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FROM LEWISBURG TO CALIFORNIA IN 1849

(Notes from the Diary of William H. Chamberlin)

(Concluded)

Edited by LANSING B. BLOOM

CHAPTER XX

Friday, Sept. 14.—Found an Indian trail this morning, which we followed for several hours, when we came to a deep slue of stagnant, though fresh good water. Here we found two or three Indians encamped on their way from the mines. They had been working for Col. Fremont, and had been paid in blankets and clothing. These Indians are very lazy, and will only work for clothing, preferring to steal their food, live on acorns, roots, fish, etc., or do without. They care nothing about money, and if they happen to get any it is immediately spent for some article of clothing or ornament. These Indians informed us that we were four days' journey from the mines, two from the San Joaquin river, without a trail and a difficult course, having no landmarks, which we found pretty correct, "only more so." After a hard day's march, and a very winding one, we encamped on a patch of good grass near a reed swamp, from which we procured water. No wood, but we gathered a large pile of dry wild horse dung and set it on fire, which answered the purpose very well, and is certainly an improvement upon buffalo chips. We roasted the last of our elk meat and ate it this evening. Our provision sacks are now empty. Having nothing to cook our meat in, or with, we were obliged to roast it on spits and it was well scented by the fuel. With a good wood fire this is by far the best way of cooking fresh meat. It has a much sweeter flavor. We see an abundance of game during the day, but can not get within shot, the country being so level. The country still has the same barren appearance, except on the immediate border of the marshes, slues and rivers in the centre of the valley. Had we not become accustomed to mirage we would be deceived by it every day; as it is, it is hard to believe what "our eyes see." Groves of trees and flats of grass constantly appearing before us in the desert waste, and never reaching them, only serves to make traveling more wearisome and unpleasant. The weather is now com-

fortable during the day and very cool at night. The hazy state of the atmosphere continues, and heavy dews fell during the night. Wild horses around camp this evening. Distance, 25 miles—2471.

Saturday, Sept. 15.—Shortly after we started three antelopes crossed our path a short distance ahead of us. Being in advance I shot two of them, one of which we packed along, and gave the other to several emigrants, who had encamped with us and were also out of provisions. We shaped our course N. W. and about 11 o'clock a. m. reached a large slue, which we at first thought to be a river. It was about 30 yards wide, deep, but we could observe no current, although the water was clear and fresh, and abounded in fish. On the west of us we saw a heavy line of timber; following down the slue in that direction, we soon reached its junction with the San Joaquin river. We have reason to rejoice that we have at last reached this point, for we have been bewildered and troubled no little since entering the valley. Several mules "gave out" before reaching camp this evening, but were afterwards brought up. The fact is, we are amongst the first persons that ever traveled down this desert side of the valley, which we have since ascertained. The river is about 60 yards wide and from 2 to 4 feet deep at this place. The current runs at the rate of $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles per hour. The water is very cold, clear and good. It runs on a bed of sand which is bespangled with flakes of mica, resembling gold, and abounds in fine fish called mountain trout, of the same species that we caught in the head waters of the Rio Gila. The banks of the river are skirted with a thick growth of large and small willows and underbrush. The entire bed of the river is several hundred yards in width, and the banks 15 feet high, which are no doubt full in time of high water. We are encamped on the great bend in the river, which a few miles west of us flows off in a N. W. direction. It rises in the Sierra Nevada mountains and flows S. E. to this point,⁹⁴ where its general course is N. W. to its mouth. We have not yet had a glimpse of the Sierra Nevada range. Distance, 20 miles—2491.

Sunday, Sept. 16.—Eight of our mules were missing this morning and we did not recover them until noon. We trailed them several miles and found them amongst a band of wild horses. We had great difficulty in separating them from the horses, and what seems strange, the mules that were broken down the evening before were amongst the number. The wild horses had led them away from camp

⁹⁴. He should have said southwest instead of southeast.

during the night. They are a great annoyance to travelers. However, this delay proved a fortunate circumstance to us. We did not move camp. Capt. Dixon shot two antelopes; and one of our party who crossed the river in search of the lost mules, met a company of gold diggers on a "prospecting" expedition to Kings river, which I believe is a branch of the San Joaquin.⁹⁵ Their captain, Mr. Walker, is an old Indian trader, has been in this country some years, and visited the States six times by the overland route.⁹⁶ He gave us a great deal of information concerning this country, the gold mines, etc. But what was better than all, we purchased three days' rations of American flour from them. This was very providential. We gave 50 cents per quart for it, which was reasonable. These various matters occupied our time during the day. Indications of rain, but none fell. We actually suffered from cold during the night.

Monday, Sept. 17. — Found a shallow fording and crossed the river early this morning. We hurried the mules through, which prevented their miring in the quicksand. We were advised by Capt. Walker's company to continue up the river a day's march, and then strike in a N. E. direction for the mountains. We nooned at some deserted Indian wigwams, and caught some fish for dinner, which we roasted in the ashes. The country lies higher on this side of the river, but is almost as sterile as the other side. The earth is of the same ashy nature, into which the mules sunk at every step. The surface is made irregular by the numerous little hillocks scattered over it. We encamped on the bank of the San Joaquin, which is certainly a pretty stream, runs in a clear bed, is as clear as crystal, and very meandering in its course. Distance, 20 miles—2511.

Tuesday, Sept. 18.—Left the river this morning and traveled in a N. E. direction by the compass. In a short time the mountains became visible, when we bore due north for them, and reached the table land about 2 o'clock p. m. The day was very hot, and we nooned without water for ourselves and animals. Packed up and spent the rest of the day in search of water, but found none, and were obliged to encamp without it. We found a green spot where there had

95. Like the San Joaquin (but to the south and roughly parallel with it) King's river flows southwest and then northwest, joining the San Joaquin west of the modern Fresno.

