J. ROSS BROWNE AS SPECIAL AGENT
IN THE WEST, 1854-1860

by

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS
In the Graduate College
THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

1964
STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To have written anything of merit about J. Ross Browne necessitated the help of a large number of people. The sources on Browne's life are not indexed and are widely scattered. To have brought these materials together, it was necessary to enlist the aid of a variety of people in libraries throughout the country. Much help was received also from scholars of American history and literature. Before I extend my thanks to this long list of individuals, however, I wish to single out one person who deserves very special consideration.

Should this study deserve any praise in both scholarship and general presentation, it is due to the influence of Professor John Alexander Carroll of the University of Arizona. Two years ago Dr. Carroll answered my quest for a thesis topic with this directive: "Go find out something about J. Ross Browne. He's an interesting character who keeps popping up in my reading." I followed this suggestion. And from start to finish Professor Carroll always made time for me in a schedule which was unbelievably busy. As my
advisor, he made himself readily accessible to me not only at his office on campus but at his home as well. Most importantly, however, it is by his example as a historian that I approached this study with a great deal of enthusiasm. To Dr. Carroll, then, I give the warmest of my thanks.

No small amount of gratitude is due to Horace Parker. As publisher of the Paisano Press, Dr. Parker has pursued J. Ross Browne as a hobby for years. From him I gathered important leads and was able to borrow essential manuscripts. Professor Bruce R. McElderry, Jr. of the University of Southern California was gracious enough to entertain me at his home and share with me some of his source material on Browne, information upon which rested a lecture he delivered a few years ago on Browne. Dr. John J. Weisert of the University of Louisville also provided me with leads taken from his three articles published about Browne. Martin Schmitt, Head of Special Collections at the University of Oregon, was generous enough to send me copies of Browne manuscripts in his care. Richard Dillon of the Sutro Library also made fruitful suggestions, as did the late Professor Charles M. Gates of the University of Washington who guided me to people who were helpful.
I wish to extend my thanks also to those librarians in the Far West who have been especially kind. At the top of this list is Miss Ernestine Brown, Head of the Northwest Collection at the University of Washington, who not only uncovered essential items but went beyond the call of duty in many cases. Also at the University of Washington is Richard Berner, Curator of Manuscripts, who was most patient with this unsure student. At the Arizona Pioneers' Historical Society, I was always given quick, professional service by Sadie Schmit and Lenard Brown. Priscilla Knuth of the Oregon Historical Society also guided me to a wealth of material. The real bonanza of manuscripts was found, however, at the Bancroft Library, whose efficient staff made my task much easier. Dr. James D. Hart, who was Acting Director of the Bancroft in 1962, was most generous in his suggestions.

To the scores of people with whom I corresponded in search of manuscript material, I wish to express my gratitude for the time they spent searching the archives in their charge. Of these researchers, the following provided me with copies of manuscripts and other written material: Murphy D. Smith of the American Philosophical Society,
PREFACE

During his lifetime, 1821-1875, John Ross Browne demonstrated an amazing ability to succeed at an unusual variety of important tasks. With the publication of a book in 1846, he contributed greatly to correcting the abuses of seamen in the American whale industry. Three years later, as a shorthand reporter in the constitutional convention, he established for himself a permanent place in the history of California. From 1854 to 1860 he waged a never-ending war against inefficiency and fraud in the Federal service. In 1868 his summary on mining statistics demonstrated he was one of the country's leading experts on mineral resources, and in 1869 he proved that he understood international relations better than did some of the officials of the State Department. Meanwhile, during all this time, he had created for himself an enviable reputation as a satirist and author of works on travel.

Yet in none of these respects has Browne's role been properly assessed. In 1936, in her History of Nevada, Effie Mona Mack expressed the same idea, though she limited her
observations to the part Browne played in the development of one state in the West.\(^1\) It will be the purpose of this paper, therefore, to demonstrate that in at least one respect Browne was an important man, an American with whom historians should be better acquainted. Only a full-length biography could show the many ways in which Browne contributed to the growth of the West, but the task at hand will be to examine only one of these: his work from 1854 to 1860 as a special agent for the Treasury Department and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. It is hoped that this investigation of Browne's activities during the pre-Civil War decade will reveal that he was the key man in the honest implementation of the revenue and Indian policies of the Federal government. Whatever success the government had in instituting a program for efficient and economical Federal service on the Pacific Coast in the decade of the 1850's was largely due to Browne.\(^2\)


\(^2\)A short biography of Browne has been published: Francis Rock, *J. Ross Browne: a Biography* (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1929). Rock, then a parish priest in San Francisco, prepared this work as a doctoral dissertation. It was his purpose to rescue from obscurity a man whom he judged to be important: "The nature and the
There are a number of ways to deal with the subject. For instance, one might isolate revenue affairs from Indian matters; or one could divide Browne's activities into his performances in each state. The reasons against such fragmentation are indicated in the nature of the subject. During this six years Browne was instructed to investigate over two hundred types of Federal offices, many of which were connected with the Indian service as well as with customs business. Frequently he found opportunities to report to

volume of his literary work, the active part he played in the development of the Pacific frontier, his own attractive personality, and his significance in the history of our national literature, call for a revival of his memory" (ix). With the help of Ross E. Browne, Browne's only living son in 1928, Father Rock was able to trace the general outline of Browne's life; and an examination of the literature of Browne's time helped Rock to make a brief bibliography of his subject's published material. In recent years, however, the National Archives has issued reels of microfilm which contain nearly all of Browne's reports and letters to the Treasury Department, the Indian Bureau, and the Secretary of State. These documents comprise the primary source on Browne's work for the government. Moreover, the present writer has been able to find additional published material by Browne, has located numerous references to him in various diaries and newspapers, and has examined copies of letters to and from Browne which are scattered in libraries throughout the country—all of which were either overlooked by Rock or were not available to him. In all fairness to Father Rock, however, it must be admitted that the modern researcher can draw upon published indices to manuscript collections, microfilm, and published diaries which were well hidden or non-existent in 1929.
the Secretary of the Interior while he was traveling on Treasury Department instructions. Furthermore, revenue affairs directly concerned Indian matters: the expenses of the reservations were paid out of the duties collected, and part of Browne's job was to monitor the spending of the officials in the Indian service.

This study rests primarily on manuscript sources, most of which are microfilms of unpublished letters and reports deposited in the National Archives. Over 4,000 letters were read and abstracts taken from most of them. Two kinds of material were relied upon most heavily: Browne's correspondence with various Federal agencies, and reports others made to the Treasury Department and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. For the results of this correspondence, letters sent by various governmental offices were perused. Furthermore, a search was made into Browne's published writings for additional comments he made about his work. In a number of instances, educated guessing led to the location of important sources deposited in various libraries throughout the country. Background material was gathered from a wide variety of sources which included general histories, magazine articles, book reviews, contemporary
newspapers, and oral interviews. Leads to manuscript collections were obtained from various guides, and over one hundred inquiries were written pursuing these leads. Few possibilities were not investigated: the author also "walked the stacks" of dozens of libraries and historical societies on the Pacific Coast.

All these efforts have been necessary, for very little is known of the early Federal service of J. Ross Browne despite the fact that he left an extensive body of engaging literature and wrote voluminous letters. Subsequently he was first Commissioner of Mines and Mining for the States West of the Rocky Mountains and was a highly controversial Minister Plenipotentiary to China. Despite his varied accomplishments and national fame, however, Browne's name has somehow eluded the pen of most historians. Occasionally, those who know something of Browne attempt to

1Very few guides to manuscript material list J. Ross Browne. The use of these works, therefore, was limited to examining them for letters written by people Browne knew. After establishing Browne's association with a given person, that man's name was sought out in the various guides, and inquiries were made to the library that housed his manuscripts. In most cases, the effort was in vain. There were, though, twelve depositories that held some of Browne's correspondence; and from each one copies of letters were solicited and received.
solve the riddle. Some observe that while Browne was a pioneer in many fields, those who came after him overshadowed him by doing a vastly superior job. Others feel that Browne never really did anything outstanding, dismissing him as traveler and casual observer of the type around 1860.¹ All of this speculation indicates only one sound idea: pitifully

¹See Carl Coke Rister's review of The March of Empire; Frontier Defences in the Southwest, 1848-60, by Averam B. Bender, in Southwestern Historical Quarterly, LVI (January, 1953), 480. Rister is typical of modern historians who know little about Browne and are unfamiliar with the comments Browne's contemporaries made about him and his works. In the nineteenth century, Browne attracted a great deal of notice throughout the nation. Of the thousands of books published each year, Browne's were reviewed as widely and as favorably as any. When criticizing works of other authors, reviewers often compared them to Browne's: "We can offset Lamartine's persistent lachrymoseness by Ross Browne's persistent jocularity. . . ." Bret Harte, review of Going to Jerico, by John F. Swift, Overland Monthly, I (July, 1868), 101. Moreover, in its monthly notice of current periodical literature the Nation usually commented upon Browne's most recent articles. When Browne was made Minister Plenipotentiary to China in 1868, one popular periodical reminded the public of his literary offerings: "Mr. Brown [sic] is an experienced traveler and observer, and moreover a thorough investigator, who will carefully study our real interests in China, and supply the Department of State with the kind of information necessary to conduct our relations with that country, which steam has made our neighbor; and we may reasonably expect from him, when his term of service expires, an entertaining and instructive book on the Flowery Land, written from an American standpoint, and full of useful information for our merchants and manufacturers." See "Some Good Foreign Appointments," Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, XXVI (28 March 1868), 18.
little is known of the long career and significant contributions of J. Ross Browne! It is hoped that this study will shed some new light on this somewhat shadowy but important figure in the history of the western United States.
ABSTRACT OF THESIS

From 1854 to 1860 John Ross Browne served the Federal government on the Pacific Coast as a special agent. While he spent most of his time investigating the business of the Treasury Department, he also made frequent inspections for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. During those six years, nearly all his time was consumed correcting abuses in the customs houses and on the Indian reservations.

Although Browne had prepared himself well for his tasks, he could not prevent improbity from recurring. Having traveled widely prior to becoming a special agent, he could list a wide variety of unsavory characters he had met in foreign lands. It seemed, however, that the very worst of these had congregated in California and in the Pacific Northwest. Moreover, the selfishness, deception, and corruption he had witnessed in Washington while a Senate reporter in 1841 and a clerk and secretary in the Treasury Department during 1845-49 was mirrored in the government's affairs on the Pacific Coast in the 1850's.
Malfeasance took many forms. As special agent, Browne attempted to prevent smuggling, halt misappropriation of funds, reduce over-employment, establish efficiency, and bring honesty to Treasury business from San Diego to Port Townsend. His job was frustrating, however, since the suggestions he incorporated in his voluminous reports to Washington went largely unheeded. Congress, Browne learned, always balked at remedies which constituted a threat to the power of patronage.

Running concurrently with his investigation of Treasury affairs, were frequent examinations of Indian problems. By 1856 Browne had uncovered dozens of heinous abuses on the reservations which threatened the immediate destruction of the California Indians. Funds directed for the welfare of the tribes were misappropriated with the results that widespread starvation was flagrantly apparent on the reservations. When several of the tribes left their reservations seeking food and a return to their ancient ways of life, they were systematically murdered by sadistic and greedy white men who coveted their lands. It was not, however, until Browne had overwhelmed his superiors in Washington with repeated reports of these flagrantly criminal abuses
that the Bureau of Indian Affairs was stirred to act and put into operation Browne's suggestions.

Although much of Browne's advice was taken only when it was pacific and conciliatory, he did manage to establish overall efficiency in the Federal government's business on the Pacific Coast. Not only did he cause the removal of corrupt high officials, such as the Collector of Customs for San Francisco and the Superintendent of California Indian Affairs, but he was instrumental in replacing them with honest men. Not only can Browne's importance be measured by the efficiency and integrity he established in Federal business on the Pacific Coast, but the vast amount of literature he left, both his published satires and official reports, gives the historian a reliable account of customs matters and Indian affairs in the Far West from 1854 to 1860.

David M. Goodman
May 16, 1964
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CHAPTER I

SHORTHAND AND LONG JOURNEYS: THE YEARS OF PREPARATION, 1841-1853

In the turbulent decade of the 1850's the Federal government was represented in the Western states and territories by a number of aggressive and able men, one of the most conspicuous of whom was John Ross Browne of Kentucky. From 1854 to 1860 Browne served as Special Agent of the Treasury Department and conducted investigations of many kinds throughout the West. Appointed ostensibly to ferret out malfeasance among Federal officials, Browne did not anticipate that mismanagement was so widespread and so deeply rooted, or that replacing it with honest work would be so difficult. As it proved, Browne's repeated attempts to stimulate his superiors to correct the abuses in the government service cost him his job at the age of thirty-nine after seven years of candid reporting. During that time, he steered a stormy course through the murky waters of corruption and inefficiency in the revenue and Indian policies of the United States government.
But Browne was more than just a representative of the Treasury Department. If one would keep a list of the times that Browne's name occurs in Western literature, one would soon curiously observe that he was associated with nearly every aspect of the development of the West. A cursory glance would reveal he was involved with Indians and mining, while a closer examination would find him actively interested in customs affairs, civic matters, real estate problems, and farming possibilities. Browne was a ubiquitous figure from Port Townsend, Washington Territory to Galveston, Texas. Concerning Browne's travels, one author remarked that his "path over the western section of our country, if marked on a map, would look like veins of wealth on the body politic, or, like the imaginary wanderings of the American Eagle." ¹

Yet it was not his job with the Treasury Department that made Browne one of the better known men in America during the last half of the nineteenth century. Browne's reputation rested upon his literary accomplishments. He

journeyed extensively over nearly every continent and produced memoirs of his travels in the leading newspapers and magazines of his time. Harper's Magazine was the principal depository for his accounts of his life abroad. From 1853 to 1868 Harper and Brothers published forty-two installments of his adventures in Europe, Iceland, Africa, the Near East, and the American West. Moreover, while he conducted his investigations for the Treasury Department from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Coast, he gathered enough knowledge of the mineral resources of the West to procure a Federal appointment as the first Commissioner of Mining Statistics for the States West of the Rocky Mountains. The two reports he issued from that office remained standard works on the subject for more than fifty years.

1Nearly all of these articles were published later as books, some being increased by Browne in length and others gathered together and issued as a unit.

2Browne was appointed to this position on August 2, 1866. J. Ross Browne and James W. Taylor, Reports on the Mineral Resources of the United States (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1867), 3.

That Browne produced such volumes is adequate testimony for two of his most prominent characteristics: his honesty and his ability to work hard and efficiently.

Browne's integrity was quite well known. He would not allow custom or sentiment to prevent him from making objective remarks to his superiors regarding any matter which might concern a given task. He did not confine his observations to the narrow limits set by instructions, but broadened the area under scrutiny to include all that influenced the situation. Unlike the vast majority of Federal officers, Browne took his job seriously. He was not content merely to draw his pay for reporting the facts revealed by his investigations. He insisted, rather, that abuses be corrected as soon as possible and policies implemented to prevent any recurrence. Needless to say, those who operated the patronage system did their best to stifle Browne's suggestions. They worked against him in Washington and on the Pacific

Mineral Resources of the States and Territories West of the Rocky Mountains (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1868). Neither of these volumes should be confused, as they often are, with the privately printed Resources of the Pacific Slope: a Statistical and Descriptive Summary, with a Sketch of the Settlement and Explorations of Lower California (New York: Appleton and Co., 1869), which is substantially the same as the first two.
Coast, making his job a frustrating and thankless one. Yet Browne patiently removed every obstacle placed in his path. He believed firmly that "no man who is true to himself can fail in his object; I have never yet despaired of final success." This "final success" was a diplomatic position in some foreign port, where he could give vent to his desire to travel. Not until 1868, however, did he achieve his goal.

1J. Ross Browne, Special Agent of the Treasury Department, San Francisco, 2 October 1856, to James Guthrie, Secretary of the Treasury, Washington; Letters and Reports Received from Special Agents, 1856-61: J. Ross Browne: 1854-57, National Archives (hereinafter referred to as NAB), Microcopy 177, Roll 1, 378. Browne sent this letter in reply to Guthrie's query about what he could do for Browne, since the special agent was growing increasingly unhappy with his job.

