

and he deposited it in his bullet pouch; but subsequently finding it in his way in approaching a band of buffaloes, he thoughtlessly threw it away. The following year, when at Santa Fé, he was emptying his pouch, and among its contents several bright particles which had become detached from the rock attracted the attention of the Mexicans. These were carefully gathered up, and after examination proved to be virgin gold. The old trapper on his return sought for the source of the treasure, but was unable to find it.

John Hawken, an adventurous and daring trapper with whom I became intimately acquainted, told me that seven years before he was trapping with a companion upon Salt River, about one hundred and twenty miles above its mouth, which empties into the Gila after its confluence with the San Francisco,

below the Pino village. While there they fell in with a party of Apaches, with one of whom they traded for a parcel of yellow metal which he called *oro*, and which he told them he obtained at a place half a day's travel from where they were and where he said there was *mucho*; but he did not specify further, for the other Indians threatened to kill him if he revealed the locality or made any further disclosures. This being the first native gold Hawken had seen, he was not sure of its identity; but on the opinion of his companion, who had seen it before, they took it with them to Taos, and it proved to be nine dollars in value of pure gold.

We heard here very extravagant accounts of the gold brought from California by those returning from there; some, as they said, having come back with mule loads of the dust.

*Micajah McGehee.*

## CALIFORNIANA.

**Montgomery and Frémont: New Documents on the Bear Flag Affair.**

THERE have lately been put into my hands by the editor of THE CENTURY certain original documents of decided importance for the history of the seizure of California. I have been asked to examine these and to summarize a portion of their contents, a thing which I the more readily do because they serve to set in a clearer light than heretofore the honorable conduct of an officer whose part in the seizure of California was a difficult and delicate one, and who himself did his duty so well and so modestly that he has in the past altogether escaped the celebrity that has fallen to the lot of other persons surely not more deserving. This officer, Commander (afterward Rear-Admiral) John B. Montgomery, was in 1846 in command of the United States ship *Portsmouth*. His ship visited California in 1845; returned in October to the southern Mexican coast; was at Mazatlan October 16, 1845, and at Guaymas December 2; and returned again to California, under Sloat's orders, in the spring of 1846. The purpose of her coming was to inquire into the alarming reports that had gone southward concerning the quarrel of March between Frémont and Castro. She reached Monterey towards the end of April, later passing on to San Francisco; and she lay in the harbor of San Francisco until after the raising of the American flag at that port on July 9, a date two days later than the seizure of Monterey. Montgomery's stay at San Francisco thus covered the entire time of the Bear Flag episode. From him Captain Frémont obtained, through Lieutenant Gillespie, supplies to enable him "to continue his explorations" and to accomplish his other peaceful duties during that now famous affair. To him, in fact, Captain Frémont also wrote, as he himself declares in his letter to Senator Benton of July 25, 1846 (see Frémont's "Memoirs," p. 546), "describing to him fully my position and intentions, in order that he might not unwittingly commit himself in

affording me other than such assistance as his instructions would authorize him naturally to offer an officer charged with an important public duty; or, in fine, to any citizen of the United States." To Montgomery also General Vallejo appealed by messenger after the Bear Flag men had made the general their prisoner. From Montgomery Castro demanded an account of what the Bear Flag meant, and of what part the United States Government had therein; and meanwhile the Bear Flag men themselves were begging him for counsel and encouragement; and every officer on board the *Portsmouth* was longing for the coming of Sloat and for the end of this tedious attitude of neutrality. In this trying position Montgomery kept his head, and did his duty with a firmness that the documents before me put in a very clear light. These documents are, (1) extracts from Montgomery's private diary, (2) copies of the official correspondence of the commander, with letters to and from Larkin, Frémont, Castro, Gillespie, and others. Of these letters some have previously been known, through the papers of Consul Larkin, and otherwise. Several are also printed in Frémont's "Memoirs," although the aforesaid letter of Captain Frémont to Montgomery, "describing to him fully my position and intentions," has been, as I believe, heretofore unknown, and furnishes the most characteristic and interesting addition to our previous knowledge that is contained among these papers.