96. Doubtless he is speaking of Joseph Walker "the famous Santa Fé trapper who had served under Bonneville and had broken the trail from Great Salt Lake west across the Great Basin to Monterey," discovering a pass at the source of the San Joaquin river. Nevins, *op. cit.*, 198, 211, citing Sabin, *Kit Carson Days*.

lately been water and had good grass for the mules. Distance, 20 miles—2531.

Wednesday, Sept. 19.—These mountains are very barren, but there is a species of oak growing in the ravines. To produce acorns for Indian food and make fire wood is about all this tree is good for. It is large and branching, but very short in the trunk. After an hour's drive we came to a small, clear running stream. Supposing this to be one of the mining rivers, and within reach of provisions, we ate our last small rations of bread and meat, of which we were much in need, having eaten nothing since yesterday morning. All hands were certain that we would have our "eyes" at least full of gold dust in less than twenty-four hours, and of course, once in the diggings we could get something to eat, and "all about supper" in the mines was the joke about camp. Well, we packed up and traveled until dark, expecting every moment to hear the music of the pick and shovel, or meet some "umbra"⁹⁷ that could direct us to the desired haven. But we were (green, wa'nt we?) doomed to be disappointed in our expectations, and we again encamped without water or anything to eat. Some of our men did not get in for several hours after we encamped, their riding mules having failed under them. We killed an animal resembling a ground hog this afternoon, on which we expected to have a delicious supper. After dressing him as well as we could without water, we threw the carcass into the fire and "stirred him up" until we thought him "done brown." But, alas! like the pelican, a single bite sufficed for supper. We laid it aside, sorry that we had troubled packing it into camp, and turned in to rest if we could, or suck the gums to allay the thirst, thinking that we could eat something if we had it. Distance, 20 miles—2551.

Thursday, Sept. 20.—Made an early start, and the small path we were on soon led us to the water. This we found in a deep ravine in the mountains. The bed of the stream was dry, except in this one place, but from signs a large body of water poured down it during the rainy season. This is the character of many of the small streams running from these mountains. We found horse and mule tracks a short distance up the ravine, but there they ended. After a fruitless search for a trail leading out in the direction we wished to go, we were obliged to descend the rocky bed of the arroyo. We were not aware at this time that we were so near the "Maraposa" diggings, which are located within ten miles to the eastward of this point. Ignorance may be the "mother

97. Chamberlin spelled it as it sounded. He means the Spanish *hombre* (man).

of vice," but it was the cause of misfortune and suffering to us in this case. Having nothing to cook we tried acorns, but they were too green and bitter. We drank a cup of coffee and started. We had gone but a short distance when we again found the trail of cart tracks, which we had been endeavoring to follow, and continued on this for some time before we discovered that we were traveling in a S. E. direction, and directly on the back track. Here was a dilemma; which way to go we knew not. Three-fourths of our mules were completely worn out, and ourselves so reduced in strength that we could scarcely pack and unpack. After a short deliberation we concluded to return to the ravine, which we had followed out to the edge of the plain. Here we found another small hole of water, some grass, and encamped beneath the shade of a large spreading oak. John Musser, Hill Dixon and Charles Gathwait took four of the best mules and started in search of the mines for provisions. They had gone but a mile or two when Dixon and Gathwait "had some words" about the course, (they were of the same mess); Hill knocked Gathwait off his mule and he fell "smash" into a hornet's nest. The insects, not liking this, attacked the intruder on all sides. He not knowing where he was, or what this new pain meant, sung out lustily for help to get out of h—l. Poor Charley returned to camp writhing with pain; his "eyes blacked," face swollen, and "blind as a bat." There is no doubt but that hunger quickens the temper and destroys man's best nature. We have not met a single person since leaving the San Joaquin river that could give us any information, not even an Indian whom we could employ as guide, without which it is difficult to travel in this country, there being so many trails running in various directions. Those that went in search of provisions, were instructed to strike a due north course, in case they could find a well-beaten satisfactory trail to follow. We drank a little coffee and lay down to meditate upon our "fix." Slept, but only to dream of "sides of bacon," "pots of mush," and other luxuries, that we despised in days lang syne. Distance, 5 miles—2556.

Friday, Sept. 21.—This morning I gathered up an old, dirty bag that had contained sugar, and boiled it out. In this water we boiled coffee, and a better cup I never drank. Some of us started out with our guns and succeeded in killing a small hare, a hawk, and a few woodpeckers, quails and doves. These we put into a camp kettle and made it full of broth, but it scarcely deserved the name, being so thin and poor. Out of this nine of us ate, or rather supped,

for there was scarcely a bird to the man. We styled it "bird tea." This is all we have eaten for 52 hours. The condition of our bodies can well be imagined. My rifle is the only gun left in our mess, out of what we started with. We made all the effort we could to kill some large game, but without success. We anxiously looked for relief until dark, expecting our men to return; but they did not come and we began to fear that they had strayed from their course, for we were all satisfied that we could not be far from "some place." When night set in Howard and Armstrong saddled up their mules and started out on the same errand. We made up our minds not to kill one of our mules until reduced to the last extremity. This evening Capt. Dixon learned Maj. Green "how to fire-hunt"; accordingly the captain shouldered the "blazing pan" and rifle and the major a bag of small wood, to keep up the flame, and sallied out. They returned in about an hour, not being able to "shine any eyes." We turned in, but the gnawing of hunger would not suffer us to sleep soundly. Our slumbering visions were disturbed by the sight of bloody mule steaks smoking on the spit, but before we could enjoy the imaginary feast, the shrill howl of a caoti [coyote] would "tear our eyes open."

