

As a part of the agreement, Castillero, one of Alvarado's southern opponents, was sent to Mexico to present the case to the supreme government, which, in its weakness and inability to do anything else, made the best of a bad business and confirmed Alvarado and Vallejo provisionally in their places.¹

The successful leaders of the revolution were not slow to partition the spoils. Vallejo got control of the missions of San Rafael and San Francisco de Solano; Alvarado, the mission of San Juan Bautista. The Americans and English who had served in the army were given lands and cattle, and as there were plenty of both to go round, the country was peaceful and happy.

It was at about this time that there appeared in California a man who was destined to play an important part in the history of the country. Johann August Suter, or Sutter, as the name was generally written, was a native of Baden. When he was sixteen years old he took up his residence in Switzerland, failed in business there, and in 1834 sailed for America as an emigrant, leaving his family behind him. From New York he went to St. Louis, and then in the spring of 1835 to New Mexico, where he was a trader for a year or two, apparently without much success. In the spring of 1838 he started for California with a party of seven men, travelling by the then well-known Oregon trail, and arriving at Fort Vancouver, on the Columbia River, in October. In order to get from Vancouver to California it was necessary for him to go first to Honolulu, thence to Sitka, and thence to San Francisco; so that it was not until July, 1839, that Sutter landed in California. At Monterey he passed himself off as an officer of the French army, though he probably had never seen France, and was cordially received by Alvarado, who advised Sutter to announce his intention of becoming a Mexican citizen, and in the meantime to go into the interior and select any tract of unoccupied land that might suit him, and return to Monterey in

¹ "Lâcheté inconcevable" is the way in which Duflet de Mofras characterizes this act of Bustamante's government.—(*Exploration de l'Orégon*, I, 302.)

a year, when he would be given his papers of naturalization and a grant of land.¹

As a result of the information Sutter had picked up in New Mexico, in Oregon, and in Alaska he had made up his mind to settle in the Sacramento valley, as far away as possible from Mexican authorities, where he might be free to pursue his own plans for collecting furs and trading with the natives and the trappers. Some time about the end of August, 1839, therefore, he settled himself at a point on the Sacramento River near its junction with the American River (*Rio de los Americanos*), the site of the present city of Sacramento.

Sutter's enterprise proved remarkably successful, and his frontier camp grew into what he called a fort, and became a sort of Alsatia, where all the wandering American and English vagabonds of California found a refuge in which they could not be disturbed by any Mexican authorities. By the end of 1842 there were probably from thirty to forty white men connected in one way or another with the establishment; and there were also a number of Indians employed by Sutter, some of whom he actually succeeded in making work. He raised a certain amount of wheat, distilled brandy from the wild grapes which grew in abundance in the neighborhood, and began to acquire large herds of cattle. Having been naturalized as a Mexican citizen, he applied for the grant of land promised to him, which was accordingly issued on June 18, 1841, and included eleven square leagues of land.²

An English visitor to California in 1842 describes Sutter as—

"trapping, farming, trading, bullying the government, and letting out Indians on hire. . . . If he really has the talent and the courage to make the most of his position, he is not unlikely to render California a second Texas. Even now, the Americans only want a rallying point for carrying into effect their theory, that the English race is destined by 'right divine' to expel the Spaniards from their ancient seats—a

¹ Baneroft, *California*, IV, 122-123.

² *Ibid.*, 136; *Ferris v. Coover*, 10 Cal., 589.

