

PACIFIC COAST FORTUNES.

Immense Wealth Acquired in a Very Few Years.

MONEY MAKING ROMANCES.

The Railway Kings—How the "Big Four" Worked the Railroad Field for All There Was in It.

George H. Fitch in the Compendium.

Balzac, with his royal imagination, never conceived anything more dramatic, more picturesque, or more essentially unreal than the rise to fortune of the score of men who may be classed among the great millionaires of the Pacific coast, the enormously rich men who will "out-put" to use an expressive phrase, for more than twenty millions.

Nowhere in this country, outside of the oil regions of Pennsylvania, have vast fortunes been gained in so short a time as in California. The names of the men who made the Golden State known round the world, they were the pioneers, the Argonauts, the adventurers who built a great state in the far west and transformed in a single decade the wretched, Spanish-American cattle raising territory into one of the richest states in the world.

The Pacific coast millionaires may be arranged like the geologic formations of the earth, in three ages. The primary period embraces the famous men who made the Golden State known round the world. They were the pioneers, the Argonauts, the adventurers who built a great state in the far west and transformed in a single decade the wretched, Spanish-American cattle raising territory into one of the richest states in the world.

The secondary period is the era of the railway kings, which is the conquest of the alkali desert that stretches away eastward from the base of the mountains to the prairies of Wyoming. It includes Leland Stanford, Mark Hopkins, Collis P. Huntington and Charles Crocker, known in negro minstrel parlance as "The Big Four," whose combined wealth is estimated at one hundred and eighty million dollars.

The tertiary period is the age of the bonanza kings, which saw the development of the Comstock lode in Nevada, the richest silver mines in history, the addition of over four hundred million dollars to the world's supply of gold, and the discovery of Montana, which has become famous in ten years.

Another and later era must embrace the land and speculative millionaires, the names of which are—Leland Stanford, Mark Hopkins, Collis P. Huntington, Luning, and others, who, are above the ten million level.

The aggregate wealth of all these Pacific coast millionaires would make cheap the treasure of Montezuma, and the treasures of "King Solomon's Mines." Even if it could be stated in exact figures, the average reader would have as poor a conception of it as he has of the weight of bulk of fifty thousand dollars in gold.

The railway kings, who are the founders and builders of the Central Pacific railroad is the story of all. Of radically unlike character, they have still worked together so closely that their fortunes have been identical.

The first place in my sketch of the building of the Central Pacific railroad belongs to Leland Stanford, who by character, wealth, and position was the leader in the enterprise. He came of excellent English stock, his father being a farmer near Albany, N. Y.

Stanford, after the study of the law, went to Wisconsin, but there he entered the law of his father's library by fire. He came home undimmed, and while casting

about for a new location, in 1852, he caught the California gold fever. He engaged in the general merchandise trade, and in 1854 he was the possessor of perhaps \$100,000. In 1861 he was elected governor of California by the republicans, and it was in this same year that the project of spanning the continent with a railroad was conceived.

Never was a great work begun under more untoward conditions. The road had to be built to Ogden in Utah, a distance of 875 miles. The rugged foot hills, the almost inaccessible heights of the snow capped Sierra Nevada, the desolate alkali plains, the terrible error had to be built to Ogden in Utah, a distance of 875 miles.

By making use of natural passes over the mountains the engineers finally decided that the road was feasible. Then Stanford set to work to gain help. The position was this: He had as associates Huntington, who was a dealer in hardware at Sacramento, the capital city, and Mark Hopkins, Huntington's partner.

It was made over two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Many of the Californians had crossed the plains and climbed the Sierra in the overland emigrant trains. These pioneers sought the route of building a railroad, and their opinion had great weight with others. The result was that the projectors could get very little at the outset in their own state.

It took the courage of great connections to overcome this public sentiment; and the projectors secured the great fortune that was worth many millions; but before they could use this land grant from the government bond of thirty-five thousand dollars per mile, they were required to construct the first fifty miles of road.

It was in overcoming this difficulty, in inspiring the confidence of capitalists, that the genius of Stanford was shown. Even when government aid came it was badly handicapped, for the bonds were sold at about one-third of their face value. All through the dark days of the war the company went pluckily on with their work.