2Browne began his first and only diplomatic assignment on April 11, 1868. As United States Minister Plenipotentiary to China, he pursued a course which displeased the government, though it was a realistic one (New York Times, 19 September 1869, 1). The position of Minister to China was the culmination of a long and difficult government career for Browne, one in which he faced tremendous amounts of criticism for doing an honest job. And, when he was recalled from China, many of the periodicals across the nation continued to heap abuse upon him. One weekly, though, sympathized with him and expressed very well what Browne must have felt: "It must be a curious sensation to go abroad with the applause of one's countrymen, lead what one considers a sober, moral, and industrious life during one's absence, and then suddenly to open the papers of one's native land and find one's self described as a disgrace to one's home and
Browne's first experience with Federal matters was not ordered by the government. Yet it proved later to be an important one. In the fall of 1841 Browne made his first visit to Washington, D.C.¹ During his stay in the capital he gained an insight into the human character as it expressed itself in the workings of government, a knowledge which would profoundly influence his own long career as a Federal officer. Moreover, the skills he perfected in relation to his work in Washington opened important opportunities and became indispensable to him in the future. Browne could not have been aware, though, that November 1841 would mark the start of one of the most significant episodes in his life.

At the time the trip offered no special consequences, though it did serve a number of purposes. In the first place, it was a tonic for Browne's seriously wounded pride, which had just been shattered by his failure to win the kindred, and a person to whom a bare subsistence is all that the groaning and indignant earth can possibly owe." Nation, IX (2 September 1869), 183. For a short analysis of Browne's service in China, see Paul H. Clyde, "The China Policy of J. Ross Browne, American Minister to Peking, 1868-69," Pacific Historical Review, I (September, 1932), 312-23.

heart of a Louisville belle. Secondly, the visit partially quenched Browne's ever mounting thirst for travel. And,

1Browne was terribly dejected after he failed to gain the limelight in Louisville society during the summer of 1841. Disillusioned with himself, he expressed his sorrow to a friend: "My mind has been terribly depressed. In fact you cannot conceive the extent of my misery—the concentrated essence of black horrors would not express it. . . . I have come to the conclusion that since I have no chance among the fair sex, I will make myself a great man, if the germ of excellence be in me." J. Ross Browne, Mount Vernon, Indiana, 24 September 1841, to Daniel J. Lyons, Louisville, Daniel J. Lyons MS, University of Oregon. Evidently, Browne had dramatized his adventures in Louisville's social circle in a nationally distributed magazine (J. Ross Browne, "Misfortunes of a Timid Gentleman," *Graham's Magazine*, XIX [September, 1841], 120-23; [December, 1841], 286-92). Fiction proved too thin a veil, however, and Browne suffered accordingly. He wrote to Charles J. Peterson, who was an editor on the magazine: "Between you and me, I made a very particular ass of myself writing that . . . thing. There is more in it than you are aware of; and I can tell you it has produced such refreshing showers on my head, of envy, jealousy, scandal, and gossip, among the Louisville beauties, as make it quite agreeable to be in Washington at present." Browne, 19 November 1841, to Peterson, *loc. cit.* For additional information about Browne's life at this time, see John J. Weisert, "John Ross Browne's Great Steam Duck," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, XXII (May, 1959), 251-54.

2Browne was an inveterate traveler. Whenever one finds his name it is almost always associated with his wanderlust. Although he journeyed extensively in nearly every continent, he took his family along whenever possible. When the Brownes returned from China in 1869, his son remarked about his father's pension: "I belong to the family of one possessed with the Demon of Travel! The desire for roaming comes upon him like the drunkard's longing for liquor. In less than three days after announcing his intention, he starts off to some remote part of the globe, in
finally, Washington offered employment to the twenty year old youth. The fact that he had never been to the capital was in itself enough to attract him, for that germ of wanderlust which would characterize his life was beginning to affect him. Washington was not Europe, where he had wanted to travel at least since 1840, but it was a step in the quest of no one knows what: sometimes I have doubted that he himself knows. I have been flying with the rest of the flock, from one end of the world to the other, but to no purpose that I have yet been able to discover, except to get away from the last place." Spencer Browne, "Queer Sights and Ways in Peking," *Overland Monthly*, VII (September, 1871), 242. Even when mentioning Browne in passing, people usually associated him with his travels: "In the afternoon I met the celebrated traveler, J. Ross Browne. He appears a quiet fellow, not at all the one to visit so many distant lands and write such genial accounts of what he sees." William H. Brewer, *Up and Down California in 1860-1864: the Journal of William H. Brewer*, ed. Francis P. Farquhar (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1931), 452.

1 J. Ross Browne, Louisville, Kentucky, 14 March 1840, to Charles J. Peterson, Philadelphia, Charles J. Peterson Collection, Harvard University. Tiring of his sedentary life as a police reporter on his father's newspaper, the *Louisville Public Advertiser* (for a general description of Browne's life at this time, see John J. Weisert, "Thomas Edgerton Browne and John Ross Browne in Kentucky," *Filson Club Historical Quarterly*, XXXVI [October, 1962], 329-39), Browne determined to go abroad: "It is my intention to start a tour through Europe, in a few weeks, if nothing happens to prevent me, in company with two literary gentlemen of this city. . . ." Browne, 14 March, 1840, to Peterson, *loc. cit.*
right direction. Like his father,¹ who accompanied him, Browne always sought ways in which to earn a living by writing. An agreement with several Western editors to report for their readers the debates of the Senate brought the pair to the capital.²

While his father looked upon the trip mainly as a means of earning a living, Browne viewed it as an opportunity to save enough money to pay for a European excursion. It was, though, the preparations the pair made for their work that were to become the most important part of the visit. They learned at this time "Gould's System of Stenography" well enough to feel "prepared to give verbatim reports, if desired, of all the speeches and proceedings in

¹Browne's father, Thomas Edgerton Browne, had been an Irish political agitator with his anti-English newspaper, The Comet, before he was arrested and kept in prison in the early 1830's. Rock, op. cit., 12-13. Faced with the alternatives to remain in jail or leave Britain, he chose the latter. Shortly thereafter, he sailed for the United States, where after several months of wandering, he finally settled in Louisville, eventually re-entering the newspaper field. For more information about Thomas Edgerton Browne, see Weisert, "Thomas Edgerton Browne and John Ross Browne in Kentucky," loc. cit., 329-32.

²Browne, 19 November 1841, to Peterson, loc. cit.
the Senate.¹ A few years later this skill at shorthand earned for Browne the job of Official Reporter for the California constitutional convention of 1849, and it proved a vital weapon in his fight against fraud and malfeasance as Special Agent of the Treasury Department during the 1850's.

The winter of 1841-42 offered more than the opportunity to practice shorthand. It also gave Browne the chance to observe famous politicians in action. The result was that he began to grow disenchanted from his childhood illusions about the altruism of legislators. Although a tour of the public buildings impressed Browne with their grandeur, he was chagrined by the smallness of the minds that worked in them.² Here Browne saw the unforgettable morass of patronage and party politics, the bitter fruits of which he fought

¹Ibid. For a general survey of Browne's role as a shorthand reporter, see Ward E. McConnell, "J. Ross Browne—Bonanza Reporter," National Shorthand Reporter, VIII (October, 1946), 3-5. This article is mainly a restatement of the observations made in Rock, op. cit., 16-27 passim.

²J. Ross Browne, Washington, 30 November 1841, to Charles J. Peterson, Philadelphia, Charles J. Peterson Collection, New York Historical Society. Browne found Washington an interesting place: "Since the receipt of your last, I have been busily engaged in reviewing all the curiosities of Washington— including those of the Patent Office, the Capitol, the Navy-yard, and various buildings and places of public resort; all of which interested me so much as to render me unfit for scribbling of any description."
against throughout his career as a government official. It was not, however, until 1860, when he was fired from his job as Special Agent, that he felt he was in a position to expose publicly the detrimental results of patronage and the prostitution of politics.\footnote{Browne was dismissed from public service by a letter from the Treasury Department dated 15 February 1860. J. Ross Browne, San Francisco, 17 March 1860, to Howell Cobb, Secretary of the Treasury, Washington; Letters and Reports Received by the Secretary of the Treasury from Special Agents Concerning Investigations Throughout the United States and Territories, 1857-61 (hereinafter referred to as NAA), Microcopy 177, Roll 2, 41.} Meanwhile, he contented himself during the winter of 1841-42 with accurately reporting Senatorial debates for the Western press.

Although his work in the Senate chamber occupied much of his time, Browne managed to acquire an influential circle of friends. Many of these people were literary men,\footnote{Among the young authors residing in Washington was Jesse E. Don, a contributor to Graham's Magazine during the 1840's. Though Browne does not mention any others specifically, in his letters to Peterson he describes socializing with the capital's younger literary people. Browne, 30 November 1841, to Peterson, \textit{loc. cit.}} writers with whom Browne felt comfortable, since his own career as an author had already progressed with several short stories published in \textit{Graham's Magazine} and the \textit{Southern}
If these literary contacts helped to advance his writing opportunities, his other Washington friends aided him in finding a job with the Federal government. It was to be, however, nearly a year and a half before his experiences in Washington during 1841-42 would bear fruit.

A cruise on a whaler, a sojourn on the isle of Zanzibar, and a job aboard a merchantman occupied Browne's time after he tired of his reporting job in Washington early in July 1842. What happened next Browne later described in the preface to one of his books:

I set out from Washington with fifteen dollars, to make a tour of the East. I got as far east as New York, where the last dollar and the prospect of reaching Jerusalem came to a conclusion at the same time. Sooner than return home, after having made so good a beginning, I shipped before the mast in a whaler, and did some service, during a voyage to the Indian Ocean, in the way of scrubbing decks and catching whales. A mutiny occurred at the island of

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1 During 1840 and 1841, Browne saw six of his short stories published in these magazines.

2 Browne lived sixteen months abroad, from July, 1842 to November, 1843. The time he spent on a whaler and on the island of Zanzibar has been fully described in his book *Etchings of a Whaling Cruise; With Notes of a Sojourn on the Isle of Zanzibar, To Which Is Appended a Brief History of the Whale Fishery; Its Past and Present* (New York: Harpers, 1846).
Zanzibar, where I sold myself out of the vessel for thirty dollars and a chest of old clothes; and spent three months very pleasantly at the consular residence, in the vicinity of his Highness the Imaum of Muscat.¹

By November 1843, Browne was back in Washington where his stenographic skills procured for him his first job with the Federal government.² He was now hired as a shorthand reporter for the Congressional Globe.³ During the next several months, Browne quickly realized that even United States Senators were capable of "the small trickery practiced in the struggle for power, the overbearing aristocracy of station and the heartless and selfish intrigues in political circles. . . ."⁴ If his earlier experience with Congress had raised doubts in his mind about the idealism of legislators, this second occasion cemented his thoughts: an honest man would have a very difficult time working for the Federal government.

¹Yusef; or, the Journey of the Frangi. A Crusade in the East (New York: Harpers, 1853), v-vi.
²Rock, op. cit., 21.
⁴As in Rock, op. cit., 16, without crediting Browne.
Washington, however, did not mean work only. While reporting for the *Globe*, he found time to ingratiate himself with the members of the capital's younger set. Feeling for his fellow men, experiences aboard a whaler, musical ability, and a literary reputation earned for him a prominent place among Washington's most eligible bachelors. Before long, he met Lucy Anna Mitchell, the daughter of a well known Washington doctor and Maryland farmer, Spencer Cochrane Mitchell.¹ For the next two years Browne was so infatuated with his lady love that he could think of nothing else. "In due time, after troubles enough to crush any man who had not grappled with the big fish of the sea," he "overcame the prejudices of sundry old ladies, including anxious mothers, spinster aunts, and friendly old maids, who had no great opinion of a young fellow who had run away from home on so extensive a frolic." All such prejudices he overcame and "wound up," he said, "by getting married."²


²J. Ross Browne, Washington, 9 November 1846, to Richard Henry Dana, Boston, Richard Henry Dana Collection, Massachusetts Historical Society. In this letter Browne introduced himself to Dana as a believer in the cause to make fairer laws for American seamen.
Shortly thereafter, in April 1845, he set off on a trip to present his new bride to his family and friends in Kentucky and Ohio.\(^1\) After a brief stay\(^2\) in Cincinnati, the new couple traveled to Columbus, Ohio, where Browne had been offered a job as clerk, contributor, reporter and general business overseer on the *Ohio Statesman*.\(^3\) Two months later he accepted an appointment as an assistant compiler of bank statistics in the Treasury Department.\(^4\) Soon Browne's ready geniality and consistent efficiency prompted Robert J. Walker, the Secretary of the Treasury, to invite Browne to be his private secretary.\(^5\) It was not long, however, before office life became too tedious to afford him any amusement.

To relieve the monotony of daily routine, Browne used his

\(^1\) J. Ross Browne, Washington, 17 September 1847, to Lewis J. Cist, Lewis J. Cist MSS, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Cist was an old friend of Browne when both lived in Cincinnati in the early 1840's. He was a poet of some merit, publishing many poems in a variety of popular magazines during the 1840's.

\(^2\) Ibid.

\(^3\) Ibid. It was on the [Columbus] *Ohio Statesman* that Browne learned a good deal about bookkeeping, a skill which was vitally necessary in his job as special agent.

\(^4\) Ibid. See also Browne, *Yusef*, vi.

\(^5\) Browne, 17 September 1847, to Cist, *loc. cit.*
spare time constructively.

During the fall and winter of 1845 he gathered together some manuscript notes he had taken while on the whaling voyage, revised and arranged them to the best of his ability, and submitted them in January 1846 to Harper and Brothers in New York. The publishers recognized the importance of the book and published it in October under the title Etchings of a Whaling Cruise. The excitement of seeing his book through the press, though irksome at times, did provide some variety to his otherwise regular and dull life. More excitement was, however, in store for Browne. Once his book was read by the reviewers, it became a great success. Many hailed it as being every bit as important as Richard Henry Dana's Two Years Before the Mast, saying

1Ibid.

2Ibid.

3Ibid.

4From every part of the country, Browne received very flattering notices of his book. The most prominent of the magazines in which the volume was reviewed were the Knickerbocker, XXVIII (November, 1846), 449, Debow's Commercial Review, III (February, 1847), 183, and American Agriculturalist, V (December, 1846), 382.

5The American Review, IV (November, 1846), 539-40, felt it was very nearly as clever a book as Dana's. Hunt's
that what Dana had done for the cause of merchant sailors,
Browne had done to help the common whaleman.¹ Browne became
famous not only in the United States but in England as well.²
It was perhaps this newly won fame that made Secretary
Walker take more notice of his amanuensis. In any case,
Walker invited Browne during the summer of 1847 to accompany
him on a tour of Rockaway and other distant ports.³

Yet these respites from the grueling, boring job of
compiling bank statistics and writing dull, detailed

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¹Herman Melville's review of Etchings of a Whaling
Cruise, by J. Ross Browne, in Literary World, I (6 March
1847), 105-06: "Indeed, what Mr. Dana has so admirably done
in describing the vicissitudes of the merchant sailor's
life, Mr. Browne has very creditably achieved with respect
to the hearty whaleman's."

²At least two important English publications
reviewed Browne's work most favorably. While the Anthenaeum
(23 January 1847), 91-94, found the author's descriptive
details difficult to believe, the Edinburg Review, LXXXVI
(July, 1847), 67-73, felt that Browne gave a faithful
delineation of the American whale fishery. The book was
also published in England by Murray and Company in 1846
with the same title.

