A person with a small income can live far more comfortably in California than at home, chiefly because he will find himself able to dispense with many things that the ever powerful "Mrs. Grundy" declares to be requisite at home!

To the Englishman who does not fear work, especially if possessed of a moderate capital, California offers a reasonable prospect of a comfortable provision, with increasing facilities for communications with other parts, while an almost perfect climate and the healthy out-door life go far to make existence more enjoyable than in the old country.

NOTES ON CALIFORNIA.

BY

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WALSALL:
W. HENRY ROBINSON, STEAM PRINTING WORKS.
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CALIFORNIA, formerly a province of Mexico, was ceded to the United States in 1848, and admitted to the Union in 1850. All grants of land that had been given to individuals by the Mexican Government were confirmed by U. S. patent. We, therefore, find that with the exception of grants to railroad companies, larger tracts of country are owned by individuals in California than in any other State of the Union. Few people in England realize the enormous tract of country comprised in the word California. As compared with the square mileage of England, Scotland, and Wales, it is over one hundred thousand square miles larger: the former containing 188,891 square miles, and the latter 88,320 square miles. There are several railroads open now to California, the quickest and oldest route is from New York by Chicago, Omaha, Ogden, and Sacramento, to San Francisco. This is certainly the most pleasant journey except in the months of December, January, and February, when one is liable to be detained by snow, not only for hours, but for days. This can be avoided by taking one of the more southern routes, either by St. Louis, Kansas City, Las Vegas, Deming, and Tuson, to Los Angeles; or again, by New Orleans, through New Mexico and Arizona to Los Angeles. Both these latter routes are below the snow line, but are best avoided during the summer months, owing to the great heat and dust.

There is also, for those that prefer a long sea passage, the trip to Panama by steamer, from Southampton or Liverpool, across the isthmus by rail (a few hours day journey), and then by steamer to San Francisco.

The art of travel has almost reached perfection in America, where one can always enjoy a Pullman sleeping car, with its comfortable beds and lavatories; but I do not propose to give an account of what can be seen on many lines in this country, but rather of what will be new to many, viz:—life in California.

On arriving in San Francisco, one is struck at once by the size and beauty of the harbour, which is large enough to contain the navies of the world. It has, however, its drawback, and that a great one, viz: that in bad weather, with a westerly gale, the sea on the bar at the entrance makes the passage by what is known as the Golden Gate impassable. The buildings in the city (stone and brick) compare well with New York and other eastern towns, and when we remember that in the year 1849 San Francisco consisted of only a few adobe (mud) hovels, the "go-ahead" character of our Yankee cousins is well exemplified. The Palace Hotel is perhaps the largest in the world, containing over one thousand beds. The Chinese quarters are also well worth a visit, if only to see how closely human beings can be packed; it is true, there is a sanitary ordinance as regards space, but it seems to be rarely enforced. A short time also may be spent in the Chinese Theatre and Joss House (or church).

While on the subject of the Chinese in California, I may state that they make good domestic servants; clean, quiet, and very quick at picking up new dodges.

The greater part of the railways have been built by Chinese labour, as well as the numerous canals for irrigating purposes;

in fact, for any big job Chinese labour is preferred to white. This is chiefly the fault of the very men who are constantly crying out against the heathen for taking the bread out of their mouths, and who—when they are employed themselves—are the first to strike, if they see a chance of getting a rise in wages, just when the contractor is pushed for time and bound to finish the job or forfeit a large sum. Then again as regards white labour, there are always a number who never come to time on Monday morning. For these reasons Chinamen, though man for man not equal to the white, are preferred. It must be borne in mind that there is no navvy class in California; no man being content to live and die a labourer, when it is possible to rise to be President. There are no better market gardeners than the Chinese, who supply all the towns, peddling their goods though the streets.

In San Francisco the process of house moving and raising is carried to perfection; you may see large, two-storied, frame buildings put on rollers and moved away, without any trouble, to make room for a brick or stone building. In the case of a brick or stone building requiring another story, and there being no room to add side or lengthwise, the story is put on at the bottom instead of the top, as one might naturally expect. This is done by placing underneath the side and partition walls of the lower story long baulks of timber, and under these again screw jacks, by means of which the whole building is raised to the required height. The lower story is then built on the old foundations and the top lowered. I have seen all this done to a building with 30 feet front, and 50 feet depth, in the main street of San Francisco, the people living in the house during the whole time, the only inconvenience occasioned being the temporary absence of the front door-step which was replaced by a ladder.

There is no lack of churches and places of worship of various denominations, in all the towns; and there are schools with good teachers, even in the very remote districts; the school system of the States being, next to the Post Office, the most perfect of any Government institution. The College of Santa Clara in the north, and a new College at Los Angeles, rank equal to any of the older colleges in the east.