CHAPTER XXI

Saturday, Sept. 22.—I started out this morning in hopes that I could kill an antelope, but was so weak that I could not hold out long, and after a stroll of two or three miles, I was obliged to return to camp. We attempted several times to eat the green acorns, boiling and toasting them, but they only sickened us. We firmly resolved to kill a mule to-morrow morning if our men do not return before that time with provisions. (We have since learned that a number of companies, coming into the San Joaquin valley from the coast on their way to the Maraposa mines, were as badly bewildered as ourselves, and some of them much worse, getting into the mountains amongst the Indians, and were obliged to live upon grasshoppers, acorns, horse beef, etc.) About 3 o'clock p. m. Howard and Armstrong returned, having run the trail out on which they started. They sung out for some mule beef before they had reached camp, thinking that we had certainly butchered one by this time. A few moments after Musser and Dixon came in with a mule load, having been more successful. After a considerable winding about amongst the mountains in search of a trail they struck out in a due north course, and reached the Rio

Marcaides [Mercedes], where they saw some cattle, and shortly afterwards a man, who directed them to Scott and Montgomery's ranch, a few miles down the river, which they reached yesterday evening.⁹⁸ They purchased and packed the supplies last night, and left early this morning. When about to buy they were asked whether they had any money? Of course they wanted to know why such a question was asked, and were told that if they had money "they must pay well for what they got, and if not they should have it anyhow; that's the way we do business in California." Our boys said they likely had enough, but none to spare, and they charged accordingly—75c per pound for pork, 75c for jerked beef, 62½c for flour, 55c for sugar, 37½ for green beef, etc.—3 days' rations. The bill amounted to \$90, the whole of which could have been purchased in Lewisburg for \$5. We thought it "smacked" strongly for the diggings, but we rejoiced to get it at any price, and immediately set about satisfying our appetites. John and Hill were two or three meals ahead of us, but they well earned them. I ate very sparingly of bread alone, fearing the effect, but with all my care I was very unwell during the night, and at the same time suffered from toothache. Hill and Charles "shook hands and made up," and peace and plenty being once more restored in camp, a more pleasant, jovial evening has not been enjoyed in a long time, and our past troubles and trials were set aside as things that have happened but cannot happen again. Besides all this, our boys, while at the ranch, saw some of the genuine gold diggers and lots of the dust, that had been taken out of the earth not more than two days' journey hence. Under the circumstances, who wouldn't feel good? "O, California! That's the land," etc., etc.

Sunday, Sept. 23.—Our mules have done finely, and started off more lively than usual. Traveled in a N. W. direction, over rolling tablelands, and stopped to noon at a fine pool of water. Towards evening we reached the Rio Marcaides and encamped. Here we found a large trail and wagon road leading up to the river. This is a beautiful, clear, running stream, abounding in fish, and at this point is 20 feet wide and 1 ft. deep. Distance, 16 miles—2572.

Monday, Sept. 24.—Unwell during the night and feel bad this morning. Going up the river some distance, we left it and turned to the right, on the road leading to the Maraposa mines. It had been our intention to stop on the Marcaides, but having become so accustomed to traveling we could not halt. Like the sailor, we would be out of our

98. These men, Scott and Montgomery, we are unable to identify.

latitude in any other business. We saw where some washing had been done, but nobody was at work. Traveled over a mountainous country, partly covered with stunted oak, pine and other timber. The earth is of a reddish cast, clay and gravel, with slate and quartz rock cropping out in places. We nooned at a spring by the wayside. Here we met persons going to and from the mines, and have heard the first unfavorable side of the story; which of course we did [not] relish. Several persons from more northern diggings said, "we have heard that rich deposits of gold have been discovered in the Maraposa region, and we are on our way thither, to get some of the big lump; for in the Towalume diggings, which we have just left, we can't make more than an ounce a day to do our best, and that won't pay salt." "It is all a d——d lie about their discovering rich diggings in the Maraposa region," said another man. "I've just come from there myself, nine-tenths of those at work are not actually making their bread, and it's a rare chance that a man makes an ounce a day. If I hadn't left when I did, I should have starved. I'm bound for the Towalume diggings myself. A friend of mine has just returned from there, and says that he can make two or three ounces a day easy. And if I can't make that, an ounce a day, as you say a man can make, it is better than to work for nothing in the cursed Maraposa diggings." And thus the conversation ran on. We "pricked up our ears," for we found out that this gold question, like many others, has two sides, and can be discussed. Another poor fellow inquired the distance to Scott's ranch; said that he tried his luck in the diggings, and was satisfied that there was none for him, that he was now on his way to San Francisco to start home, and if God would let him live long enough to get out of the country, he would never want to hear the word "gold dust" mentioned. These were knock-down arguments, but we have traveled some five thousand miles to "see the sights," and see it we would. Accordingly we proceeded on our journey and encamped near a spring on the mountains. I have kept up with the company but a small portion of the day, having frequent very sick spells, when I would be obliged to alight and lay down in the shade until better. When I reached camp I was much fatigued and very weak. Distance, 16 miles—2588.

Tuesday, Sept. 25.—Unwell all night. Packed up this morning for the last time, we hope, (until ready to vamoise from the diggings), and continued our journey over a mountainous country. Met a number of Americans and Spaniards packing from the mines, and passed others on their

way thither, heavily laden with provisions, merchandise, etc. Passed a number of dry diggings, at present unworked for want of water. The amount of earth thrown up appears almost incredible; the bed of almost every ravine and gulch is turned over. About 2 o'clock we reached the foot of the arroyo, known as Fremont's diggings, and "dropped anchor" in sight of the "promised land," after the lapse of seven months since leaving home, and an overland journey of twenty-six hundred (2600) miles.