³Browne, 17 September 1847, to Cist, loc. cit.
financial reports did not nearly satisfy Browne. Since 1845
he had labored hard at his desk. Now, in 1849, he deter-
mined to travel again; only this time he would support him-
self, he hoped, with a government commission. To gain his
objective, he pleaded constantly with Walker to help him
procure a diplomatic post, preferably in the Near East.
Frequently Browne would complain to the Secretary that his
job was stifling, making him nervous and ill. Finally, on
December 28, 1848 Walker presented Browne with an appoint-
ment as a lieutenant in the United States Revenue Marine.¹

¹Robert J. Walker, Washington, 28 December 1848, to
Browne, U. S., Congress, House, California and New Mexico,
There has been some poor guessing about just why Browne came
to California in 1849. Effie Mona Mack, in her Mark Twain
in Nevada (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1947), 112,
somehow arrived at the conclusion that he was sent out offici-
ally as an internal revenue inspector but was in reality
part of an espionage system to report on appointees who did
not favor William Gwin. She maintained also that he was an
informant to Southern leaders at this time (ibid., 205).
She then declared that he gave up his spying in favor of
participating in the gold mania and took part in most of the
gold rushes in California (ibid., 362). From all indications,
however, it is safe to say that Browne came to California for
only one purpose: to carry out revenue instructions. Con-
cerning the suggestion that he followed the gold rush over
much of California, it should be observed that Browne arrived
in California in August 1849, reported the constitutional
convention during September and October, and had sailed back
to New York by November 1849. He hardly would have had time
to seek any gold. Moreover, all evidence points to the fact
Although Browne was not instructed to visit the Near East, he was given the opportunity to travel to the Pacific Coast. He was ordered to sail for San Francisco, where he was to acquire information about how to prevent American seamen from deserting. He was then to report his findings to Captain Alexander V. Fraser of the revenue cutter Cornelius W. Lawrence. Once his mission in San Francisco had been carried out, Browne was to proceed to Oregon with official dispatches relating to the revenue service, one of which concerned how the revenue cutter in the Northwest could best be used.¹

Three weeks later, on January 22, 1849, Browne sailed from New York on his way to California.² The voyage proved to be a most interesting one. In 1853, when Browne looked back on the trip, he summed up what occurred:

On the voyage to Rio, a difficulty occurred between the captain and the passengers of the vessel, and we were detained there nearly a month. I took part with the rebels, because I believed them to be right. The captain was deposed by the American

that Browne did not return to the Pacific Coast until 1854, where his official duties kept him fully occupied until 1860.

¹Ibid.
²Rock, op. cit., 23.
consul, and the command of the vessel was offered to me; but having taken an active part against the late captain, I could not with propriety accept the offer. A whaling captain, who had lost his vessel near Buenos Ayres, was placed in the command, and we proceeded on our voyage around Cape Horn. After a long and dreary passage we made the island of Juan Fernandez. In company with ten passengers, I left the ship seventy miles out at sea, and went ashore in a small boat, for the purpose of gathering up some tidings in regard to my old friend Robinson Crusoe. What befell us on that memorable expedition is fully set forth in a narrative recently published in "Harper's Magazine." Subsequently we spent time in Lima, "the City of the Kings." ¹

Although the publication of Browne's adventures on "Robinson Crusoe's island" ² created immense popularity for

¹Browne, Yusef, vi.

²The narrative was first published as a three-part series: J. Ross Browne, "Crusoe Life. A Narrative of Adventures in the Island of Juan Fernandez," Harper's Magazine, VI (February, 1853), 300-317 (March, 1853), 470-87, and (April, 1853), 588-604. In 1864, Harpers began to publish in book form Browne's articles as they appeared in their magazine. The first of the series was Crusoe's Island: a Ramble in the Footsteps of Alexander Selkirk. With Sketches of Adventure in California and Washoe (New York: Harpers, 1864). The trip was also recorded by one of Browne's fellow wanderers, Dr. Jacob Davis Babcock Stillman, who first published his diary in a series of magazine articles: "Seeking the Golden Fleece," Overland Monthly, XI (September, 1873), 226-33, (October, 1873), 297-305, (November, 1873), 417-21, (December, 1873), 539-47, XII (January, 1874), 40-47, (February, 1874), 156-63, and (March, 1874), 250-56. The articles were later issued as a book, Seeking the Golden Fleece (San Francisco: A. Roman and Co., 1877).
him as a writer, the adventures he shared with his fellow travelers became the most important part of the trip. These men were headed, for the most part, for the goldfields of California. They were "Forty-Niners" in every respect. It was at this time that Browne took his first prolonged view of the kind of people with whom he would associate during the 1850's. Many of these men went to California to "get rich quick." They were not interested in settling the land or in the progress of California. They were opportunists who wanted to take the wealth they drained from California back East. In a way, these argonauts were like the government officials with whom Browne became directly involved for

1A sample of the laudatory reviews of the book can be found in the New York Times, 9 November 1864, 2: "A volume of varied attractions, which owes as much to the pencil as it does to the pen of its accomplished author and illustrator. Whatever part of the world he may unexpectedly find himself in, Mr. Browne's vivacity never deserts him, and he always possesses the graphic talent to lay before his readers the very scenes and actors that his lengthened rambles around the world have made him familiar with." Attesting to the popularity of the volume is the fact that it was reprinted at least five times (1867, 1871, 1872, 1873, 1875) by Harpers, and Sampson, Low and Company published it in London in 1864 also.

2A vividly humorous description of these argonauts is found in Browne's "Crusoe Life," Harper's Magazine, VI (February, 1853), 314-15.
the next ten years. The most that Browne could say for them was that they were detrimental to the interests of responsible and efficient government.

The future of the State of California was not on Browne's mind, however, when the ship finally docked at San Francisco on August 5, 1849.¹ He was more anxious to collect the mail that had been forwarded to him and be off on his investigation for the Treasury Department. Upon opening his correspondence, Browne received a painful surprise: "It was my fortune to arrive penniless in California, and to find, by way of consolation, that a reduction had been made by Congress in the number of revenue vessels, and that my services in that branch of public business were no longer required."² This was indeed a stroke of bad luck. Yet it was to be the start of the greatest streak of good fortune that would befall Browne for the next nineteen years. It not only helped spread his fame throughout California, but it provided him with the means to travel to the Near East

¹Rock, op. cit., 25.

²Browne, Yusef, loc. cit. In the New York Times, 19 January 1863, 2, Browne is quoted to have said that he had twenty-five cents upon his arrival in California in 1849.
where he had always hoped to go. Moreover, it lent a great boost to his literary reputation.1 Most important, though, it aided him tremendously in procuring the job he held from 1853 to 1860.

The strange streets of San Francisco did not prove to be entirely inhospitable, however; and, Browne was soon able to solve his problem: "While thinking seriously of taking in washing at six dollars a dozen, or devoting the remainder of my days to mule-driving as a profession, I was unexpectedly elevated to the position of post-office agent; and went about the country for the purpose of making postmasters."2 Browne had met an old friend, R. T. P. Allen, Special Agent for the United States Post Office.3 Coinci-

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1The publication of several articles in 1853, supported by the printing of Yusef that same year, perked up his spirits greatly concerning his literary career. However, in 1847 he felt: "The amount of my experience in literature . . . is just this: followed as a profession it is an uncertain reliance, and a pursuit likely to wear out the mental machine before competency has been gained—as an amusement, it subjects one to everlasting vexations and disappointments." Browne, 17 September 1847, to Cist, loc. cit.

2Browne, Yusef, vii.

3Letter of Dr. B. Sacks, Historical Consultant, Arizona Historical Foundation, Baltimore, 4 September 1963, to author, based on manuscripts in his collection.
dentally with Browne's need of a job, Allen was searching for a responsible person to establish post offices at San Jose, Santa Barbara, Los Angeles, and San Diego. Browne was hired.

While making preparations for his new job, Browne heard somehow that the convention to draft a constitution for the proposed State of California lacked an official reporter. Never a man to overlook an opportunity to make money or to meet influential people, Browne saw his chance. On his way to San Jose, he probably speculated how he might get that position. After establishing a post office in San Jose, he began to put his plan into operation. Monterey, the meeting place of the convention, was only sixty-five miles away and on the road to Santa Barbara, his next stop. Should he be able to convince the steering committee at Monterey that he was their man for official reporter, he would resign his post office commission and set to work with the delegates who were beginning to arrive from all parts of California.2

1 Browne, Yusef, vii.

2 Among the dozens of important people Browne met in Monterey was Bayard Taylor, who was in California gathering
After some weeks of wrangling with the finance committee, headed by Elisha Crosby, Browne was able to make an agreement to report the debates of the convention. He would be paid the $10,000 he demanded, $6,000 of which was to be paid in advance to defray the costs of printing and distributing the debates. The remaining $4,000 Browne intended to take as a profit and pay all other expenses attending the publication.\(^1\) By proposing such terms, Browne hoped to succeed with a shrewd maneuver: not only would he be paid well for the job, but his name appended to the title page of the book would greatly increase his national reputation.

notes for his forthcoming book, Eldorado; or, Adventures in the Path of Empire (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1850). Whether or not the two had met prior to 1849 has not been determined (cf. Rock, op. cit., 27). In any case, Taylor wrote of the jaunt the two made around the Monterey area in his book. It has not been feasible to consult the original edition of Taylor's book. Therefore page references to the work will be cited from the 1949 printing published by Alfred A. Knopf and Company. See 1949 edition, 129-30. Six months later the two were in Washington. Taylor, however, neglected to look up his friend Browne, and the latter gently chastised him for not paying a visit. J. Ross Browne, Washington, 29 April 1850, to Bayard Taylor, Bayard Taylor MSS, Cornell University Library.

\(^1\) J. Ross Browne, Monterey, 17 September 1849, to Elisha O. Crosby, Finance Committee Chairman, Monterey, Elisha O. Crosby MSS, Bancroft Library, University of California.
since the eyes of the nation were anxiously focused on the proposition of statehood for California. Doubtless he especially hoped to impress influential people in Washington, for by this time Browne was increasingly desirous of acquiring a diplomatic appointment.

With the close of the California convention on October 13, 1849, Browne hastily gathered his notes of the debates and boarded a steamer for the East. He was anxious to find a printer, pay for the publication of the proceedings, and take his profit to finance a trip to Europe. As it turned out, matters worked very much to his advantage.¹

¹Not only did Browne contract with John T. Towers of Washington to print the 2,000 copies ordered by the finance committee, but the United States Senate purchased 2,000 additional volumes. J. Ross Browne, Washington, 29 May 1850, to Thomas Ritchie, Editor, Richmond [Virginia] Inquirer, Thomas Ritchie Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Moreover, Browne anticipated that a Spanish translation would sell. Accordingly, he arranged with S. W. Benedict of New York to print a Spanish edition (J. Ross Browne, Relación de los Debates de la Convención de California, Sobre de Estada, en Setiembre y Octubre de 1849 [Nueva York: S. W. Benedict and Company, 1851]). There is some disagreement about the specific number of copies the California Convention ordered. Most sources record that Browne was ordered to have printed 1,000 copies; but, Browne, in his letter to Ritchie, tells of 2,000 ordered. Either Browne was fabricating to Ritchie, from whom he wanted a favorable review in his newspaper, or the finance committee changed their mind at the last minute. See Taylor, op. cit., 118, for his opinion of the situation.
His manuscript was published in 1850,\(^1\) and he made a highly successful tour of the Continent during 1851-52.\(^2\)

Upon his return to Washington, he expanded his growing literary reputation in the hope that it might win for him a diplomatic appointment.\(^3\) But the need to provide for

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\(^2\)With the financial arrangements concluded and with a few thousand dollars in his pocket, Browne gathered together his family and departed for Europe in September, 1851 (Rock, *op. cit.*, 28). Always seeking a way to combine pleasure with profit, Browne made arrangements with the Washington *National Intelligencer* to be its European correspondent. Consequently, eight long and amusing letters from Browne were published during his tour: *[Washington] National Intelligencer*, 4 March 1852, 2; 25 March 1852, 4; 6, 13, 29 April 1852, 4; 8 May 1852, 4; 10, 17 June 1852, 4. Yet there was more to the publication of these articles than it might appear. Browne admitted that he considered it probable that he might use the material at some future period (Browne, Yusef, iv). He did not, however, specifically mention what was on his mind.

\(^3\)Browne hoped to take advantage of the popular practice of appointing literary men to diplomatic posts, and with a wide reputation as an author Browne felt he would be in a strong position to ask for at least a consulship. Upon his return from Europe he worked hard to build his popularity as an author. During the fall of 1852, he struggled to finish *Yusef*, intending to petition the government as soon as practical. He wrote to Harpers jestingly: "This winter approaching I intend making application to Congress for the command of an expedition into Persia and the Caspian Sea, on authority to undertake, at the expense of government, the
his ever-larger family now turned Browne away from traveling and writing as a means of livelihood, and he focused his attention upon procuring a government position in Washington.¹

removal of the sands from the Lybean [sic] Desert. It will be necessary for me therefore to have some ground to go upon, and I think a book will be ground enough to warrant Congress in sending me as far away from the country as possible." J. Ross Browne, Washington, 1 October 1852, to Harper and Brothers, New York, Harpers Collection, J. Pierpont Morgan Library, New York City. Thus here is illustrated how Browne cleverly inserted humor into his plan. Harpers was receptive, and in 1853 three excerpts from the forthcoming Yusef made their appearance in Harper's Magazine, VI (January, 1853), 212-17, (April, 1853), 635-36, and (May, 1853), 733-48. Meanwhile, during the first half of 1853, the series of articles in the magazine about Juan Fernandez Island had "attracted very considerable attention, on account of the easy and spirited style of the narrative and the diversity of character and incidents introduced, to the great amusement of the reader." Godey's Lady's Book, LXIX (December, 1864), 547. See also supra, 20, fn. 2.

¹With success reaped from his spreading literary fame, Browne felt confident in February, 1853 that once Yusef was published he could successfully apply for a consular job. Preferably, he wished to be assigned to some part of Europe or South America. J. Ross Browne, Washington, 23 February 1853, to Harper and Brothers, New York, Harpers Collection, loc. cit. Browne's luck faded at this juncture. The books, letters of recommendation (see Browne, 23 February 1853, to Harpers, loc. cit.), his own influence and that of friends all failed to win an appointment for him. Still Browne did not give up his desire to travel. In July, realizing his writing talent was highly regarded, he asked Harpers to commission him to visit the Far East. If they would furnish him the means on the strength of what he could do for their magazine, he would leave for China within the next two months. J. Ross Browne, Washington, 27 July 1853, to Harper and Brothers, New York, Harpers Collection,
As he might have expected, it was another job with the Treasury Department that he was offered. His wishes to travel were to be partially fulfilled: he was appointed as a special revenue agent. It would be his duty to conduct investigations of various Federal agencies throughout the country. At last Browne was installed in the position he would hold until 1860. For those seven years he would be, as he signed himself, the "most obedient servant" of the Secretary of the Treasury.

J. Pierpont Morgan Library, New York City. As a matter of fact, Browne was so anxious to move that he threatened to visit the "Celestial Empire" with or without a commission. It turned out, however, that this effort also died aborning.
The route of Browne's tour of Southeast Texas made in the spring of 1854 is drawn in above. The heavy line represents the part of the trip Browne mentioned specifically; the broken line indicates the portion of the journey Browne alluded to.
In January 1854 Browne left New York by steamer for Galveston, Texas. Behind him lay several weeks of experience investigating revenue affairs in the Great Lakes region, which helped to prepare him for a similar duty in Texas.\(^1\) Upon docking at Galveston, Browne began a series of investigations in an atmosphere of danger—one so hazardous, in fact, that he was authorized to call upon the Army for protection.\(^2\) The first part of his tour, however, was routine, and not for some time did Browne feel it necessary to call for troopers. His route took him through the major settlements in southeast Texas. He conducted business in Austin, Galveston, Eagle Pass, San Antonio, Laredo, and Rio Grande City.

Upon examining the customs house at Galveston in the

\(^1\)Rock, *op. cit.*, 32-33.