It is interesting now to read the brilliant letters of A. D. Richardson to the New York Tribune, in which he described the scenes of this ride across the continent, with the working of the projectors to the thousands of tourists as the trip across New York state or the tour of the great lakes and the St. Lawrence. The journey from sea to sea, which then consisted of twelve days, has been cut down to six, while the hardships of the old time railroad travel has been so eliminated that a Sybarite might now enjoy the journey.

The completion of the railroad witnessed the sudden advance of all its projectors to great wealth. Immigrants flowed into the state by thousands; the company's lands became valuable; the freight and passenger rates were taxed to the utmost; new territories were opened and clamored for railroad connection, so that a little more than ten years after the building of the original road, the building of the other trunk lines of the Pacific coast has been begun, and the development of the Pacific coast as well as of the vast interior territory, has been going on ever since.

These years have naturally witnessed great changes in the fortunes of the men who built the first Pacific coast railroad. All except Hopkins are still alive, and all bid fair to enjoy many more years of life. Stanford's health is broken, as much by the loss of his only son as by the weight of years and heavy cares.

Stanford's only passion is for fine horses and he has gratified on his estate at Palo Alto in the heart of the Santa Clara valley. There he has a large number of fine thoroughbred horses, and when he goes down to his country home it is his pleasure to sit in a large chair and enjoy a ride on one of his favorite young flyers brought out for trial.

It was the hope of Senator Stanford to perpetuate his name and to hand down his wealth to his only son, Leland Stanford, who was a brilliant and marked ability in mechanics. But the boy had a weak physique, and three years ago, while in Florence, he contracted the Roman fever and died suddenly. His death aged the father more than twenty years of work and responsibility had done. It led him to devise means for leaving a memorial to his dear son in the form of a great industrial university to be established on his estate at Palo Alto.

RESULTS OF ELECTRICITY.

Achievements of the Powerful and Mysterious Fluid.

THE TELEGRAPH IN ENGLAND.

Electricity in the Navy—Lighting Photographs—Mines Lighted by Electricity—Alarm Bells—Electric Railways—Freaks.

The London Times this summarizes some of the statements made by Mr. Raikes, the postmaster general, in his speech delivered at the telegraph jubilee recently.

At first a machine required five wires before it could dispatch a message. Now on one single wire seven or eight messages can be sent simultaneously. At first the rate of sending did not amount to more than four or five words a minute. Now on the latest machine no less than 463 words a minute can be dispatched.

The number of telegrams sent during the past year amounted to close upon a million a week—51,500,000 in all. To put the matter concisely the relative proportion between letters and telegrams has altered in the most astonishing way during the past thirty years. In 1855, when the public had become well used to the telegraph and when every railroad line was provided with telegraph communication, for every telegram sent there were 480 letters.

In the next block above the Stanford and Hopkins palaces is the large and pretentious residence of Charles Crocker. There is no architecture about it, but it is finely furnished, and has a large art gallery. Crocker was taken into the railroad company in 1882, with his brother, and has executed a large amount of work in the building of the railroad.

It is Mr. Crocker's custom to ride home from the railroad offices in San Francisco in the democratic street car. Any one who sees him in the street will be struck by his large gold-headed cane which would take him for a deacon or a philanthropist, so benevolent is his expression and so immaculate his clerical looking neck tie.

Of the railroad millionaires C. P. Huntington is least known in California. For more than twenty years he has made his home in New York and has been engaged in the same business in that city. He is a great organizer, an accomplished diplomat, a manipulator of railroad shares and a railway logician.

Photographs of Lightning Wanted. Electrical Review: "The Royal Meteorological society is desirous of obtaining photographs of lightning, and it is believed that a great amount of research on this subject can only be pursued by means of the camera.

Mr. Settle, the patentee of the water cart, by means of which dynamite is exploded harmlessly in fery gas or in the presence of your workmen, is managing director of the Madley Cart and Iron company in Stafford. His inventive skill has been applied successfully to the illumination by electricity of the mines under a large globe filled with water.

Home Made Mummies. There were recently lying in San Francisco, awaiting the attention of the remains of four Arizona Indians, which are, perhaps, the most perfect specimens of the natural embalming process of a dry climate ever found in this country. These remains are simply dried up by the action of the sun, and there is no humidity. Even the viscera, which all embalmers in Egypt found necessary to remove in order to guard against decomposition, have been desiccated like the other parts of the body.

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