

# THE HESPERIAN.

VOL. II.

MARCH, 1859.

No. 1.

## SKETCHES OF THE EARLY SETTLERS OF CALIFORNIA.

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GEORGE C. YOUNT.

THE subject of this sketch was born in North Carolina in the year 1794, and, with his father's family, emigrated to Missouri in the year 1804. From thence—prompted solely by a spirit of enterprise and a love of adventure—he set out for California, where he arrived in February, 1831. He justly ranks among the earliest pioneers of civilization on the Pacific coast, being at the time of his arrival, and for some time after, the only white man to be found from the Mission of Sonoma to the quarters of the Hudson Bay Company. He found the country overrun by numerous tribes of savage Indians—there being at that time not less than ten or twelve thousand ranging the country from Napa to Clear Lake. They were composed of various tribes, which, perhaps, accounts, in some degree for their sudden and almost total disappearance, as they frequently made war upon and destroyed each other. Grizzly bears were also found in great numbers; to use the words of the venerable pioneer, “they were every where—upon the plains, in the valleys, and on the mountains, venturing even within the camping-grounds, so that I have often killed as many as five or six in one day, and it was not unusual to see fifty or sixty within the twenty-four hours.”

The only traces of civilization to be found in the country at the time of Mr. YOUNT's arrival, were the Missions which had been

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founded by the Old Padres, who were sent from Spain for the purpose of civilizing the Indians, which object they accomplished by attacking small parties of Indians, taking them prisoners, and driving them into the Mission, where they were put through such a course of instruction as best fitted them for the duties they might be expected to perform.

Each Mission was supplied with five or six Spanish soldiers, and when one band of Indians became somewhat tame, they were sent out, under the command of the Spanish soldiers, to attack and drive in more Indians, who, in their turn, had to go through a course of instruction or civilization.

The soldiers wore coats made by pasting one deer-skin upon another, to the number of seven, which admirably served the purpose of coats of mail, as no arrow could possibly penetrate them. As soon as one Mission was well filled, the Padres would take some of the most civilized Indians, and, selecting another station, start a new Mission. In this way the various Missions were established, beginning at San Diego, and extending until every important point had its Mission.

In the fall of 1833 the cholera broke out in California, and raged with terrible violence among the Indians; so great was the mortality that they were unable either to burn or bury the dead, and the air was filled with the stench of decomposing humanity. A traveler who passed up the Sacramento valley at this time, relates that on his way up he passed a place where there were about three hundred Indians, with women and children, encamped; when he returned, after an absence of three or four days, the ground was literally strewed with dead bodies, all having died except one little Indian girl; she occupied the camp alone, while around her lay the festering bodies of her dead companions, and the air was rendered noxious by the disgusting stench arising from the dead bodies which, not alone in this camp, but every where throughout the valley, strewed the ground.

After Mr. YOUNT's arrival in California, he continued his occupation of hunting and trapping, together with catching sea otter, up to the year 1834; he then spent two years in traveling from place to place, engaging sometimes in one occupation and again in another. At this time he frequently took charge of the Sonoma

Mission, while the Padre went to San Rafael to look after affairs there.

In 1836 he retired to Napa Valley, for the purpose of settling upon a large tract of land which had been granted him by the Mexican Government. Here the same spirit of enterprise which had prompted him to stray so far from the land of his fathers, began to show itself in the way of improvements, and, in the fall of 1836, he built the first log-house ever built on the Pacific coast, and raised the first chimney in California, from which ascended the blue smoke to heaven.

The Spanish Padres, when they saw the cheerful fire blazing on the hearth, exclaimed in alarm, "Younte! it will make you grow old to have a fire in the house." And the savage Indians looked on in wonder and amazement, then, shrugging their shoulders, retired to ponder over the wonderful works of the "white man." The house was constructed somewhat after the fashion of a block-house or fort, with one room below about eighteen feet square, while above, the walls extended so as to make a room twenty or twenty-two feet square; where the roof extended, port-holes were made for the purpose of protection against numerous hostile tribes of Indians, and through which Mr. YOUNT was often called upon to defend himself by firing many a deadly shot upon the savages, who from time to time came down from the mountains to make war upon him.

At this time his only companion was an old Frenchman, who had served in the war with Bonaparte, and his only neighbors five or six families of friendly Indians, who had taken up their abode near by. With these exceptions, there were no neighbors nearer than the Sonoma Mission on the one side, and the Hudson Bay Company on the other.

At one time the Indians of Sonoma made a great feast and dance. The Indians on Mr. YOUNT's place took it into their heads to go to the feast; so a young Indian came forward and asked Mr. YOUNT if he might go, at the same time signifying that five or six more of the tribe would also like to attend. Mr. YOUNT readily gave his consent; but the young Indian became depressed in spirit, seemed moody and sad, and finally declared he would not go to the dance, and no persuasion of his companions could induce him to change his mind, so they departed without him.

