# NEW PUBLICATIONS.

## FREMONT AND CALIFORNIA.

In "A Memorial and Biographical History of the Coast Counties of Central California" (the Lewis Publishing Company, Chicago), edited by Henry D. Barrows and Luther A. Ingersoll, the former takes occasion on coming to Monterey County to explain the acts of John C. Fremont at the time when the Territory was passing from the possession of Mexico to that of the United States. Mr. Barrows is convinced that the adverse criticisms of Professor Royce and others are unjust. He insists that whether Fremont acted wisely or not, his intentions were thoroughly patriotic. It is pointed out that Fremont obtained from Senator Benton his views as to the importance of opening communication with Oregon and the other portions of the Western country which were then held by the United States. The opinions of Benton, though perhaps in advance of his time, were justified by the events.

In 1845, when Fremont, then a captain, entered California with a party of engineers on his way to Oregon, he went at once to Monterey. Through the good offices of Thomas O. Larkin, United States Consul, he obtained permission to recruit his exhausted men and animals in the valley of the San Joaquin. At first there was apparently not the slightest objection on the part of the Mexican authorities to the presence of the Americans. Nevertheless, it was well known on both sides that war was to be expected in the near future, and it was suspected that Great Britain might attempt to secure the debt due her bankers from Mexico by seizing California. Fremont, in conversing with Larkin, naturally made himself acquainted with the state of feeling on the coast among both the Americans and the Mexicans. The country had been for some time undergoing a process that already made it more American than Mexican, and the American residents, it is acknowledged, were far from reluctant to express their wishes for transfer to the United States. While Mr. Barrows points out that Fremont may have been too outspoken in his sympathy with the American element of the population, and intimates that the Bear Flag episode was indiscreet, yet he shows that Fremont was right in expecting orders from Washington to co-operate with the naval forces of the United States in case of war. If his acts affected the progress of affairs, they at least only hastened a result that was inevitable. But the free movements of himself and his party about the country awoke the suspicions of the Mexicans, and on March 7, 1846, he received a peremptory notice to withdraw from the Territory. To enforce this demand, the prefect, General Castro, hastily gathered a force of three or four hundred men, and Fremont, fearing attack, fortified a position on Gabilan Mountain, and on March 10, finding that the danger was past, began his march to Oregon.

Fremont himself denied that he committed any act of hostility or impropriety on this occasion, but he also acknowledged that appearances against the United States were strong, and a fight would have compromised the Government at Washington. The time on the Coast was not one of delicate diplomacy, but of passionate feelings, and Fremont's care and moderation at the moment when restraint must have been most difficult outweighs whatever indiscretions of speech or act he had committed before.

"Confessions of a Convict," edited by Julian Hawthorne and published by Rufus C. Hartranft, Philadelphia, is a collection of anecdotes and reminiscences made by a former convict in Auburn prison, who is a stenographer. Mr. Hawthorne in his preface to the book avers that "No. 19,759," as the author was known in prison, if justice had been done would never have been in a position to write such a book. But whoever he may be, he tells little about himself, unless his descriptions of the treatment of prisoners and like matters be considered personal. He is the listener and the looker-on at the play daily re-enacted, but with incessant changes, before his eyes. Others are the actors—for example, "Jimmy" Hope, the bank burglar, and a certain ex-banker who will doubtless be easily identified, and numerous others who are known by strange nicknames. What a study in pessimism the book is! How the shady side looks at what is supposed to be the bright and honest side of life comes out clearly in these pages. The "crook" has his points of honor and his criticisms on the people who are not crooked seem apt at times, and always amusing. One would think all the good men were in prison to read the confession of Hope, the burglar. Mr. Hawthorne makes no mistake when he calls attention to this character as an admirable one for fiction. He has education, manners, self-restraint, a knowledge of the world; and the stories he has to tell lose nothing at his hands. One might almost suspect that a good literary man was spoiled when he went into business as a bank burglar. After showing on their own testimony that convicts are a commendable class of people, the book ends, as it should in fairness, with a glance at the other side. "Crooks" may be fair with each other, but it must be quite clear even to those who send them flowers that they are at war with the rest of the world. Hope's reminiscences and those of others include some famous names from the shady side of New-York; for instance, those of Heenan and John Morrissey and Mrs. Mandelbaum. The tales in which these personages figure make one think about those rough, unsightly hillocks which inside were all fairy show and glitter. The fairy show turned out always to be a very vulgar make-believe.