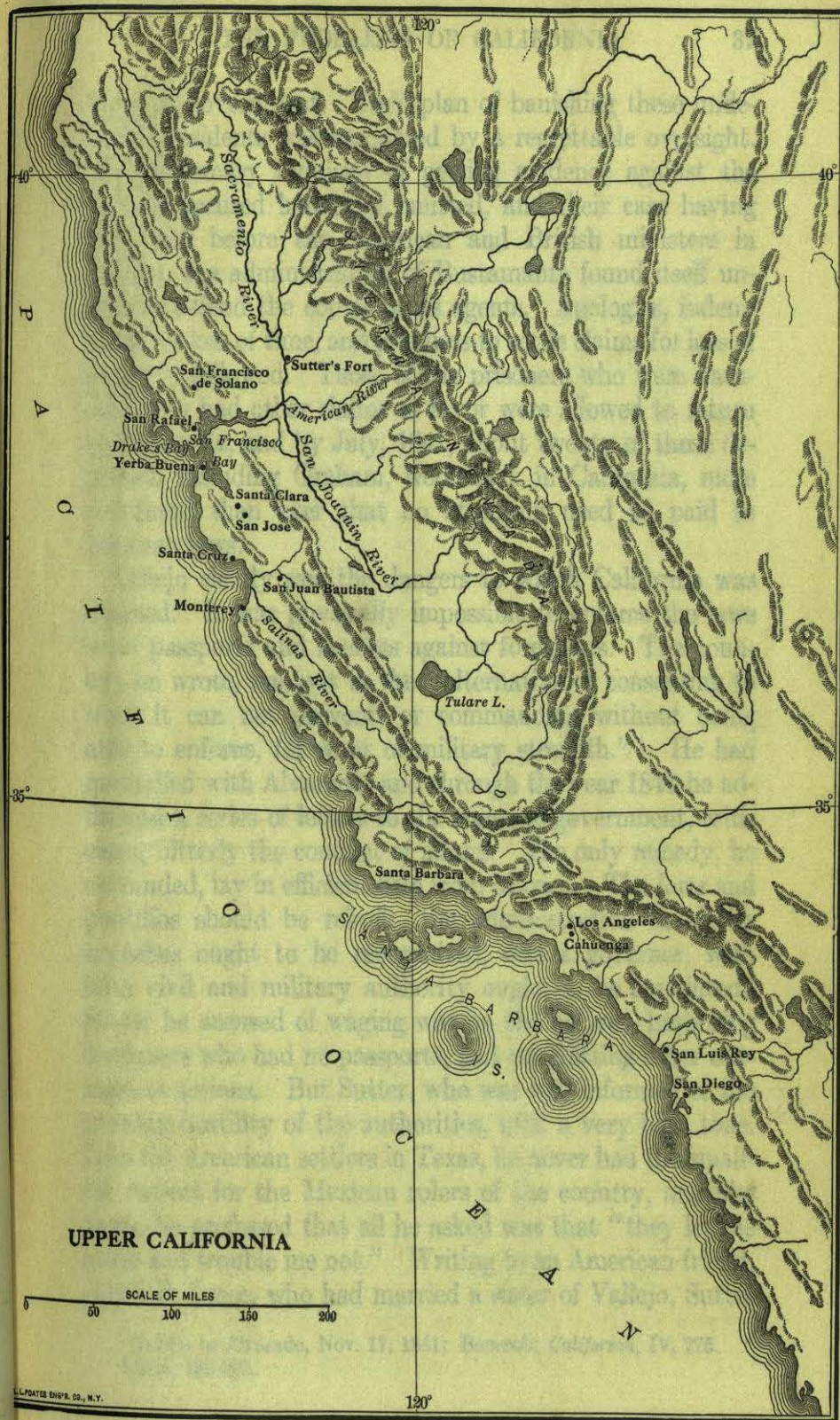
theory which has already begun to develop itself in more ways than one.