There is space here for only a very brief account of the substance of the extracts from Montgomery's diary. The earlier extracts concern the visit to California in 1845. At Monterey, Montgomery interviewed Consul Larkin, and "learned from him that American interests were perfectly secure, and little probability of their being interrupted in any way unless by a war with Mexico." There was indeed some talk between the two concerning the supposed English designs upon California, and Larkin told Montgomery of a reported subsidy that was to be paid by England to Mexico for

the support of the new troops that were to be sent to California. These rumors, to be sure, have long been known to students of this period of California history. It is interesting to find that both Larkin and Montgomery at the moment believed them; although there is indeed little evidence for their truth, and although Montgomery learned of no very authoritative source for them. In October, Montgomery, then at Acapulco, notes the failure of the Mexican plan to send troops to California, a failure which he attributes to "the supineness of the Government and want of funds." It is certain that whatever the English intrigues of those days may have been with regard to California, one in vain looks for evidence of any decisive movement of any sort resulting from them. On April 23, 1846, Montgomery, then just arrived at Monterey, received information from Larkin "that the commercial and other interests of the United States continued safe, having experienced no interruption or annoyance since our visit in October last." As the quarrel of March between Frémont and Castro was now a matter of very recent history, and as Montgomery had come especially to find out about it, one reads this statement with some surprise, but finds the explanation in words which follow a little later, in the same entry of the diary, after a brief statement of the nature of the March quarrel itself: "It is here well understood that no real attack upon the camp of Captain Frémont was contemplated by General Castro when he directed this movement, but that it was done with the view only of furnishing materials for forming a high-sounding, flaming despatch to the central government of Mexico." "Mr. Larkin informed me," continues Montgomery, "that the unsettled condition of California seems to point to a necessity, and naturally produces in the public mind an expectation, of a speedy political change of some kind; and that the feeling is rife that California is soon to be governed by England or the United States, predilections being divided." The diary adds that, in Larkin's opinion, the native and Mexican population of the country would find a "change under either" England or the United States "acceptable," and that if the war with Mexico should come to pass there would be no great trouble in securing the prize for our own flag. On April 29 Montgomery is "informed by the consul that General Castro is troubled with suspicions of collusion between Captain Frémont and myself, and supposes that I have sent for him to return to Monterey." On May 4 Lieutenants Bartlett and Wilson, having returned from an excursion into the interior, tell Montgomery of their pleasant reception, and say that both American residents in the vicinity of San José, and "many of the most intelligent Mexicans and Californians," "express openly their desire" for the coming of our flag, and "fearlessly speak of it" as an event "which is near at hand." Montgomery himself adds the expression of his belief in the growing chances of an easy occupation of the land. His own social relations with Castro continued good during all this time. May 9 he attended a large picnic given by Castro himself, and May 15 Castro was a guest at a ball given on shore by the wardroom officers of the *Portsmouth*. Castro's military preparations, which still continued, are correctly interpreted by Montgomery as having in the main relation to the feud between

the Commandante General and Governor Pio Pico. Rumors of Frémont's expected return continued.

We now come, however, to more exciting events. June 7 finds Montgomery in San Francisco Bay. Gillespie has just arrived, on his return from the north, bringing a requisition from Captain Frémont for supplies. Frémont himself has come back to the Sacramento Valley. His party is "nearly destitute," as appears from the letter written by Gillespie, and copied in the "Correspondence" which accompanies the diary. Gillespie's mission to the bay, and his success in getting supplies for Frémont from Montgomery, have always been known matters of our history. It is also known, from a letter summarized in my "California" (p. 106), that Gillespie represented to non-official residents at the bay that the purpose of Frémont in asking for supplies was solely to equip his party for setting out at once on his return overland. It has, however, never before been absolutely sure that Montgomery received no hint from Gillespie of Frémont's real intentions in asking for this aid. H. H. Bancroft, in Vol. V. of his "California," p. 127, can only say: "I know of no reason to suppose that Montgomery was informed by Gillespie of the revolutionary project on foot." The present papers, both diary and correspondence, put it beyond doubt that Montgomery had *no* notion of the coming outbreak. He honored in perfectly good faith the topographical engineers' requisition for necessary supplies for his scientific expedition, and on June 11 despatched the ship's launch with the desired stores. On the way up the river, on the very first day of the launch's journey, Gillespie heard of the capture of Arce's horses by the settlers, an act with which, as is known, the Bear Flag affair was begun. A hastily penciled note from him (here copied) gave the first information to Montgomery of what was afoot; but Gillespie had no intention of revealing as yet Frémont's connection with the undertaking. In the postscript to his note Gillespie writes: "I am of the opinion that the settlers have obtained decided proof of Castro's intention to have their crops burned to warrant the course they have pursued. The bearer hereof says he heard a messenger to Captain Sutter state that they had acted under advice from Captain Frémont. If such is the fact, which I very much doubt, there is positive cause for hostility on the part of the settlers." In his diary Montgomery now gives, between the 15th and the 18th of June, an interesting account of his earliest relations with the Sonoma insurgents and with their opponents. These four days were very full of news and excitement. Montgomery fully believed the settlers to be acting upon their own responsibility. His private sympathies were altogether with them. They were his countrymen, newcomers in a distant land, exposed to hardship, and now, as he thought, threatened with oppression. He believed, naturally enough, the reports which were freely circulated as to Castro's designs against them, although he knew too much to regard Castro as a very formidable foe to anybody. But meanwhile he valued the honor of his flag, and he knew the duties of a neutral. He could sympathize with the insurgents; but he could not give them aid. With an indignation which must seem to us quite pathetic, he defended Frémont, as a fellow-officer under the flag, from the fierce accusations of Castro, who wrote from Santa Clara on June 17 demanding from

