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Title: "A New Eldorado in California" (Novyi El'dorado v Kalifornii)

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Otechestvennyia zapiski (Notes of the Fatherland), vol. 62 (1849), section VIII,
pp. 216-224. Excerpt from p. 216.

What an enchanting land California is! For eight months of the year the skies stay cloudless and clear. For the rest of the year, from late November on, it rains periodically. It never gets hotter than 25° Reaumur [77° F.] in the shade. In January everything returns to life, and vegetation is fully growing; everything is fragrant; and the friendly hummingbird flutters and glitters on a stalk, or shimmers above a flower like a precious gem.

California's virgin soil gives forth astonishing fruits: I happened to see a wheat harvest there that yielded 150-fold! And even with meager efforts applied. A pointed, twisted branch, whose tip is covered with some kind of share, serves as a plow. After scratching about two inches of soil, a farmer can finish his sowing. A branch of a bay [laurel] tree, tied to an ox, serves as his harrow. If you take a peach off a tree and toss the pit away, and it falls on the ground, and if you come back three years later to the same place, you will see an adult tree, cut fruit off of it, and enjoy it!

A giant evergreen tree - the redwood [chaga] (pinus Californicus) - grows in California. Look at this massive tree: eight or nine centuries have passed over it. Its hollow core, burned out by fires, may serve as a home for entire families! With my own eyes I saw a grain storehouse and a building with an office and two rooms for assistants built out of one tree. It was 180 to 200 feet tall, from top to bottom, and eight to ten feet across. One can imagine the deafening crash which such a colossus makes when felled by human hands! Other trees in the forests of California include the bay tree, chestnut and oak, and, along river banks, wild-grape stock.

Man has looked upon this land with cool indifference for a long time. But now, when gold has been discovered in the bowels of the earth, people have been pouring in: across the Rocky

Mountains, from New Orleans, across Panama, and around the Horn. Mineralogists and natural scientists have even gone there now. Each vein in this land of beauty trembles under the anatomical knife of science. The best years of my life I spent there, and I reverently carry the recollection of these days in my soul.