* * * *

May 24, 1850.—My log-book, or "notes by the way," ended with our journey; but our experience since arriving in the country, and what we have "seen and heard," may prove interesting for future reference, in noting which, I am satisfied that an occasional leisure hour will not be entirely misspent. I can say for our mess that I never heard a man (save one) regret the adventure, either on road or since; but have heard scores by the way almost curse the day that they ventured upon the hazardous and foolhardy enterprise, and had they known what they were obliged to endure, all the gold in California could not have enticed them from home.

Our experience at gold digging was short and unsuccessful. The day after we arrived at Maraposa mines, we moved camp to a spot we had selected, upon the point of a rocky bluff, overlooking a large part of the gulch in which digging was going on. Here we "set up stakes," or rather lay down our empty, worn-out packs, beneath the imperfect shade of several small oak trees. We had no tent, nor had we slept under cover since leaving Santa Fe. There was no grass in the vicinity, and the Indians were stealing animals every night and driving them off into the mountains. We concluded to send our mules to Scott's ranch on the Marcaides, where we could have them run with a "caballada," upon the range, at \$8 per month each, and no security for their safe keeping. Our first business was to purchase a supply of provisions. There were several stores in the place, some in tents, others in the open air. We found prices to range pretty much as follows: Tea, \$3; flour, 50c per pound; pork, 75c; saleratus, \$8 per pound, etc. This was said to be very cheap, and really was, but at the time we thought it sank pretty deep into the small remnant of "coined dust" we had brought with us. It cost about \$2 per day to live, and do our own cooking. We were surprised to see how willing merchants were to credit persons coming into the mines with provisions, tools, etc., and also noticed that the miners

were not in the habit of paying cash, but settled their bills at the end of the week or month. Our next step was to take a walk through the diggings, see how they did it, what tools were required, and select a spot to commence operations. The first hole that attracted our attention was at a narrow point in the arroyo, and from the appearance of the rock on either side, a ledge once obstructed the passage of the stream, which is now so low that the water appears only at intervals, and sinks. In this place there were three persons at work. They sunk the hole some 8 or 10 feet deep; one was engaged in bailing out water, another was scraping up the gravel and sand in the bottom, and the third washed it out in a wooden bowl. We saw him washing out several times, and always had from half an ounce to two ounces. This we thought "first rate luck," but they worked hard for it, and were wet from head to foot. Several persons were working with them, with tolerable success. We went a little farther up the gulch, and stopped to inquire of a man what luck. He was taking out about an ounce per day. Another man was at work opening a new hole; he said that he had worked three weeks in a hole some distance above, and made but a few dollars. If he didn't have better luck this time he would leave for some other diggings. Here the Sonorians were at work, burrowing under the ground, and working very slowly and carefully collecting none but the earth containing gold, which they packed off to water upon their heads. The Americans seldom work in the dry diggings. We saw a number of machines at work with varied success. They consisted of a rocker or cradle, dug out of a pine log, placed in a slanting position, and put in motion by means of a lever. The earth and water is poured in at the upper end, passes through a copper or sheet iron sieve, and runs off at the lower end, the gold and some sand settled to the bottom and is retained by several cross pieces or shoulders, left on the bottom when dug out. We soon became satisfied looking at others, and also satisfied that the larger portion of those at work were making but little more than board. We supplied ourselves with the necessary tools and went to work. Paid \$16 for a crowbar, \$8 for a shovel, etc.

Opening a hole in these diggings was a pretty difficult job. It was not worth while to clear off a large spot, for it would only be by chance that we would find gold at the bottom, and the stone and clay were closely cemented together, making the digging very hard. When we reached the rock we found that a "knife" was necessary to dig out the crevices, and a "horn spoon" to scrape it up. I tried wash-

ing, but when I had all the earth and sand out of the pan, there was no gold in the bottom. I gave that part of the play up in despair, having never washed out a peck. We sank several holes, all with like ill success. While we were in the mines the total earnings of three of us was about \$40, and our expenses \$100. These mines are 80 miles distant from Stockton and 180 miles from San Francisco by land. Col. Fremont holds a claim of 100 square miles, which he purchased of the Spanish governor of California.⁹⁹ This covers the most valuable portion of the Maraposa gold regions. His partner Mr. Godey had a store here, and a large number of Indians employed at digging.¹⁰⁰ He had discovered a large vein of quartz rock said to be rich in ore, and has erected a rude machine for crushing it. From what we could learn there were about 200 Americans and as many foreigners and Indians at work in these diggings. The Americans were mostly from Texas and other southern states. The entire population appeared orderly and well disposed. The men went about their work, leaving camp, their provisions and money to take care of themselves. It is seldom that punishment is necessary in the mines, but when required, I am told that the Lynch law is immediately put in force, and offenders may expect a "rough handling." There was a good deal of liquor sold, at 50c per glass and \$5 per bottle. There was a man buried a short distance from our camp who died from the effects of drink at these prices.

On Sunday there was an election for *alcalde*, and an auction. I saw *panol* bought at \$10 per 100 pounds for horse feed. The Mexicans prepare it by roasting the wheat before grinding it, and eat it with sugar and water. We saw very few men digging on the Sabbath; with the above exceptions, the day was pretty well observed. In the evening, when nothing was to be seen but the many camp-fires, and all was still but the low hum of conversation as it came up from the different groups around the lights, and at once, from the opposite side of the arroyo, a loud, musical voice stuck up,

"On Jordon's stormy banks I stand, etc."