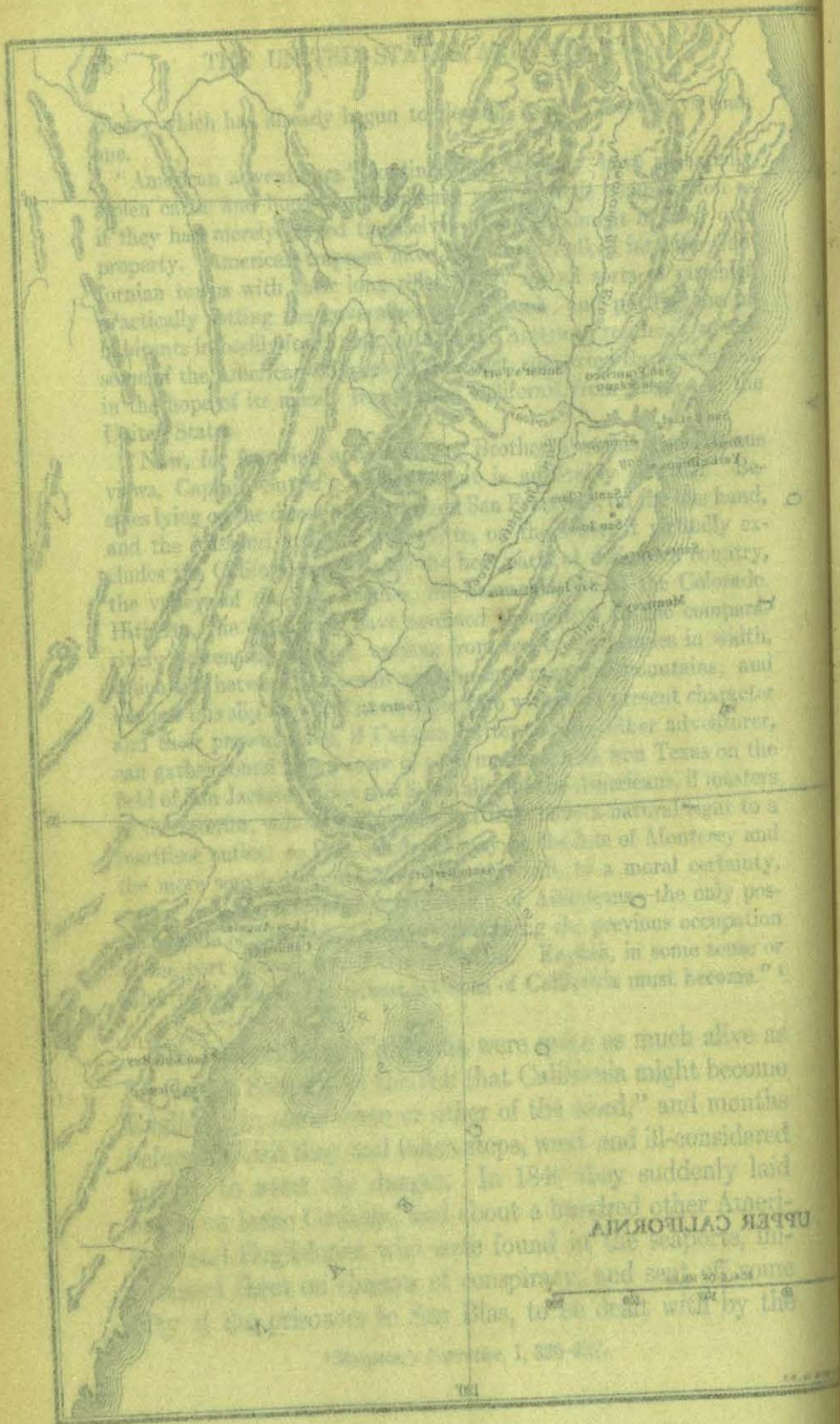
"American adventurers," continues our author, "have repeatedly stolen cattle and horses by wholesale, with as little compunction as if they had merely helped themselves to an instalment of their own property. American trappers have frequently stalked into the Californian towns with their long rifles, ready for all sorts of mischief, practically setting the government at defiance, and putting the inhabitants in bodily fear; and, in 1836, the American residents, as also some of the American skippers on the coast, supported the revolution, in the hope of its merely transferring California from Mexico to the United States.

"Now, for fostering and maturing Brother Jonathan's ambitious views, Captain Sutter's establishment is admirably situated. Besides lying on the direct route between San Francisco, on the one hand, and the Missouri and the Willamette, on the other, it virtually excludes the Californians from all the best parts of their own country, the valleys of the San Joachin, the Sacramento, and the Colorado. Hitherto, the Spaniards have confined themselves to the comparatively barren slip of land, varying from ten to forty miles in width, which lies between the ocean and the first range of mountains; and beyond this slip they will never penetrate with their present character and their present force, if Captain Sutter, or any other adventurer, can gather round him a score of such marksmen as won Texas on the field of San Jacinto. But this is not all; for the Americans, if masters of the interior, will soon discover that they have a natural right to a maritime outlet; so that, whatever may be the fate of Monterey and the more southerly ports, San Francisco will, to a moral certainty, sooner or later, fall into the possession of Americans—the only possible mode of preventing such a result being the previous occupation of the port on the part of Great Britain. English, in some sense or other of the word, the richest portions of California must become."¹

The authorities of California were quite as much alive as Sir George Simpson to the risk that California might become English, "in some sense or other of the word," and months before his visit they had taken steps, weak and ill-considered indeed, to avert the danger. In 1840 they suddenly laid hands on Isaac Graham, and about a hundred other Americans and Englishmen who were found in the seaports, imprisoned them on charges of conspiracy, and sent off some fifty of the prisoners to San Blas, to be dealt with by the

¹ Simpson's *Narrative*, I, 326-327.