\(^2\)Browne, Laredo, Texas, 14 February 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 84. His instructions to call upon the Army for protection came from the War Department.
last week in January, Browne felt he would enjoy a pleasant trip through Texas. Galveston proved to be, however, the calm before the storm. There he found the books and accounts kept satisfactorily by well informed revenue officers of good character.\(^1\) At San Antonio the situation was far different. Arriving just prior to February 2, Browne found a confused state of affairs.\(^2\) Two matters caught his attention: stock was being illegally brought in from Mexico, and the inattentive collector of customs was not doing his job.\(^3\) The collector had totally ignored revenue matters, preferring instead to devote all his time to buying and selling stock. Consequently, when his deputy refused to accept any duties, claiming he had no authority to do so, Mexican stock had been sold in San Antonio tax-free.\(^4\) This was too much for Browne. Immediately he contacted the importer and demanded

\(^1\)\textit{Ibid.}

\(^2\)Browne, Austin, Texas, 26 January 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 83.

\(^3\)Browne found the revenue officer living twelve miles from town, a distance which would prevent him from conducting his official business. Browne, Laredo, Texas, 14 February 1854, to Guthrie, \textit{loc. cit.}, 84.

\(^4\)Browne, San Antonio, Texas, 2 February 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 85.
the duty.\footnote{The buyer, E. Jones and Company, attempted to dodge payment by insisting that the stock were all breed mares and under the law exempt from duty. Eventually Browne collected the whole tax, $266. Ibid.} It was, however, only after Browne threatened court action that he was able to collect.\footnote{Ibid.} To prevent such a situation from recurring, he took the collector's resignation and appointed a temporary officer in his place.

San Antonio had been the scene of the first serious problems for Browne. There he saw shirking of responsibility and lack of initiative. The results were a loss of thousands of dollars in duties that had not been collected and the encouragement of a habit of smuggling which was difficult to stop. To Browne it was vital that the laws be respected and enforced. Should the people lose respect for the Federal officials, the laws would become useless. Chaos would result. His experience at San Antonio was mild, however, when compared to events at Eagle Pass and the villages along the Rio Grande.

Moving south to the Rio Grande, Browne found a ridiculous situation at Eagle Pass. Although an inspector was stationed there, no business was being conducted. Goods

\footnote{Ibid.}
from Mexico were moving across the river without the slightest attention paid to the revenue laws of the United States. The customs officer felt himself powerless to do anything: he had no instructions from Washington.\(^1\) Browne quickly explained both verbally and in writing what the inspector was to do. Browne shook his head wonderingly as he started for Laredo, where he arrived the week of February 14, but surprisingly enough customs affairs at Laredo were well attended. Moreover, an examination of the books revealed that the revenue collected had nearly doubled due to the effectiveness of the mounted inspectors.\(^2\)

Unfortunately the Treasury Department had decided to abandon the corps of mounted inspectors. When Browne was told of this plan, he hastened to inform Secretary Guthrie that these men had proved to be an incalculable amount of good. They effectively halted smuggling in the Laredo area by dispersing over the countryside and blocking all possible trails from Mexico. Browne felt that the mounted inspectors were absolutely essential to the protection of the frontier.

\(^1\) Browne, 14 February 1854, to Guthrie, \textit{loc. cit.}.

\(^2\) \textit{Ibid.}
Without them the growth of population in Texas would be flooded with foreign goods entering duty free.¹

At Laredo Browne paused to rest and otherwise prepare for the most hazardous part of his tour, an inspection of the revenue stations along the lower Rio Grande from Laredo to Brownsville. Fifteen years later Browne described his situation in this vivid language:

The country through which I expected to travel was entirely different in its climate and physical aspect from any I had yet visited, and possessed in addition to the attraction of novelty a peculiar interest arising from the eventful character of its history. Some of the most sanguinary battles recorded in the annals of border warfare had taken place in those wild stretches of prairie lying between the Nueces and the Rio Grande, through which my route lay.

In consequence of the unsettled condition of Western Texas, which was still infested by roving bands of Lipan and Comanche Indians, I was authorized to call for a military escort, should I find it necessary. The duty assigned to me was not without risk in other respects, for I had to deal with a very lawless set of white men, chiefly renegades from the American army, and the offscourings of all the disreputable classes set

¹The first page of this letter is missing. To whom it was addressed, the date it was sent and from where it was mailed cannot be known therefore. It will be identified as NAB, 82-84. It is possible that some of Browne's reports never reached Washington since mail service on the frontier was unsure; consequently, he often repeated observations he had already made in his other reports to various government officials.
adrift after the Mexican war.

The most enterprising of these desperadoes were now engaged in smuggling Mexican stock across the line, and there was reason to believe that they sometimes added murder to their list of crimes. All rumors respecting their acts, however, were vague and unreliable. They were supposed to have stations at convenient intervals along the Rio Grande, extending from Eagle Pass to Brazos Santiago, and to be in league with a disreputable class of Texas settlers, who purchased the stolen and smuggled stock. It was important to the government, if such stations existed, that they should be broken up, not only because of the frauds upon the revenue, but to arrest, if practicable, the repeated outrages committed by these lawless men upon inoffensive Mexicans and tribes of friendly Indians.¹

While at Laredo Browne heard from a group of soldiers, who had just returned from the lower Rio Grande Valley, that the territory was in a lawless state.² At least three murders had been committed within a few days of Browne's

¹J. Ross Browne, "A Ride on the Texas Frontier," Overland Monthly, I (August, 1868), 157. This article was the first of several contributions Browne made to San Francisco's new publication. In reviewing the contents of the magazine, the Nation, VII (24 September 1868), 253, selected Browne's article as an example of the fine stories in the periodical. At this time Browne continued to maintain an enviable reputation as a humorist. The article was originally scheduled for the first issue of the magazine, but was unavoidably crowded out. Noah Brooks, "Early Days of The Overland," Overland Monthly, XXXIII (July, 1898), 8. A sequel to it was printed some months later, J. Ross Browne, "Old Texan Days," Overland Monthly, I (October, 1868), 367-71.

²Browne, 14 February 1854, to Guthrie, loc. cit., 84.
arrival and banditry was running rampant. Furthermore, a Mexican rustler was encouraging the Mexicans on the American side of the river to violate the revenue laws of the United States.\(^1\) In view of these circumstances, Browne promptly accepted an offer of a detachment of six troopers to escort him as far down the Rio Grande as Ringgold Barracks. For this courtesy Browne was grateful, finding them to be "an incalculable service and in fact could have made but little progress without them."\(^2\)

Exactly what happened next cannot be documented, since only a fragment of one letter has survived from the additional reports Browne sent to Washington.\(^3\) The letters cease just as Browne was preparing to leave Fort McIntosh at Laredo. For some reason these reports have been lost, misplaced, or removed from the National Archives. Although

\(^1\)Ibid.

\(^2\)The offer came from Colonel Gustavus Loomis, the commander of Fort McIntosh at Laredo. Other officers who aided Browne were Major James Belger at San Antonio, Major S. B. Crittenden of Fort Inge, and Colonel Joseph Plympton of Fort Duncan at Eagle Pass. For their assistance Browne remarked, "I am indebted for wagons and escorts, and for every kind of attention both personal and official." Ibid.

\(^3\)NAB, loc. cit., 82-84.
the last letter is incomplete, it is clear that it is a summary of the state of revenue affairs in Texas. He mentioned, moreover, that he mailed letters from Galveston, Austin, San Antonio, Eagle Pass, Laredo, and Rio Grande City. In any case, this investigation of the Treasury Department's affairs in Texas took an abnormally long time. During his stay of four months Browne was much inconvenienced in getting from place to place, because there were no safe and regular means of conveyance. He was able, however, to take a close look at the Federal government's operations in Texas.

His experience in Texas had taught Browne much. In adjusting revenue affairs along the Rio Grande, he learned to deal with the same types of problems he found later on the Pacific Coast. The influx of population had shifted the centers of commerce, which called for a redefinition of revenue districts and a relocation of ports of entry. As the danger of smuggling increased, it was necessary to reorganize the customs force: in some cases help, such as boatmen and inspectors, was no longer needed, while in

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1Ibid., 84. For his humorous description of travel on the Texas frontier, see Browne's "A Ride on the Texan Frontier," loc. cit., 158-63 passim.
other instances there was a demand for additional men.¹

Moreover, the sort of people he met in Texas were similar to the type he found on the Pacific Coast during the next six years. The only difference between the malfeasance he saw in Texas and that which he uncovered in the Far West was that on the coast the misdeeds were more varied, involved far greater sums of money, and were more difficult to correct. On the other hand, Browne was disappointed that the Army on the Pacific Coast did not aid him as readily as did the troopers in Texas. As a matter of fact, the Army soon became the special object of Browne's invective, not only in his official correspondence but in his published works as well. It was not, however, until May 27, 1854 that Browne was instructed to visit California and the Pacific North-west.² A month later he was at Aspinwall, Isthmus of Panama,

¹NAB, loc. cit., 82-84. The reorganization of the revenue districts Browne suggested were extensive. The district of Brazos Santiago should include Eagle Pass, and the port of entry should be shifted from Port Isabel to Brownsville. The district of Saluria should exclude Corpus Cristi, and the port of entry should be changed from La Salle to Powderhorn.

²Browne, Treasury Department, Washington, 16 January 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 220. In this letter Browne reminds Guthrie of the date of his instructions. Browne had at this time returned to Washington after nearly eight months on the Pacific Coast.
where he prepared to leave for San Francisco. The "Bay City" became his headquarters from which he conducted several investigations of both Treasury and Indian affairs.

Once Browne had arrived, he started to work immediately on Treasury matters. By mid-summer he was making the rounds of the various Federal agencies in San Francisco. While his own office was located in the customs house, he spent much time in all the places where governmental affairs were conducted. Although the customs house and the Branch Mint were his chief concerns, he was also a familiar figure along the waterfront, a regular witness at the district courts, a frequent advisor in the surveyor's office, and an occasional visitor at the various Federal warehouses.

It can be assumed, moreover, that when time permitted Browne was a welcome guest at the haunts of California's literati. One can safely think that it was at these places during the 1850's that Browne talked with Bret Harte, Ina Coolbirth, Prentice Mulford, Joaquin Miller, and Charles Warren Stoddard. Like Browne, each of these writers had come to California in the decade after the gold rush. And

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1Browne, Aspinwall, Isthmus of Panama, 13 June 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 87.
as Browne did, each would erect his own unique monument on San Francisco's literary frontier.
CHAPTER III

PREVIEW OF THINGS TO COME: THE PACIFIC COAST IN 1854

On July 1, 1854 a slender young man of above middle height with scanty dark hair receding from his broad forehead leaned against the railing of the steamer that was bringing him into San Francisco Bay. From his vantage point on deck, he surveyed the golden-brown hills which had become so familiar to him during the fall of 1849. J. Ross Browne was back in California--this time to stay! Before him lay the most difficult years of his life, during which the concentration of all his energies was not nearly enough to carry out the monumental task he was assigned to do, as the government's only special agent on the Pacific Coast. Browne would find it impossible to usher clean and efficient practices into the government's revenue and Indian policies.

1"Paul Du Chaillu Again," Harper's Magazine, XXXVIII (January, 1869), 164. In the opening paragraphs to this article, the editor of Harper's Magazine drew a verbal portrait of Browne at the age of forty-eight. Other pictures show, however, that even at age thirty-three he was losing his hair, was slim and "had the air of a scholar..."
One of the bigger jobs he now undertook was to reduce the expenses of collecting the revenue supplied by the various customs districts, the largest of which was San Francisco. When Browne presented his credentials and instructions to Richard P. Hammond, the Collector of Customs for the District of San Francisco, he knew his job would be difficult.\(^1\) After several meetings with the collector, Browne was finally able to persuade Hammond that the force employed to collect the revenue could be appreciably reduced without injuring the customs service.\(^2\) Their only disagreement, for the present, seemed to be about the extent of such reductions. At this time the collector impressed Browne as "a gentleman of great intelligence and integrity, and an ardent supporter of the administration."\(^3\) The key phrase in

\(^1\)Browne, San Francisco, 15 July 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 88. Hammond had already been informed that Browne was due to arrive by steamer. Guthrie, Washington 2 June 1854, to R. P. Hammond, Collector of Customs, San Francisco; Letters Sent by the Secretary of the Treasury to Collectors of Customs at Pacific Ports, National Archives (hereinafter referred to as NAP), Microcopy 176, Roll 2, 248.

\(^2\)Browne, 15 July 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, loc. cit., 88.

\(^3\)Ibid.
that evaluation was "an ardent supporter of the administra-
tion." In their talks Hammond had probably pointed out that
the revenue force could certainly be reduced, but many offi-
cials held their positions as a result of political patron-
age; to fire them would be to cause the Democratic party to
lose votes. Almost immediately, then, Browne was made aware
of a problem which would thwart much of his reforming
efforts.

In any case, Browne felt that the revenue expenses
in San Francisco could be reduced by at least $100,000 per
year, "not only without detriment but greatly to the advan-
tage of the public service."\(^1\) The saving would be made by
reducing the number of employees and dropping the lease on
the Union Street warehouse where customs goods were stored.
In lowering the number of Federal officers, Browne encoun-
tered a painful problem. Many of the positions he recom-
manded for elimination were filled by able and valuable men.
Such was the case with the Deputy Surveyor and Deputy Naval
Officer. Upon investigating their duties, Browne found they
were doing all the work in their respective offices, while

\(^1\)Ibid.
their superiors did nothing.\textsuperscript{1} To Browne's way of thinking, Congress should eliminate the positions of these particular deputies. Since there was not enough business to keep the Surveyor and Naval Officer busy, they had no need of assistants. In suggesting this move, Browne stated his case:

I beg to express the opinion, derived from personal observation, that in all cases where public officers perform no actual duty, the result is injurious to the government. . . . The time misspent in private or political pursuits is paid for out of the public Treasury and properly belongs to the government, and if they are idle and occupy merely nominal positions, there can be no necessity for their continuance in office. In addition to these considerations, the public interests are still more injuriously affected by the loss of confidence on the part of the people in public officers; and where there is no confidence in the faithfulness and integrity of the constituted authorities, frequent attempts to evade the laws must be the result.\textsuperscript{2}

Meanwhile Browne's relations with Hammond had improved.\textsuperscript{3} By July 31 the collector had dismissed seventeen

\textsuperscript{1}\textit{Browne, San Francisco, 20 July 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 91.}

\textsuperscript{2}\textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{3}\textit{At this time, Browne also looked into another matter concerning both the Treasury and State Departments. An agent of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company complained to Browne that the United States Consul at Acapulco had compelled the company to ferry certain seamen from Acapulco to San}
minor revenue officers. With a bit of rapport established, Browne hastened to inform the Secretary of the Treasury, James Guthrie, that he hoped his reports did not reflect Hammond to be a spendthrift. On the contrary, Browne felt Francisco. Supposedly, these men were destitute American seamen, who had the right to such service. The agent contended that the consul received a bounty for each sailor he sent aboard. The company was losing money in the situation, since the government paid only ten dollars, while the passage cost fifty dollars. Browne, San Francisco, 15 July 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 89. Though Browne could find no proof of fraud (ibid.), his letter was sent to William L. Marcy, Secretary of State, and from there communicated to Charles L. Denman, United States Consul at Acapulco. James Guthrie, Secretary of the Treasury, Washington, 12 August 1854, to William L. Marcy, Secretary of State, Washington; Dispatches from United States Consuls in Acapulco, 1823-1906, National Archives, Microcopy 143, Roll 1. When Denman heard about the charges leveled against him, he wrote a long, detailed letter proving he felt they were false and malicious. Denman, Acapulco, 5 December 1854, to Marcy. Ibid.

1Browne, San Francisco, 31 July 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 99.

2Browne, San Francisco, 31 July 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 114. As Browne saw increasingly more evidence that the government was spending far too much money on revenue business, he suggested in detail just where expenses could be reduced. Since he was well aware that he had caused several men to lose their jobs, he was careful about his own expenses: "I have left in the hands of Messrs. Barnes and Mitchell orders for my entire compensation of $8 per day to be paid over to my family, and all I ask in addition to that is that I may not be embarrassed in my movements here for the want of means, being determined to perform the entire duty entrusted to me at all hazards, whether my allowance be sufficient or not." Browne, San Francisco, 29 July 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 96.
the collector had done his best for the government under adverse conditions. Moreover, Browne always received every assistance, kindness, and cooperation at the customs house.\(^1\) It is evident at this time that Browne would go out of his way to push through his reforms. He found excuses to defend men who really desired to take undue advantage of the government. He hoped perhaps to win them over to his side by smoothing over improper situations. There was no sense in offending people, especially since he did realize a good many votes were gathered by patronage. Browne was, however, too optimistic; and the burden of patronage was to vex him continually.

