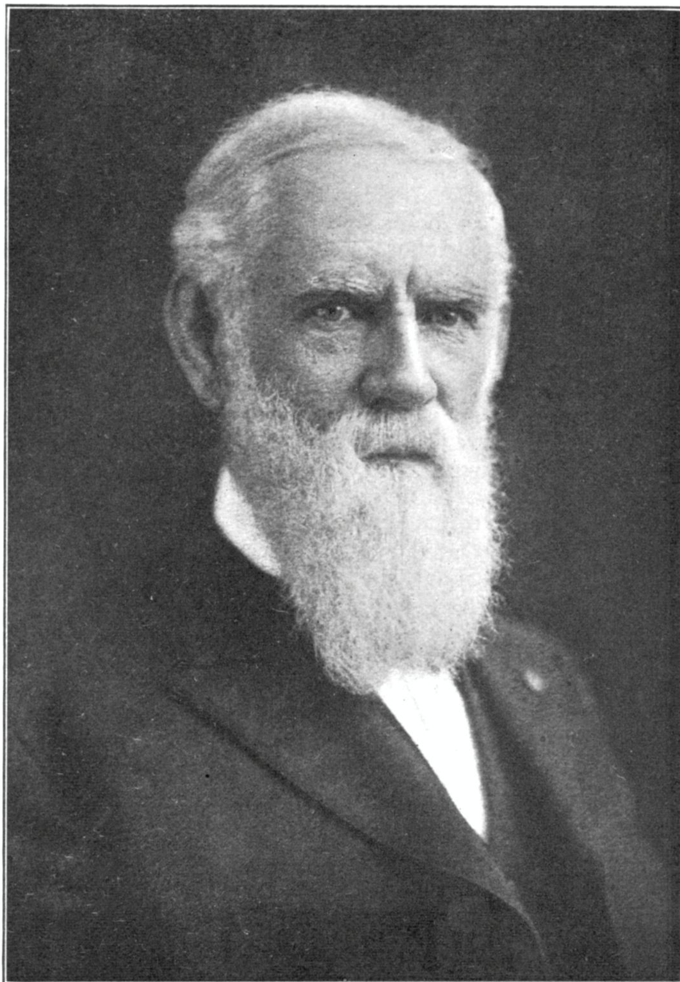

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CALIFORNIA UNDER THE RULE OF SPAIN AND MEXICO.

BY J. M. GUINN.

California, generally speaking, is regarded as a new country, and our eastern friends are accustomed to refer to it as "Out West"—a term significant of recent settlement. Yet in point of discovery California ranks among the earliest made on the North American continent, and in time of settlement it antedates all the other States west of the Alleghany Mountains except four.

What was named by the Spaniards Alta California was discovered by Cabrillo in 1542—fifty years almost to a day after the discovery of the New World by Columbus.

Our easy victory over the Spaniards in our recent war with them, in which we wrested from Spain the last vestage of her former vast possessions in America, has bred in us a contempt for the Spanish soldier and sailor; and in our overmastering Anglo-Saxon conceit we are inclined to consider our race the conservator of enterprise, adventure and martial valor, while on the other hand we regard the Spanish Celt as lacking in energy, deficient in enterprise and destitute of courage; and yet there was a time when these race conditions seemingly were reversed. There was a time when the Spaniards were the most enterprising, the most adventurous and the bravest of the nations of Europe.

A hundred years before our Pilgrim Fathers landed on Plymouth Rock, Spain had flourishing colonies in America. Eighty-five years before the first cabin was built in Jamestown, Cortez had conquered and made tributary to the Spanish crown the empire of Mexico, a country more populous and many times larger than Spain herself. Ninety years before the Dutch had planted the germ of a settlement on Manhattan Island—the site of the future commercial metropolis of the New World—Pizarro, the swineherd of Truxillo, with a handful of adventurors had conquered Peru, the richest, most populous and most civilized empire of America. In less than fifty years after the discovery of America, Balboa crossed the Isthmus of Panama, discovered the Pacific Ocean, and took possession of it for the Spanish crown; Magellan, sailing through the straits that still bear his name and across the wide Pacific, circumnavigated the globe; Cabeza de Vaca, with three companions, after nine years' wandering among savage tribes, crossed the continent overland from the Atlantic to the Pacific; Coronado, searching for the fabled Seven Cities of Cibola and the mythical Quivera, penetrated the

interior of the North American continent to the plains of Kansas; and Cabrillo, the discoverer of Alta California, explored the Pacific Coast of North America to the 44th parallel of north latitude; and all these discoveries had been made by the Spaniards in fifty years. Was there ever a half century in the world's history so crowded with mighty events? Was there ever a people more daring?