It sounded strange, and yet familiar, in this wild, pent-up

99. The reference is to Governor Pio Pico. See H. H. Bancroft, *History of California*, vi, 552, note. "Under the Mexican law, such a grant as Fremont had obtained gave no title to mineral rights, and public opinion regarded placer deposits, no matter on whose land, as general and unrestricted property."—Nevins, *Fremont*, 436.

100. The man here called "partner" was Alexander Godey, for years a close friend and associate of Frémont.

corner of the world. As the sound rolled along the gulch, and reverberated from the hill and mountain, it reminded us of "good old Methodist times" at home, and we concluded that the singer must be one of 'em.

CHAPTER XXII

Green, Howard and Fox, who worked together, were more lucky in digging than Musser, Schaffle and myself. Howard picked up a piece containing some quartz which weighed nine ounces. I saw one piece that weighed five pounds, and several others weighing 3, 2 and 1 pounds. Mr. Armstrong became dissatisfied with the country and diggings and made up his mind to go home. I believe he never struck a blow nor washed a grain. He had been unwell for some days. We were sorry to see him leave. He had been a good fellow and deserved the best wishes of us all. I suffered more from sickness during the two weeks I remained in the mines than I had for many years previous. Howard, Musser and Fox were also unwell. Indeed, we did not know the condition to which our systems had been reduced by the fatigues of traveling, and scanty allowance of food, until we attempted to work. Fearing that we would not recover until we got out of the place, Musser and myself concluded to go "down country," see San Francisco, Stockton, get our "news," purchase a tent and supply of provisions, pack them into the mines, and winter there. Accordingly, we got up "Old Whitey," for whose board we had been paying 50 cents per day, with the privilege of browsing upon the mountains, packed several saddles, blankets, saddle-bags, empty packs, lariats, and provisions upon her back, and started on foot, leaving Green, Howard, Schaffle and Fox in the mines.

Nothing particular occurred and we reached Scott's ranch on the evening of the second day—we had traveled very slow on account of our weakness. Part of their "caballada" having gone astray, we were detained here two days hunting our mules. We mounted two of the best animals, which had improved considerably, and set out from the ranch in the afternoon; our course north, over a high, barren plain. We had no road, and when night set in the heavens clouded over and a slight sprinkle of rain fell. This was on the 11th of October, and the first rain of the season. We managed to keep our course in the darkness until we reached the Towalume river. We groped our way down the bluff and encamped on the flat, i. e. lay down in

the rain, beneath a large tree, where the big drops pelted us all night. The Towalume river resembles the Marcaides in many particulars: perhaps more timber growing on the flat. We descended the stream several miles, found a crossing, and continued down the north side. Passed an Indian "rancheria," where they had constructed a very ingenious fish trap, upon which they depend for subsistence, until the acorns ripen and grasshoppers grow fat. The wild Indians of California are the most miserable looking, indolent and degraded portion of that race of people I have seen since leaving the frontiers of the States. We stopped about noon at a tent, a few miles from the south of the river, to graze our animals. Here we saw Mr. Armstrong's mule, saddle, etc. Upon inquiry we learned that he had lain sick here for several days, sold his mule, etc., and proceeded on foot for Stockton this morning. We were apprehensive at first that something of a still more serious nature had happened him. Struck out in a N. W. course for the Stanislaus river,¹⁰¹ over another high, dry, barren plain. Reached the lower ferry about dusk, where we forded the stream. Could get nothing to eat, and being out of provisions, we applied to a ferryman—a most forbidding looking Irishman, who immediately shared his scanty meal with us. We offered to pay him, but he refused to take anything, saying that we should do likewise at the first opportunity, etc. We took the advice and had another proof that appearances often deceive. We traveled down the river some miles after dark, in search of grass. About 9 o'clock we spied a light, and on coming up to it, found a number of Spaniards encamped, and turned in with them.

In the morning we again struck out across the plain, and about 3 o'clock p. m. reached the lower ferry on the San Joaquin river. This ferry is owned by three young men, Bonsall, Doak and Scott, and is a very valuable property. Mr. Bonsall, who left Clearfield Co., Pa., when a boy, and has since worked in the lead mines of Mo., told me the other day, that he had been offered \$10,000 to drop his interest in the concern, and "take his bones out of the country." Here we intersected the main land route between San Francisco, San Jose and Stockton, or in other words, between the northern and southern portions of California, and divided by the bay of San Francisco. After taking dinner, we ferried over, at \$1 each for man and mule. Stopped at M'Caffrey's Tent, or the "Elkhorn Inn of the San Joaquin,"

101. The Stanislaus river is about 20 mis. south of Stockton, near the modern Hetch Hetchy aqueduct.

as he was pleased to call it, (San Hwa-keen, J always having the sound of H in the "Lingua Español.") In the morning after breakfasting upon salt pork, sea biscuit, and coffee, for which we paid \$1.50 each, we again packed our mules and pursued our way. The road was very fine, over a level plain, to the mountains on the west of the valley, and appeared lined with travel. The distance across this range of bald mountains is about 8 miles. The ascent and descent very gradual, except the dividing ridge, which is somewhat abrupt. Nooned at a spring on the mountains, and reached Livermore's ranch in the evening. Mr. Livermore was formerly an English sailor, and has resided in the country some 30 years. He has a Spanish wife, and his "cassa" and everything about him look California like. We lay down upon the ground floor to sleep, but couldn't. In the morning we learned that it was "only the fleas" that annoyed us. This country is actually pulluted with fleas, body lice, bed bugs, ticks and other vermin. It is a current joke, that previous to the war, the "coatis [coyotes] and fleas held possession of the country."