Mexican government. Their plan of banishing these undesirable residents was hampered by a regrettable oversight. The customary requisite of getting evidence against the persons accused had been omitted, and their case having been laid before the American and British ministers in Mexico, the administration of Bustamante found itself unable to defend the course of its agents. Apologies, indemnities for loss of time, and promises to settle claims for loss of property followed. Those of the prisoners who were naturalized or had other claims to favor were allowed to return to California, and by July, 1841, about twenty of those deported, including Graham, were back in California, more convinced than ever that no attention need be paid to Mexican laws.

Vallejo clearly saw the dangers to which California was exposed. It was physically impossible to enforce the laws as to passports and licenses against foreigners. The country, he wrote, was put to the "alternative of consenting to what it can not prevent, or commanding without being able to enforce, for want of military strength."¹ He had quarrelled with Alvarado, and through the year 1841 he addressed a series of letters to the supreme government, criticizing bitterly the conduct of affairs. The only remedy, he contended, lay in efficient help from Mexico. The forts and presidios should be rebuilt, the administration in all its branches ought to be reorganized, and a governor, with both civil and military authority ought to be appointed.² Sutter he accused of waging war on the natives, harboring foreigners who had no passports, and committing other outrageous actions. But Sutter, who was well informed of the growing hostility of the authorities, took a very high tone. Like the American settlers in Texas, he never had the smallest respect for the Mexican rulers of the country, and like them, he professed that all he asked was that "they let me alone and trouble me not." Writing to an American friend, Jacob P. Leese, who had married a sister of Vallejo, Sutter

¹ Vallejo to Alvarado, Nov. 17, 1841; Bancroft, *California*, IV, 275.

² *Ibid.*, 198-205.

boasted that if the authorities tried to drive him out of the country, he would "make a Declaration of Independence and proclaim California for a Republic independent from Mexico." He was strong enough, he said, to hold his fort until he could send couriers to the Willamette valley, where he could raise sixty or seventy good men (Americans), and he could, if he chose, send to the mountains and get hunters and Indians to join him. If the Mexicans did him any harm the French government would send a frigate to collect heavy damages. Vallejo, of course, sent this precious letter to Mexico.¹

The unpopular and unstable government of Bustamante, at its last gasp in 1841, was unable to spare a man or a dollar; but when Santa Anna was once firmly seated, he arranged to send troops under the command of a military governor, who was to be instructed to see that the laws of the republic were strictly obeyed throughout the length and breadth of California. The ideas of the government were excellent, the execution of them deplorable. General Micheltorena, a braggart, who was believed to be "not overstocked with the one indispensable requisite to make a good soldier," was put in command of some three hundred convicts, ignorant of the very elements of drill and discipline. Of the early days of Micheltorena's rule in California, which was just at the time of Commodore Jones's seizure of Monterey, enough has already been said.² It remains only to relate the end of his career as governor.

For some two years Micheltorena continued in power without encountering any serious difficulty. There were from time to time rumors of local plots against him, and orders came from Mexico to have everything in readiness to repel an invasion in case of war with the United States. But no trouble arose with the foreigners, chiefly because nobody thought it necessary to ask them inconvenient questions as to passports.³ There always remained, however,

¹ *Ibid.*, 238-240; Richman, 270-273.

² See Chapter XX, Vol. I.

³ On July 14, 1843, a decree was issued through the Mexican War Department to the Comandante General in California, directing the expulsion of

the chronic difficulty about money. The convict soldiers were not paid, and they robbed hen-roosts or whatever else they could lay hands on. The condition of California by the end of 1844 was perhaps no worse than it had been three years before; but it certainly was no better. Meanwhile American immigrants, contemptuous of the "Spaniards" and their laws, were coming into the country in steadily increasing numbers.