The County Hospitals are well supported by a county poll-tax, and in several towns there are Infirmaries, managed by Sisters of Mercy. In these latter, for a charge below that of a a first-class hotel, the best nursing can be obtained, and to my mind these are the harbours of refuge for which all sick folk should make.

There are two seasons in California, the wet and dry. The wet season lasts from December to March, when rains are anxiously looked for; a dry season in these months meaning death to thousands of stock and a "bust-up" to numberless stock-men. Frosts are rare in the valleys, but in the mountains any degree of cold can be reached even in summer, especially on the slopes of Mount Shaster, the highest peak of the Sierra Nevada, with its ever snow-white crest, 14,000 feet high. There are two main ranges of mountains in California, the Sierra Nevada and the Coast Range, running north and south. It was at the foot of the former range, on the banks of the Sacramento river, that gold was first discovered in 1849, causing so great a rush to California that in two years the population was trebled. At that time the only way to get to the country was by waggon across the plains (a three months' trip), or by sailing vessel round Cape Horn.

Mining in California is now chiefly carried on by Companies, the expense of beginning to work a quartz claim being more than most individuals can stand, and the "leads" being generally discovered by poor prospecting miners, a class of men peculiar to mining countries and well worth description.

Parties of two or three of these men will club together for an outfit, consisting of a riding-mule or donkey a-piece, and one pack animal (donkeys are preferred as being hardier and not so liable to stray from camp), also rifles, blankets, picks, shovels, a gold-pan for washing dirt, with about one month's provisions. On reaching the ground to be prospected, the first thing is to choose a good camp with water; then, one being the cook for the day or week, the others start out. Every likely looking piece of rock is examined with a magnifying glass, pulverized on a flat rock, and washed in a horn spoon or shovel; the gold, being heaviest, remains to the last, and an old hand can make a very good guess as to its value. Loose rock is called "float" in distinction to rock "in place," or the "main ledge." Having found float containing gold, the search then begins higher up (as the float must have been washed down) until the main lead is discovered, or the main rock, containing the gold or silver. This varies in size from the thickness of a sheet of paper to many feet; in some places lying together in what is known as a "pocket," while at other times it forms a continuous vein, which nearly always runs in an opposite direction to the grain of the rock. A person fitting out a prospecting party and standing all expense can claim by law half the find.

Quartz leads are worked now almost entirely by stamp mills, run by steam or water power, and consisting of a number of stamps weighing over 100 pounds each. These are lifted by cams, and crush the quartz as fine as flour; water being then mixed with the quartz, a paste is formed, which, after passing through sieves, runs over copper plates covered with

quicksilver. These absorb, or, as the term is, "amalgamate" the gold. The amalgum, or quicksilver and gold, is then removed from the plates and placed in a retort, the quicksilver evaporated, and the pure gold remains behind.

The old Mexican plan for working leads by an "arastra" (from the Spanish word "to drag") without the expense of machinery is still much in use, and is as follows :—A circular place, of some ten feet in diameter, is cleared out, and the floor laid down with flat hard pieces of rock, with spaces of about an inch left between. Above this floor a cross-beam is fixed, from a socket in the middle of which an upright post revolves, with arms attached to it. Heavy pieces of rock called "drags" are fastened to these arms, and the post is made to revolve by one or two horses, or, better still, where possible, by a water-wheel. Into this rough-looking mill the quartz is placed, water poured in, and all ground up ; when in a state of paste quicksilver is added ; after a time a sluice gate is opened and all run off. The quicksilver, with the gold absorbed, remains behind in the crevices between the flooring rocks, and is then retorted.

Then there is "placer mining," by which is meant obtaining the gold that is found in streams and old mountain water courses, which has at some time been washed out from the quartz by the action of water or earthquakes, and such like convulsions of Nature. Placer mining is done in various ways. The most common and simple of these is the "rocker;" this is a square bottom trough with one end out, fixed on rockers, like a baby's cradle, and placed on a slight incline so that water will easily run off. On the bottom, every four inches apart, are placed inch battens, called "riffles," which are slightly concave on the upper edge. At the upper end of the rocker, and raised about a foot, is a deep tray with a perforated bottom. Into this tray is placed the gravel containing the gold (commonly

called "pay dirt,") and then, while water is poured on the gravel either from a spout or by a dipper, the rocker is kept in motion ; by this means the dirt is all washed away, the big stones are thrown out of the tray, and the gold that is washed through is caught on the upper side of the riffles. In addition to the rocker a blanket is often placed in a shute below, through which the gravel is washed, and which retains very small particles of gold. In places where water is abundant and can easily be brought on the ground, long cuttings are made, with sluice-boxes placed at intervals, the bottom of these being filled with riffles, and while the water runs through the pay-dirt is shovelled in. There is also what is called "hydraulic mining," only used when water can be obtained from a sufficient height to give great force when discharged through a hose and branch pipe, like a gigantic fire-engine. This is used where large and high banks of pay-dirt are found ; as the bank is washed down the dirt is led through numbers of sluice-boxes, as before described. Sometimes water is brought for this purpose for miles by flumes and ditches at a great cost.