While the English and the French were cautiously feeling their way along the North Atlantic coast of America and taking possession of a few bays and harbors, the Spaniards had possessed themselves of all of the South American continent and more than one-third of the habitable portion of the North American.

When we consider the clumsy and imperfect arms with which they made their conquests, and the lumbering and unseaworthy ships in which they explored unknown seas, we are surprised at their success and astonished at their enterprise and their daring.

The ships of Cabrillo were but little better than floating tubs—square rigged, high decked, broad bottomed, they sailed almost equally well with broadside as with keel to the wave. Even the famous galleons of Spain compared with the ships of today were caricatures of maritime architecture—huge, clumsy, round-sterned vessels with bulwarks four feet thick and built up at stem and stern like castles. Whether in storm or fair weather, they rocked and rolled continually.

Nor were storms and shipwrecks on unknown seas the mariner's greatest dread, nor were they his deadliest enemies. That fearful scourge of the high seas, the dreaded escorbuto or scurvy, always made its appearance on long voyages, and sometimes exterminated the entire ship's crew.

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Two hundred and twenty-seven years have passed since that autumn day when Cabrillo, the discoverer, sailed into San Diego Bay. In all the centuries that have gone by since that eventful day, California has remained a terra incognita—an unknown land.

Out beyond the Channel Islands, freighted with the wealth of "Ormus and of Ind," year after year the Manila galleons sailed down the coast on their return voyages. Storm-tossed and scurvy-scourged, there was no harbor of refuge prepared for them on the California coast. The kings and nobles of Spain must revel in luxury and there was no money to spare from the royal treasury to explore an unknown coast when the only return might be the saving of sailors' lives.

For two centuries and a half Spain has held her vast colonial possessions in America, but her grasp is loosening. As the years have gone by, defeat and disaster have come upon her and she has

fallen from her high estate. Her power on sea and land has weakened. Those brave old sea kings, Drake, Hawkins and Frobisher, have destroyed her Invincible Armada and burned her ships in her very harbors. English and Dutch privateers have preyed upon her commerce on the high seas, and buccaneers have robbed her treasure ships and devastated her settlements on the islands and the Spanish Main; while freebooters of many nations have time and again captured her Manila galleons and ravished her colonies on the Pacific Coast.

The bravery, the energy and the enterprise that had been a marked characteristic of her people in the days of Cortez and Pizarro were ebbing away. The immense wealth that flowed into her coffers from her American possessions engendered habits of lavish expenditure and official corruption among her rulers, demoralized her army and prostrated her industries. While her kings and nobles were reveling in luxury, her poor were crying for bread. Proscriptive laws, religious intolerance and haunting fear of her Holy Inquisition had driven into exile many of her most enterprising and most intelligent people.

These baneful influences had palsied the bravery and spirit of adventure that had been marked characteristics of the Spaniards in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Other nations stood ready to take advantage of Spain's decadence. Her olden-time enemy, England, who had gained in power as Spain had lost, was ever on the alert to take advantage of her weakness; and another power, Russia, almost unknown among the nations of Europe when Spain was in her prime, was threatening her possessions in Alta California. To hold this vast country it must be colonized, but her restrictions on commerce and her proscriptive laws against foreigners had shut the door to her colonial possessions against colonists from other nations. Her sparse settlements in Mexico could spare no settlers. The native inhabitants of Alta California must be converted to Christianity and made into citizens. Poor material indeed were these degraded savages for Christians or citizens, but Spain's needs were pressing and missionary zeal was powerful. The scheme for the occupation and colonization of Alta California was to be jointly the work of the Church and the State—of the Sword and the Cross. The State was to send its soldiers to protect the missionaries while engaged in the work of conversion, and punish the natives when they rebelled. The church, besides converting the natives, was to train them to habits of industry, teach them to be self-supporting and fit them for citizenship.

Early in 1769 two ships were dispatched from ports in Lower California to San Diego, which had been selected as the initial point for beginning the work of conversion, and two land expeditions

began their march from Loreto to San Diego. With the second land expedition came Gaspar Portola, the Governor of the Territory, and Father Junipero Serra, the President of the Missions.

On the 16th day of July, 1769, the first mission, San Diego de Alcalá, was founded; and during the same year Governor Portola explored the country as far north as the Bay of San Francisco, which his expedition discovered and named.

