

THE EXODUS

--by H. C. Bailey.

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The exodus from the mountains to the valleys started in the fall of '53, as the two or three-year limit of getting their pile expired and the miners had only a few hundred or probably a thousand dollars, too little to go back with, and the prospect often discouraging, with many doubts they turned to the valleys that gave better assurance of permanent success. One hundred bushels of barley to the acre and one and a half dollars a bushel; potatoes 5 to 10 cents ^{per} pound, eggs \$1.50 to \$2 per dozen, hens \$3 to \$4 each, butter \$1.75 a pound, and vegetable products about the same. Another factor that added impetus to the movement--the probabilities of a permanent home--was gaining, as the beauties and possibilities began to dawn in the minds of the drifting population. The question came up in many minds, why not live here? It is a far better place than where I came from. The return of almost all who had gone home gave force to the idea.

There were two prime factors in the settlement of California that in a large measure were lacking east of the Rockies. First, the experience of two or three years in the mines and a fair amount of cash, and ample opportunities to get more when needed. Second, the few difficulties encountered. The climate was such as to require little shelter for the man and none for his stock. The soil was so rich and mellow the most primitive cultivation assured bountiful crops.

The soil was easier to work the first time it was plowed than after ten years cultivation. No grubbing or waiting for the sod to rot; and the yield was marvelous, as much as 100 bushels to the acre of barley and oats.

I speak advisedly, for I have raised the crops and paid for the threshing.

In noting the development of Colusa county, it is but a counterpart of all valley districts in the state where the necessary were present--wood, water and soil.

The idea of making a home instead of going home took root and grew and flourished as only things can in California. All over the country squatter claims were located and crops planted, permanent homes planned and preparations worked out accordingly.

In the fall of '53, three more women were added to our immediate community and quite a number in the county. In the fall of '54 a mania broke out among the married men to get their families to California and proved a blooming success, with the result that by Jan. 1st, 1855, we could muster enough ladies in a circuit of 30 miles to dance two cotillions at the same time at the first American wedding in the county.

From now on our progress was rapid along these lines. The idea of permanency became a settled fact. All who had Indian wives divorced them before the others appeared on deck.

The elements thus thrown together from many places soon crystalized into a harmonious and contented community built up to suit themselves and different from any known before. All the early female settlers of California were overworked and had little time for the social relations. When they did visit it was a genuine real visit, confined to the kitchen as well as the parlor. All helped alike about all household duties till all was done. An absolute democracy in practice, not theory. Some are disposed to pity the frontier people with their troubles and hardships. In my opinion, all such is wasted. There are compensating factors of which older and more refined communities

know nothing. The mutual confidence, sympathy and reliance, the absence of conventionalities common to all, the absolute certainty of all that sympathy or service can do for us in times of trouble or distress, are no small factors in life's uncertainties.

H. C. Bailey