the commander an explanation of Frémont's conduct. Castro pointed out that the captain of the surveying expedition, "without the formalities established among civilized nations," had invaded the country and seized Sonoma. Montgomery replied (June 18), in a tone of absolute assurance, that Frémont's expedition was solely scientific in its aims, and that it was "in no manner whatever, either by authority of the United States Government or otherwise, connected with the political movement of residents of the country at Sonoma." For Castro to assert that such a connection existed was, so Montgomery retorted, "to impugn the integrity of the United States Government." It was his turn, he suggested, to demand explanations when his flag was by implication thus dishonored. But alas for Montgomery's sincere and genuine indignation on behalf of his brother officer! Ten days later, June 28, the diary mentions a second visit of Gillespie, bringing the news that Frémont had openly joined the Bears, and was in pursuit of Torre in the San Rafael region. "This course of Captain Frémont," says Montgomery in his private diary, "renders my position as a neutral peculiarly delicate and difficult. Having avowed not only my own but Captain Frémont's entire neutrality and non-interference in the existing difficulties in the country, it can scarcely be supposed, under the circumstances, that I shall be regarded as having spoken in good faith and sincerity." In fact, as one sees, Montgomery learned that under certain circumstances one may expose his country's honor to only the more reproach by chivalrously offering his own honor in defense of his brethren in the service.

The mission of Lieutenant Misroon, whom Montgomery despatched to Sonoma as neutral and mediator, occupies considerable place in these records; as do also other well-known public incidents of those days. But there remain still two important topics upon which these documents give significant testimony. With the mention of these I must close.

First: It has always been doubtful, I believe, when the first news of the actual hostilities on the Rio Grande reached Frémont. What we have known heretofore is that Sloat at Mazatlan was informed of the beginning of active hostilities by a message that reached him May 17, and that a letter, which he at once wrote to Larkin, reached Monterey by the *Cyane* on June 19, nearly a week after the seizure of Sonoma. Up to this time Frémont himself had avoided an open union with the Bears. He had taken charge of Vallejo and the other prisoners first taken. But he had remained quiet. Yet, on the 21st, he was already making preparations to leave Sutter's Fort with his party, and on the 25th he reached Sonoma. It is, of course, interesting to learn whether the openness of Frémont's hostile proceedings from this time forth could have been due to any fresh assurance that actual war was under way on the Atlantic coast. Professor William Carey Jones, in an article recently written in defense of Frémont's conduct during the early part of the seizure of California,<sup>1</sup> has endeavored to make probable an earlier date for Frémont's knowledge of the hostilities on the Rio Grande than had generally been supposed likely. The present documents do not bear out his view. It appears

<sup>1</sup> See "Proceedings of the California Historical Association," Vol. 1, p. 1. Professor Jones's somewhat original interpretation of the relations between Montgomery and Frémont is almost entirely set aside by these new documents.

