

OREGON FREE PRESS.

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"Here shall the Press the people's rights maintain, Unawed by influence, and unbribed by gain."

TERMS OF THE "FREE PRESS."

One copy, per annum, (in advance,) three dollars and fifty cents, cash—for six months, two dollars.

ADVERTISING.—Each square, (12 lines or less,) first insertion, two dollars—each subsequent insertion, one dollar. A reasonable deduction made on yearly advertisements.

Currency and produce taken at their cash value.

GOLD MINES OF CALIFORNIA.

It appears that in the first part of February last, Messrs. Marshall & Bennett were engaged with a party in erecting a saw mill for Capt. J. A. Sutter, on the American Fork of the Sacramento river, about forty miles above its mouth. In excavating the tail race, they removed the rock during the day and let in the water after night, in order to wash out the loose dirt and sand. On the morning of the 10th, after shutting off the water, Mr. Marshall discovered the first gold, lying on decomposed granite in the bottom of the race. It would seem that but little doubt was entertained of its being the real 'simon pure, for operations immediately ceased on the mill, and all hands commenced searching for gold. It was soon found that gold abounded along the American Fork for a distance of thirty miles. For a time the discoverers were the only ones aware of the fact, but the news finally spread through the settlements. But little credit however, was gained by the report, though occasionally a solitary "gold hunter" might be seen, stealing down to a launch with a pick and shovel, more than half ashamed of his credulity. Some time during the month of May, a number of credible persons arrived in town from the scene of operations, bringing specimens of the ore, and stating that those engaged in collecting the precious metal were making from 3 to \$10 per day. Then commenced the grand rush! The inhabitants throughout the territory were in commotion. Large companies of men, women and children could be seen on every road leading to the mines, their wagons loaded down with tools for digging, provisions, &c. Launch after launch left the wharves of our city, crowded with passengers and freight for the Sacramento. Mechanical operations of every kind ceased, whole streets, that were but a short week before alive with a busy population, were entirely deserted, and the place wore the appearance of a city that had been suddenly visited by a devastating plague. To cap the climax, newspapers were obliged to stop printing for want of readers.

Meantime our mercantile friends were doing an unwonted "stroke" of business. Every arrival from the

mining district brought more or less gold dust, the major part of which immediately passed into the hands of merchants for goods, etc.—Immense quantities of merchandise were conveyed to the mines, until it became a matter of astonishment where so much could be disposed of. During the first eight weeks of the "golden times" the receipts at this place in gold dust amounted to \$25,000. For the eight weeks ending at this date, they were \$600,000. The number of persons now engaged in gold hunting probably exceed 6000, including Indians, and one ounce per day is the lowest average we can put for each person, while many collect their hundreds of dollars for a number of days in succession, and instances have been known where one individual has collected from 1500 to \$1800 worth of pure gold in a day. Explorations have been progressing, and it is now fully ascertained that gold exists on both sides of the Sierra Nevada, from lat. 41 North to as far South as the head waters of the San Joaquin river, a distance of 500 miles in length and 100 in breadth. Farther than this has not been explored, but from the nature of the country beyond the sources of the San Joaquin, we doubt not gold will also be found there in equal abundance. The gold region already known is however sufficiently extensive to give profitable employment to 100,000 persons for generations to come. The ore is in a virgin state, disseminated in small doses, and is found in three distinct deposits—sand and gravel beds, on decomposed granite, and intermixed with a kind of slate.

For a long time subsequent to the discovery of the mines, the only implements used in washing the gold were large tin pans, or Indian baskets. Latterly, "machines" were used—at first a rough log hollowed out (in some instances) by burning, and scraping with a butcher knife; afterwards more finished ones made their appearance, built of red wood boards in the shape of an ordinary trough, "about ten feet long and two feet wide at the top, with a riddle or sieve at one end to catch the larger gravel, and three or four small bars across the bottom, about half an inch high to keep the gold from going out with the dirt and water at the lower end. This machine is set upon rockers, which gives a half rotary motion to the water and dirt inside." Four men are requisite to work one of these machines properly.

(Californian.)

☐ The Washington Union publishes an official army order, wherein the President directs it to be announced in 'general orders that deserters from the army at large, may peaceably return to their homes without being subject to punishment or trial on account of such desertion.