Castañares, the Californian delegate to the Mexican Congress, by writing and by word of mouth, urged on the government the neglected and dangerous condition of the territory. His plans were magnificent. Plenty of soldiers, rebuilt fortifications, a navy yard, a fleet of gun-boats, improved mail service, revived missions, and, of course, assisted immigration on a large scale were among the remedies he proposed. Where the money, skill, and energy were to come from for these objects he did not undertake to say. Certainly the Mexican government had none of either to spare, and they could only reply that they would attend to California when the affairs of Texas were disposed of.

In vain Castañares warned them that California could not wait, that it was worth far more than Texas, that it was on the verge of revolution, and that if left abandoned and uncared for it would certainly be lost. The now falling government of Santa Anna had staked its all in trying to raise an army nominally intended for Texas, and was utterly unable to do anything for California. Castañares protested in the solemn tones of a Hebrew prophet. "I tremble," he wrote, "at the sad consequences of such a loss. A powerful foreign government will there pitch its camps. . . . Then will sprout the seed which to-day lies forgotten in her soil;

natives of the United States. After long delays and vigorous protests by Waddy Thompson this was explained as a general order in relation to all foreigners "who from their bad conduct might be considered prejudicial to public order." It was never published or acted on in California. See Sen. Doc. 390, 28 Cong., 1 sess.; Bancroft, *California*, IV, 380. A copy of the order was sent to Almonte, the Mexican minister in Washington, with an explanation that it had been dictated with the noble object of forestalling anything that might disturb public tranquillity.—(Bocanegra to Almonte, July 6, 1843; *Sec. de Rel. Ext. MSS.*)

then will her mines be worked, her ports crowded, her fields cultivated, and then will a numerous and toiling people acquire property which they will be ready to defend with their blood."¹

The revolt which Castañares had predicted soon broke out. It was not intended as a separatist movement in any sense. The leaders wished to remain Mexicans, but they wished the offices for themselves and their friends, the *hijos del país*, and they availed themselves of the strong popular dislike for the convict soldiers.² In the middle of November, 1844, some fifty Californians pronounced, and the usual Mexican methods to put down the rebellion were at once adopted, the governor proclaiming that all foreigners who took part would be put to death without quarter, and that all others would be tried and executed or imprisoned. But when it came to fighting, neither party proved eager for war; and a so-called treaty was made, by which Micheltorena agreed to send away his convict troops, and the Californian rebels agreed to wait at San José for the fulfilment of the promise.

But Micheltorena had not the slightest intention of fulfilling it. Instead, he enlisted the mercenary aid of Sutter and Graham and their fighting men, and perhaps got some help from Thomas Larkin, who had recently been appointed American consul at Monterey. Everything being ready, Sutter, with about a hundred Americans and English, and some Indians, started on the first of January, 1845, to attack the rebels who, under Alvarado and José Castro, were still in camp at San José. At the same time Micheltorena issued another proclamation, and with three hundred Mexicans he marched out from Monterey to join Sutter. In the face of so large a body, Alvarado could only retreat toward the south, where he was followed, very slowly, by Micheltorena and his allies.³

The retreating "army" of Alvarado, numbering about

¹ Bancroft, *California*, IV, 412-418.

² In Mexico—as in Washington and in London—the movement was looked upon, however, as in reality a declaration of independence.

³ Bancroft, *California*, IV, 458-491.

ninety men, reached Los Angeles on January 21, 1845, and after some parleying, won over the authorities of the town. A military force, which included a company of foreigners, was raised at Los Angeles within a week, and when Micheltorena arrived at Santa Barbara at the beginning of February, delegates from the rebels were there to endeavor to bring him to terms. The negotiations, however, failed, and on the fifteenth of February Micheltorena and his men began moving cautiously toward Los Angeles. The rival armies, numbering four hundred men apiece, or less, finally met on February 20, at Cahuenga, not far from Los Angeles, and engaged in a noisy but distant (and therefore quite ineffectual) exchange of shots. The foreigners on both sides, it should be explained, took no part in this contest, having made some agreement to that effect among themselves, and it seems that as one of the terms of the bargain, Sutter allowed himself to be taken prisoner by the revolutionists.¹

The Mexicans, being thus left to fight their quarrel out among themselves, soon came to the conclusion that they preferred peace. Micheltorena, on the morning of February 21, 1845, hoisted a white flag and proposed a capitulation, and on the next day another treaty was signed, under which he and his convicts went back to Mexico and Pio Pico, of Los Angeles, was made governor *ad interim*. As a further concession to the people of the south, Los Angeles was to be the capital; but José Castro was made military commander of the territory, while Alvarado was consoled with the custom-house at Monterey. The rest of the offices were divided between north and south for "political" reasons.

