mules or horses to Panama, a distance of twenty-one miles. Panama is by no means a healthy city, but it is much safer for a foreigner to reside in than Chagres. Here the traveller embarks for San Francisco and the gold country.