During the fifty-two years of Spanish domination in California, *i. e.,* from 1769 to 1821, twenty missions were established, four presidios or military posts built, and three pueblos or towns founded. The chain of missions extended from San Diego to San Francisco. Into these the coast Indians were gathered, either by persuasion or by force. They were taught the religious observances of the Catholic Church and were trained to labor. Little or no attempt was made to educate the native converts. A few of the brightest were taught to sing in the mission choirs, but the great mass of the neophytes, after three generations of mission training, were as ignorant of book learning as were their ancestors who gathered acorns for food in oak forests of the California foothills.

Under Spanish domination in California the missions were all powerful. From San Diego to San Francisco they absorbed all the best land between the Coast Range and the sea. There was but little left for settlers. A colonist could not obtain a grant of land if the padres of the nearest mission objected.

Few forms of land monopoly have ever exceeded that of the mission system of California. Take, for example, the San Gabriel Mission. At the zenith of its power it controlled 24 ranchos, containing about a million and a half acres of the most fertile land in California. San Gabriel Mission reached its highest neophyte population in 1817. It then had 1701 Indians under its control. Its average neophyte population for the first three decades of the past century, when it was most prosperous, was about 1500. It took a thousand acres of fertile land to support an Indian—even the smallest papoose of the mission flock. It is not strange that the people clamored for a subdivision of the mission estates.

The three pueblos established in California under Spanish rule were San Jose, founded in 1777; Los Angeles, or to give it its full title, El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora La Reina de Los Angeles. The town of our Lady the Queen of the Angels founded in 1781, and Branciforte, founded in 1797. The growth of these pueblos or agricultural colonies, which they really were, was slow. Exclusive of the soldiers the white population of California in the year 1800 did not exceed six hundred souls, although three decades had passed since the first settlement was made. The people lived in the most primitive manner. There was no commerce and no man-

facturing, except some coarse cloth and a few crude articles made at the missions. The houses were adobe huts roofed with tule thatch. The floors were the beaten earth and the scant furniture home-made. There was a scarcity of cloth for clothing. Padre Salazar relates that when he was at the Mission San Gabriel in 1795, a man who had a thousand horses and cattle in proportion came there to beg cloth for a shirt, for none could be had at the pueblo of Los Angeles, nor at the presidio of Santa Barbara.

Hermanagildo Sal, the commandante of San Francisco, writing to a lady friend at Monterey in 1799 says, "I send you by the wife of the pensioner, Jose Barbo, one piece of cotton goods and an ounce of sewing silk. There are no combs and I have no hope of receiving any for three years." Think of waiting three years for a comb. What a blessing to be a bald headed man in those primitive days.

John Gilroy, the first English speaking resident of California, says at the time of his arrival (1814), there was not a saw mill, whip saw or spoked wheel in California. Such lumber as was used was cut with an axe. Chairs, tables and wood floors were not to be found except in the governor's house. Plates were rare unless that name could be applied to the brick tiles used instead. Money was a rarity. There were no stores and no merchandise to sell. There was no employment for a laborer. The neophytes did all the work and all the business of the country was in the hands of the friars. They were supreme. They had everything their own way. The government and the military were expected to do whatever the frairs requested. The missions contained all the wealth of the country.

Wheat, barley and beans, the chief agricultural products, had no market. Nearly everything consumed by the people was produced at home. There was no foreign trade. Here was socialism exemplified,—there was no capitalistic class to rail at; no monopolies to dissolve, and no trusts to burst.

Centuries of oppression at length drove the native born inhabitants of Mexico and the South American provinces to revolt. The offices of honor and profit in church and state were filled by natives of Spain. These treated the mixed bloods of American birth with contempt and cruelty. Even the child of pure Spanish ancestry born in America was regarded as an inferior to the child who first saw the light of day in the Mother Country—Spain. As Spain declined in power the hatred to the Spanish aristocrats increased among the natives of Mexico.

On the 15th of September, 1810, the patriot priest Miguel Hidalgo, a creol by birth, raised the standard of revolt and struck the first blow for Mexican independence. He soon found himself at the

head of a motley army, undisciplined and poorly armed, but its numbers swept away all opposition. Over-confidence brought reverses, and the patriot army met a crushing defeat at the bridge of Calderon.

Hidalgo was captured and shot. Though suppressed for a time the cause of independence was not lost. For eleven years a fratricidal war was waged—cruel, bloody and devastating. Alende, Aldama, Moreles, Mina, Rayon and other patriot leaders met their death on the field of battle or were captured and shot as rebels.

