

that a fire has destroyed most of San Francisco and that the majority of the merchants in the city have been ruined. We have had no details as yet. If De Gaulne has been wiped out I am in grave danger of losing the four hundred dollars placed on deposit with his firm. The goods we have coming out are also placed in jeopardy—a consoling prospect to look forward to and divert us from our present trials and tribulations.

We have also heard that at Camp Murphy, in the mines south of here, the French to the number of five or six hundred and the Americans, some twelve or fifteen hundred, have had trouble, declared war, and as the result of some disagreement are fighting. We understand that the conflict threatened to assume the proportions of a civil war until the Governor of California and the French consul, Mr. Dillon, stepped in and curbed the disorder. The bitter feeling, however, still runs high.

Despite the fact that we have not heard how the trouble started, anyone who knows the quick temper, pride, and aggressiveness of the two nationalities as reflected in these particular individuals can without injustice readily imagine that both sides must have been equally guilty. This is what made the attempt at reconciliation progress so smoothly.

We hear numerous rumors about robberies perpetrated by Indians in the North as well as the South, of bloody reprisals on one side and another, and of miners killed or wounded. But the incident that made by far the deepest impression on the men along the Trinity River concerns what happened to some Canadians who are camping about twenty-five kilometers down below Big Bar. These men were the heroes of the day, the victims being their Indian neighbors.

This may have been what the two Indians whom I met on May fourth not far from our camp on the prairie were trying to tell me about, and it explains the way they acted when they thought we were going out to swell the number of their enemy.

These particular Frenchmen I have reference to were trappers by profession and, in consequence, nomads. They had come down a short time ago from Oregon. Last year while hunting in Oregon they heard of the gold discovery in California. On their way to California they prospected all the rivers and finally found the long-sought gold on the Trinity.²⁶ In 1850 they located here near the river. They have exploited and washed all the sands nearby, and have taken out fabulous amounts of gold-dust.

²⁶ See, this *Quarterly*, vol. V, p. 146, footnote.

But like anyone unaccustomed to the luxuries of life they longed to enjoy their wealth at any cost. And so they squandered it on whatever would add to their comfort and enjoyment. Having horses they think nothing of travelling one hundred leagues to purchase supplies and luxuries. In 1849 they combed the placers of Big Bar and Long Bar then moved on down the river. Now they are located near Trinity Bay where supplies can be procured more easily. There they spend their winters.

Their camp is made up of some twenty-five men and about the same number of women and children. I do not know what laws or religion they have adopted and, though there are no priests, judges, or lawyers among them, yet they all live harmoniously in one small community. And here they are born, married, and buried without benefit of clergy or the law so necessary as a rule to civilized communities. While I fail to understand it, yet such are the facts.

In all countries not under legal regulations the head of the family is absolute master of all his own goods and chattels and, among nomadic tribes, the word of the leader is law.

These Frenchmen are skilful in hunting beaver, marten, and fox, as well as larger game. Having stripped Canada, Oregon, and Northern California of this form of wealth they are now looking for some more remunerative occupation. This group, or their agents, have already scoured the country in the immediate vicinity. Beavers are rarely seen any more on the banks of the Trinity though formerly whole colonies of these mammiferous rodents were found in this locality. On my trips I have found traps especially built for them. To-day, hunted as they are, they are found only in isolated places and a Canadian considers it a rare bit of luck when he catches one. These trappers dislike the English because they are in control of Canada; they detest the Americans because they are Protestants; they abhor the Indians for being robbers. The French alone meet with their approval.

At present these French trappers are only encountered in isolated localities. Yet they are brave, energetic, loyal, and highly respected, despite their small numbers. I do not know what their religious beliefs, if they have any, are. More than likely they have none at all in view of the way they are born, marry, and die, like so many flies.

To live naturally and simply satisfies all the demands of their natures. When everything is said and done they like the simple life and would not live otherwise. Nomads as they are and habituated to living in lonely forests and remote from all evidences of civilization if they have evolved a religion and creed to suit their needs it would

be based on Catholicism. However, it would be a Catholicism of a practical nature, radical, and free of conventions and restrictions.

Unlike the Yankees they have no prejudices against caste or colour, and will marry the first woman they meet whom they fancy, making her their companion, slave, and beast of burden. These women, who are usually Indians from Canada, Oregon, or California, are referred to as their "Savages." Children born of such unions are called "Our Savages."

The presence of such rich placers in this country was not suspected until the end of last autumn when, in an effort to conceal this information, the trappers decided to winter on the river. To lay in enough supplies to make them comfortable during the winter season they sent men and mules to several villages, some going to The Springs [site of the town of Shasta] and others to Trinidad City.

Observing that their saddle-bags were full of gold-dust and nuggets and that they were very liberal in paying for what they purchased, interest was aroused and it was believed that a new El Dorado had been located. This led to a mad rush for these new placers, a rush that was destined to lead to disappointment. The Canadians, flushed with success, bought everything in sight and owing to the exorbitant prices asked they soon found they had spent most of their wealth when winter was over. This forced them to go to work again in the spring. This time, however, conditions were much less favorable for quick results, competition being heavy.

Such was their status after wintering at Canadian Camp. About this time some greedy Indians living near them stole several of their mules and horses and they immediately voted to send out a punitive expedition against these robbers. This, by the way, was led by the younger Canadians who have Indian blood in them.

Starting out heavily armed as Canadian trappers always are, they reached the outskirts of the village under suspicion, before daybreak, surrounded it, and set the huts on fire. Then, hiding in the underbrush, they shot the Indians as they ran from the flaming huts. The women and children alone were spared and managed to escape.

When a count was made fourteen victims were found lying on the ground. These heavy losses are characteristic of uncivilized countries where five men on foot equal one man on horseback in skirmishes. This nocturnal combat ended without endangering any of their own members. All the same it was a cruel retaliation and one which reflected little glory on the victors. Exultant over their victory the executioners returned to camp and celebrated by heavy drinking.

This is typical of the tales we hear around here. Add to this the