

out the State; every year has seen it observed by the Native Sons, who have increased in fifteen years to 8000 members.

The New England Society of California Pioneers visited San Francisco last May, and the old men looked vainly for landmarks that they could identify in a city which has sprawled over miles of sand dunes and has neared the Golden Gate. San Francisco's growth in these forty years is typical of the enormous progress of California. Changed is the old order of mining life, gone forever the supremacy of the pioneer gold hunter with pan and rocker; but in his place is the scientific mining engineer, using machinery that is the wonder of the world; the wheat-grower, whose steam plow

turns a mile-long furrow and whose harvest hands camp at night in the vast fields over which they move; the fruit-grower, who has made the level valleys and even the steep foothills smile with fruitage of orange, lemon, fig, grape, and apricot; and, best of all, the tiller of small farm and orchard, who is proving that in this Italy of the far West may be seen the ideal country life, with work out-of-doors which refined women may share in without risk of coarsening their hands or their natures. California to-day, with its thoroughly American people, of tireless energy and equally great self-control, is the best monument to the wisdom of the pioneers who laid the foundations of its statehood.

*George Hamlin Fitch.*

## CALIFORNIANA.

### Light on the Seizure of California.

WITHIN the last few years much has been done by local historians, notably by Mr. H. H. Bancroft's collaborators, to clear up the mysteries that used to obscure the story of the seizure of California by our naval forces in 1846. The present note intends to offer one additional scrap of information bearing upon the matter. By way of introduction I shall venture to summarize, in unoriginal fashion, the now well-ascertained facts concerning the naval capture of California, leaving aside wholly any detailed discussion of evidence until I come to my one additional piece of evidence itself.

The Polk Cabinet, as is well known, planned the Mexican war for some time before it broke out. They devoted, of course, much attention to the best way of obtaining possession of the Mexican "Department of Upper California," a province which was not only very sparsely inhabited, but which also had a very loose connection with the mother country, and a very imperfect sense of loyalty to the central government, so that its seizure, whenever hostilities should break out, seemed to be no very difficult matter. In the Sacramento Valley were already a few hundred American settlers. Our recently appointed consul at Monterey, Thomas O. Larkin, a shrewd Yankee trader, who had done business on the coast for a number of years, was in intimate personal relations with several prominent public men among the Californians. He wrote frequently and voluminously to the State Department, trying to convince his official chiefs that the Californians were distracted by their own petty provincial political quarrels, that they had little feeling for the central Mexican government but jealousy or dread; and that, with some care, the land could be won away from Mexico, on the breaking out of the war, by the consent of the Californians themselves, and without bloodshed. In consequence of these representations the Cabinet instructed Commodore Sloat, in command of the Pacific squadron, to hold himself in readiness for the first news of hostilities, and then, without delay, to proceed to California, to seize Monterey and San Francisco, and to invite the Californians to change their allegiance.

Beyond the actual seizure of the defenseless ports, which his overwhelming force might be expected to accomplish without any collision of arms, he was instructed to show no violence, and to do everything in his power to conciliate the inhabitants, and to "encourage them to adopt a course of neutrality." "It is rumored," said Secretary Bancroft in one later communication, "that the province of California is well disposed to accede to friendly relations. . . . You will take such measures as will best promote the attachment of the people of California to the United States."

Meanwhile, with the same purpose in mind, the Government sent to Larkin, in October, 1845, a secret despatch, which was committed to memory by a special agent, Lieutenant Archibald Gillespie, and so carried by him across Mexico for oral delivery. A written duplicate of this despatch was sent around the Horn on one of the naval vessels bound for the Pacific. Both Gillespie's oral version of his secret instructions, as taken down from dictation at Monterey, and the duplicate afterwards received by Larkin, are now extant, and agree down to one or two very slight verbal differences. The despatch instructed Larkin and Gillespie to cooperate in an intrigue intended to win over the Californians, who, even in case the outbreak of the war should be delayed, were to be induced, if possible, to declare their independence of Mexico, and were to be assured of the support of our Government in any such action.