From mines and mining we will now proceed to agriculture. What strikes one most in California is the state of perfection to which agricultural machinery has been brought and the few hands required to cultivate large tracts of land. And, first, the gang plough. The one most in use is the double gang of two shares, worked by one man who sits on the top, drives his four horses, and works the lever at his side that controls the shares. There are numberless other gang ploughs ; one of eight shares is often used for large tracts of land; behind the plough and attaches is a seeder, and behind that again a harrow ; the whole is drawn by ten or twelve horses and driven by one man, so that one journey over the ground completes the job. Hand sowing is rarely done. If several small gang

ploughs are used, a sowing machine is placed in a waggon, and worked by an endless chain attached to the hind-wheel; these seeders will throw a distance of twenty feet, and the quantity discharged can be regulated to a great nicety. Cutting for hay is done in much the same manner as in this country by mowers and reapers. In the large tracts, where the grain only is required, a machine called a "Header" is used; this cuts off the heads only of the grain. It is constructed on the same principle as the lawn mower, and can be raised two or three feet from the ground; it cuts a swath of from twelve to fourteen feet, throwing the heads of the grain upon a draper which discharges them into a waggon driven at the side. The header is driven by six or eight horses from behind, and the driver who is behind the horses has a steering wheel which he controls by a tiller between his legs.

The straw that is left on the ground is usually fed off or burnt up. The thrasher is generally close behind, the grain being stored as soon as possible after cutting. The hay used in California is chiefly barley, cut when the grain is just in the milk and the straw green, though, where the land can be irrigated, alalfa (a clover) is chiefly used. This is so rapid in its growth in warm climates that three crops a year can be cut, and it is excellent food for stock, though not sufficient without grain for working teams. Oats are seldom used, as in the rich and virgin soil the straw grows too rank for hay unless cut very young, when the grain would be lost. Where the soil is damp enough, or can be irrigated, corn, that is Indian corn, is planted after the hay and grain are cut, and gathered about November. I cannot help thinking that California has seen its best wheat days, as the new lands now being opened by the Canadian Pacific Railroad, on the main road to markets on either side of the Continent, must reduce the price, which is

even now barely sufficient to pay the cost of producing. But on the whole of these wheat lands, where it is possible to get water, fruit can be raised, and there one sees a great future for this State. Vines bear in three years, oranges in seven years, and other fruit in proportion. Oranges are now selling at $1.50 per box of 120 oranges, pomegranite (that over-rated fruit) will often bring 5 cents (2½d.) a-piece. There is no trouble in selling all fruit on the tree, the demand for grapes for wine-making being very great, and also for fruit for tinning and drying. The raisins compare well with the best Malaga and the figs with those from Smyrna. The country round Los Angeles is now covered with vineyards and orange groves, and these will soon extend as far as the coast, which is 18 miles distant. There are several thriving colonies in California, and in all, fruit-raising is the main object. Water for irrigation is a *sine qua non* on account of there being only one wet season of a few months' duration in the year. The expense of bringing water upon the ground by ditches miles long, being more than most individuals can stand, companies are formed, which in most cases have turned out paying investments, the purchasers of the soil being shareholders in the water rights. By these companies deserts without a sign of tree or shrub, and only fit for grazing purposes, become transformed into beautiful gardens. The American is great at planning out a town. In no new towns are the streets less than 60 feet wide; and rules are generally made regulating the particular sort of tree to be planted on lots bordering the streets and main roads, and their width apart.

I would caution would-be purchasers against making up their minds too readily to buy in one of these land companies as I know of more than one wild cat scheme that by good advertising has well paid the promoters, though not the victims who settled. It would be well if all who visit this country

were to live one whole season at or near the place they think of making their future home, in order to study the water supply, if nothing else, as many a murmuring brook in the spring is a dry watercourse in the fall.

Cattle raising is one of the most lucrative pursuits in parts where large ranges can be obtained, and also in many places where a man, in pre-empting his 160 acres, covers the only water near, can command a large tract of Government land for grazing, useless without the said water.

As regards the large cattle ranches (from the Spanish word Rancho "farm") the custom is to collect (rodeo) cattle in the spring and fall, when all calves are branded and ear marked (every brand being registered in the county records). This is an interesting performance. The owner of a ranch sends round to his neighbours to tell them the day on which he collects, when they send their mounted herders or drovers (Texas "Cowboys," California "Vaqueros"). They then proceed to collect all the cattle in as large a district as can be worked in one day. The cattle being collected, are retained in a bunch by a few vaqueros on the outside, while the stray cattle are picked out and placed by themselves; this is done by two vaqueros, one on each quarter of the animal driving it out of the bunch. When all strays are out, the beef cattle are first separated, then all the cows with calves unbranded are driven off to a corral (an enclosed place with sides 6½ feet high), where the calves are branded; the remainder of the cattle are then let go.