After leaving Livermore's ranch we crossed a plain two leagues in width, on which thousands of cattle were grazing, and then entered a range of hills, covered with wild oats. The place is known as "Amador's Pass" and was the handsomest spot we had seen in California. A small stream of clear, cold water flows E. in the direction of the road, along which are several flats and groves of large California oaks. Passed Senol's ranch, crossed a high range of hills and descended into the Mission of San Jose.¹⁰² This, like all the California missions, is partly in ruins. We purchased some fruit of the old Frenchman in charge of the orchard and vineyard, and pursued our way towards Pueblo, which we reached about sundown.¹⁰³ Put up at the U. S. hotel and slept in a haystack, \$2 for a bed being more than we could afford. This place is handsomely situated in the centre of the valley. The majority of the inhabitants are Spaniards, Chilians, Sonorians, etc., but Americans are fast settling here, and during this season a great many buildings have been put up. It has been decided upon as the seat of government. Here we were first reminded of the "land we hailed from," by neat frame houses, well furnished, tables

102. Heading west, they crossed the Diablo Range. The *mission* of San José (founded June 11, 1797) lay about midway between modern Oakland (to the north) and the *pueblo* of San José (to the south, near the southern end of the great bay).

103. There will be more regarding the Pueblo in the following chapter.

set *a la mode*, pleasure carriages, women dressed in silks, men in broadcloths, etc.

Three miles from Pueblo we passed through Santa Clara.¹⁰⁴ This mission is beautifully located, the land around is fertile, and as there are no Spanish claims upon it, a great many Americans are "squatting" here, expecting the lands to become government property. We had dinner at Mr. Wistman's, and here, for the first time since leaving home, sat down to a meal prepared by the hands of American females. Mr. Wistman came to the country in '46, settled here, and now owns a fine, well stocked ranch. Wealth and prosperity has grown up about him. Lodged at the "Old Missions," a large, lone adobe building, in which a New Yorker has taken quarters and opened a house of entertainment. Whether this ever was a mission, or only goes by that name, I have never learned. It is situated 20 miles from San Francisco. Passed Jose Sanchez's ranch, after which the country became more barren in appearance.

On ascending the hill bordering on the bay we had a fine view of the Golden Gate, through which the tide was ebbing, with a noise resembling thunder. We could see the Pacific ocean in the distance raising up mountain like, and bounding the horizon on the west. The "Mission Dolores" lay in our way, situated 3 miles from San Francisco.¹⁰⁵ The lands around this mission are also being fast taken up by American settlers. Shortly afterwards we entered the chaparel [*chaparral*] and sand hills. The sand is very deep, and a team can do little more than draw an empty wagon through it. On reaching the summit of the last sand hill the City of San Francisco, bay, harbor, and shipping burst upon our view. The appearance and magnitude of the place far exceed the most liberal ideas we had formed of it. We were almost lost in wonder as we urged our wearied mules through the crowd in one of the principal streets and gazed upon the large and even elegant buildings, the display of signs and merchandise, and the moving mass of human beings of every caste and tongue. We were almost deafened with the hum of business, the noise of the saw and hammer, rattling of cart wheels, and the jingle of money in the exchange offices and gambling houses. We kept along through several of the streets, gazing at everything that

104. Santa Clara de Asís mission was founded Jan. 12, 1777, and therefore antedated the Pueblo of San José (founded Nov. 29, 1777). See Caughey, *op. cit.*, 164-165.

105. By "Dolores" is meant the mission of San Francisco de Asís (founded Oct. 9, 1776). In the founding of San Francisco, Capt. J. B. de Anza picked Fort Point for the presidio and the "Arroyo de los Dolores" for the mission. Caughey, *op. cit.*, 156-157.

attracted our attention "with eyes and mouth open," not forgetting that we should look up a stopping place, and that we were "out" in the garb of mountaineers. We put up at a hotel; boarding \$14 per week, mule feed the same price. Our first business was to go to the postoffice and "get our news." The answer, "Nothing for you, sir," took us all aback. Could it be possible that our friends, after making so many promises, had neglected or forgotten us? It was a cruel disappointment. We afterwards learned that no mails had been received from the States for several months.

In strolling around town we observed a striped pole. This was something to my mind, for I had neither shaved nor trimmed my beard since leaving the Mississippi. The fee was a dollar, and well earned, for razor after razor was laid aside—no doubt but some sands of the Gila remained in it.

CHAPTER XXIII

On our way down we had concluded to stop at Pueblo and get into some business, and after remaining in San Francisco three or four days we returned to Pueblo San Jose. Here we were advised by several Americans to commence butchering. We soon found that we could not talk enough Spanish to purchase cattle, and gave up the idea. The Spanish know but little about the honors and laws of trade. If they were in need of money they will sell their property for a trifling sum to get it; but if a person wishes to purchase of them, and they do not want for money, no price will buy it.

We made up our minds to return to the diggings and make the most of it during the winter. Nothing particular occurred until we reached the mines, except after crossing the San Joaquin, rain commenced falling and continued at intervals for a number of days. Our clothes and blankets were kept constantly wet, in which we had to sleep; but by this time we were well and were very much recruited. We were also lost between the Towalume and Mercaides rivers, which is a very common occurrence on these plains. The trails through the mountains were so much softened by the rain that our mules frequently sank to their bellies. When we reached the diggings we found that Fremont's gulch was drowned out, and the miners were leaving for Agua Frio, the dry diggings several miles distant. Things presented a most squalid appearance. We were perfectly disgusted with the mines, and determined to pack up our traps and move down country, where we could encamp during the

rainy season. During our absence Green and Howard had left the mines and gone to Stockton, taking Franklin with them. Fred and Fox were left, and they had not been able to make their board. While on our way down we lived upon salmon, an excellent fish, which is so abundant in the Mercaides, Towalume and Stanislaus rivers that we killed them with clubs and stones, when ascending the shoals.

