

CALIFORNIA SKETCHES

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649385058

California sketches by O. P. Fitzgerald

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O. P. FITZGERALD

**CALIFORNIA
SKETCHES**

CALIFORNIA SKETCHES.

BY

O. P. FITZGERALD

*"And one upon the West
Turned an eye that would not rest,
For far-off hills whercon his joys had been."*



NASHVILLE, TENN.:
PUBLISHING HOUSE OF THE M. E. CHURCH, SOUTH.
J. D. BARRE, AGENT.
1880.



According to Act of Congress, in the year 1879, by
O. P. FITZGERALD,
in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington.



AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

THESE Sketches wrote themselves, as it were. About three years ago my friend, Prof. Alonzo Phelps (formerly of Harvard University), in reply to my remark that somebody ought to preserve the vanishing phases of the early California life, said, "Yes, it ought to be done, and you are the man to do it." The matter was then dismissed from my mind as the flattering suggestion of a partial friend. After leaving California, every thing connected with my life, or that had come under my observation while there, assumed a fresh interest to my own mind. The remark of my friend was remembered, and, more to gratify a kindly impulse than with a view to make a volume, in snatches of such leisure as an editor gets, the penciling of these humble Sketches began. Now that the little book is finished, I am at least half sorry it was ever begun. Yet there has been a pleasure in writing it. The old days have come back to me again, and images that were fading have stood before me in the form and color of life. Ah! if I could make them stand there before my kind readers! The Sketches are all from real life. In one or two instances names are disguised for obvious reasons. I have told the story as I saw it, and as I remember it. There is no fancy-sketch among these chapters. If I had

entered that field, a volume more suited to the modern taste might have been the result; but it would have had no value as a picture of actual life. An anachronism may be found here or there. I wrote wholly from memory, and am not strong in the matter of dates. Except incidentally, no mention is made of persons still living, though the promptings of affectionate admiration made a strong temptation to place some living faces on the canvas.

My motive in publishing in this form is not a bad one. It is not literary ambition; for I am conscious that the risk is equal to the possible gain in that direction. It is not to put a shadow upon the memory of the dead, or to inflict a wound upon a living soul. My motive is such as all noble spirits would approve, but which need not be stated here. With these words I send forth my little book leaving it to its fate.

One of these chapters is from a different hand. Which one it is, is left to the discrimination of the critical reader.

O. P. FITZGERALD.

Nashville, September, 1879.

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MY FIRST SUNDAY IN THE MINES.

SONORA, in 1855, was an exciting, wild, wicked, fascinating place. Gold-dust and gamblers were plentiful. A rich mining camp is a bonanza to the sporting fraternity. The peculiar excitement of mining is near akin to gambling, and seems to prepare the gold-hunter for the faro-bank and monte-table. The life was free and spiced with tragedy. The men were reckless, the women few and not wholly select. The conventionalities of older communities were ignored. People dressed and talked as they pleased, and were a law unto themselves. Even a parson could gallop at full speed through a mining camp without exciting remark. To me it was all new, and at first a little bewildering, but there was a charm about it that lingers pleasantly in the memory after the lapse of all these long years from 1855 to 1879.

Sonora was a picture unique in its beauty as I