

DISCOVERY OF GOLD IN CALIFORNIA

THE *Century Magazine*, for February, contains a very instructive article entitled, "The Discovery of Gold in California," written by John S. Hittell. Accompanying the article are narratives by Charles B. Gillespie and E. C. Kemble. Mr. Gillespie furnishes an account of the discovery as related by Mr. Marshall, the chief figure in the narrative, while Kemble confirms it by his account.

In the summer of 1847 the number of United States citizens in California did not exceed two thousand. The most prominent man was John A. Sutter. He was a native of Baden, Germany, but a citizen of the United States by naturalization in Missouri. Though in 1847 by naturalization also a Mexican, yet he was looked on as an American. He settled, in 1839, at the head of navigation on the Sacramento river. Here he built a structure which afterwards became known as Sutter's Fort. He was invested with official authority by Mexican Governors. But he was always regarded as the friend of Americans.

In 1847 Sutter conceived the idea of building a flour mill and a saw mill. Around the Fort at that time was a man named James W. Marshall, a native of New Jersey. On the 27th of August an agreement was made between Sutter and Marshall to build the mill. The latter to erect and superintend the work, the former to furnish the supplies. The place selected for the saw mill was Coloma, 45 miles from the Fort.

At this time several members of the "Mormon" battalion arrived at Fort Sutter. This battalion was first organized at the Missouri River, then marched overland, and garrisoned San Diego where, on July 16, it was disbanded. The members who now arrived at the Fort were on their way to Salt Lake. Sutter hired a number of them to work on his mills about the 14th of September, 1847. The names of the "Mormons" who dug the head and tail race of the saw mill were Alexander Stephens, James S. Brown, James Barger, William Johnston, Azariah Smith, Henry W. Bigler, all of the battalion. There were three others not "Mormons," named Wimmer, Scott and Bennett.

John S. Hittell says in his article:

"The first record of the discovery, and the only one made on the day of its occurrence, was in the diary of Henry W. Bigler, one of the Mormon laborers at the mill. He was an American by birth, then a young man, and now a respected citizen of St. George, Utah. He was in the habit of keeping a regular record of his notable observations and experiences, selecting topics for remark with creditable judgment. His journal kept during

his service in the Mormon Battalion and his subsequent stay in California is one of the valuable historical documents of the State. On the 24th of January, 1848, in the evening, Bigler wrote in his diary, 'This day some kind of metal was found, in the tail-race that looks like gold.'

The page of Bigler's diary on which the entry of the 24th is made, is reproduced in fac simile in the *Century* article. The words, "first discovered by James Marshall, the boss of the mill," are interpolated and written after the entry mentioned above. The *Century* writer says that Bigler himself made the interpolation. If so, some explanation should be published from him.

In 1856 Marshall published a letter stating that he had discovered gold at Coloma about the 19th of January, 1848. A second letter written by him in 1857 states that the discovery took place on the 18th, 19th or 20th. In 1870 his biography was published, and that fixes the discovery on the 19th. This latter date was looked on as the precise day of the discovery until 1886, when the diary of Bigler was examined. That was compared with the diary of Azariah Smith, another member of the Mormon Battalion, and also with Sutter's diary, and it became quite clear that the 24th was the true day. John S. Hittell settled this point, and was the first to publish it in January, 1886. One fact is beyond question, that Bigler made the first record of the event, and on the very day.

Tyler's History of the Mormon Battalion has the following paragraph:

"On or about the 24th of January, 1848, water was turned into the race above the saw-mill. The race was found good, but the water, in leaving the head of the flume and reaching the head of the tail race, having considerable fall, washed a hole near the base of the building. Being turned off, Superintendent Marshall went below to see what effect the wash was likely to have. While thus examining, his eyes caught sight of yellow shining metal, which he picked up, not knowing what it was, but believed it to be gold. An assay proved his conjecture correct. The nuggets were in value from 25 cents to five dollars each."

Hittell and Tyler both concur in saying that Marshall was the real discoverer of gold. Brother Bigler is yet alive, and he must have a vivid remembrance of such an important occurrence as the discovery of gold. He had the intelligence and industry to keep a diary in his youth. Such a man's narrative is worth something. In the interest of truthful history he should speak.

This discovery had an important influence on the world. Hittell says:

"But Marshall's find did not limit its great influences to our continent. It aroused and stimulated industrial activity in all the leading nations. It profoundly agitated all the countries of South America. It shook Europe and Asia. It

caused the first large migration of the Chinese across the Pacific. It opened Japan to the traffic of Christendom. It threw a belt of steam around the globe. It educated Hargraves, and taught him where to find and how to open up the gold deposits of Australia. It built the Panama railroad. It brought the Pacific Ocean within the domain of active commerce. Directly and indirectly it added \$3,500,000,000 to the stock of the precious metals, and by giving the distribution of this vast sum to the English speaking nations added much to their great industrial and intellectual influence."

And with this great event of modern times, the history of the "Mormon" people will forever be identified. The shovel of the humble "Mormon" has led to the production of greater wealth than the sword of Cyrus who conquered Croesus, and subjugated Lydia and Babylon, yes, and greater than that obtained by Alexander in Persia, by Cortez in Mexico and Pizarro in Peru.

The gold yield of California in 1848 was \$5,000,000, in 1849 \$23,000,000, in 1850 \$50,000,000, in 1853 \$83,900,000, when it reached its zenith. The yield averages now \$12,000,000 annually. The gold yield altogether for the past forty-one years is estimated at \$1,200,000,000. But California is not dependent on gold for its prosperity. Its agricultural interests are now its mainstay.

THE SILENT FORCE OF TRUTH.

AN exchange, which is published in the interest of working people, and called *The Remedy*, has the annexed pointed paragraph:

"Freedom will not come until the people unite; but the people, until they know what they unite for, and they will never know that, never will unite, until they fully learn certain grand truths. Political parties cannot unite them—old parties nor new parties. Trades Unions cannot unite them. Knights of Labor cannot unite them. Alliances and confederations cannot unite them, for parties and organizations have power only as they have truth. It is the power of truth, and that only, that can ever unite the people—nothing else. Yet few men really understand this. Good men who will freely spend days and dollars to organize, to build, and to make a noise and a show, will very grudgingly spend minutes and cents to quietly spread the truth. As yet men know little of the silent irresistible power of truth, and in their ignorance make little use of it."

There have been a great many foolish and mistaken notions expressed concerning the influence that unites the "Mormon" people. We admit they are not as united as they ought to be, all things considered. But there is a cohesive force among them that is potent and marked, and is generally recognized. What is it? The common answer is "The power of the Priesthood." This, in the sense in which it is uttered, is a most egregious mistake.

The influence that unites the "Mormons" is the spirit of truth. It is a