Fox found employment at Bonsal's ferry. John, Fred and myself came on down and encamped at the forks of the Stockton and Benecia roads, in Amador's Pass. Two of us went down to Pueblo and invested our remaining funds (about \$200) in a tent and provisions, which we packed up upon our mules. We put up a pole frame, over which we stretched our canvas. The public, thinking that we were "in the business," began to call for meals, provisions, lodging, etc., and thinking it as well to be employed as idle, we killed a beef, put the kettle on the fire, and dealt out meat, hard bread, sugar, flour, etc. Ten days afterwards I started to San Francisco to purchase supplies with six hundred dollars in my pocket. There I found Green and Howard. They had clubbed together with Jesse Thomas and a Mr. Jacobs, of Huntingdon Co., Pa., and were keeping bachelor's hall, in a small room for which they paid \$75 per month rent. Major Green had been very unwell, but was recovering from the typhoid fever. Dr. Winston was attending him. I also met Maj. Beck, Jas. Duncan, Jno. Hayes, Mr. Kelly and Mr. Smith, of the Lewistown company. They started from home after us, and had a pleasant trip through Mexico, and arrived at San Francisco early in July. They had all been to the diggings and were more or less successful. It was really gratifying to meet so many persons from the neighborhood of home.

There had been a great change in the place since I had been there before—a period of six weeks. A great number of buildings had been put up, and large blocks of houses covered what were then vacant lots. The town was "full of people," half of the buildings being occupied as boarding and gambling houses. Board was from \$20 to \$40 per week; rents exorbitantly high; business of all kinds brisk, and merchandise commanded good prices. The gambling houses were thronged, and as these were the only place of resort, many persons entirely averse of gambling were induced to patronize the "banks." Money on loan was worth from 10 to 15 per cent. a month. Lots that were purchased two years ago for \$16, sold for \$40,000; timber commands \$400 per M. feet, etc.

I made an arrangement for the goods we had shipped from Philadelphia, and redeemed them. The extreme, storage, etc., were trade of the northern mining region.¹⁰⁶ During the rainy season, Sacramento was overflowed, and great deal of property destroyed. The rise in the river, from the melting snow, has again deluged the place, in defiance of their efforts to keep out by embankments.

The founding of these towns has been so successful, and profitable to the projectors, that a great many "would like to be" speculators have laid out cities in various parts of the country, on mining streams and the principal rivers, advertise their many advantages, as to location, etc., make "sham sales," and use every effort to induce the "green 'uns" to take the bait. I could enumerate perhaps fifty that have been laid out within the last year, and lots for sale—the majority of which, will never pay the expenses of surveying.

Three-fourths of the people in the country say, "that if we can get what gold we want, we will play quits with California." They do not care about investing their money in uncertain real estate. The majority of persons that emigrated to the country in the year '46 and prior to that, have settled upon lands in various parts of the country, and having the advantage of the first opening of the mines, are now wealthy, almost without an effort. I have been amused at several of these "old settlers," as they are called, talking about going to the States to "see the country," and if they "like it" they "will move." Within the last [. . .] three or four greater than the first cost.¹⁰⁷ I shipped them on a launch to the Mission Embarkadero, 40 miles distant, and six hours sail, for \$2.00 per cwt. The distance from the anchor ground to the beach, is a serious drawback upon the port of San Francisco. A great many goods shipped, did not pay for getting them ashore. One ship master, bought up a lot of mess beef, as the cheapest article he could get for ballast. Another who had brought out a lot of coal as ballast, retained it, although it was worth \$50 per ton. The beach is the form of a crescent. The town is handsomely situated, but there is little room to extend it, unless they build upon the sand hills in the rear of the place. Water lots sold at an enormous price, on which large mercantile houses are built, upon piles. The buildings are generally of very flimsy structure. While I was there, a fire broke out, and laid a square in ruins. Before it had done burning, contracts were

106. This is unintelligible,—due evidently to some carelessness in the printing of Chamberlin's notes at Lewisburg in 1902.

107. Again some failure to reproduce the notes correctly is evident.

made for new buildings, and the lumber drawing upon the ground. In less than a fortnight, many of them were completed, and gambling and other business resumed as though nothing had happened. Three weeks ago, another more disastrous fire visited the place; almost half of the city was burned. It is already rebuilt, and the marks of the fire can scarcely be seen. This shows a spirit of energy and perseverance on the part of her citizens, scarcely if ever equalled.

When I was about to leave the place, Maj. Green had a severe attack of the diarrhoea (a prevailing and frequently fatal disease in this country) which, in his already weak condition, soon made him one of its victims. California may do to stay, or even to live in, but when death calls upon the wanderer, separated by thousands of miles from his family and friends, it is a hard country to die in. It was with feelings of indescribable sorrow, that I followed the body of my friend to the grave. His remains and those of James Banks, Esq., of Lewistown, Pa., rest side by side in the Russian burying ground.

CHAPTER XXIV

Some weeks ago, business obliged me to go to Stockton. That place was situated on a level plain, and borders on a lagoon, which connects with the Bay of Francisco. The place was then almost sunk in mud, but during the dry seasons is very pleasant. The majority of the houses were canvass, but a large number of good buildings had already gone up. Vessels of a large size, can ascend the slue, and discharge freight with ease and little expense. Since the business season has opened, real estate has risen in value, and many buildings are being erected. It is the emporium of trade for the southern and part of the middle mines.