Through the long and bitter struggle for Mexican independence the people of California remained loyal to the Spanish crown, although through Napoleonic wars and the political upheavals that shook the mother country, Spain, they must at time have been in doubt who was wearing that crown. Sola, the Spanish born governor of California, was bitterly opposed to the revolution—even going so far as to threaten death to any one who dared to utter a word in its favor. The mission friars were loyal to Spain. The success of the republican cause in Mexico meant the downfall of their domination in California. They hated republican ideas and regarded their dissemination as a crime. Under Spanish rule they were the ruling power in California.

In September, 1821, under the leadership of Agustin de Iturbede, who had been a royalist general but who had deserted that cause and joined forces with those of the brave old patriot, Guerrereo, who in its darkest hour had sustained the flickering light of the revolution—the cause of Mexican independence was won at last. The government of the country did not pass at once from monarchy to republicanism. There was an interregnum of empire. In an outburst of enthusiasm among the soldiers and common people, congress was forced to elect Iturbede, emperor. He was crowned with the imposing title of His Most Serene Majesty, Agustin I, by Divine Providence and by the Congress of the Nation first Constitutional Emperor of Mexico."

The people of California, isolated from the world and seemingly forgotten during the long years of intermittent war in Mexico have heard rumors of a change of government but of what nature the change has been they do not know. In the waning days of September, 1822, a vessel floating a strange flag cast anchor in the bay of Monterey. The gunners at the old Castillo trained their pieces on her and the drummer at the presidio beat to arms, but her mission is a peaceful one. A pompous personage bearing a strange flag comes ashore. He announces himself as a commisionado of his imperial majesty Agustin I. Emperor of Mexico, and comes to command the allegiance of the Californians to the empire.

The troops are assembled; the flag of Spain—the flag of Castile

and Leon—with all its old time glories, that for half a century had floated over California, is lowered and in its place floats the imperial banner of Mexico. It is greeted with salutes of artillery and shouts of Viva el Emperor Agustin I. A few months pass and another change comes. The emperor proving himself unfit to rule an unruly people is deposed and banished to Italy, returning he is declared an enemy to the republic and shot as a traitor. The flag of the empire is lowered and the tri-colored banner of the republic waves over the palacio of the governor. In the short space of a twelve month the inhabitants of California have successively been the citizens of a monarchy, an empire, and a republic, and have pledged their allegiance to three different flags. Governor Sola, from a most extreme Spanish loyalist, has been transformed into a Mexican republican.

The transition from the rule of a monarchy to that of a republic at first brought but little change to the people of California. The missions were still all powerful. The revolution had not shorn them of their perogatives nor of their possessions, but the Republican government of Mexico had in keeping for them a day of reckoning. The war of the revolution had engendered in the Mexican patriots a bitter hatred to the gachapines or tories—Spanish loyalists. The frairs were nearly all Spanish born and had been loyal to the Spanish crown throughout the revolution, most of them had refused to take the oath of allegiance to the Republic, and some had been banished from the country.

The neophyte population of the missions was steadily declining. The sanitary conditions at them were bad and the death rate high. In some of them as high as seventy per cent of the children died in infancy. In the mission at San Fernando during its existence as a mission, 1,367 Indian children were baptised—of these 965 died in childhood—leaving only 400 to grow up to maturity. The birth rate at the missions never equalled the death rate and when the gentiles or wild Indians could not be brought into the missions their population began to decline. Even without secularization the decline from the high death rate would have depopulated them in a few decades.

In 1834-35 the Mexican Government enforced its decree of secularization. The neophytes were colonized in pueblos on the mission lands—given the right of citizenship and a share of the personal property of the mission to which they belonged. The pueblo scheme was a failure. The Indians had never been taught self reliance or self control. They had always been worked under masters, their industry was enforced. Left to themselves they were incapable of the management of property. They wasted their substance and then flocked to the towns and became the pariahs of society. They sank

lower and lower in dissipation until their excesses put an end to their existence. A few fled to the mountains and joined the wild Indians there and became expert horse thieves. These were shot on sight like wild beasts by the rancheros, whose horses they stole.

What became of the vast mission estates? As the cattle were killed off of the different ranchos of the mission demains, settlers petitioned the Ayuntamientos for grants. If upon investigation it was found the land asked for was vacant the petition was referred to the governor for his approval. In this way the mission lands passed into private hands. The mission padres had no title to the lands—they held them in trust for the Indians, when that trust ended the lands reverted to the public domain. California improved more in wealth and population between 1836 and 1846 than in the previous fifty years. Secularization was destruction to the missions, but it was beneficial to the country at large.