It is perfectly sure that the instructions of the Government in no wise contemplated or authorized any revolt of the American settlers in the Sacramento Valley against the Californians, or any employment of force beyond the already mentioned seizure of the wholly defenseless ports by Sloat upon the receipt of news of actual war. As is well known, however, Captain Fremont's exploring party was at the time of Gillespie's arrival still within the territory of California. Fremont had come during the winter, and had requested permission of the authorities at Monterey to rest his party "on the frontier of the department." A controversy which had grown up out of this request, and which had been in large measure provoked by mem-

bers of Frémont's party, had led Castro, as Prefect of Northern California, to order Frémont out of the department altogether. After considerable waiting and defiance Frémont had begun to obey the order, going northward through the Sacramento Valley. Gillespie arrived at Monterey on April 17, 1846, and after delivering his instructions to Larkin proceeded to follow up Frémont, in order to acquaint him with the Government plans, and to deliver to him private letters from the Benton family. Gillespie actually overtook Frémont in the Klamath region. This act of Gillespie's was indeed part of his official mission, but there can be no doubt that the only instructions which he had to convey to Frémont were the ones already made known to Larkin, namely, to cooperate in a peaceful intrigue for the purpose of inducing the Californians to leave the Mexican allegiance, and be ready for our formal seizure of the territory.

Frémont, however, who had his own personal interests to consider, and who had already quarreled with Castro, now unfortunately decided upon a course of action directly contrary to the instructions, trusting apparently to the nearness of the Mexican war itself to shield him against all the consequences of his disobedience. His trust was well placed; for he has ever since been popularly regarded as the chief servant of his country in the winning of California. He even induced Gillespie to cooperate with him. What they did was to return southward into the Sacramento Valley and stir up the American settlers to the well-known "Bear Flag" revolt, a movement which was brought about through flagrant misrepresentations of the purposes and hostile preparations of the Californian leaders, and which was a wholly unprovoked assault upon a peaceable people. That it led immediately to but little bloodshed was due to the fortunate fact that, before it had gone far, Sloat appeared at Monterey with news of the outbreak of war and seized the ports. Meanwhile it is certain that the whole Bear Flag affair was a distinct hindrance to the successful seizure of California, and to the later pacification of the province; and that the chief mover in this affair, in all his hostile acts up to July 7, when Sloat raised the American flag, is to be credited only with having wrought mischief, endangered American interests, and disobeyed his instructions.

Sloat, meanwhile, who had been waiting at Mazatlan for news of the outbreak of war on the Rio Grande, went through a series of experiences which have since led to numerous legends. Near him, on the Mexican coast, was the English flag-ship *Collingwood*, with Admiral Seymour on board. An understanding grew up among the American officers, either at that time or later, that Seymour was waiting, like Sloat, for news of hostilities on the Rio Grande, and that he no doubt had instructions "to take California under English protection," as the thing is usually stated, as soon as war should break out. When Seymour appeared in Monterey Bay, some two weeks later than the date of Sloat's arrival, and when after one week's stay, and after the interchange of the customary courtesies, the English flag-ship sailed away again, the tradition gained ground that there had been a "race," and that, in case Seymour had come in first, the territory of California would have passed into English possession. For this whole tradition no reasonable and truthful evidence has ever been ad-

vanced, except the actual presence of Seymour on the coast as described. Numberless are the mutually inconsistent and wholly worthless tales that have been told about incidents before, during, and after the "race." Many of these tales are ordinary family legends, narrated by relatives of this or that officer concerned. A decidedly careful examination of several of them has convinced me, as it would convince any impartial person, of their insignificance. They are usually in the most obvious conflict with known dates and with known events.