By the end of July the problem of the Union Street warehouse was requiring increasingly more of Browne's attention. Ultimately, this building would be replaced by another more suitable to the government's purposes. In the meantime, Browne discovered that the warehouse was an unnecessary expense, since the merchants were storing their goods in private places.\(^2\) There was therefore no reason to keep

\(^1\)Browne, 31 July 1854, to Guthrie, \textit{loc. cit.}, 114.
\(^2\)NAB, \textit{loc. cit.}, 82.
the lease. What really excited Browne's interest was the collapse of the walls at the end of July. Not only was that a great inconvenience, but the worst of it was that Hammond had just given the owners $8,283 to make repairs necessary to prevent such an event. Moreover, Browne discovered that the walls collapsed because the builder had used inferior material. Somehow the government had to recover the money.¹

Other problems had arisen. One in particular caught Browne's special attention. The arrival of ships from China was creating a stir in San Francisco. Once these ships docked, people viewed an appalling sight and vented their displeasure on the masters of such vessels. The ships were overloaded with human cargo: Chinese were jammed together not only below decks but on the weather deck as well. Upon seeing such a ship, Browne notified the Treasury Department that the Passenger Act of February 22, 1847 was being disgustingly violated: "The case of the Liberated can scarcely be surpassed in all its inhuman and disgusting details by that of any slaver in the African slave trade."² This

¹Browne, San Francisco, 31 July 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 116.

²Browne, San Francisco, 1 August 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 117.
overloading would be the subject of many of Browne's reports for the next seven years. Yet Washington never provided adequate legislation to enforce the law. Before he could intervene in the government's behalf, he felt compelled to carry out his instructions to make a tour of inspection of the revenue districts of the Washington and Oregon territories.

Browne left San Francisco on August 3, 1854. In the Northwest he found a great deal more improbity. He wrote to Washington that the "Northern District" was loosely managed. Moreover, since he saw that little revenue business was being conducted, and because there was little hope for an increase he recommended that the force of customs agents in the region be reduced.

He began his tour of inspection with the ports of the collection district of Umpqua, an area which extended

1 Browne, Salem, Oregon, 17 August 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 123.

2 Browne, San Francisco, 23 September 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 131.

3 Ibid.
along the Oregon coast from California to the Columbia.¹ Browne found the towns, including Gardiner, the port of entry, to be small and quiet.² As a matter of fact, business was so dull during the summer of 1854 and prospects for its increase so remote that he recommended that the District of Umpqua be attached to the District of Astoria, with the city of Astoria serving as the only port of entry.³ If this suggestion were implemented, Addison Crandall Gibbs, the collector at Gardiner, would be put out of a job. Browne wrote to the Department that although he was impressed with Gibbs, whose affairs he mentioned were in fine order, he felt that the position of collector in the Umpqua District was a needless drain upon the public treasury.⁴

Gibbs, however, was unaware of Browne's views. After Browne left Gardiner, Gibbs requested from the special

¹Browne, Umpqua, Oregon, 8 August 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 125.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Browne, San Francisco, 24 September 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 139.
agent help to preserve him in his position.\textsuperscript{1} He wrote to Browne that someone was attempting to persuade the President to replace him. Furthermore, he pointed out that he expected an increase in pay, which would help to relieve his family's poverty.\textsuperscript{2} He was concerned most of all, though, for his reputation, which a dismissal this early in his career would endanger. Browne, however, continued to remind the Department that the position of collector at Gardiner was unnecessary.\textsuperscript{3}

From Gardiner Browne proceeded northeast\textsuperscript{4} through the Umpqua and Willamette Valleys, viewing with pleasure the settlement of the land and the fields of ripening grain.\textsuperscript{5}

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\textsuperscript{1}A. C. Gibbs, Collector of Customs at Umpqua, Oregon, 16 August 1854, to Browne, San Francisco, NAB, 141.

\textsuperscript{2}By 1855 Gibbs was earning $1,503 per year; in 1857 his salary increased to $2,000. \textit{Register of Officers and Agents, Civil, Military, and Naval in the Service of the United States on the 13th of September 1857} (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1857).

\textsuperscript{3}Browne, 24 September 1854, to Guthrie, \textit{loc. cit.}, 139.

\textsuperscript{4}Browne, 17 August 1854, to Guthrie, \textit{loc. cit.}, 123.

By the seventeenth of August¹ he reached Salem, where he tended to some business at the Office of the Surveyor General.² During the course of the next week, he turned his attention to the collection district of Astoria, which followed the Columbia from Portland to Astoria. Upon completing his rounds of the customs houses, he concluded that expenses in the district should be reduced by the removal of unnecessary officials. One of these men, Peter G. Stuart, the surveyor and inspector of Pacific City, was drawing a salary but doing nothing to earn it.³ There was, however, nothing to do. As a matter of fact, Stuart lived in Oregon City, 130 miles from his post in Pacific City, a place to which he had never been!⁴ With these facts in mind and after tending to some minor business, Browne made plans to end his stay in Oregon and embark on a tour of the Territory of Washington.

¹Browne, 17 August 1854, to Guthrie, loc. cit., 123.
²Ibid.
³Browne, Astoria, Oregon, 21 August 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 126. In this letter, Browne spells the surveyor's name as "Steward," while the Treasury Department referred to him as "Stuart." The latter spelling is used in this paper.
⁴Ibid.
Leaving Astoria soon after August 21, Browne reached Olympia on September 2\textsuperscript{1} after an especially hazardous and difficult trip.\textsuperscript{2} He found that Washington Territory was a sad contrast to Oregon, where the land abounded "in fine farms well cultivated, and bearing luxuriant crops of grain. Immigration was rapidly filling up the lands; and large herds of stock were grazing on the prairies."\textsuperscript{3} If Washington was making any progress toward being a suitable place in which to live, Browne did not recognize it. The state of transportation he found to be rather primitive, and he severely criticized it in a letter to Guthrie in early September after reaching Steilacoom:

\begin{quote}
It is very difficult and tedious traveling in this country owing to the absence of the usual means of conveyance. There is not a stage or steamboat in the territory, and scarcely a road that amounts to more than a trail, and all the water travel is done by boats and canoes.\textsuperscript{4}
\end{quote}

Browne summed up his opinions of the territory with the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1}Browne, Olympia, Washington, 2 September 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 129.
\item \textsuperscript{2}Browne, 23 September 1854, to Guthrie, \textit{loc. cit.}, 131.
\item \textsuperscript{3}HED 39, 2-3.
\item \textsuperscript{4}Browne, Steilacoom, Washington, 4 September 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 130.
\end{itemize}
remark that Washington was "a good country for coarse lumber, and nothing more."¹

During the next two weeks Browne toured Puget Sound, visiting nearly every town. The main industry of the area seemed to be lumbering. Most of the settled areas were populated by sawmill hands, who made up the majority of the sound's 875 inhabitants.² Concerning customs matters, Browne felt that the Puget Sound region was doing little more business than was the District of Umpqua. He did find, however, three matters worthy of some official comments. The most important of these affairs was the occupation of the San Juan Islands by the British. Isaac Eby, the Collector of

¹Ibid.

²Ibid. Browne recorded the following statistics about the principal places on Puget Sound:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Olympia</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>Engaged in lumbering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steilacoom</td>
<td>150</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nisqually</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Only inhabitant is blind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alki</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seattle</td>
<td>125</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bellingham Bay</td>
<td>50-60</td>
<td>Engaged in coal and lumber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Gamble</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Hands run one large sawmill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Madison</td>
<td>15-20</td>
<td>Sawmill hands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Ludlow</td>
<td>15-20</td>
<td>Sawmill hands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Townsend</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Two stores; proper place for port of entry for the Sound</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Customs of Nisqually, complained that he and his staff, two inspectors and four boatmen, were having a difficult time ousting some Englishmen who were forcefully occupying the islands.¹ In his report to Washington, Browne urged Secretary Guthrie to act upon the matter immediately. He remarked that no blood had been shed yet, but that such an event was in the offing.²

Eby was also involved in two other situations that Browne reported to the Treasury Department. The special agent suggested to Secretary Guthrie that Port Townsend replace Nisqually as the port of entry for Puget Sound.³ Although the town was among the smallest on the Sound, its location was better suited to carry out customs affairs than was Nisqually, where Eby maintained his official headquarters. If this proposal were granted, Eby would either have lost his job, or he would have had to move to Port Townsend. In the other matter Browne reported, charges of malfeasance were being brought against Eby by the surveyor

¹Browne, 23 September 1854, to Guthrie, loc. cit., 131.
²Ibid.
³Browne, 4 September 1854, to Guthrie, loc. cit., 130.
of Nisqually, A. Benton Moses, and a certain B. F. Shaw.¹

The pair accused Eby of using government funds to pay private expenses. In one case, Shaw had complained, Eby employed a Mr. Betts as a boatman, but who was really Eby's cook.² A careful investigation of the facts persuaded Browne not to take any action in the matter. He felt the charges grew out of personal jealousies and malice between the protagonists.³ His remarks written to Guthrie about the charges reflect an insight into human nature and an awareness of political situations which made him one of the best qualified men the government could have chosen to investigate fiscal matters:

I could find nothing in them except what would naturally result from a hostile feeling between the parties. . . . There is a great jealousy existing between federal officers and disappointed politicians in Washington Territory, and between men of different pursuits, whose interests frequently clash where the community is small, and I think where absolute fraud cannot be detected, the better plan is to let them settle their own difficulties.⁴

Back in San Francisco by September 21, Browne mailed

¹Browne, San Francisco, 18 October 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 166.
²Ibid. ³Ibid. ⁴Ibid.
to the Treasury Department additional reports about his tour of the revenue districts. Although he had sent off letters from many of the towns in the Northwest, he decided it was necessary to repeat his findings in reports mailed from San Francisco where he was more sure of the mail service.\(^1\) To some degree Browne did succeed in reducing the expenses in the northern districts, though not all of his recommendations were implemented. While Addison Gibbs was permitted to keep his position,\(^2\) Peter Stuart was discharged.\(^3\) Although the department ordered Gibbs not to spend more than twenty dollars for the customs house in Gardiner, the government refused to pay any more money to Stuart who did not reside at his post. Furthermore, Eby was warned to be more careful when he selected assistants to aid him in the Sound region.\(^4\)

\(^1\)While Browne was touring the Northwest at this time, he felt it was necessary to repeat information in each letter he sent to the Department. He remarked constantly that the postal service in the northern territories was unsure.

\(^2\)Guthrie, Washington, 24 November 1854, to Gibbs, Gardiner, Oregon, NAP, 322.

\(^3\)Acting Secretary of the Treasury, 18 October 1854, to Peter G. Stuart, Pacific City, Oregon, NAP, 308.

\(^4\)Guthrie, 7 November 1854, to Isaac Eby, Port Townsend, Washington Territory, NAP, 313.
During the fall of 1854, Browne toured the revenue districts of the Pacific Northwest. The map shown above is a photograph of the one Browne sent to the Treasury Department. In it, he traced his route through the territories and added Seattle, Alki, Victoria, and Port Townsend, which were not printed on the original map.
By the end of September 1854 Browne saw that he had much to do. He had been on the Pacific Coast only since July, yet he realized he would need the utmost cooperation from government officials if he was to successfully carry out his instructions as the Treasury Department's special agent for California and the Northwest. The skill with which he had handled revenue problems in Texas only six months before was being seriously challenged by the amount and variety of difficulties which now faced him on the Pacific Coast. In San Francisco the largest problem was to reduce substantially the customs force; by July 31, however, only a few minor officials had been removed by Collector of Customs Hammond. His trip through Oregon and Washington during August and September cemented his thoughts about the need to eliminate dozens of revenue officers. There was very little work for the customs service in the Northwest, but many salaries were being drawn by men who did little or nothing to earn them. During these three months, July through September 1854, the pattern of Browne's behavior as a special agent emerged. In a magazine article Browne wrote in 1861, he described his official life.

From mail to mail . . . the agent made his reports; piling up proof upon proof, and covering acres of
valuable paper with protests and remonstrances against the policy pursued; racking his brains to do his duty faithfully. . . . He did exactly what he was instructed to do, which was exactly what he was not wanted to do. . . . He was a fellow of infinite jest. There was something so exquisitely comic in the idea of taking official instructions literally, and carrying them into effect, that he could not resist it. The humor of the situation kept him in a constant chuckle of internal satisfaction; but it was the most serious jest he ever perpetrated, for it cost him, besides the trouble of carrying it out, the loss of a very comfortable per diem. 1

It would not be, though, until 1860 that Browne would be relieved of his duties. During the summer of 1854, however, he began the process by defying the patronage system.

CHAPTER IV

TWO BUSY MONTHS IN CALIFORNIA

By September 23 Browne was back in San Francisco, where he resumed examining revenue affairs. He soon had visited every revenue station in the district. The more Browne saw, the more he grew convinced that severe cuts in the customs force should be made. At the custom house many clerks were absent much of the time; on the docks the inspectors, measurers, and weighers had very little to do. Business in San Francisco had decreased during 1854, and Browne could anticipate no real increase for years to come unless some new excitement, like a gold rush, arose. The clarity of these facts made Browne feel that a smaller force would make the individual officials more effective and stop jealousies which had arisen over the amount of labor done. Browne also believed that if a reduction were made in the number of clerks, the amount of labor of each

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1 Browne, San Francisco, 23 September 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 133.
would increase. Their salaries were not, however, to be reduced, though the government clerks were being paid at a higher rate than private ones. "The very best and most reliable persons should be employed," Browne advised, "and such men are more valuable at a higher rate of compensation than an inferior kind at any price."  

If the reductions Browne called for were to be implemented, several influential people would lose their jobs. Browne became fully aware that not only would he have to battle their complaints to bring efficiency to the revenue service, but he would have to combat their influence to retain his own job. The opponents of Browne's ideas congregated at the customs house during the national campaign of 1854 to discuss how patronage should be divided if the Democratic party maintained control. The political contest of that year was especially vigorous, and the Democrats were prone to point out anything they felt was inimical to the election of their candidates. Since one of the strongest weapons of any party was patronage, Browne's ideas on

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1 Ibid.
2 Ibid.
reducing the number of customs officers met with potent opposition. He was criticized consistently for his stand. Yet he did not yield an inch. The customs house had become a gathering place for all aspirants to public office, and Browne felt that this was most injurious to the public welfare. His view was expressed to the Treasury Department in these words:

Such a system is corrupt and improper, and leads to the retention in office of persons who are deemed 'useful' outside, and who have never done any business in the office, or such only as could be performed by a much smaller force. The past history of California shows whether the government or any party in the ascendancy, has been benefited by purchasing friends at the expense of the Treasury, and I should be sorry to see the same state of things prevailing under this administration.

Browne went on to say that he did not expect his views to meet with much favor. Moreover, he was sure that influential people would write to Washington that his "labors . . . are

1 Browne was supported by Guthrie in this case. The Secretary informed Hammond that "any officer of the Customs, who has a separate place of business, will post up a notice to the effect that the offices are open only to persons having business to transact. Visits on private business and all lounging in any of the offices of the Custom House are to be discouraged in every proper way." Guthrie, Washington, 8 November 1854, to Hammond, NAP, 316.

2 Browne, 23 September 1854, to Guthrie, loc. cit., 133.
inimical to the success of the administration."\(^1\) No matter what, though, he refused to be upset by such views: "I believe the system to be wrong in itself and injurious in its tendency and shall act upon that belief while in office and at all other times."\(^2\)

With the defense of his actions placed before the Department, Browne made plans to complete his first tour of all the revenue districts on the Pacific Coast. By September 1, 1854, he was well acquainted with the revenue

\(^1\)Browne, San Francisco, 24 September 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 135. Browne was well aware that many of the people he suggested be released were influential: "Now I desire to say that each one of these gentlemen occupies a high position both at home and here. They have all powerful friends who can do much in Congress to embarrass the operations of the Department. But I cannot in justice to myself permit such considerations to influence me. If the Department can only be sustained by what I deem to be morally corrupt, and injurious to the prosperity of the country in its tendency, it will not be in however small a degree by the humble part which I take in its affairs. It would be presumptuous in me to expect that every measure which I have recommended will be adopted by the Department. I can only present the facts and let them pass for what they are worth. But they tell me here that I am striking at friends of the President and at your friends. Permit me to say, with due respect, that such a consideration would weigh little with me as any other. You will, therefore, with a knowledge of these facts, which I submit to you frankly and in good faith, act your own pleasure."

