

gospel to whomsoever they might find dwelling in that unknown land. After much hardship the pious missionary, Father Junipero Serra, founded a mission at San Diego in 1769. This was followed by others at later dates to the number of twenty-two. Soldiers were sent to protect the missions, and as the term of service of these expired they generally settled in the country. The power and wealth of the missions became so great that in 1824 the Mexican government began a series of hostile legislative acts, resulting, in 1845, in their complete secularization, the loss of all their power and nearly all their great wealth. By this time California had a large Mexican population, possessed the dignity of a governor, and had enjoyed the pleasure of several of those "revolutions" which seem to form such a necessary portion of Mexican political life. One year later, in 1846, California was wrested from Mexico by Lieutenant Fremont and Commodore Stockton, and became a territory of the United States. Following almost upon the heels of this great event came the discovery of gold at Sutter's mill and the great rush of adventurers to the verdant slope of the Sierras.

Gold had previously been discovered in California, but its existence in quantity was not known; or, if known at all, only to the priests, who kept it secret for fear of the consequences to their missions, a fear which subsequent events amply justified. Gold was being mined in small quantities in Southern California as early as 1828, and several discoveries were made subsequently, but no excitement prevailed, and the yield was small. No one, so far as is known, had the remotest idea of the hidden treasure in the gulches, streams and flats of the Sierras, nor of the ancient river channels and quartz lodes now so well known and so extensively worked. In 1826, Jedediah S. Smith, one of the partners of the American Fur Company, while returning from a trapping expedition through California, crossed the Sierras near Mono lake, discovering placer deposits in the mountains and carrying some of the gold dust with him to the company's rendezvous on Green river. The next year he led another party to California with the double purpose of trapping beaver and investigating the gold deposits; but his company was almost totally annihilated by Indians, first in Arizona and afterward in Oregon. In 1844, John Bidwell, since governor of California, and now a wealthy farmer living near Chico, barely escaped the honor of making known to the world the existence of gold in the mountains hemming in the Sacramento valley on the east. He was one of the few American settlers in the valley at that time, and was told by Pablo Gutierrez, one of Captain Sutter's *vaqueros*, of the probable existence of gold in the mountains. Bidwell proposed that they go on

a prospecting trip, but the Mexican said it was useless to attempt mining without a *batea*, and that it would be necessary to send to Mexico to secure the required implement. In his ignorance, Bidwell assumed that what the man told him was correct. He afterward learned that the wonderful *batea* was simply a wooden bowl, and that almost any kind of dish or pan would have served as a substitute. This was three years before the American conquest. Had Bidwell made the discovery, as he undoubtedly would have done but for the Mexican's positive assurance that nothing could be accomplished without a *batea*, the subsequent history of California might have been different. In compliance with the request of Mr. Bidwell, Gutierrez agreed to keep the matter a secret until such time as the supposed necessary implement could be secured. The next winter the Mexican came to an untimely end. The Castro rebellion was then convulsing the province, and Gutierrez was captured by Castro's men, while bearing dispatches from Sutter to Micheltoreno, and was promptly executed. With him died Bidwell's hope of finding golden riches in the mountains.

As has been said, gold was mined in Southern California for a number of years, but the Mexicans were indolent, careless and unambitious, and the great secret of the Sierras remained undiscovered by them. It remained for the energetic and adventurous, the hated and despised *Americanos* to discover and develop the great El Dorado of the Pacific. Previous to the American conquest a number of Americans had settled in the Sacramento valley, and at that critical time, with their countrymen in other portions of the state, helped Fremont and Stockton subdue the Mexicans and gain possession. The most important settlement was that of Captain John A. Sutter, near the junction of the American and Sacramento rivers, where the city of Sacramento now stands. Captain Sutter was not a native American, but was born in Baden, Germany, of Swiss parents, and secured his title in the Swiss army. He had, however, lived in the United States several years before he came to the coast, in 1838. His establishment was known as "Sutter's Fort," and was a rallying point for settlers in the valley. During the two years following the conquest, trains of immigrants added considerable numbers to the American population of California and to the settlers in the Sacramento valley. This increasing settlement was what led directly to the discovery of gold.

Among the Americans was a mechanic, James W. Marshall, who had emigrated from Missouri to Oregon in 1844, and had gone to California the next year. He took part in the conquest of the state, and at the end of the war returned to Sutter's Fort, where he