The facts themselves, so far as they are known, are as follows (compare the account written by one of H. H. Bancroft's ablest collaborators, Mr. Henry L. Oak, in Bancroft's "California," Vol. XVII. of the "History of the Pacific States," p. 205 *seq.*): Sloat heard of hostilities on the Rio Grande as early as May 17. But the commodore showed himself throughout this whole affair a timid and irresolute man, so far as concerned the fulfilment of his very explicit instructions; for he waited in entire inactivity until May 31, when he heard further news, this time of General Taylor's battles of the 8th and 9th. He then decided that this must mean that "outbreak of war" which his instructions contemplated. He accordingly wrote to Secretary Bancroft, "I have received such intelligence as I think will justify my acting upon your order — and shall sail immediately to see what can be done." Hereupon, however, Sloat actually did nothing, and remained where he was until June 5, when the news came of the capture of Matamoras. Even such startling evidence of the reality of the war only led Sloat to write on June 6 to Bancroft, "I have upon mature reflection come to the conclusion that your instructions will not justify my taking possession of California, or any hostile measures against Mexico." And, to cap the climax of this irresolution, the log of Sloat's ship, the *Savannah*, contains as the entry of the next day, "June 7.—News received of the blockade of Vera Cruz by the American squadron; at 2 P. M. got under way for Monterey."

Nor was Sloat's mind much relieved when, on July 2, he reached Monterey. Here, of course, he learned how the Bear Flag had thrown everything into confusion in the north. Both Larkin, who was perplexed by Frémont's disregard of known instructions, and Sloat, who was now looking to Larkin's instructions for new light, were for some days in doubt as to what was to be done. At length, July 7, Sloat made his decision, landed his forces, and took possession of the port. The seizure of San Francisco Bay and the occupation of several points in the interior immediately followed. Commodore Stockton, arriving July 15, relieved Sloat at the latter's request, and after an interview with Frémont, who reached Monterey with the "Bears" on July 19, the new naval commander decided to seize the southern towns and harbors as well, and to proceed, in as imperious and hostile a spirit as possible, to the entire subjugation of the country. The result of this new policy of official hostility to the very inhabitants whom all the American officers had been instructed to "conciliate" was the arousing of such bitterness that in the following winter a revolt occurred in the south, much unnecessary blood was spilled, and the seeds of permanent hatred between the Californians and their conquerors

were sown. But of the events later than July this note need not further treat.

We have now seen how speedily Sloat did his share of the "racing" with Seymour. It remains to examine Seymour's share in the same international contest. In favor of the supposed English scheme for the seizure of California in 1846 there is, as I have said above, no known evidence whatever, except the actual presence of Seymour on the coast. I say this after long and diligent search for such evidence, and I venture to defy any one to produce any other but legendary testimony for this favorite element in all the legends of the conquest of California. Seymour was probably on the Mexican coast to watch our fleet with special reference to the Oregon complications, whose settlement was not made known in these remote regions until a time later than this. The stories have placed the *Collingwood*, during the time of waiting for the "race," sometimes at San Blas, sometimes at Mazatlan, where she lay "alongside" Sloat's *Savannah*. Anxious to get what information I could about the *Collingwood*'s actual movements, I sometime since asked Mr. Clements R. Markham, the well-known traveler and historian, to give me further advice. He courteously took considerable trouble to aid me. Why he could do so with particular success will appear from the following letter, which, with his inclosure, I now print as my additional piece of evidence. It has before been referred to by me in an article in the "Nation," but has not before been quoted in full.

21 ECCLESTON SQUARE, S. W.  
LONDON, 20 MAY, 1887.

MY DEAR MR. ROYCE: I have just finished reading your "California." . . . I was particularly interested in the pages devoted to a discussion of Admiral Seymour's proceedings at Monterey, because, as I think I told you, I was then serving as a very young midshipman on board the *Collingwood*. I believed your conclusions to be correct; but, to make certain, I referred the matter to the present Admiral Lord Alcester, who was then Lieutenant Beauchamp Seymour, and flag-lieutenant to his uncle on board the *Collingwood*. I inclose a copy of what he has written to me on the subject, and which he says you are at liberty to make any use of you see fit.

