

(Continued.)

HISTORICAL ADVENTURES ON THE PACIFIC COAST.*

THE SPANIARDS DISCOVER THE ENTRANCE TO THE COLUMBIA.

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Such hints as Russia had given, again stimulated the Spanish government in Mexico to attempt the permanent settlement of Upper California. Between the years 1769 and 1780 they planted eight colonies between San Diego and Santa Clara, and it is noticeable that they remained, up to the time of the American conquest, the only settlements of any importance in the whole of California. They are all known by the prefix "San" to their names, each one having a patron Saint of its own.

It was reported that the Viceroy, in ordering the settlements at different points, remarked that if St. Francis wanted one he should show them (his officers) his bay! Accordingly, when the two overland expeditions, with herds of cattle, had arrived at San Diego, to meet the supplies arriving by sea, Gaspar de Portola set out again with a colony, and cattle, for the Bay of Monterey; but marching east of the Coast Range, he passed by Monterey without seeing it, and arrived at Drake's bay, which at once received the appellation of San Francisco, and which, oddly enough, was in or about the latitude of the harbor of that name entered by one of their vessels two hundred years before. So the Saint got his settlement after all!

These Spanish settlements had a struggling existence for a dozen years or so; but finally, by the cultivation of the land around the missions and forts, and the increase of cattle, became comfortable and independent. From the stock driven from Mexico to San Diego, and from San Diego to San Francisco and Monterey, descended all those immense herds of cattle which roamed wild over the California plains seventy years later, when the first American settlers of Oregon made an expedition to the Sacramento valley for the purpose of purchasing of the Spaniards a herd to stock the Wallamet valley; and trouble enough they gave their new masters, too, who would almost as willingly be attacked by "grizzlies" as chased by "Spanish cattle," and who were compelled to teach the wild cows to be milked by tying together their hind legs, after tying their horns to the fence!

Having accomplished, after a period of two hundred years, the actual settlement of their California possessions, the Spanish authorities began once more to prosecute their enterprises to the north. In 1774 an expedition left *San Blas*, on the Mexican coast, consisting of one vessel only—the *Santiago*—officered by Ensign Juan Perez as commander, Estevan Martinez, pilot, and Friar Pena and Crespi, chaplains. Chaplains were usually also the historians of an expedition. The *Santiago* was ordered to proceed as far north as the 60th parallel, and thence to make a careful survey of the coast southward as far as Monterey. The season proving a stormy one, it was June before the expedition left Monterey, going north, and the 18th of July before land was discovered, in latitude 54 deg. Perez noted that the land extended to the south as far as the eye could reach, from this position, but terminated to the north in a high point, which he named Cape *Santa Margarita*. A range of snow-covered mountains, which he could see in the interior, were also called *Sierra de San Christoval*. The

land thus discovered is now called Queen Charlotte's Island, and the point is Cape North.

Perez did not proceed further north, but returned from here southward, and kept the shore in sight for one hundred miles, trading with the natives who came off in their boats, eager to exchange rich furs for knives, shells, or old clothing. Being driven to sea, he did not sight land again until he came into latitude 49½ deg., where a deep bay was discovered, with a high point on either side of the entrance. The description given by the chaplains is interesting, and establishes the claim of the Spanish to the first discovery of Vancouver's Island. A lively trade was carried on with the natives. Friar Pena speaks of them as having lighter complexions than the other aborigines of America, and also of their superior skill and intelligence. Their dress, like that of the Indians farther north, was of skins; but their hats were made of plaited rushes, curiously painted, and pointed at the top, where a knob was added by way of ornament, and perhaps of use also. These extinguisher hats are to be seen occasionally even to the present day, and attest the faithfulness of Pena's description.

The natives had, besides, articles made of copper and iron, a fact which greatly surprised the Spaniards, who could not learn that they had any intercourse with foreign nations. The superior skill of the Indians of that part of the coast is well known at present, and is accounted for by ethnologists on the ground that these people are the debris of the civilization of Central America, some of the arts of which, especially carving in stone or wood, they have preserved. There is certainly a strong resemblance in their language as well, though the designs used by them in carving appear quite as much Japanese as Central American. Friar Pena also gave a fair account of the bay which they had discovered, and named *Port San Lorenzo*, and which afterwards was called Nootka Sound by the English. The two capes were named respectively *Santa Clara* and *San Esteban*, both of which names are since changed.

Ensign Perez did not tarry long at this afterwards famous port, but kept on down the coast, discovering Mount Olympus, which he called *Santa Rosalie*, but not seeing the entrance to the Strait of Fuca, nor to the Columbia river. In reading the accounts of so many Spanish expeditions, the wonder is ever present that they made so few important discoveries. Probably the meanness of their outfits, and the unscientific character of their officers, must be made to account for the evident fact. Spain was then, as she is now, behind all the rest of the world in scientific knowledge; and if old Spain were so, how much more her remote Mexican provinces.

Yet, when the Viceroy had received the report of Perez, he very persistently, at least, sent out another expedition in the *Santiago*, under the command of Captain Bruno Heceta, who was accompanied by Perez as ensign. The *Santiago* was accompanied by a small vessel commanded by Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Zuidra. The vessels proceeded in company, making a landing in a small bay between 41 deg. and 42 deg., which received the name of *Port Trinidad*, and where the officers took formal possession of the country for the King of Spain. They remained nine days at this place making themselves acquainted with the natives, whose manners and customs they very well described. Leaving a cross to mark the possession of the

place, the expedition proceeded to sea again, but the winds prevented their keeping near the shore, and they did not come in sight of land until they had reached latitude 48 deg. 27 min., from which point they began to examine the shore southward, looking for the strait discovered by Fuca.