Other aspects of the shady life of the metropolis are presented in a story by Maurice M. Minton, "The Road of the Rough" (The Illustrated American Series). The novel exemplifies the homely proverb about the habit chickens have of coming home to roost. The sins of a man's youth find him out, and he is punished in his own person and in the person of others whom he would gladly shield. The theme is not a new one, and a cynical person wonders what need there is of repeating a sermon as old as humanity, and one which is never heeded. Still it must be said that Mr. Minton tells his story with earnestness.

Mr. R. L. Stevenson has been talking with a New-Zealander on literature and the reading of young people who want to cultivate literary style. He commends all these young people to read aloud. "Too many of us," he said, "read by the eye, but the man who means to write must, whether he articulates or not, read everything by the ear. In short, as a musician reads score and can hear harmony, so the literary man, even when skimming with the eye, must be able to hear all the uttered words." Mr. Stevenson declared that he was a tremendous believer in the classics, and added: "I have the more cause to be so because, although I am in the position of Shakespeare—I have little Latin and less Greek—yet the benefit which I owe to my little Latin is inconceivable. It not only helps one to arrive at the value of words, but you must remember that we are only the decayed fragments of the Roman Empire from which we have all that we value ourselves upon, and I always believe we can never be so well employed as in endeavoring to understand as well as we can the original meaning of that system of things in whose ruins we live. In the second place the Latin language, of which I profess myself a devotee, is so extraordinarily different from our own, and is capable of suggesting such extraordinary and enchanting effects, that it gives a man spur and wings to his fancy."

It is worth while, perhaps, to quote a few other sentences from this successful author's rambling advice to the budding New-Zealand writer. "If a young man," he said, "wishes to learn to write English he should read everything. I qualify that by excluding the whole of the present century in a body. People will read all that is worth reading out of that for their own fun. If they read the seventeenth century and the eighteenth century; if they read Shakespeare and Thomas Browne, and Jeremy Taylor and Dryden's prose and Samuel Johnson—and, I suppose, Addison, though I never read him myself—and browse about in all the authors of those two centuries, they will get the finest course of literature there is. Those are the two extremes. What we have tried to do in this century is to find a middle road between the two extremes, mostly and usually by being more slovenly. I have only one leather in my cap," continued Mr. Stevenson, reflectively, after a slight pause, "and that is, I am not a sloven. I am in my dress," he continued with a smile, glancing at his easy-fitting smoking jacket and slippers, "but that is another matter. I mean in my style, and too many of us are slovens just now.

"I should be frightened," Mr. Stevenson went on to say, "to tell any young man to read Carlyle. I was afraid to read him when I was young, because I felt he cast a sort of spell upon me that might be called possession, and I was afraid of becoming a mere echo. Your students should certainly read Ruskin—for choice I would have them read 'Arrows of the Chase.' I would have them read Scott—but I wish you could put down my expression when I say this; it would save a good deal of explanation. He was undoubtedly slovenly. He makes me long to box his ears—God bless him!—but to a luminous and striking degree he is free from the faults that many of us possess. I would also like them to read Hazlitt—there's a lot of style in Hazlitt. I would like them—it is curious how I come round to people who are not particularly stylists—I think it is very well worth while to read Napier. His 'History of the Peninsular War' seems to me a fine, solide piece of work. I suppose it might do them good to read Pater's 'Studies of the Renaissance.' It is an extreme of a kind and had a huge influence on me when it was first published. I think it is always wholesome to read Leslie Stephen. I would recommend them to read George Saintsbury. These two last writers would give them short cuts, but they must read the books they read about."

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There is lots of good sense in this letter, and I am proud to have elicited it. There is, of course, a grain of sarcasm in the expression "other gift enterprises," but I take it that that was a mere lapsus pennae. But my correspondent don't quite understand that every reader who sends me his address, as he has done, gets a book, and a very good book, too. The coupon plan might accomplish the same thing, but it would not secure to me such delightful letters. No, I shall pursue my present plan, and I shall keep all the letters I get, be they many or few, and every writer will get a copy of "A Familiar Talk on Business Education." Address as before, S. S. PACKARD, 101 East 23d-st., New-York.

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