Ever yours, very truly,

CLEMENTS R. MARKHAM.

[Inclosure.]

FROM ADMIRAL LORD ALCESTER TO MR. CLEMENTS MARKHAM.

19 MAY, 1887.

Mr. Royce . . . is perfectly correct in his surmises. There is not one word of truth in the statement to which he alludes, for I know for certain that Sir George Seymour never had orders to hoist the English flag in California, or to assume the protectorate of that dependency of Mexico in 1846, or at any other time. Neither was there a race between him and Commodore Sloat as to who would reach Monterey first. If we had wanted to precede the *Savannah* there we should not have begun by going in an opposite direction for several days. For I see by my journal that we left Mazatlan (where the *Savannah* was) on the 24th of May, 1846, arrived at San Blas, which is to the southward, on the 27th, did not leave San Blas until June 13, and arrived at Monterey on July 16. Sir George Seymour treated me with confidence on public matters, and I was completely *au fait* of all questions with which he had to deal, and of the orders he received.

We went to California to protect English commerce and interests, having heard of the proceedings of the party which hoisted the so-called "Bear Flag." As to what Sir George Seymour is suggested to have said to American naval officers as a harmless jest after dinner, it is simply impossible. Fancy him, of all men in the world, a *preux chevalier* of the old school, and who was

sobriety itself, taking American officers into his confidence and telling them what he never would have told to his own captains even.

As for what the foregoing letter proves, it must be remembered that when the *Collingwood* left Mazatlan to sail south, on May 24, news of the first hostilities had been in Sloat's hands for one week, and that when Seymour left San Blas, June 13, Sloat was already six days out of Mazatlan. It is impossible that Seymour should not have been advised of the hostilities on the Rio Grande before so late a date. Lord Alcester uses terms in his, not in our sense, when he calls the news that decided Seymour to go north news of the "Bear Flag" party. This news must have referred to the earlier quarrel of Frémont and Castro, which, of course, an English observer would not easily distinguish from the American settlers' revolt that followed.

I need hardly say in closing how much I feel indebted to Mr. Markham for this piece of information, which would have saved us many false reminiscences if it had been known to our own histories thirty or more years ago.

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

Josiah Royce.

#### The California Boundary Question in 1849.

UNDERSTANDING me to have been personally connected with the organization of the State government of California, THE CENTURY has honored me by asking whether I could furnish any fresh matter "from the inside" relating to that important event.

My connection with it was simply as a delegate from San Francisco to the Constitutional Convention held at Monterey in July, 1849, under a proclamation issued by Brigadier-General Riley, U. S. A., the acting governor of California. Most of the important debates were in committee of the whole, in which I usually presided as chairman, and, in that capacity, I had the honor of putting the question on the clause prohibiting "slavery or involuntary servitude" in the new State, and of announcing a unanimous vote in its favor. Some of the delegates were from Southern States; but Dr. William M. Gwin, from Mississippi, under whose guidance they evidently acted, and who had openly proclaimed his intention of being elected a United States senator from the new State, was too shrewd a politician to risk, by a pro-slavery vote of himself or of his friends, a defeat in his senatorial campaign. A decided majority of the people on whose votes he depended had come from Northern States, and would presumably oppose the admission of slavery.

I regret to state that, owing to the constant pressure of professional business in San Francisco from 1848 to 1853, I had no time or opportunity to inform myself as to any of those "inside" facts and influences that go to make up *l'histoire inédite* of every important political event; but I recollect distinctly one incident which, though in some degree personal to myself, may be thought to be not devoid of interest.

It was in the last days of the Convention. Every clause of the constitution had been fully debated and agreed to in committee of the whole and reported to the Convention, where the entire constitution had been read twice and finally adopted on the third reading.

But a terrible blunder had been committed. California, as part of the territory of Mexico, extended to