How far, if at all, this successful rising was connected with the general hostility to Santa Anna's government is not by any means clear. But it occurred at about the same time with the events in Mexico which ended in Santa Anna's arrest and banishment, and when the news of Micheltorena's overthrow reached the capital Herrera's administration was

¹ The terms of the agreement by which the foreigners abstained from fighting are, to a large extent, matters of conjecture; but that some agreement of the sort was made seems certain.—(*Ibid.*, 502-508.)

in full control, and quite prepared to express approval of the movement which had resulted in driving out Santa Anna's man. In instructions dated April 11, 1845, no word of blame was uttered, and the local legislature was requested to propose the man they wanted for governor.¹ The Federal government also made the customary announcement that it was "busy with measures which will assure the integrity of our territory in that precious part of our republic." At the same time measures were taken to restore Mexican authority in California by means of what the Minister of War saw fit to describe as "a most brilliant expedition." There was a good deal of mystery about it, but the fact was that some six hundred men, with large quantities of supplies, were actually collected a few months later under the command of Colonel Ignacio Iniestra, and got as far on their road as Cuernavaca. Four vessels were also chartered at Acapulco, but before the expedition could be got ready to sail a revolution broke out, and men, arms, stores, and ships were turned over to the revolutionists, who kept them all at home.²

Meanwhile Governor Pico, in obedience to exhortations from the central government, was warning the people that war with the United States was imminent, and appealing to them to fly to arms for the defence of their beloved country against the attacks of a foreign usurper. His proclamations left the people unmoved, and little or nothing was accomplished in the way of preparing for a hearty and effectual co-operation between the residents of the various parts of the country.

The truth was that the Californian natives were not capable of any sustained and energetic measures. Their Mexican ancestors had never exhibited much efficiency, and in the course of three generations in a country so productive as California, in a climate so mild, and with an abundance of cheap labor—such as it was—furnished by the mission Indians, the race had become degenerate. They possessed but one art, that of horse-breaking, for all accounts

¹ *Ibid.*, 526.

² *Ibid.*, 524-529.

describe them as excellent horsemen. They were without the energy to make new settlements, or to put up new buildings, or even to keep the old ones in repair. After the destruction of the missions they allowed every branch of agriculture to decay. They had lost even the rude manufactures introduced in mission days. Their trade was in the hands of foreigners. They were too incapable when they slaughtered cattle to skin them properly, and too indolent to go to the trouble of curing the hides for export, a laborious task that had to be performed chiefly by American sailors.¹ With uncounted cattle at their doors, the Californians had neither milk nor butter nor cheese. The country abounded with fur-bearing animals, which they did not capture, but which were hunted by American, British, and Russian trappers. Their waters abounded in fish, but they were too lazy to build boats or to make nets. They never surveyed their coasts, and they never explored their country; and again these tasks were undertaken by American, British, and French explorers from the other side of the world.

Their country was a fertile garden, splendidly adapted, as all men could see, for agriculture and for pasturage. Whether they possessed mineral resources no one knew, but every one could see that they possessed magnificent forests and unequalled harbors, and that they were incapable of utilizing any of these advantages. As they were incapable of governing the country, so they were obviously impotent to retain possession as against any one who could land a few hundred armed men. To use the phrase which John Quincy Adams had used of Florida, the country was a derelict, to be picked up by any adventurer who chose to take it into the port of a strong and stable government, and to develop its possibilities by efficient colonists.²

Efficient colonists, it was known, were ready and willing to come from the United States, and come they did in the

¹ Dana's *Two Years Before the Mast*, 173-175.

² "Los ricos terrenos de California," Paredes wrote in his proclamation of January, 1846, "*sin paz, sin administración, sin rentas públicas*," condensing in a few words the helpless and abandoned condition of the country.—(Bustamante, *Nuevo Bernal Diaz*, I, 116.)