I have never as yet been as far north as Sacramento City. It is said to be the largest town in California, and concentrates [*sic*] the years, the great changes that have taken place in the country, the excitement of business, the abundance of money, etc., are so very different to everything experienced in the States, that persons would find it difficult to content themselves where time rolls on without any sensible changes, in the order of things, more especially if they had left indigent homes, and have enjoyed independence and affluence here.

The markets of this country, are very fluctuating. The supplies from the States and foreign countries are irregular,

and the price of an article depends entirely upon the quantity in market, or the ability of speculators to monopolize. Three months ago lumber was worth \$400 per M. feet by the cargo, it can now be bought for \$40. Flour was then worth \$40 per bbl. now \$8 to \$10. At the same time sugar and coffee were selling at 10 to 12 cts. per lb.; now it is scarce at 40 cts. All the scythes and snaths in market could have been purchased for \$10, at that time; a few days ago we were in San Francisco, and wished to buy one, (a scythe and snath,) the merchant asked \$60 for it; we offered him \$50; in the mean time, another person in search of the same article, stepped in, and inquired the price of it; \$70 was asked, the price paid, and he walked off with his bargain. The best flour in market, and that which commands the highest price, is brought from Chili, S. A. Fruit, vegetables, sugar, etc., from the Sandwich Islands; lumber, fish, butter and some vegetables from Oregon; silks, teas, fancy articles and drygoods of various kinds from China. Three-fourths of all the merchandise consumed here, is received from the United States, England and France. This includes lumber, breadstuffs, meats, liquors, and other groceries, heavy drygoods, clothing, hardware, etc., etc. The products of all countries in the world can be had, and representatives from the same be seen, in California.

It is amusing to notice the change in occupations and mode of living experienced by persons coming to this country. Men of all professions, trades and employments, become merchants, gamblers, farmers, watermen, teamsters, day laborers, etc., and as a first and last resort, the mines. A physician works in the diggings because he finds it more profitable than his profession: a lawyer runs a launch on the bay; a preacher keeps hotel, or a farmer "deals monte," all for the same reason. While in San Francisco last winter I saw a man of perhaps fifty years of age engaged in patching the leaking roof and mending the sidewalk of the boarding house at which I stopped. I saw he drank a great deal, but was talkative and intelligent. Upon getting into conversation with him I found that he was a lawyer of Pennsylvania, where he had been a successful practitioner for many years, and had been employed as counsel in several important cases, in connection with Hon. Ellis Lewis.¹⁰⁸

108. The Hon. Ellis Lewis (1798-1871) was a Pennsylvania jurist, a staunch Democrat all his life. The governor appointed him (1833) state attorney general, but within a few months he succeeded to the office of presiding judge of the 8th judicial district and later (1843) held the same office in the 2nd judicial district. In 1848, he published *An abridgement of the criminal law of the United States.*—*Dict. of Am. Biog.*

The amount of water crafts upon San Francisco bay, and the rivers, is almost incredible. Thousands of boats and launches are in the trade, and ascend some of the rivers to the mines. About twenty-five steam boats are now plying between the various points of commerce, carrying passengers and freight. It is said that the boat "Senator" cleared as high as \$30,000 per trip. She runs between San Francisco and Sacramento city, and goes through and back within two days.

Those portions of California adapted to agriculture are generally covered with Spanish claims, which if acknowledged valid by the American Government will for a while prove a hindrance to the settlement and prosperity of the country. But Spanish ignorance, indolence, and jealousy cannot hold out long against the ingenuity and enterprise of the Yankees, many of whom have already contrived to "get into the affections" of the "Dons." Taxes upon their 100 square miles, and American gamblers, (who won't play a "fair game")¹⁰⁹ into their purse and herds of cattle will soon have the desired effect. Then instead of these vermin-beset, adobe *casas*, see a country dotted over with neat, comfortable farm houses, gardens, fruit trees, and cultivated fields. But all these things will depend entirely upon two things—whether the soil will produce without irrigation, and the continuance and yield of the gold mines; for California must depend upon a home market for her products. The latter, time will tell; the former will be known soon, for there are a number of persons engaged in farming. The soil produces without [irrigating] water, but whether in quantity or quality sufficient to warrant cultivation is not known. Should California become one of the United States, the wealth of the mines continue, and the earth yield abundantly, nothing will be wanting to make her the most populous, wealthy, and flourishing State in the Union in a few years.

A national railroad from the Mississippi river to the Pacific ocean would certainly be of great advantage to the country, and more closely connect the interests of her extended territory, if the great work could be accomplished. I see that it is a subject much agitated in the States and many persons there believe we will soon see locomotives and trains of cars "hopping" the rivers and "skipping" over the plains and "jumping" the Sierra Nevada mountains." It will do to talk in that way, but from what little knowledge

109. There has been an evident omission of some words in printing. Insert "making inroads" or some such expression.

I have of the country I would be willing to wager all I expect to make in California that the undertaking will not be completed, if begun, within the nineteenth century. And if the opinions of men who have traveled every known overland route are of any weight, not one out of a hundred that I have heard will admit that it is at all practicable. The broad plains and deserts, the deep arroyos, the wide, sandy beds of rivers, the many mountains, the most formidable of which is the Sierra Nevada, whose summit towers above the regions of perpetual snow, the scarcity of material for constructing it, and the distance, are obstacles, which, in my opinion, render even the idea absurd.¹¹⁰

I have "spun my yarn" to the foot of the last page, and I now "knock off" with pleasure, lay the pen and writing desk (the bottom of an empty wine case) aside, and resume the hoe handle, which implement I can wield with better grace and effect.

(THE END)

110. Chamberlin's reference above to statehood for California shows that it was still the year 1849 when he concluded his diary. If he lived until 1869, of course he saw realized for California this "absurd idea" of a transcontinental railroad.