that, on June 20, both Larkin himself and Captain Mervine, of the *Cyane*, wrote to Montgomery from Monterey. Their two letters, written the day after the *Cyane's* arrival, together inform Montgomery that Sloat is on his way northward, and, without directly mentioning the outbreak of hostilities, speak of "important news," that "cannot be revealed," but of whose nature Montgomery shall before long be "apprised." This guarded tone was very tormenting to Montgomery, whose neutral position was daily growing more intolerable. As late as June 26 he still believed Frémont to be as neutral in conduct as himself, and so on the latter day he wrote to Frémont, transmitting the contents of Larkin's letter, as being the whole of his news. This letter, with other despatches, was sent to Frémont at Sutter's Fort under care of Lieutenant Bartlett. When Bartlett reached the fort Frémont was already with the Bears. The letter, therefore, went on to Sonoma, and was acknowledged by Frémont as late as July 5 as something new, and, as regards the facts about Sloat, very interesting. When one adds that Montgomery, writing on July 2 to Mervine, and begging for more information, says emphatically, "We have been completely cut off from all information from below [*i. e.*, from Mexico] since the 1st of April last" [*i. e.*, since Montgomery's own departure from the south], one sees the great improbability that before July 1 any one north of Monterey knew more than the little that Larkin and Mervine chose to reveal to Montgomery, and to one or two other of Larkin's confidants. And this little did *not* include information of the actual hostilities.

The second and final matter of which I spoke above is contained in the text of Frémont's letter to Montgomery, written upon the reception of the supplies brought by the launch. The letter is dated "New Helvetia," June 16, and, taken in connection with all the circumstances of the moment, it forms one of the most interesting confessions that Frémont ever chose to make of his position at the moment of his entrance upon hostilities. It will be remembered that, according to Frémont's own statement to Benton, this letter was to "describe fully" his own "position and intentions"; that it was written especially for the guidance of Montgomery, who had just shown the greatest willingness to aid the leader of the scientific exploration by every means in his power; that it was prepared after the settlers had begun, under Frémont's advice, their movement for independence; and finally, that it was written but a very few days before Frémont started to join the Bears at Sonoma. The moment was a critical one. Frémont has since asserted that he acted upon special instructions. In his "Memoirs" (p. 520) he speaks of this very time as the one when he decided "that it was," as he says, "for me rather to govern events than to be governed by them." Under these circumstances, to write to Montgomery as follows is to furnish the best possible comment upon one's own conduct. The sentence italicized in the following copy of this letter has in Montgomery's record but one word italicized, viz.: the word *active* in the phrase "such active and precautionary measures." I print it thus here in order that it may be set side by side in the curious reader's mind with other and later accounts that General Frémont has given

of his instructions. Otherwise the letter appears unchanged.

NEW HELVETIA, CALIFORNIA,  
June 16, 1846.

SIR: I had the gratification to receive on the 6th your letter of the 3d inst.; and the farther gratification to receive yesterday by the hands of Lieutenant Hunter your favor of the 10th conveying to me assurances of your disposition to do anything within the scope of your instructions to facilitate the public service in which I am engaged. In acknowledging the receipt of the stores with which you have supplied us, I beg you to receive the earnest thanks of myself and party for the prompt and active kindness, which we are all in a condition fully to appreciate. My time to-day has been so constantly engrossed that I could make no opportunity to write, and as it is now nearly midnight you will permit me to refer you to Lieutenant Hunter for an account of the condition of the country, which will doubtless have much interest for you. The people here have made some movements with the view of establishing a settled and stable government, which may give security to their persons and property. This evening I was interrupted in a note to yourself by the arrival of General Vallejo and other officers, who had been taken prisoners and insisted upon surrendering to me. The people and authorities of the country persist in connecting with me every movement of the foreigners, and I am hourly in expectation of the approach of General Castro. My position has consequently become a difficult one. The unexpected hostility which has been exercised towards us on the part of the military authorities of California has entirely deranged the plan of our survey and frustrated my intention of examining the Colorado of the Gulf of California, which was one of the principal objects of this expedition. The suffering to which my party would be unavoidably exposed at this advanced period of the year, by deprivation of water during intervals of three and four days, renders any movement in that direction impracticable.

