

thy of remark that gold was the metal least thought of or talked of. The quicksilver mines near San Jose had long been known and worked. Other deposits of quicksilver ore were reported in all directions. Copper was discovered somewhere, saltpetre and sulphur also, a quarry of limestone was opened, and coal had been found near San Francisco, which, however, had the unfortunate quality of being incombustible. Silver also was said to have been discovered in various directions. To this metal indeed, more than to any other, was expectation directed, and people seemed to have an idea that the land was underlaid with silver ore.

The first discovery of gold was made near Sutter's Fort, thirty miles from Sacramento, or New Helvetia as it was then called, in December, 1847. But the stories told of it were too good to be credited. In March, however, the papers of San Francisco announced that "the quantity of gold taken from the mine recently found at New Helvetia was so great that it had become an article of traffic in that vicinity." In a short time the editors and others began to see the lumps of "pure virgin gold" *with their own eyes*. The "yellow fever," as it was facetiously called, then broke forth with extreme violence, and carried off the population as rapidly as means of travel could be obtained. The "Star" of May 27th, gave a most lugubrious article, dating the prosperity of the town from the occupation of the country by the United States, but averring that never within the last three years had it presented a less life-like, more barren appearance than at the present time. Stores were closed and houses left tenantless, the hum of industry silenced, and everything wore a desolate and sombre look, all being dull, monotonous and dead. Lawyers, merchants, grocers, carpenters, cartmen and cooks rushed in one motley assemblage to the mines. The few merchants who remained posted up on their stores the since familiar placard "Highest price paid here for California gold."—Such was the melancholy tone of the public press. "The unhappy consequences of this state of affairs," adds the editor, "are easily foreseen!"

The "Star" of the 3d of June announced the death of its comrade, the "Californian," by the "prevailing fever," and declared its own existence threatened by the same epidemic, which had entered the printing office and even seized the "devil." Its forebodings proved to be true, as the "California Star" did not appear above the horizon the next week. In six weeks the former paper was revived, and the Star rose again soon afterwards. The editor of the Californian, however, entered on his new life with serious misgivings, threatening in the first issue again to retreat to the mines if not sustained by the citizens. The two papers were then united, and the joint concern finally took the name of the "Alta California."

The temporary suspension of trade and business was soon followed by the most extraordinary activity. Adventurers from all nations, and merchandize of all kinds began to pour into the town, on the way to the mining region. Buildings that had been vacated were filled with newly arrived gold seekers, hurrying to the mines. Storehouses were in demand for mercantile purposes, and labor, which had been but one or two dollars a day prior to the discovery of gold, was not to be had at any price. Carpenters often refused fifteen and twenty dollars a day. Schools and churches were forgotten, and if public meetings were held, the object was to fix the value of gold dust, or to make plans for testing it. In August im-