\(^2\)Browne, 23 September 1854, to Guthrie, loc. cit., 133.
affairs of San Francisco. His trip to the Pacific Northwest had acquainted him with Treasury affairs in the north. There was left the greater part of California: the revenue districts of the San Joaquin Valley and those around San Diego and Los Angeles.

After he had toured the San Joaquin Valley, however, his anticipated trek through the Tejon Pass to San Diego was interrupted by another matter: a request from the Interior Department to examine Indian affairs. Consequently, it was not until the end of October that he was able to make his tour of the districts to the south. His suspicions that California was a place for the grossest extravagances of Federal money were confirmed over and over again.\(^1\) He was convinced that "every public officer in California does as little for the government and as much for himself as possible."\(^2\) In these six weeks he took his first official look at Indian affairs, an acquaintance with matters that would take much of his time for years to come. There was, however,

\(^1\)Browne, District of San Joaquin, 28 September 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 146.

\(^2\)Browne, San Francisco, 11 October 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 150.
in all of the confusion, one thing that pleased Browne: he was doing the thing that made him most happy—traveling. It was his ambition to know as much of the world as he could. The exploration of California was an important part of that desire. As a matter of fact, Browne thought so much of the state that he felt increasingly more, as the months of 1854 rolled by, that California would be an excellent place to bring his family. By the end of June 1855, the Brownes had settled in Oakland, across the bay from the San Francisco custom house.

On September 25, 1854, however, Browne wrote to Secretary Guthrie that customs affairs at Benicia, California could be vastly improved.\(^1\) The root of the difficulty centered in the corrupt character of the Collector of Customs for the Sonoma District, L. B. Mizner. From his desk at the Benicia customs house, Mizner looked for opportunities to exercise what he thought was his right "to take every advantage of the government."\(^2\) When Browne asked him to have the

\(^1\)Browne, Benicia, 25 September 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 142.

\(^2\)Browne, San Francisco, 17 November 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 197.
rent on the customs house lowered from $300 to $100 per month, Mizner only put him off.¹ By November 17, though, Browne had conferred with Felix Argenti, the owner of the building, who admitted to the special agent that business was such at Benicia that he could not get ten dollars rent per month from a private party—and consequently he was glad to have the government lease it at $100.² Mizner, however, stood his ground, telling Browne that he did not see how the request of the agent superseded the power of the Secretary of the Treasury.³

If business was slow in Benicia, it was even slower at Sacramento. Browne recommended, therefore, that the deputy collector, Charles C. Sackett, pay only one third of the amount that the government had been paying. Browne observed that the Department was footing the bill for three rooms, only one of which was used for official business. The other two Sackett used for his apartment, for which

¹Browne, 25 September 1854, to Guthrie, loc. cit.
²Browne, San Francisco, 14 October 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 154.
³Browne, 17 November 1854, to Guthrie, loc. cit., 197.
Browne did not feel the government should pay. As a matter of fact, Sackett admitted he spent only two hours a month on customs business, whereupon Browne concluded the District of San Joaquin, in which he was the only revenue officer, should be abolished.¹

Moving south to Stockton, Browne saw additional evidence that the government should make a stronger effort to enforce the revenue laws. The fact that the rent for the customs house at Stockton was exorbitantly high was nothing compared to the amount of revenue the government was losing at the passes between the San Joaquin Valley and the cattle trails leading up from Mexico. He discovered that large herds of cattle from Sonora were being brought into the valley without duty being paid.² There seemed to be only one way to stop this fraud: station an inspector at Fort Yuma where the cattle had to cross the Colorado.³

¹Browne, Sacramento, California, 26 September 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 144.

²Browne, 28 September 1854, to Guthrie, loc. cit., 146.

³Browne, 11 October 1854, to Guthrie, loc. cit., 150. On Browne’s repeated suggestions, Guthrie instructed Oliver S. Witherby, Collector of Customs at San Diego, to appoint an inspector at Fort Yuma, to prevent Mexican cattle
Several weeks after Browne sent his reports to Washington about the desirable reductions to be made at Benicia, Sacramento and Stockton, he was gratified to learn that his efforts were being appreciated. Not only did Guthrie instruct Hammond to follow some of Browne's suggestions in San Francisco,1 but the landlords of the customs houses in the cities Browne visited were informed that the Treasury Department approved of lower rents.2 At Benicia, especially, Mizner was asked to accept a new lease on Browne's terms.3 Moreover, he was pleased to see that the force employed in the surveyor's office had been reduced from three people to two, the chief surveyor and an assistant.4 In making the

coming into the country from Sonora from entering duty-free. Guthrie, Washington, 27 November 1854, to Witherby, NAP, 323. Some months later Witherby was instructed to nominate Thomas E. Buchanan as a deputy collector, to be stationed at Colorado City, near Fort Yuma. Guthrie, Washington, 5 March 1855, to Witherby, NAP, 361.

1Guthrie, Washington, 7 November 1854, to Richard P. Hammond, NAP, 313.

2Guthrie, Washington, 10 November 1854, to L. B. Mizner, Benicia, NAP, 318.

3Guthrie, Washington, 11 November 1854, to L. B. Mizner, Benicia, California, NAP, 319.

4Browne, San Francisco, 13 October 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 151.
reduction, however, Guthrie, the surveyor, and Browne agreed to a desirable compromise: since Van Voorhies, the deputy surveyor, was indispensible, he should be retained as a clerk, but without a salary decrease. It was, though, unfortunate that the miscellaneous clerk, Mr. Burton, was dismissed; he did his job well, Browne said, and his absence would be a loss to the Department.

The Democratic victory in the election of October 1854 in California only strengthened Browne's views on what should be the fiscal policy of the government. Despite the reduction of the revenue force, Browne became aware that "all sensible businessmen and disinterested Democrats" approved of Guthrie's reductions. Yet the talk around the customs house was that these reductions were alienating

1Ibid.

2Ibid.

3Browne, San Francisco, 13 October 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 152. That the Democrats won the election was due to the sound policies performed by the government: "The administration can never lose a friend in the honest performance of its duty to the people and to the country. Much is said about the victory 'we' have just achieved. Now, the plain truth is . . . the administration party was successful because the measures of the administration were popular and the party was strong."
enough people to ruin the party. This sort of speculation did not bother Browne, however, for he felt that people who engaged in such gossip cared only as much for the party as they could be helped politically by it. Still Hammond was not convinced that Browne was right. Despite this disagreement, however, Hammond "cheerfully and in all cases most promptly complied with the wishes of the Department." Moreover, he invariably gave Browne every courtesy and facility in the discharge of the special agent's duties.¹

Corruption, however, continued to infest the California patronage. With this fact in mind, Browne warned Guthrie, in 1854, that implementation of sound fiscal policies would be difficult:

The City of San Francisco is the very hotbed of all sorts of corruption, political, moral, and financial. It is hard to tell in whom to put faith. As a principle, therefore, I would say, no man should be trusted in the expenditure of public money further than is absolutely necessary; and every man, however high his reputation, should be deemed open to temptation and to corrupt influences where honesty goes by degrees of compassion.²

¹Browne, San Francisco, 15 October 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 158.

²Browne, San Francisco, 13 October 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 153.
To illustrate his point, Browne issued a further warning to Guthrie about the new custom house then in the process of being built. He pointed out that the government was fortunate in the purchase and location of the lot. Yet it could be expected that the construction would cause some abuse of public funds. It would be, moreover, the Army that would perpetuate such an abuse, since it was the Corps of Army Engineers which was doing the building. Browne described what would happen with biting sarcasm: "As a general rule Army officers are not proverbial for economy, as for a strict adherence to appropriations. They are apt to construct public offices as they do fortifications." ¹

With these admonitions in the mail, Browne spent the next few days attending to some minor business. A superficial investigation into the accounts of certain Army and Navy officers did not indicate any frauds. Still Browne was aware that his next perusal of their books could reveal malfeasance. Then, too, fraud might be carried out without the government being able to correct it. "Public officers," he wrote, "are a long distance from the seat of government

¹Ibid.
here, and can enjoy almost entire immunity from punishment by losing their vouchers in a fire, suffering the loss of books and accounts, or some other convenient disaster."^1

With the settlement of these matters, Browne left for the San Joaquin Valley to continue his tour of the revenue districts there and to make an examination of the financial affairs of the districts in southern California. At Stockton he instructed the collector to dismiss the inspectors stationed at Tejon Pass and at Walker Pass since no cattle and few immigrants had used those trails for two years.² At San Diego, he saw a typical example of government inefficiency on the Pacific Coast. The collector of customs was threatened by the War Department with the loss of the customs house. After due inquiry, Browne gathered the facts that the building, once the property of the Army, was due to be wrecked to salvage its lumber and window frames. The additional fact that the building originally cost the government $27,000, but now was worth only $3,000, stirred Browne to figure that if the structure was razed

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¹Browne, San Francisco, 15 October 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 159.

²Browne, Tejon Pass, California, 3 November 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 169.
the government would take a considerable loss. This was especially true when it was considered that the lumber that could be saved was worth only $400-$500, and that another customs house could be rented at a reasonable cost only with considerable difficulty. Browne, therefore, did not favor destroying the building.¹

At San Pedro some minor business was taken care of,² and at Los Angeles Browne made an effort to find some information about the price of cattle.³ From Los Angeles, Browne trekked inland to meet Thomas Henley, the new Superintendent for California Indian Affairs, in order to help him examine the conditions of the Tejon Reservation, in reference particularly to the fiscal operations. It happened that the ex-superintendent of California Indian Affairs, Edward

¹Browne, San Diego, California, 7 November 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 170. The collector, Oliver S. Witherby, was instructed to allow the military to use the building. Thus Browne's suggestion was not taken. Guthrie, Washington, 18 January 1855, to Witherby, NAP, 341.

²Browne, San Pedro, California, 9 November 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 218. Browne reduced the rent on the customs house from forty to thirty dollars.

³Browne, San Francisco, 14 November 1854, to George Manypenny, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Washington, NAB, 189.
Fitzgerald Beale, had suddenly been removed from office during the past summer. He was accused of peculation.1 Since the charge concerned public funds, the Indian Bureau did not hesitate to request help from the Treasury Department to examine the affair. Consequently, Browne was asked to look into and report upon Beale's financial operations. Browne's report not only exonerated Beale but it also prompted the Bureau of Indian Affairs to request this special agent's aid often during the next ten years.

Since it gave him an additional opportunity to travel, the assignment to the Beale affair pleased Browne. In any case, the investigation was to be made at the Tejon Reservation2 which was on Browne's way back from Los Angeles.

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1 For Beale's association with California Indian affairs, see Richard E. Crouter and Andrew F. Rolle, "Edward Fitzgerald Beale and the Indian Peace Commissioners in California, 1851-54," Historical Society of Southern California Quarterly, XLII (June, 1960), 107-31.

2 The Tejon, or Sebastian, Reservation was the pilot reservation for an extensive system with which Beale hoped to solve the Indian problem in California. It was established at Tejon Pass, in the southern part of the state, in 1853. A fine general description of the problem facing Beale and a clear account of the events which led to the establishment of the reservation is given in John Walton Caughey, ed., The Indians of Southern California in 1852: the B. D. Wilson Report and a Selection of Contemporary Comment (San Marino, California: The Huntington Library, 1952).
and San Diego. During the first week of November 1854, therefore, he and Henley visited the Tejon, where they made all the inquiries necessary to make a full report about Beale's fiscal policies. Browne wrote to Washington that he could find no evidence of peculation, though he did feel that Beale had spent too much money for the maintenance of the reservation. In general he agreed with Henley that the Tejon was prosperous and quiet. He hoped, however, that the government would reject a proposal then under consideration which would reduce the area of the reservation from 25,000 to 10,000 acres.¹

Browne knew how detrimental to Indian welfare a decrease in the size of the reservation would be. The closer Indians mingled with white settlers, the less the chances were to civilize them. As a matter of fact, the tragedies related in Browne's reports during the ensuing ten years increased in both number and unpleasantness the more the two races mixed. Although he reported to Washington time after time that outrageous abuses were being perpetrated against the Indians, he was forced to sit by, denied the authority

¹Browne, 14 November 1854, to Manypenny, loc. cit., 189.
to act, while the reservation system of California was being quickly destroyed. Once the investigation was concluded, Browne returned to San Francisco after first stopping briefly at Santa Barbara, where he found business at a standstill,¹ which made him suggest reductions in Federal spending there.²

Traveling back to San Francisco, Browne reviewed his accomplishments since he had come to California July 1. By November 14 he had visited every port of entry and delivery on the Pacific Coast.³ His thoughts were full of the frustrations he had felt and loneliness for his family; he was ready to quit his job and return to Washington where he could engage in some pursuit more congenial to his tastes.⁴ He complained to Guthrie that he was "fed up" with

¹Browne, San Francisco, 14 November 1854, to Guthrie. The only business carried on in Santa Barbara was the annual shipment by boat of a few boxes of grapes to San Francisco. NAB, 190.

²The revenue officer at Santa Barbara was instructed to discontinue paying rent for his office. Guthrie, Washington, 18 December 1854, to Oliver S. Witherby, Collector of Customs, San Diego, NAP, 335.

³Browne, San Francisco, 14 November 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 187.

⁴Ibid.
the evils resulting to the public interest from the delays, irregularities and frauds, incident to the collection and disbursement of public funds in a country settled chiefly by speculators and political adventurers. . . . After four months of constant labor and exertion, during which the business of the government has wholly engrossed my attention, I am now prepared to say that it will be utterly impractical for me to accomplish all that has been confided to my charge in less than two years. It is worse than useless to make superficial examinations of subjects involving important interests. Time must be allowed. Each subject must be fully considered. None but reliable data should be furnished to the Department. After writing 140 letters and reports, and traveling over the entire country from San Diego to Puget's Sound, I find that I have scarcely made a beginning at the business committed to my charge. One thing I am perfectly satisfied of—that an agent with proper powers could save the United States . . . at least half a million dollars a year.  

That agent should be the Appraiser General. But Mr. Bridge, who was currently holding that office in San Francisco, was in Browne's opinion totally incompetent.  

In this view Browne was not alone. Until a competent and honest man could replace Bridge, revenue affairs on the coast would

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1Ibid.

2Browne, San Francisco, 14 November 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 188. Browne listed a good many complaints against Bridge. The official was totally under the control of others; he lacked firmness, judgment, and self-reliance. His sole and absorbing passion was avarice: he dealt in stocks, loaned money at usurious rates, and spent most of his time in pecuniary matters.
remain in poor condition.

For the next several weeks, Browne debated whether or not to return to Washington. In mid-November he communicated to Guthrie his desire to resign his appointment on the Pacific Coast. It would only be a matter of time, he said, before he left on his own accord if he was not relieved of his position officially.¹

Meanwhile Browne continued to investigate revenue business for the government.² In the last two weeks of November he uncovered frauds relating to the appraisal of a boatload of ice brought to San Francisco from Sitka, Alaska.³ It was apparent, too, that less than one fourth of the stock brought into southern California from Mexico paid any duty. In this case, however, Browne departed from

¹Ibid.
²NAB, 197-217 passim.
³Browne, San Francisco, 17 November 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 198. It was proven that a Cyril Grey, a clerk in the customs house, had released the name of one of the appraisers to the ice company several days before the appraisal was made. At that time, the appraiser was bribed by the company to evaluate the ice at a lower than normal rate. Hammond agreed with Browne that Grey should be released and planned to discharge him at the end of the month.
his normal attitude and encouraged Guthrie to influence Congress to make such stock duty-free. It was Browne's contention that since cattle raising was the main occupation in that part of the state, the government would do well to remove the duty and thereby encourage the rapid settlement of that sparse country.¹

Two other important matters drew Browne's attention during the last week of November. The first involved a plot on the part of the Russian consul in San Francisco which threatened to violate the neutrality of the United States in the Crimean War.² The other matter concerned the United States Branch Mint in San Francisco, which was inoperative much of the time because not enough refining material and funds for incidental expenses were being provided.³ Unless these problems were attended to, it was widely apparent that people would continue to lose confidence in the Branch Mint. Before he could investigate these matters further,

¹Browne, San Francisco, 18 November 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 199.