After the inauguration of a republican form of government in Mexico some of the most burdensome restrictions on foreign commerce were removed. The Mexican congress of 1824, enacted a colonization law which was quite liberal. Under it foreigners could obtain land from the public domain. The Roman Catholic religion was the state religion and a foreigner before he could become a permanent resident of the country, acquire property or marry was required to be baptized and embrace the doctrines of that church. After the Mexican Congress repealed the restrictive laws against foreign commerce a profitable trade grew up between the New England ship owners and the Californians.

Ships called hide dróghers were fitted out in Boston with assorted cargoes suitable for the California trade. Making the voyage by way of Cape Horn they reached California,—stopping at the various ports along the coast they exchanged their stocks of goods and Yankee notions for hides and tallow. It took from two to three years to make a voyage to California and return to Boston, but the profits on the goods sold and on the hides received in exchange were so large that these ventures paid handsomely. The arrival of a hide drógher, with its department store cargo was heralded from San Diego to San Francisco. It broke the monotony of existence, gave the people something new to talk about and stirred them up as nothing else could do unless possibly a revolution.

"On the arrival of a new vessel from the United States," says Robinson in his Life in California, "every man, woman and boy and girl took a proportionate share of interest as to the qualities of her cargo. If the first inquired for rice, sugar or tobacco, the latter asked for prints, silks and satins; and if the boy wanted a Wilson jack knife, the girl hoped that there might be some satin ribbons for her. Thus the whole population hailed with eagerness an ar-

rival. Even the Indian in his unsophisticated style asked for Pañas, Colorados and Abalaris—red handkerchiefs and beads.

When the ship's cargo was sold, or rather, exchanged, the hold was filled with dried hides for the New England market. Cattle then were slaughtered for their hides and tallow. The meat was left for the Indians and coyotes.

As I have said before, the transition from monarchy to republicanism made but little change in the people of California at first, but as the years passed and their commerce increased and immigration drifted in more enlightened views prevailed. The restraint in which church and state had held them in the days of Spain's domination relaxed, or rather were loosened, by themselves. With increasing independence came the desire to have a voice in their own government. The population was largely native born and the most active and progressive men among them were of the hijos del pais—sons of the soil.

Mexico ignored the claims of these men to political preferment and sent her broken-down politicians and generals out of a job to California to fill the offices of profit and trust. These Mexican dictators, as the native sons called them, brought with them a staff of place hunters who were greedy for the spoils of office and insolent and overbearing to the people. All this was hard to bear. The natives resented this affront put upon them and revolutions followed.

Callow historians have seized upon the fact of the numerous political uprisings of the Californians as a proof that they were unfit to govern themselves, and thus attempt to justify the seizure of the country by the United States. Commodore Stockton, in his proclamation to the people at the time of the first conquest, excuses his usurpation of the governorship of the territory by denouncing Castro as a usurper because he aided in driving out of the country the Mexican-born Governor Micheltorena.

These historians forget that our own Revolution was brought about by the tyranny of the royal governors sent over by England to govern the colonies. During the twenty-five years that California was under the rule of Mexico only one native son was made Governor without a revolution, and that was Arguello, who was appointed under the empire. Castro, Alvarado and Pico, native sons, secured their appointments to the governorship by driving out of the country the Mexican dictators who held that office. These revolutions were for the most part bloodless affairs. The aggregate loss in killed and wounded in the half a dozen so-called battles would not equal the loss of life of a single encounter between Kentucky feudists.

It is perhaps useless to speculate upon what might have been the destiny of California had not the United States acquired it,

partly by conquest and partly by purchase, sixty years ago. It is not probable that in all the years since then Mexico would have continued to hold possession of it. Some one of the nations of Europe—England, France or Russia—that have been chronically afflicted with land hunger would long since have snapped the tempting morsel from her weakening grasp.

It is both pleasing and profitable for us, its inhabitants, to contemplate what California is and has been to the Union. Eliminate from the wealth of the country the billion of dollars in gold from her mines that in the past sixty years California has poured into the treasury of the nation and the marts of trade; take away, too, the income from such an investment and you would turn back the hands on the dial plate of our civilization half a century.

Eliminate from the map of our country all of the territory south of the 40th parallel and west of the Rocky Mountains down to the Mexican line, and turn it over to a foreign nation, and you would cripple our people in peace and war and put a ban on our progress that would be insurmountable. Yet all this vast territory came to us with our acquisition of California. No State in the Union has done more for the progress and prosperity of the nation than ours, and yet no people in all of the commonwealths of the Union are so ashamed of their history as are the Californians. There is not, to my knowledge, a State or Territory, except California, but what exxpends from its public funds money to support a State Historical Society—to collect and preserve its history, to perpetuate the name and fame of its pioneers.