

NOMENCLATURE OF THE PACIFIC COAST.

ONE of the first things to attract the attention of tourists in the west is the polyglot nature of its nomenclature. French, Spanish, Scotch, English, American, Indian and Chinook jargon names have struggled with each other for the mastery, and in the contest have often become so confused and disjointed as to retire from the field and leave it in possession of a hybrid. The contest has left us many names of a doubtful origin, and, as now spoken and written, of no significance. English names "Frenchified," French names Anglicized, Indian and French names Americanized, abound on every hand, interspersed with purer titles of English, Scotch, French, Spanish and American origin, with not a few derived from the harsh, but expressive Chinook.

In the process of evolution, which is still going on, many names have entirely lost their original significance, and have become transformed into others possessing distinct and apparently irrelevant meanings. Thus "Cowse" creek, named after a bulbous plant of great edible value and much prized by the Indians, is now plain "Cow" creek, and is supposed by the majority of the people living along its banks to have been christened in honor of some frisky bovine of pioneer days. So long as the intensely practical and unimaginative American, with little reverence for antiquity and a high regard for the practicalities of the present, shall continue to occupy this fair land, the names of foreign origin must continue to submit to this process of evolution, though in a less degree than in the past. The extremely off-handed manner in which the early settlers of Oregon and California, especially of the latter state, dealt with the well known names of the country, must have been highly annoying to those who had been accustomed to speak them in their purity. The Argonauts of '49 in California slaughtered the Spanish names even more recklessly than did the white-wagon immigrants of Oregon the Canadian-French titles of the adjacent state. Some of the names they translated, using the synonymous English word; in other cases they preserved the spelling but changed the pronunciation, or kept the same pronunciation with a different spelling, or radically altered both; while in many instances old names were entirely discarded and new ones bestowed.

From this it will be understood why many of our geographical features have several names, and why there is not, and in the very nature of things can not be, any standard authority for either the pronunciation or orthography of many of them. They have "growned" like Topsy, and like that erratic colored maiden claim neither kin nor parentage. It will be of interest to many to know, as nearly as can be as-

certain, the origin of some of the names of most common use, the reason for their being bestowed, the process of their evolution, if such a change has taken place, and the other titles the same objects have borne in times past. In a more elaborate article, these might be classified according to their origin, but in this brief sketch they will be taken at random, and necessarily a great many will not be spoken of at all.

Let us begin with the names of the states and territories. California is a word of doubtful origin. It first appeared, so far as is now known, in a popular romance which was published in Seville, Spain, in the year 1510. It was entitled "The Sergas of Esplandian, the Son of Amadis, of Gaul," and related many wonderful adventures of that mythical person. In this book occurred the following passage: "Know that on the right hand of the Indies there is an island called California, very near the Terrestrial Paradise, which was peopled by black women, without any men among them, because they were accustomed to live after the manner of the Amazons. They were of strong and hardened bodies, of ardent courage, and of great force. The island was the strongest in the world, from its steep rocks and great cliffs. Their arms were all of gold, and so were the caparisons of the wild beasts they rode."

This exciting and popular book was universally read in Spain for many years after its publication, and no doubt did much to inflame the young cavaliers with that spirit of adventure which took so many of them to the New World in search of the fountain of perpetual youth, and mythical cities with their stores of silver, gold and precious stones, for which they searched for more than two centuries. Twenty-five years later, Cortez, having completed his bloody conquest of Mexico, and having constructed vessels on the Pacific coast of that country, dispatched an expedition in search of an island "of Amazons, or women only, abounding in pearls and gold," of which the "great men" had told him. The result of this expedition was the discovery of the peninsula of Lower California, to which the historian Gomez informs us was given the name California. There have been various speculations among scholars and geographers concerning the origin of this word, and by some of them the early explorers have been credited with manufacturing it from the Latin *calix fornax* (a hot furnace), or the Spanish *callida fornalla*. If they did, it is the only instance on record where they manufactured a word in such a cold-blooded and scientific manner. The chief objection to this pedantic origin is the fact that the name appeared in its purity, in the passage quoted above, more than a quarter of a century before, and it is highly probable that the name that was to stir the cupidity and enterprise of the