²For Browne's account of this intrigue, see NAB, 214-17 passim.

³Browne, San Francisco, 22 November 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 205.
Browne made his decision to leave San Francisco, and sail back to Washington. He explained to Guthrie why some other person should be sent out to perform the duties of special agent on the Pacific Coast:

Although I have never had a single unpleasant word here or elsewhere, while I have held the appointment, I am satisfied that no man can act honestly toward the government in such a capacity without devoting his whole energy to it, discarding all hope of making a competency for his family, and doing many acts toward his fellow men that cannot be but repugnant to the feelings of a gentleman.1

During the fall of 1854, Browne dealt with a variety of Treasury business. His struggles to bring economy and efficiency to the Pacific Coast were beginning to bear fruit, however. Acting upon Browne's suggestions, Guthrie had ordered the officials of San Francisco, San Diego, Santa Barbara, Benicia, San Pedro, and the San Joaquin Valley to reduce expenses by paying less rent and discharging superfluous help. The Democratic party's victory in 1854, moreover, had borne out Browne's contention that efficient government would be supported by the people even though the patronage was reduced. And during November, Browne was officially introduced to his first assignment concerning

1Browne, 14 November 1854, to Guthrie, loc. cit., 188.
Indian affairs. The experiences and successes he found in California during October and November 1854 were soon to be forgotten, however, in the next installments of his adventures on the Pacific Coast. Meanwhile, Browne took a brief respite from his duties in the Far West.
CHAPTER V

TO THE EAST AND BACK, 1855

By January 5, 1855 Browne was back in Washington, where he gave reports to both the Treasury Department and the Secretary of the Interior. Among the people with whom he spoke was George Manypenny, Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Browne gave additional testimony that Beale's financial operations were beneficial. Despite this favorable evidence, Beale was not reinstated, and Henley continued as Superintendent of California Indian Affairs. Concerning

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1 Robert W. McClelland, Secretary of the Interior, Washington, 5 January 1855, to George Manypenny; Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-81; California Superintendency, 1849-80 (hereinafter referred to as NAC), Microcopy 234, Roll 34, 1975.

2 Browne, Washington, 28 January 1855, to Manypenny, NAC(34), 64.

3 Ibid. Throughout the winter of 1854-55, Beale tried desperately to clear his name in Washington. His major ally, it seemed, was Browne, who had investigated the Tejon Reservation and found it in fine order. Consequently, Beale gathered as much of Browne's testimony as possible to lay before the Department of the Interior. For the letters Beale sent, see NAC(34), 970-90 passim.
revenue matters, Browne spoke with Secretary of the Treasury Guthrie and insisted that many more reductions could be made in collecting the revenue in California. He pointed out that revenue expenses on the Pacific Coast were twelve times greater than on the Atlantic while living expenses in the West were only a little higher than in the East. The fact that some reductions had been made indicated that still more were possible, and in Browne's opinion there was no need for more than four revenue districts on the Pacific Coast.¹

In regard to the Branch Mint in San Francisco, Browne felt that the difficulties there should be corrected as soon as possible, since the mint was all-important to the welfare of the government service on the Pacific Coast. He had noticed in December, when he carried out his instructions to examine the mint, that business continued to be done there only sporadically. The frequent interruptions were caused by the lack of acids supplied to the refining department. This difficulty, he felt, was not the fault of the Superintendent, Mr. L. A. Birdsall, but rather due to the fact that he was handicapped by lack of money to purchase supplies.

¹Browne, Washington, 16 January 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 220.
like coal, which could be bought for less on the off-season, and acids, which were not sent to San Francisco frequently enough. Moreover, he related, the size of the mint was not only too small, which handicapped the production of coin, but the condition of the building made the supply of gold subject to theft. Rather than have the refining done by private firms, Browne felt, the mint should be moved to a more desirable location in order to provide more room for other mint business and processes. With all the corruption in San Francisco, the government would eventually lose a great deal of money if private parties did the refining. With the unimpaired application of the fine skills of the scientists at the mint, the employees were capable of producing the thirty to forty million dollars which business on the coast demanded annually.¹

The Treasury Department was, evidently, well satisfied with Browne's performance in the West, for he was assigned again to perform the duties of special agent in the Midwest and New York. During February 1855, Browne investigated the affairs of the public depositories of Chicago and

¹Browne, Washington, 23 January 1955, to Guthrie, NAB, 222.
Dubuque. He found nothing of any interest at Chicago, but at Dubuque matters were in immediate need of correction. After a careful examination, he concluded that money kept there was not secure. The vault was kept in a building easily accessible to thieves. In any case, the whole situation was in the hands of an irresponsible clerk. In general Browne felt that too much money was being sent at one time between depositories. If accident or robbery should occur while the money was being transported, as was likely to happen, the government stood to lose a great deal.

By the first week in March, Browne had traveled to the Great Lakes region where he had spent the last part of the summer of 1853. At St. Paul he made a thorough investigation of the official transactions of Willis A. Gorman,

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1 Browne, Chicago, 6 February 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 232.

2 Browne, Dubuque, Iowa, 8 February 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 233.

3 Browne, Dubuque, 8 February 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 234.

4 Browne, 8 February 1855, to Guthrie, loc. cit., 233.
governor of the territory.\(^1\) In order to understand Gorman's conduct and ascertain why certain people were hostile to him, Browne conducted his investigation for several days without allowing anyone to know his purpose. He found that Gorman was charged with two misdeeds: the governor was said to have deposited money with certain St. Paul bankers in order to delay annuity payments to the Sioux Indians, and he was described as a profane, unreliable, indiscreet person, deficient in dignity of character and unfit to be governor.\(^2\)

After an examination of the situation the special

\(^1\)Browne, Washington, 6 April 1855, to Robert McClelland, Secretary of the Interior, Washington. J. Ross Browne MSS, Huntington Library, San Marino, California. This letter embodied Browne's report entitled: "Report in Relation to the Official Transactions of Willis A. Gorman, Governor and Ex-Officio Superintendent of Indian Affairs of Minnesota."

\(^2\)Ibid. In his report Browne enclosed several documents which have since been either destroyed or mislaid: (1) the annual report of the governor, 25 January 1855; (2) the report of the standing committee of the majority in the judiciary in relation to the Minnesota and Northwest Railroad Company; (3) a memorial of the minority members in the Minnesota Legislature asking Congress to disapprove and annul the charter given to the railroad; (4) the veto message of the governor, 8 February 1855, disapproving the act amendatory of the charter; (5) a notice of a memorial by William P. Murray, President of the Legislative Council, asking for the removal of Gorman, 8 February 1855; and (6) a copy of the U. S. House debate about the company's charter.
agent concluded that the accusations were unwarranted. They had grown out of Gorman's hostility to the charter granted to the Minnesota and Northwest Railroad Company. The friends of the company were very unhappy with Gorman's stand in the matter.¹ They had hoped to gain profit by controlling the land granted to the railway. As far as Indian affairs were concerned, Browne concluded that no one could do an adequate job as both governor of the territory and superintendent of Indian affairs. Both positions were big ones. The government, therefore, should separate the two offices and hire a separate superintendent, Browne contended.²

With the Gorman affair concluded, Browne turned his attention to other matters. During the rest of March and through April and the first week of May 1855, he probably was busy with additional Treasury affairs.³ Once he

¹Gorman evidently felt that the friends of the company had been going about the whole business in an unfair way. Ibid.

²Ibid. As Browne investigated additional Indian matters, he discovered that the care and administration of the Indians throughout the country demanded careful professional help in which honesty and understanding were prerequisite to success.

³No trace of Browne's activities for these months can be found, though it is likely that Treasury affairs
This sketch of Browne appeared in Harper's Weekly, XII (22 February 1868), 125, upon his appointment as Minister Plenipotentiary to China in 1868. It was probably copied from a photograph taken during the 1860's. It appeared also in his obituary notice published in Harper's Weekly, XIX (25 December 1875), 1041.
returned to the East Coast from Minnesota, he spent some time in New York examining the affairs of the custom house.\(^1\) On April 27 Browne accepted another assignment as Special Agent for the Treasury Department on the Pacific Coast.\(^2\) This time he would return to California with his family\(^3\) and with an increase in pay from eight to ten dollars per day.\(^4\) Upon receiving his instructions, Browne hurried from New York to Washington in order to gather his family together in time to make the May 5 steamer.

By May 15 the Brownes had reached Aspinwall, ready to travel across the Isthmus of Panama to the ship waiting to take them to San Francisco. At Aspinwall, Browne paused to conduct some Treasury business and write to his friend, P. G. Washington, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, to continued to lay under his scrutiny. Certainly he had no time to make extensive trips before leaving for California.

\(^1\)Browne, Aspinwall, Isthmus of Panama, 15 May 1855, to P. G. Washington, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, Washington, NAB, 235. In this letter, Browne mentions that he kept a mailing address in New York.

\(^2\)Browne, San Francisco, 19 October 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 303.

\(^3\)Browne, 15 May 1855, to Washington, \textit{loc. cit.}, 235.

\(^4\)Browne, San Francisco, 11 June 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 237.
thank him and Guthrie for the favors both had granted to him and to apologize for not saying goodbye when he was in Washington. After conducting some minor business at Aspinwall, Browne sailed for California.¹

After a passage of twenty-five days, Browne and his family arrived in San Francisco on May 30.² Across the bay, Oakland offered the best place to settle his family. It was still a small village with plenty of room, and the price of property Browne could afford: he looked forward to building a large home on a lot of several acres to accommodate his ever-increasing family.³ Temporarily, however, he installed

¹Browne, 15 May 1855, to Washington, loc. cit., 235.
²Browne, San Francisco, 31 May 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 236.
³To accommodate his wife and children, Browne acquired a large piece of property. By 1859 his land measured nine acres, upon which was set a big house, a stable, a carriage-house and the appropriate out-buildings, all of which he owned clear of any mortgages. Browne, San Francisco, 20 October 1859, to Mark Brummagin, J. Ross Browne MSS, Bancroft Library, University of California. The main house was an impressive and unique structure, with a variety of types of towers which surpassed anything on one building constructed during the Victorian Age. For a photograph of the structure, called appropriately "Pagoda Hill," see J. Ross Browne, The Coast Rangers: a Chronicle of Adventures in California, ed. Richard Dillon (Balboa Island: Paisano Press, 1959), 12.
them in a rented house in Oakland.¹

During the next four months, four pressing matters would draw most of Browne's attention: troubles at the Branch Mint, reduction of expenses in the revenue districts, frauds in the customs service, and gross malfeasance of Hammond. The burden of examining reports and statistics was lightened by occasional trips to Benicia and the Napa Valley and by the presence of his family. His reports to Guthrie were made frequently, detailing the investigations underway. Although some of his recommendations were effected, for the most part Browne continued to be frustrated in his attempts to make the revenue service on the Pacific Coast efficient and economical. If diplomatic appointment to some far off country had not been a promising possibility, Browne probably would have quit his job.

To discover just where money could be saved, Browne continued to look for reductions in the number of customs officers. After Browne had met several times with Hammond, the collector finally released ten inspectors on June 30, 1855, and promised to make additional reductions within the

¹Browne, 31 May 1855, to Guthrie, loc. cit., 236.
next month. In July Browne reported $69,000 had been saved in salaries in the past year. Still more reductions could be made, however, since the general stagnation of San Francisco business was reflected in customs house receipts. Browne had given special attention to the working habits of Hammond's clerks, and decided that a much smaller clerical force working a six-hour day could carry out the customs house business just as effectively as the larger force then employed.

On his tours through California the special agent discovered reasons to suggest additional reductions of the revenue force at various cities. At Benicia during the last week in June he found evidence to support Secretary Guthrie's instructions that Collector Mizner's subordinates should be released and put on sporadic duty. Browne recognized that Benicia did some business in coal shipments, but the services of measurer or gauger were needed only when the boat-

1 Browne, San Francisco, 30 June 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 240.

2 Browne, San Francisco, 9 July 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 246. This letter gives a general summary of Browne's activities for the Treasury Department during the preceding fiscal year.
load of coal arrived.¹ After a tour of the Napa Valley in the middle of July to determine the actual need for revenue officers there, he concluded that none were necessary.² Browne found no great pleasure in suggesting these reductions. If he was pleased to see the revenue districts run economically, he was not happy to see men discharged. Consequently he always put in a good word for a man who was doing an effective job; and often he would suggest "efficient" ways the man could be retained at another position. Still it was usually not possible to keep many of these people. A case in point Browne explained to Guthrie in a letter in August.³ Despite the fact that B. F. Washington was one of the ablest and most prominent advocates of the administration and had demonstrated his loyalty to the Democratic party as editor of a local newspaper, Browne felt bound by duty to recommend his dismissal as storekeeper in

¹Browne, San Francisco, 30 June 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 241.
²Browne, San Francisco, 27 July 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 248.
³Browne, San Francisco, 17 August 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 262.
in the customs house—a position which provided the main support of his family. Browne thoughtfully recommended that Washington be given another appointment in the Department of the Treasury.

Much of Browne's time was now consumed by the affairs of the Branch Mint. Later he uncovered a number of frauds relating to the mint, but during the summer of 1855 he concentrated on remedying a situation which was causing the mint to be active only part of the time: the lack of enough nitrate of soda used in the refining process. This difficulty had caught Browne's attention during the summer and fall of 1854 when he had made frequent visits to the mint. Browne's reports, together with the requests of Superintendent Birdsall, brought a number of suggestions from the director of the Philadelphia mint. Browne did not favor, however, the offer of a certain Mr. Mahan to establish a new chemical works in San Francisco. Mahan had been

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1Guthrie, Washington, 7 November 1854, to Hammond, San Francisco, NAP, 313.

2Browne, 17 August 1855, to Guthrie, loc. cit., 262.

3Browne, 23 January 1855, to Guthrie, loc. cit., 222.

4Browne, San Francisco, 31 July 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 250.
a part owner in the chemical factory then failing to produce enough acids for the mint, which was caused by his mismanagement and lack of practical knowledge of the business. Browne dismissed Mahan with this comment: "No reliance can be placed upon any arrangement made by him, because of his inexperience and pecuniary embarrassments."¹

To Browne there seemed to be only one feasible path to follow, and that one appeared to be difficult to negotiate. The best course was to make a practical contract with the owners of the present works, an agreement which would insure a reasonable profit for them while the mint would be assured of a perpetual supply of acids. But the meeting Browne had with them on July 30 indicated that they looked for terms Browne felt were disadvantageous to the government. The position of the company was that the mint could not do without the chemical works. Should the government refuse to negotiate on the terms the factory dictated, the people of California would condemn the government for not providing for such a contingency. Moreover, they realized how important the mint was to the state and felt that their demand

¹Ibid.
for a two-year contract was tenable since it would take the government that long to build a chemical works of its own.\footnote{Ibid.}

There was nothing the government could do; it had to make the two-year contract. In view of this fact, Browne worked hard to secure reasonable terms, and by the first of August he had procured a favorable agreement with Mr. Farmer, the principal partner in the acid company.\footnote{Browne, San Francisco, 1 August 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 251.} The contract was a compromise. Browne pointed out that unless reasonable terms were accepted, the government would find another, if more expensive and difficult, way to get the acids. Not wanting to lose the capital invested in its works, the company agreed to improve and enlarge the factory in exchange for getting the exclusive rights to supply the mint. Although he felt the company could make a fair profit in this respect, Browne was reluctant to sign the document because it excluded the firm from penalty in case of fire or loss of material by shipwreck. All in all, however, Browne was generally satisfied with the contract, feeling that no better terms could
be made for the government on the West Coast.¹ In any case, he felt safe in reporting to Guthrie on August 1 that there would be no further difficulty in supplying enough acids to the Branch Mint.²

During the several weeks of negotiation, Browne had found other mint matters to attract his attention. One situation called for the stoppage of illegal competition between the mint and private coining agencies. The issue of private coin in California flourished until July 1852, when the Branch Mint in San Francisco entered the picture. At that time private coinage had ceased. But the frequent closures of the mint, due to difficulties with the acid supply, caused a resumption of private coining. Browne noticed, however, that the law of September 30, 1850 was being abused.³ The decree ordered that all coins should be assayed and stamped as to their refinement before they could be circulated publicly. Yet the coins that were turning up

¹Browne, San Francisco, 10 August 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 252.