The air was still and calm, and the night wore quietly away until just before day-break, when suddenly arose upon the air the fearful warwhoop! Louder and louder it sounded, as if the very fiends incarnate had been set loose; and Mr. YOUNT, grasping his rifle, sprang from his couch to find his house surrounded by a band of savages, who had come down from the mountains for the purpose of war and plunder. Thick flew the arrows, and the first one to fall was the young Indian who but the day before had refused to leave Mr. YOUNT. The Frenchman guarded the room below, while Mr. YOUNT fired from the port-holes above, killing many of the invaders, so that they were glad to retreat, carrying their dead and wounded with them.

During the skirmish a little circumstance occurred, which serves to show the disposition of the brave settler. The friendly Indian women rushed to the door of Mr. YOUNT's cabin, for the purpose of obtaining protection from the flying arrows of the wild Indians; but the Frenchman had the door strongly barricaded, and refused to open it. At length their piteous screams reached the ears of Mr. YOUNT, and in a voice like thunder he exclaimed, "Open the door, you old rascal, and let those women and children in, or I will come down and put you out among the Indians!" It is needless to say the door was opened immediately, and the women and children given such protection as the house afforded. The man who could ride right up to the face of a grizzly bear, and fight the red-skins with furious and unerring aim, whose courage in the midst of most imminent danger never faltered, could not listen to the pleading voice of the helpless Indian women and their babes, but ordered the door opened, even though by so doing he risked his own life and the life of his only companion, his trusty Frenchman.

At another time Mr. YOUNT and his friendly Indians had had a fight with some savage tribes, and whipped them. But revenge still burned within the breasts of the savages, and they determined to make another attack. Mr. YOUNT heard of their approach, and, taking twenty-five picked braves from the Sonoma Mission, went out to meet them. They met in Pope's Valley a company of five or six hundred wild savages, and a terrible battle was the result. The arrows flew thick as hail, yet the little party of braves, led on by Mr. YOUNT, stimulated by his example, and encouraged by his

voice, fought like heroes, and after a desperate encounter, which lasted until the morning began to break, succeeded in putting the enemy to flight, having taken forty prisoners, and killed and wounded many more, while they suffered comparatively small loss. During the engagement, Mr. YOUNT, who was foremost in the fight, had a silk handkerchief shot off his head by an arrow, yet he remained unhurt.

When we consider what a little handful of men went out to meet hundreds of a warlike race and yet returned victorious, we realize the power of Him who "giveth not the battle to the strong, nor the race to the fleet"—and also the fact that knowledge is power, and that it is destined by the all-wise Ruler to cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. As civilization advanced, his fights with the grizzlies and wild Indians became less and less frequent,—but new and more formidable enemies appeared in the land commissioners, squatters, and lawyers. Mr. YOUNT's history, in this respect, is but a repetition of that of almost every one of the early settlers of the country. The land which their own daring, energy, and courage rescued from the grizzly and wild Indian, they have now to contend for in our courts of law. This is not as it should be. They are all men well advanced in years; their thin locks are white with the frosts of many winters. They have played a noble part in the history of our country, and it ill becomes our government to allow them to dwell in insecurity, uncertainty, and anxiety, now. They have *earned* their repose, and should be allowed to sit in the shade of their own vine and fig-tree, in their declining years, with none to dispute their right.

Notwithstanding all he has had to contend against, Mr. YOUNT still resides in Napa Valley, on the very place which has been to him the scene of so many trials and adventures, every foot of which he has contended for, with the grizzly bears and wild Indians. Strange to say, he was never wounded in any of his conflicts, and bears upon his person no scars as mementos of the past. He yet retains much of the energy and firmness of his youth, and preserves his memory to a remarkable degree, relating incidents which happened years ago as if they occurred but yesterday, even giving the day of the week and month without the least reference to notes. He is unostentatious and simple in his manner, narrating

incidents of the most startling and thrilling nature in which he played a conspicuous part, without betraying arrogance, egotism, or vanity, and fascinates the listener by his easy and simple statement of facts. Such is Mr. YOUNT—a fair representative of a class of people who seem by nature fitted for trying times, and whose courage is at all times equal to any emergency. The more desperate the circumstances, the more calm and collected the mind—the more deadly the aim. To use the words of the venerable patriarch, “the tighter the place the surer the shot.”

He looks with a keen insight into human nature. It is to him no sealed book, but one with which he is perfectly familiar, and with which he is so well acquainted that no garb of deception could long be worn in his presence; his sharp eye and quick perception would penetrate and rend it into fragments. So while the crafty and designing could make but little headway with him, the honest and worthy may approach fearlessly, sure of ready sympathy and that benevolence which is ever the accompaniment of a noble nature.

Long may he live to enjoy the reward of his toil, and his last days pass peacefully and quietly away.

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#### THE MOTHER NURSING HER INFANT.

How mingled hope, and fear, and prayer,  
Rise in the mother's breast,  
When those bright eyes are fixed on hers,—  
To her those dear lips prest.

It is an hour of holy joy,  
And aspirations high;  
She feels the mother of a soul,—  
A soul not born to die.

Think of it, mother—not to clothe  
The lovely limbs in garments fine,  
But to adorn that soul for God;  
This is thy task divine.

MRS. V. E. HOWARD.