

powered by



A Freely Accessible  
Repository of Digitized  
California Newspapers from  
1846 to the Present

Californian, Number 4, 14 August 1848 — THE GOLD MINE. [ARTICLE]

## THE GOLD MINE.

A few months ago we were in the habit of speaking of the agricultural resources and the commercial qualities of California, as being the source of her greatest wealth, and although now they are not inferior to any portions of the world, the soil constitutes but a small part of her wealth, all interests having been absorbed in the working of the mines.

The present number of the "Californian" is intended for circulation abroad as well as at home, and will, by giving a minute and general view of the all absorbing topic, the gold mine, be found useful to persons to send to their distant friends. The information which we shall give, has been gathered from actual observation, and from persons who have been engaged at the mines, and from the most authentic sources, as it is desirable that the facts be correctly known through other countries, and especially through the United States.

Some time in the spring, Messrs. Marshall and Bennet, in opening a ditch for a tail race for a saw-mill, which had been built on the American Fork of the Sacramento, found some gold, which the current had collected in the bottom of the race, which, after being examined, was found to be very pure. It soon began to attract attention, and some persons discovered the gold in the river below and for some distance above, in large quantities, so much so that persons who only gave credit to one third of what was said about it left their homes and went to work in the mines. It was the work of but a few weeks, to bring almost the entire population of the territory together to pick up the precious metal. The result has been, that in less than four months, a total revolution has been effected in the prospects and the fate of Alta California. Then, the capital was in the hands of a few individuals engaged in trade and speculation, now labor has got the upper hands of capital, and the laboring men hold the great mass of the wealth of the country—the gold.

There are now about four thousand white persons, besides a number of Indians



engaged at the mines, and from the fact, that no capital is required, they are working in companies on equal shares or alone with their basket. In one part of the mine called the "dry diggings," no other implements are necessary than an ordinary sheath knife, to pick the gold from the rocks. In other parts, where the gold is washed out, the machinery is very simple, being an ordinary trough made of plank, round on the bottom, about ten feet long and two feet wide at the top, with a riddle or seive at one end to catch the larger gravel, and three or four small bars across the bottom, about half an inch high to keep the gold from going out with the dirt and water at the lower end. This machine is set upon rockers, which gives a half rotary motion to the water and dirt inside. But far the largest number use nothing but a large tin pan or an Indian basket, into which they place the dirt and shake it until the gold gets to the bottom and the dirt is carried over the side in the shape of muddy water. It is necessary in some cases, to have a crowbar, pick and shovel, but a great deal is taken up with large horns, shapen spoon fashion at the large end.

From the fact that no capital is necessary, a fair competition in labor without

the influence of capital, men who were only able to procure one month's provisions, have now thousands of dollars of the precious metal. The laboring class have now become the capitalists of the country.

As to the richness of the mine, were we to set down half the truth, it would be looked upon in other countries as a "Sinbad" story, or the history of "Alladin's Lamp," which required that its possessor should but wish, and his wishes should be accomplished. Many persons have collected in one day, of the finest grade gold, from three to eight hundred dollars, and for many days together averaged from 75 to \$150. Although this is not universal, yet the general average is so well settled, that when a man with his pan or basket does not easily gather 30 to 40 dollars in a day, he moves to another place, so that taking the general average, including the time spent in moving from place to place and in looking for better "diggings," we are of the opinion that we may safely set down an ounce of pure gold or \$16 per day to the man. Suppose there are 4000 persons at work, they will add to the aggregate wealth of the territory about 4000 ounces, or about 60,000 dollars a day.

The value of the gold, like all things else, is regulated by the demand. Four months ago, flour was sold in the market for four dollars per hundred, now sixteen; beef cattle six, now thirty; ready made clothing, grocer's and other good have not risen in the same proportion, but are at least double their original cost. If we make bread and



meat the standard by which to determine the value of the gold, then it is only worth one fourth of what it is elsewhere. But if gold and silver be the standard, then the bread and meat is worth four times what it was. But the relative value of the grain gold, compared with gold and silver coin, can only be changed by the action of government, for, however abundant the gold may be, it must produce its relative value in coin, and while a five dollar gold piece will be received in the treasury as five dollars, so long must an ounce of gold be worth sixteen dollars.

As to the future hopes of California, her course is onward, with a rapidity which will astonish the world. Her unparalleled gold mines, silver mines, iron ore and lead, with the best climate in the world, and the richest soil, will make it the garden spot of creation.

---

We call the attention of our readers to the Proclamation of Gov. Mason, on first page.

---

**LAWs.**—Governor Mason has had printed both in the English and Spanish languages, a code of laws for the better government of the territory of California—the preservation of order, and the protection of the rights of the inhabitants, during the military occupancy of the country by the U. S. forces.

---

**APPOINTMENT.**—His Excellency Governor Mason has appointed Charles V. Gillespie to be Notary Public in and for the

Notary Public in and for the  
district of San Francisco.

We acknowledge, with pleasure, our indebtedness for news, to several citizen gentlemen and military officers, all of whom will please accept our humble thanks.

The second Alcalde of the district of San Francisco, Dr. Leavenworth, we understand, will remain for the present in the discharge of the duties of his office.