The branding is done by two vaqueros lassoing the calf, one round the neck, the other round both hind legs. It is then thrown to the ground, while a third man on foot brands it (generally on the hip).

This collecting and branding is continued until the ranch

has been gone over, when all move on to the neighbouring ranch. When animals are sold (not to kill) they are vented, that is, the brand is placed on them a second time, so that one brand as it were cancels the other. Butchers as a rule buy on the ranch with agreement to deliver at the nearest railway station; and in the case of big ranches contracts are generally made to take so many head during the year at a certain sum, and until the number is picked out by the butcher no other cattle of that description can be sold to others.

Sheep are raised more for the wool than for mutton, though even as regards the former the Australian wool is now almost running it out of the market, and the days of large sheep ranches are over. The breed are mostly a cross between the French and Spanish Merino. These are found to answer best, being more hardy and better wool-producers than English breeds. Sheep are usually herded in bands of about one thousand, and are seldom corralled at night. The herder lives in a tent or shanty, and a very solitary life it is. He is generally provisioned for a month, and visited about once a week. There is no doubt that this solitary life is bad. I have been told by medical men that in the lunatic asylums there are in proportion more herders than any other class. As a rule they are men who have not much of what the American calls "get up and get," but have generally broken down in other things they have tried. There are, however, many exceptions to the rule, and in this country one must not take every man to be what he looks at first sight. I recollect on one occasion where I was helping a man to mark his lambs, the herder who was holding the lambs for me and had charge of the band was a young doctor, who had broken down in health by hard study, and was working as a herder to get fresh air and a few dollars. This man has now the best practice of any Medico

in one of the largest towns in California, and well he deserves the same. Sheep are sheared twice a year, early in the spring before the grass dries, (as, if the dry seed of the alfillirea—the native grass—gets into the wool, it reduces the price very much) and in the fall. After being sheared, the sheep are generally dipped, to cure the scab, from which it is almost impossible to keep them free. The dip is a trough about 20 feet long, 3 deep, and 1½ feet wide. This is filled with a particular mixture, and the sheep have to swim through it. By dipping after shearing, less of the mixture is required and no harm is done to the wool. Those who make the sheep business pay best are a class of men who are hated and detested by all ranch owners, those, namely, who travel about with their sheep, having no fixed residence; they are supposed to feed only on Government land, but as often as not they feed on private property. Most of these men are Frenchmen from the Basque provinces, born sheepmen, accustomed to a mountain country and hard usage. The life in California suits them admirably, and if they would only keep to Government ground and not steal all the sheep they can lay their hands on, they would not be regarded as the social pariahs of the country. This will be better understood when it is considered that it often requires a journey of 20 or 30 miles to get a sheriff's officer; the consequent delay and inconvenience of a prosecution are great.

Bee ranches and honey-raising may be said to have almost reached perfection in California. The four southern counties have in the last few years yielded five million pounds of honey yearly, from some five hundred bee ranches. The places usually chosen are the foothills of the mountain ranges, where the white sage is in great abundance, giving to the honey a beautiful clear colour and delicious flavour. In no country in the world is there, I should suppose, such a number and

variety of wild flowers as in these parts, and from most of these the bees procure honey.

The principal method of extracting is by the centrifugal extractor, a metal cylinder two or three feet in diameter and three feet high; in the centre of this a number of frames radiate from a spindle; in these are placed the frames containing the comb as taken from the hives, the top of the cells having been previously removed by a hot knife. The cover is then placed on the cylinder, and by means of multiplying power the frames are revolved at a very high speed, discharging all the honey from the cells. The frames with the empty comb are then returned to the hive to be refilled. The hives chiefly used are the double, the upper and lower hives being each made of eighteen inch boards, and where the honey is sold in combs the upper hive is often subdivided, as being more convenient for shipping and less liable to be broken.

The common black bee will range from three to four miles for food, but the Italian bee will go as far as five miles; the latter is much preferred, being a better worker and having a better temper. Not more than three hundred hives are kept in one camp. These can be looked after by one man when the bees are not working, but during the months of March, April, May, and June it requires one man for every hundred hives on account of the bees swarming.

In conclusion, I would state that for those who seek a delightful climate to live in, I know of none better than that of California.

For those that are willing to work there is plenty of employment, but a loafer will always have a rough time.

The days of rapid fortunes in large stock and sheep dealings are over, though there is money to be made in both, as well as in fruit raising.