

a basin, a handkerchief or a basket, without injury to its substance or form. As the female population increased, the costume of the men began to approach a more uniform standard, and now, even the slouch hat, which for a long while cleaved to the caputs of the old Californians, has given place to trim and formal models from Broadway or Chestnut Street.

In those days the humor of the people inclined them not in the slightest degree towards intellectual pursuits. From the multitudes of gambling and drinking houses, and the crowds that filled them, one might infer without sinning violently against truth, that drinking was a universal habit, and that gambling was the regular occupation of one half of the people, and the nightly diversion of the other half. In the progress of civilization and refinement, during the winter aforesaid, two theatres were kept in operation, and a portion of the citizens began to amuse themselves with concerts, balls, dinner parties, and military suppers.

In the winter aforesaid, Happy Valley began to figure in the world's history, and discussions were had in the papers as to the rightful claimant of the honor attached to giving it that name. "The Mission" also began to attract notice, and when, in the movement for the incorporation of the city, it was proposed to extend the city limits to embrace the Mission, sundry anti-annexation meetings were held by the denizens of that region, and a formidable opposition of a gaseous and ineffectual character was made to the union.

The first rush homeward took place in this winter. Driven from the mines by the weather, many of the most fortunate adventurers, and not a few of the most unfortunate, looked with longing hearts towards the father-land. All the tickets for the Steamers being taken, extraordinary prices were offered for them. For a steerage ticket, the original cost of which was \$150, as much as \$450 was frequently given.

The first of the series of calamitous conflagrations that have marked the history of the city, broke out on the 24th of December, 1849, about 6 o'clock, A. M. It commenced in an upper story of Dennison's Exchange, on the East of the Plaza, about where Kearny is intersected by Merchant street. From this point it spread down Washington street nearly to Montgomery, and also towards Clay street, destroying most of the houses in the block, which had been built up from street to street, with the exception of a portion of Clay street. Nearly 50 houses and stores were consumed, and the destruction of property was estimated at a million of dollars. The fire of November, 1852, broke out almost on the same spot, and burnt over a portion of the same ground, but with less destruction of property.

Early in 1850, an express wagon made its appearance in the streets. In March the pioneer milk wagon awakened certain agreeable emotions in many minds. There was also some excitement created by a threatened reduction of the price of washing—from six to four dollars a dozen.

A curious incident transpired in January, 1850, which was nothing less than the public sale of three females from Sidney, to pay their passage to this port. The transaction occurred near Clark's Point. They were sold for five months, at fifteen dollars each; the captain pocketing the money with entire satisfaction.

In March, 1850, was formed the "Strangers' Benevolent Society," for the relief of the indigent sick from all parts of the world.