

## Some Forty-Miners

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The purchase by the Committee of the Friends Reference Library in London of *A Quaker Forty-Niner* (see page 70 of this issue) reminded us of references to the Californian gold-diggers of 1849-50 in the manuscript of John Candler's travels in the West Indies and U.S.A., presented to D by Lucy Candler, of Tunbridge Wells, some years ago.

John Candler and his wife were passing from Jamaica to the mainland of North America.

Here is a selection of the references :

“ 1850. 6mo. 18ff. Had much conversation with some of our fellow passengers from California and the isthmus of Panama. Several on board are returning from California with plenty of gold in their trunks, which they have acquired by hard labor and under many severe privations, at the gold mines ; others with gold acquired by trading and speculation ; and not a few weary, disgusted, sick, and almost destitute. ‘ The grave yards grow faster in California than the towns,’ said one of the returning wanderers to me. I asked him what induced him to go there, and, having gone, why he returned so soon. He went, he said, hoping, like many others, to get money and do himself good, but he did not succeed as he expected, and seeing how badly the people conducted themselves he thought if he staid there, he should lose all moral principle and become like the rest. It was wonderful, he said, how soon the moral perceptions became deadened in such a society of adventurers. He was himself a ‘ Friend,’ a member of the Hicksite persuasion ; he had been brought up to hate all war and aggression, but he thought that he could now shoot a man dead without remorse, if he attempted to rob him of gold, or do him an irreparable injury. ‘ On the First Day,’ I use his words, ‘ the people abandoned themselves to gambling and cock-fighting.’

“ Another of our fellow passengers tells me that he went from New York to Panama, and was so frightened at what he saw, and feared of sickness if he went further, that he resolved at once to get back to his own home as quick as possible : he therefore engaged himself as a servant to three

fellow Americans who had fallen sick and wished to return, and was now engaged in taking care of them on board. One of them who left New York to make money at the mines was worth, he said, \$20,000, and was now a lunatic! Many of our Californian Cabin passengers dress in a shirt and trousers, smoke cigars and spit freely. One of them said to me, 'I am a North Ohio man: we do every thing for ourselves in that country; we produce a great deal by hard labor, and we bid defiance to all the world.'

"Had much conversation with some of our Californian passengers, another of whom I find to have been a member of our Society at Lynn, Mass. He left Boston sixteen months ago, with a band of forty-seven fellow adventurers to go across the North West territory, from the head of the Missouri navigation to the Sacramento river in California. The estimated distance of travel from Boston to Missouri was 2300 miles and from Missouri to the plains where gold is found 2700 miles more, in all, more than 5000 miles. They performed the journey through many great hardships, and with excessive toil, in six months, having had to open a road of 150 miles through the Rocky Mountains. Many of his fellow-travellers died by the way, or from fatigue and sickness when they reached the diggings, amongst whom were his two friends. On leaving California to return home, he could trace only eight out of the original number of forty-seven who were engaged in the work of gold-digging: the remainder were either dead or dispersed. He himself fell sick, and out of the gold he had found he had paid \$1500 to a physician for advice; this physician, he said, was kind and considerate compared with others, as he only charged him \$8 a visit, instead of a doubloon (£3 6 8), which was the usual fee. He wished he had never gone, but had been content to take the advice of Samuel Boyce, a minister of Lynn Meeting: he was a young man, he said, and young men refused counsel, but if he got safe home, he would never venture on such an expedition again.

"Another of these gold hunters found his way from New York to California by Vera Cruz and through Mexico in 46 days; he was from Providence, R.I., and he had been fairly successful in his mining operations; in one week he had made \$600. He had deposited his earnings in the bank of St. Francisco to be repaid him in New York with an

abatement of 7 per cent. He was now returning to Rhode Island to see his wife and to persuade her to go back and settle with him in California as an adopted home. He had avoided drinking and lived under a tent, and had not been sick. Some of these return passengers are sick on board our steamer, and may perhaps never reach their native land. I asked one of them whether, if he got well at home, he should be willing to make a second attempt to reach the gold region. 'Never again,' he said; 'I have seen enough. In my own country we saw only the bright side of the picture: all was gold, gold; agents from California, wanting immigrants, allured us with wonderful tales—merchants trading with that country encouraged the delusion—steam boat proprietors and a crowd of interested people promoted it. I shall stay at home and never attempt to go again.' A poor youth of seventeen left Ohio with his uncle, the lunatic, in order, as he said, 'to see the world and to find a chance,' but was struck with fever at Chagres. They set out from home ten in company, one had died in Panama, five had gone forward by sea to Saint Francisco, and he and three others were returning—himself sick of fever, his uncle a lunatic, a third unwell, and the fourth selected to take care of them, because he was discouraged and heart sick and longed to get back again.

"We have two brothers on board, who took out machinery to the mines and quicksilver; they gave employment to 70 and sometimes 80 men at the diggings, at wages varying from £30 to £40 sterling each man per month, with board at a common table under a long tent. 'Although our outlay was often \$17000 a month our income from the operations was greater. We mean to return to California with new machinery, and make it our adopted country.' The largest quantity of gold raised by the two brothers and cleansed by one machine in one day was 70 ounces, worth in sterling money £225: this was prepared by the labor of seven miners. The largest lump of gold they had heard of as being found in the country weighed 27 lbs., of which seven pounds weight was estimated as quartz, leaving of pure unalloyed gold 20 lbs., worth in English money £1000."