It is therefore my present intention to abandon the farther prosecution of our exploration and proceed immediately across the mountainous country to the eastward in the direction of the head-waters of the Arkansas River, and thence to the frontier of Missouri, where I expect to arrive early in September. In order to recruit my animals and arrange my equipage for a long journey, I shall necessarily be compelled to remain here until about the 1st of July. In the mean time should anything be attempted against me, I cannot, consistently with my own feelings and respect for the national character of the duty in which I am engaged, permit a repetition of the recent insults we have received from General Castro. If, therefore, any hostile movements are made in this direction, I will most assuredly meet or anticipate them; and with such intentions I am regulating my conduct to the people here. *The nature of my instructions and the peaceful nature of our operations do not contemplate any active hostility on my part even in the event of war between the two countries; and therefore, although I am resolved to take such active and precautionary measures as I shall judge necessary for our safety, I am not authorized to ask from you any other than such assistance as, without incurring yourself unusual responsibility, you would feel at liberty to afford me.* Such an emergency could not have been anticipated in any instructions; but, between Indians on the one hand and a hostile people on the other, I trust that our government will not severely censure any efforts to which we may be driven in defense of our lives and character.

In this condition of things I can only then urgently request that you will remain with the *Portsmouth* in the Bay of San Francisco, where your presence will operate strongly to check proceedings against us; and I would feel much more security in my position should you judge it advisable to keep open a communication with me by means of your boats. In this way you would receive the earliest information, and you might possibly spare us the aid of one of your surgeons, in case of accident here. Repeating my thanks for the assistance you have rendered us, and regretting my inability to visit you on board the *Portsmouth*, I am, sir, very respectfully,

Your obed. servant,

(Signed) J. C. FRÉMONT,  
Bt. Capt. Topl. Engineers, U. S. Army.

CAPT. JNO. B. MONTGOMERY,  
U. S. Ship *Portsmouth*,  
BAY OF SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA.

The italicized sentence excludes the possibility that Frémont's instructions had the warlike nature which he has since attributed to them. In those days his only intent was to pretend that he was in danger from Castro.

These papers also contain the record of Montgomery's admirable conduct of the later blockade of Mazatlan, an affair which yet further tried his skill and his excellent discretion. The whole series of documents is a very instructive one, and I should be glad to see them all in print.

Josiah Royce.

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

### Three Gold Dust Stories.

HOW CALIFORNIA GOLD WAS SENT TO BOSTON IN 1841.

IN 1834 I was compelled, like Dana, by an affection of the eyes, to leave my class in Harvard College, which I had just entered, among whose members were James Russell Lowell, W. W. Story, the late General Devens, and others, and, after a few years of unavailing treatment, was ordered as a last resort to a tropical clime. In 1838, just after my class was graduated, I embarked from my native city of Boston for a voyage of six months round the Horn to the Hawaiian Islands, then but little known, where I lived for twenty years.

The foreign trade of Honolulu at that time consisted of cargoes from China, the regular fall ship from Boston, occasional vessels from Oregon, Australia, Mexican and South American ports, and in furnishing supplies to the large fleet of whale-ships which came to the islands to refit. The California vessels, many of which belonged to Honolulu firms, brought hides, tallow, horses, and lumber, which were exchanged for general merchandise.

In 1841 the firm of Peirce & Brewer, with which I was afterwards connected, received from Thomas O. Larkin, the well-known merchant and United States Consul at Monterey, then the capital of the province, a remittance of what he averred to be gold dust, weighing, if I remember rightly, about one hundred ounces, which he wished us to send by first opportunity to Boston, to be sold for his account. He had bought it of an Indian, who told him that Indians often found small quantities of this placer or flake gold, which they were required by the Mexican officers to deliver to them, as belonging to the Government. They were especially forbidden to dispose of it to any of the few foreigners living on the coast.

The export of gold and silver was prohibited, the small amount in the country being insufficient for its uses. Cargoes of goods were always bartered for hides, which passed at two dollars each, at which rate they were cheerfully exchanged for Yankee notions which cost from fifty to seventy-five cents in Boston.

All vessels, before obtaining a permit to trade along the coast, had to go to a Mexican port of entry, enter the cargo, and pay the heavy duties imposed. To evade the payment of these duties, which were almost prohibitory, many a shrewd game was resorted to by these keen traders. One of these was to send a vessel to Honolulu, or elsewhere, for a full cargo of merchandise, while her consort would go with her own cargo to the coast, enter, pay whatever duties could not be