Fuca, in his report, had placed the straits between 47 deg. and 48 deg., which error misled his successors. Besides, the whole library of the *Santiago* consisted of one chart, by a French geographer, Bellin, who must have been gifted with second sight to have known any thing about the coast—and Venegas' *History of California*. One cannot help regretting that Heceta, since he came so near the strait, should not have found it. He must have been surprised as well as disappointed in the result; and though it is not the business of explorers to be governed by charts—but to make them—yet it is quite natural to look for a thing in the place where it is said to be.

But missing the object of his search was not the worst of his misfortunes. The vessels had come to anchor near the land to take on fresh water, at a place called Point Grenville on our maps, but from what happened there named by Heceta *Punta de Martires*—Point of Martyrs. Having sent seven of the men ashore in the only boat belonging to the smaller vessel, they were immediately attacked and murdered; after perpetrating which act of atrocity the Indians surrounded the schooner in canoes, and were with great difficulty prevented from boarding her. A small island near the anchorage was named *Isla de Dolores*—Isle of Sorrows—and a similar massacre occurring on the mainland opposite, twelve years afterwards, when the crew of a ship from Ostend were ashore, it was afterwards known as *Destruction Island*.

Heceta was disheartened by the loss of seven of his men, the illness of others, and also by the wretched condition of the schooner *Sonora*, commanded by Bodega, and would have returned at once to Mexico; but neither Bodega nor Perez would consent without a further effort to attain the object of the expedition, and the vessels were put on a northerly course. Before they had proceeded far, however, one of those storms that seemed always to rage on the North Pacific, separated the vessels, and Heceta, glad perhaps of an excuse, turned homeward. The first land he made was on the southwest coast of Vancouver's Island, but he failed to discover *Port San Lorenzo*, otherwise Nootka Sound. Again he came to the coast just below the Strait of Fuca, without seeing it, although looking for it.

But it is pleasant to record that, since he had so many failures, he really was the first navigator to notice the entrance to the Columbia River. Returning along the shore toward the south, when in latitude 47 deg. 17 min., he arrived, on the 15th of August, opposite an opening in the land from which rushed a current so strong as to prevent his entering it. Although believing it to be the mouth of some great river, he thought it might, perhaps, be the Strait of Fuca; therefore, he waited another day in the vicinity with the hope of making a survey of the place, but not finding it possible to enter, he reluctantly stood out to sea again. Not quite satisfied of the nature of the opening, Heceta called it *Assumption Inlet*. He also called the present Cape Disappointment, *Cape San Roque*—a name that was sometimes applied to the river, after it became pretty well fixed in the minds of navigators that a great river actually

did enter the Pacific in this latitude. A still more general name in use, was the *Great River of the West*, under which name the Columbia was known long before its waters had been seen by any discoverer. Still later, it was spoken of as the *Oregon*—but that was by overland explorers rather than navigators. The report of Heceta, preserved in the Hydrographical office at Madrid, reveals the poverty of the expedition, and relieves the commander from the suspicion of cowardice. He says: "I did not enter and anchor at this port, which in my plan I suppose to be formed by an island, notwithstanding my strong desire to do so; because, having consulted the second captain, Don Juan Perez, and the pilot, Don Christora Revilla, they insisted that I ought not to attempt it; as, if we let go the anchor, we should not have men enough to get it up, and to attend to the other operations which would thereby be rendered necessary. Considering this, and also that in order to reach the anchorage, I should be obliged to lower my long boat, (the only boat I had) and to man it with at least fourteen of the crew, as I could not manage with fewer, and also that it was then late in the day, I resolved to put out, and at the distance of three or four leagues, to lay to. I experienced heavy currents to the southwest, which made it impossible for me to enter the bay the following morning, as I was far to the leeward."

The heavy currents were the waters of the Columbia pushing his vessel to the southwest; but as he had no conception of the extensive mountain country by which so great a river could be fed, their strength puzzled as much as it baffled him. On the charts subsequently published at Mexico, the mouth of the Columbia was put down as *Heceta's Inlet*. Two weeks after this discovery, Heceta had arrived in a Mexican port; but Perez and Bodega proceeded up the coast as high as 58 deg. of latitude, naming different points on land now known as Prince of Wales Island, and southward again, naming a small bay on the California coast, *Bodega's Bay*, a name which it still retains. They then proceeded homeward, having really accomplished nothing of importance. Nothing of importance ever was accomplished by the Spanish navigators after the settlement of California, though they still struggle to maintain the dignity of the home government.

While Bodega was in the Northern seas, he bethought him of a story that had gained currency more than a century before, of an expedition that had started out from Callao, in Peru, to which reference has already been made. The story ran that Admiral Fonte, in this pursuit, had discovered a great river, which he called *Rio de los Reyes*—River of the Kings—in latitude 53 deg. north; that he ascended this river to a great lake, which, on account of its beauty, he named Lake Belle. This lake was dotted with islands of great loveliness, while its shores were inhabited by a kind and hospitable people. A town named Conasset was situated on the south shore of this lake, at which place the admiral left his vessel, and taking with him a number of his crew, ascended a river which flowed into it, called Parmentier, and which connected with another lake to the eastward. This latter lake he named Fonte, and called the strait which led from that to the Ocean on the east, the *Strait of Ranquillo*, after one of his captains.

On arriving at the eastern end of the strait, where the open sea was, (the Atlantic of course) he was told by some Indians that not far off lay a great ship, which he boarded. The only persons