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History of California. By THEODORE H. HITTELL. Vols. III. and IV. (San Francisco : N. J. Stone and Co. 1897. Pp. 981, 858.)

THE earlier volumes of Mr. Theodore Hittell's *History of California* covered the period preceding the admission of the state into the Union. The present volumes conclude the entire work, extend their story as far as the death of Governor Bartlett, in 1887, and deal with the periods of the early mining life, the great Vigilance Committee, the political struggles before the war, and the industrial and political developments since the war.

The disposition of the extensive material is substantially as follows :— Book VIII. of the whole work, with which the third volume opens, discusses, in fourteen chapters, covering some 330 pages, the “Early Mining Life.” In this book, Chapter I. gives a general account of the methods and conditions of the early stages of placer mining life ; Chapters II. and III. give some of the annals of the “northern mines ;” Chapter IV. is devoted in a similar way to the “southern mines ;” and Chapter V. tells some of the stories of the early gold excitement, with their attendant “results.” Hereupon, the chapters from the sixth to the ninth, inclusive, portray the social conditions and general “characteristics” of the early miners, at considerable length, the treatment being based upon those countless anecdotes, as well as more or less contemporaneous reports, which memory and travellers’ and pioneers’ narratives have preserved, in one form or another, until now. The development of miners’ law, the struggle for organization, the varieties of Lynch law, and, finally, the first large Vigilance Committee of San Francisco, in 1851, occupy Chapters X. to XIV., and conclude Book VIII.

Book IX. is devoted to the “Progress of San Francisco.” After four chapters on the very rapid development that occurred between 1850 and 1854, Chapters V. and VI. of this book discuss the commercial calamities of 1854-55 ; and Chapter VII. begins the often-told tale of the Vigilance Committee of 1856. The story of the great committee then continues through Chapter XIV., to the close of the Book (p. 649 of the volume).

Book X. deals with a more miscellaneous collection of topics, under the head of “State Growth.” The United States Land Commission of 1851 for the settlement of the titles of Mexican origin, the early squatters, the various “anti-foreigner” movements ; the filibusters (especially the famous Nicaragua filibuster Walker) ; the early visits to Humboldt Bay and to Yosemite ; the early stages of agriculture ; and the Indian wars (including events as late as the Modoc war of 1873), here together fill fourteen chapters, extending to page 981, and so closing the volume.

The fourth and final volume of the whole work contains Books XI. and XII., and is devoted to the political history of the state. This volume begins once more with the admission of California into the Union, and with the administration of the first governor, Peter Burnett. The titles of the chapters of both books of this volume are usually furnished by the

names of the successive governors ; but an exception is made in the case of the famous politician and senator Broderick, who was killed by Terry in the noted duel in 1859, and in the case of the Pacific Railroads and of the new constitution of 1879. These topics receive treatment in chapters with special titles.

Of the two volumes here in question, the third is of most interest to the general student of American history, although there are also various episodes in the fourth volume which have a decidedly general national interest. For example, the career of Broderick and his famous rivalry with Gwin are, from any point of view, notable incidents of the period of ante-bellum politics ; the forces that kept California in the Union during the war must interest every student of the fortunes of the Republic at that time ; the completion of the first Pacific Railroad, and the rather unexpected social and economic sequel of that enterprise, are matters of national importance ; and the story of the struggles that led to the new constitution of 1879, including the annals of the "Sand Lots," must form a part of the complete history of our more recent social processes in this country. Mr. Hittell's work has no very dangerous rival as an extensive and careful portrayal of just these matters, so far as he has found material accessible. The early history of the province of California has been more extensively, and on the whole somewhat better told in the volumes prepared under the general direction of Mr. H. H. Bancroft than in Mr. Hittell's first two volumes of his California history. But for the period since the admission of California, the Pacific Coast histories of Mr. Bancroft's well-known series are much more unequal in character and far less scholarly than the earlier volumes ; and any one who wants to be clear as to the basis upon which statements bearing upon California matters since 1850 are to rest, will, in this portion of the field, hereafter consult Mr. Hittell, until the whole material has received some new presentation. And Mr. Hittell's advantage rather grows the later down his chapters come in the story.

Meanwhile the general student will easily find Mr. Hittell's treatment too diffuse, his style colorless, and open to a good many literary objections, and his method not precisely the ideal one for a local history. For the method is one that runs to seemingly endless detail, and that uses too few summaries, and too few general points of view. But the defects do not prevent these volumes from being, for their purpose, a really admirable product of labor and devotion. They are often rough-hewn and uneven. Trivial facts or reports stand side by side with serious matters. There is a frequent lack of perspective. But Mr. Hittell makes the most studious efforts to be impartial, to avoid hero-worship, to subordinate his obvious and intense local patriotism to a purely objective concern for the truth, to keep clear of all unnecessary controversy, to be thorough-going, and even (what is hardest of all for the local historian) to be just to the relative importance of the various branches of his complex subject. It is in this last respect that, as just pointed out, he is especially open to criticism, but his efforts, at least, are constant and ob-

vious. The general disposition of the materials, as just sketched, will seem at first sight, no doubt, to any student unacquainted with California, unnecessarily awkward. For why, one may say, should Volume IV. begin afresh with the admission of the state, when Volume III. has brought the story of social conditions and of Indian wars down to such comparatively recent dates? Yet, as a fact, the disposition in question is in its general outlines only too natural, in view of a certain rather unhappy divorce between the social and the political life of the state—a divorce which long characterized just this community. The miner and the politician, the Vigilance Committee man and the governor of the state, the filibuster, the squatter and the warrior with Indians,—all these are products of California whose fortunes and whose interests were for a long time far too independent of one another. The awkwardness of the story is in so far really due to the essential awkwardness and waywardness of the life portrayed. Government and society long lived, as it were, in two connected, but far too independent worlds.

As for a very few details, that may serve to guide a reader's interest in these volumes:—The sketch of the social conditions of the early mining-camp life is still rather disappointingly at the mercy of mere anecdotes. The actual factors and forces at work are rather imperfectly analyzed. After all that has been written upon the topic, one regrets to find the material so little reduced to a definitely classified and orderly form, and still so much left in the region of mere gossip. The land troubles are dealt with in a judicial spirit, and upon some matters, such as the pueblo claims at San Francisco, Mr. Hittell preserves his independence of judgment in despite of the decision of the courts. The very extensive and minute narrative of the great Vigilance Committee of 1856 takes account of all the latest materials, and maintains the traditional Californian view of the affair with great coolness and skill, and even with more fairness of tone towards some of the opponents of the Committee than one sometimes finds. As for the relation of California to the breaking-out of the Civil War, one is indeed again disappointed to find that Mr. Hittell, after all his opportunities to collect material, has so little that is new to say, although what he says is indeed obvious and sensible enough so far as it goes. There must surely be material in existence, in regard to this crisis in California, which would repay a careful monographic study. The account of the "Sand-Lot" and of the new constitution of 1879 is almost provokingly dispassionate, as well as almost wholly free from the sociological observations that would be, in these days, natural enough. In fact, Mr. Hittell's self-restraint as to all matters of generalization, here as elsewhere, seems to go too far; for he shows a practised judgment whenever he chooses to express himself in more general fashion; and his few summaries, where they occur, are always welcome.

Extensive sections of these volumes will have only a local interest; but the state of California, in any shape, deserves the careful attention of the student of American history. These volumes close with a copious index to the whole work.

JOSIAH ROYCE.