

of the former, as he was absent, and appeared, at least among the foreigners, to be little known.

At Yerba Buena there was a similar absence of all authority. The only officer was the alcalde, who dwells at the mission of Nostra Señora de los Dolores, some three miles off. He was full of self-importance, making up for what he wanted in the eyes of others by a high estimate of his own dignity. I could find no one who could furnish me with his name, which must be my apology for not recording it in this place. Some excuse may be offered for his inattention to his duties, as I understood that he had just been united in wedlock to a lady of one of the distinguished families of the country; and after such an event in California much gaiety and rejoicing usually follow, until the hilarity at times becomes so uproarious as to end in fighting and bloodshed.

Under the Palermo Mountain, or Table Hill of Beechey, which is two thousand five hundred feet high, and sparsely wooded with a few gnarled and scraggy oaks, the hills open towards the bay into a kind of vale, which had been chosen for the position of the observatory, and where the instruments had been set up under the direction of Lieutenant Carr. This place is well adapted for the resort of whalers. Here they may repair their boats, obtain water, and refit; and from their frequent resort to it, has obtained the name of Whaler's Harbour. The cove is a safe anchorage, being protected from the northwest and westerly winds, which prevail during the summer season, and often blow with great violence.

At the time of our visit, the country altogether presented rather a singular appearance, owing, as I afterwards observed, to the withered vegetation and the ripened wild oats of the country. Instead of a lively green hue, it had generally a tint of a light straw-colour, showing an extreme want of moisture. The drought had continued for eleven months; the cattle were dying in the fields; and the first view of California was not calculated to make a favourable impression either of its beauty or fertility.

I found it very difficult to obtain accurate information in relation to Upper California. The country, at the time of our visit, and for several years previous, had been in a state of revolution; and, as is often the case under similar circumstances, was involved in anarchy and confusion, without laws or security of person and property. It is undergoing such frequent changes, that it is difficult to understand or to describe them.

With California is associated the idea of a fine climate, and a rich and productive soil. This, at least, was the idea with which I entered