²Browne, 1 August 1855, to Guthrie, loc. cit., 251.

³Browne, San Francisco, 6 July 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 245.
in San Francisco were either unstamped or, if they were issued in 1850, they had been "sweated" or filed down in value. People were paid thinking they were getting the full value of the coin, but the banks would reduce the amount upon examination of the money. Thus the government stood to lose a great deal by being paid in such coin.¹

Certain officials at the mint were also not entirely honest. On August 1 Guthrie instructed Browne to look into certain allegations made against Birdsall, the superintendent, and Mr. Harazthy, the late assayer.² In mid-September Browne reported to Guthrie that the charges rested upon their agreement with Adams and Company for gold refining, a contract made on October 9, 1854. Both denied they had any improper motives, but could offer no more than verbal statements.³ Unless the Department wanted charges brought against them, Browne felt that a letter of warning would be sufficient to prevent any additional loss of integrity.⁴

¹Ibid.

²Browne, San Francisco, 17 September 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 267.

³Ibid.

⁴Browne, San Francisco, 19 September 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 269.
Another major matter to concern Browne during the summer of 1855 was a series of frauds in the customs house which ended in the dismissal of Richard Hammond, the collector. When Browne considered the role he played in Hammond's dismissal, he felt so bad that he would have resigned his job as special agent if he did not need to support his family. Rumors about an improper connection between Hammond and certain San Francisco banking houses brought on Browne's investigation. Specifically, Hammond was being accused of misapplying funds to be spent on the construction of the new customs house for political purposes. Upon examining the books concerning Hammond's disbursements, Browne found enough irregularities to ask Hammond for an explanation.1 When confronted with the proof that thousands of dollars had been paid out without any notation in the books, Hammond admitted that he had made such disbursements, but defended his actions by saying that it was necessary to pay the money in order to keep the construction going. Browne replied that he could understand about the need to pay the money, but he still wanted to know why there was no notation in the

1Browne, San Francisco, 20 September 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 279.
books regarding the sums advanced and to whom they were
given.\footnote{Browne, San Francisco, 30 June 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 243.}  Browne told Hammond frankly that he felt it was his
duty to report the situation to Guthrie, and sent a copy of
his report to the collector as soon as it was finished on
June 30.\footnote{Browne, 20 September 1855, to Guthrie, loc. cit., 279.} Hammond, however, did not seem to attach any
importance to the matter.\footnote{Ibid. Browne wrote that he attempted to show
Hammond his report three times, but could not locate him, since the collector was not in his office. Finally, Browne
mailed it to him.}

When Browne's report reached Washington, Guthrie
acted swiftly. Hammond was relieved of his duties on
August 2.\footnote{Browne, San Francisco, 19 September 1855, to Milton Latham, Collector of Customs of San Francisco, NAB, 273.} When the San Francisco newspapers found out,
they publicized the story to such a degree that a great
furor arose. The papers, however, were publishing erroneous
statements, and the public was pressuring Browne to explain
the situation since it was evident that he knew all the
facts in the matter. The opposition party was demanding an
explanation for such official abuse, while the Democrats
looked to Browne to defend the administration. To these demands Browne's only reply was that he would say nothing. He chose instead, and not without cleverness, to focus the attention of the public to the "prompt measures taken to arrest an evil of such magnitude."¹

To say the least, Browne was unhappy about the entire matter. During the investigation he had refrained from commenting on Hammond's character. In the past, Browne had frequently told the Department that Hammond was an honest man who cheerfully implemented the desires of the Department despite the fact that he disagreed with many of them.² Consequently, he wrote to Guthrie that he told only the facts. It would be up to the Department to decide about the propriety of the collector's unusual way of keeping books.³ Certainly Hammond was given fair warning, and Browne told Guthrie in a letter of September 20 that "if there is anything in which I have done him an injustice, he

¹Browne, San Francisco, 19 September 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 270.

²For Guthrie's letter to Hammond rebuking him for disbursing money improperly, see Guthrie, Washington, 2 August 1855, to Hammond, NAP, 412.

³Browne, 30 June 1855, to Guthrie, loc. cit., 243.
will have an opportunity of correcting it in Washington, where I hope every paper will be laid before him, and his explanations received with respect and consideration."

The whole matter was, in fact, most distasteful to Browne. How much longer he would continue in a position where he was forced to help destroy his friends could be measured by his comments to Guthrie in the report of September 20:

My position in this matter is . . . so unpleasant, on account of the course which I have considered it my duty to pursue, that nothing short of the absolute necessity of supporting my family in some way, and the pressure of official business by which I am prevented from engaging in any other employment could induce me to hold the appointment a moment longer. I must sincerely assure you it would be gratifying to me to be placed in any other position not connected with the Customs, however small the compensation or however unimportant the appointment in a political point of view.

Although l'affair Hammond dealt severely with Browne's emotions and lessened his desire to continue his job, through the summer of 1855 he continued to investigate other revenue matters. In one case, he put a stop to the

1 Browne, 20 September 1855, to Guthrie, loc. cit., 279.

2 Ibid.
payment of salaries to inspectors on leave.\(^1\) In another he advised Guthrie to grant the petition of the clerks of the branch mint for a pay raise.\(^2\) With the new customs house occupied the old Union Street warehouse could be rented to the public. Consequently Browne offered several suggestions on the best way to handle the matter.\(^3\) Meanwhile, at Benicia two affairs were examined. In the first place, he found by mid-August that the rent of the customs house had not been reduced from $300 per month to $100, as the Department had ordered the collector, Mizner, to negotiate. Mizner instead advised the owner, Argenti, that the lease could not be recinded, and that he should pay no attention to the Department's wishes. In answer to Mizner's attitude, Browne suggested\(^4\) to Guthrie on August 13 that Mizner be

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\(^1\) Browne, San Francisco, 13 August 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 256.

\(^2\) Browne, San Francisco, 17 August 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 260.

\(^3\) Browne, San Francisco, 11 August 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 259. Among the suggestions that Browne made, the one he hoped would solve the problem once and for all was that he be given proper authority to carry out his own recommendations without contacting Washington.

\(^4\) Browne, San Francisco, 13 August 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 257.
required to pay the extra $200 since he refused to carry out the order.  

By the second week of September a new collector, T. B. Storer, had assumed the responsibilities of the customs house at Benicia, and he fought off Mizner's attempts to circulate unfounded rumors about his hostility to the Democratic party.

Although Browne's investigations had been a key factor in reducing the revenue expenses on the Pacific Coast, Guthrie did not dare allow him to spend any more money than was absolutely necessary. The Hammond affair probably had stirred up the discontent of many influential people in Washington as well as in California. Consequently he was apprehensive about any expenses that Browne would incur not specifically related to absolute necessity. For this reason,

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1 In a letter to Mizner, Guthrie informed him that he had been removed. Guthrie, Washington, 28 July 1855, to Mizner, NAP, 410.

2 Storer was made Collector of Customs for the District of Sonoma by a letter from the Treasury Department. Guthrie, Washington, 28 July 1855, to Storer, Benicia, NAP, 408.

3 Browne, San Francisco, 18 September 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 264.
most likely, he refused Browne's request for $1,000 to buy a traveling outfit.2

If his questionable request could not be granted, Browne did have reason to look forward to an easier time of it after the new collector had filled Hammond's place. The man chosen for the job was Milton Latham, a well known Sacramento businessman and a prominent member of the Democratic party. By September 20 Browne had told Latham of Guthrie's intention to appoint him.3 It was imperative, however, that Latham concur with Guthrie's policies for keeping abuses out of the customs house. Latham agreed to carry out such a plan, and remarked to Browne that he would

1 Browne, San Francisco, 18 October 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 291.

2 Browne, San Francisco, 12 August 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 255. Those items Browne wished to charge to the government were a small wagon, two mules with harnesses, one horse with saddle and bridle, and some camp equipment. It was Browne's plan to make a tour of the parts of the country where he had never been in order to "report facts relative to the commerce of the country which will be useful for future reference. . . ."

3 Browne, San Francisco, 20 September 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 272. For Guthrie's instructions to Latham, see his letter from Washington dated 18 October 1855, to Latham, San Francisco, NAP, 440.
do everything to implement reform. In the meantime he wanted to remain in Sacramento to conclude his business affairs. It turned out, however, that Hammond still carried some weight at the customs house and had withdrawn another $24,000 in public funds. With this news, Latham hurried to San Francisco and took over as Collector of Customs.

The experiences of the first nine months of 1855 had tried Browne's temper and tested his ability. Upon his return to Washington in January, he reported personally on the government's affairs on the Pacific Coast at the Treasury and Interior Departments, detailing the reports he had sent East during the fall of 1854. He reminded Guthrie, Secretary of the Treasury, that the Branch Mint in San Francisco would need constant watching because of the continued threat of lack of supplies. Concerning Indian affairs, Browne had had little to report: malfeasance had not as yet shown up. Early in February Browne was ordered to the Midwest, where he reported that the public depositories at

1 Browne, 20 September 1855, to Guthrie, loc. cit., 272.

2 Hammond claimed he had a right to the $24,000 as a commission for being United States Disbursing Agent. Browne, San Francisco, 26 September 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 282.
Chicago and Dubuque were in danger of being robbed if the government did not tighten up its security measures. From Chicago Browne traveled north to St. Paul, where he investigated charges of improbity laid against Governor Willis A. Gorman of the Minnesota Territory. After he had satisfied himself that Gorman was being unjustly maligned, Browne returned to Washington around April 1. There he accepted instructions to return to California with an increase in pay and his family in tow. Once back in San Francisco, Browne began a series of investigations that led to the dismissal of Richard Hammond, the Collector of Customs, a reorganization of Branch Mint affairs, a sizeable reduction in the revenue force on the Pacific Coast, and the uncovering of the usual frauds Browne was used to handling. By the end of September 1855, Browne knew he would have his hands full.
CHAPTER VI

THE FRAUDS ARE COMPOUNDED, 1855-56

During the next twelve months, a variety of important business was pursued by Browne. Although the mint was put in working order with a ready supply of acids, other difficulties concerning its officials arose. The courts were trying people against whom Browne had gathered evidence. Various revenue officers in the remote areas of California were abusing their positions as Federal employees. Claims against government property needed thorough investigation. And a number of matters involving the San Francisco customs house called for Browne's attention. In all of these matters, save one, the special agent stood, for the most part, alone in looking after the government's interests. His only support came from Milton Latham, the newly appointed Collector of Customs at San Francisco, who struggled with Browne to bring efficiency, honesty, and economy to San Francisco's revenue affairs.

During the last week in September, Latham began his new job. Although he hoped that Browne would accept
Guthrie's suggestion that Browne be deputy collector, Browne declined, pointing out that he could not hold an office upon which it was his duty to report as special agent. Such an offer must have been tempting to Browne, who was aware that the next several months would be just as harrowing as had been the last few. Yet he would not depart from his principles no matter how tempting the situation seemed.

The first matter of business at the customs house was to reorganize the revenue service along the lines of economy. After several weeks of work implementing Guthrie's instructions, by November 19 Browne noticed that the "most gratifying changes" had taken place at the customs house: the collector was at his desk from 9:00 AM-3:00 PM, and was accessible during those hours; clerks were punctual and doing their jobs well; the backlog of business had been brought up to date, with the collector personally supervising the affairs; a rigid inquiry was made about conditions in the warehouse, and instructions were given to change certain situations; and by personally examining every item of expense, Latham had uncovered many abuses which had

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1 Browne, San Francisco (no day given), September 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 286.
escaped Browne's attention.¹

Browne, too, found additional frauds, the worst of which concerned Cyril V. Grey, the clerk whom Browne had fired several weeks before for other reasons. It was now clear that Grey had conspired with certain San Francisco firms to defraud the government out of several hundred dollars. It appeared that while Grey was corresponding clerk for several of the collectors in the past, he had made arrangements with certain merchants to refund money due them on one invoice, then had refunded the money again, disguising the fact that the first refund had been made. The proof of these acts was demonstrated by Grey's own figures. Moreover, when the merchants involved complained that they had done no wrong, Browne threatened to take them to court to get back the money. He pointed out to them that they must have been peculiarly engaged during the time to have been ignorant of their receipts.² By April 3 the merchants paid

¹Browne, San Francisco, 19 November 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 316.

²Browne, San Francisco, 18 December 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 324.
back the unwarranted refunds to the government.¹

An examination of the appraiser's department during the week before Christmas indicated that the assistant appraiser, Mr. Walley, was not needed. Upon his dismissal, the Department would save $3,500 in salary per year, which when added to the savings already made would total over $16,000 saved by the government in the appraiser's department since 1854. And when the appraiser moved into his new store, an additional $14,400 would be saved each year in rent.² Furthermore, with the excellent job the naval officer, Mr. Hayden, had carried out in implementing the Department's instructions about warehousing, Browne felt he could look forward to the Christmas of 1855 feeling the system was safe from fraud.³

With business down in California, Browne convinced Latham early in February 1856 to remove ten more inspectors.⁴

¹Browne, San Francisco, 3 April 1856, to Guthrie, NAB, 340.

²Browne, San Francisco, 19 December 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 395.

³Browne, San Francisco, 19 December 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 326.

⁴Browne, San Francisco, 5 February 1856, to Guthrie, NAB, 334.
Moreover, there was absolutely no reason to believe the charges made against certain high customs officials by influential people. These allegations, Browne felt, stemmed from the desire to expand the patronage. The truth was, however, that all the reductions made which caused displeasure in Washington were necessary in view of the steady drop in business and slow rise of inflation in California since 1851. As a matter of fact, Browne felt that even more reductions should be made, since it would be desirable to eliminate a number of revenue districts.

If Browne hoped that the reform of the customs house made during 1855-56 would make life easier for him, he was to be disappointed. Just as Latham was beginning the new program, Birdsall, the superintendent of the Branch Mint, called Browne to investigate mint affairs. He had told the special agent early in October 1855 that certain people had been accusing him of doing his job improperly. He wanted

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1Browne, San Francisco, 21 January 1856, to Guthrie, NAB, 335.

2Browne, San Francisco, 17 April 1856, to Guthrie, NAB, 343.

3Browne, San Francisco, 18 October 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 293.
Browne to investigate his official affairs and report to the Department. It is interesting to note here that Birdsall realized he had done some wrong in his official acts; but he felt he would get a fair deal from Browne who would report the facts of the case without prejudice. Here is striking testimony of the reputation Browne had made for being an able, thorough, and honest investigator.

In less than a month, Browne had concluded his investigation, and he reported to Guthrie on November 4 that it would be in the best interests of the Department to accept Birdsall's resignation, rather than to prefer charges against the superintendent.\(^1\) In suggesting this course Browne considered a number of extenuating circumstances. In the first place, Birdsall was Latham's father-in-law, and the collector "would be mortified and embarrassed if his father-in-law was summarily removed."\(^2\) And, in the second place, Browne had mellowed somewhat during the last year. He therefore explained further that "if I have erred in the conciliatory course which I have taken, it is proper that the error be

\(^1\)Browne, San Francisco, 4 November 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 311.

\(^2\)Ibid.
attributed to the true cause—sympathy for an old man whose life would be embittered by the stigma attached to his name, and whose family would share in the reproach.\[1\]

The difficulty revolved around Birdsall's official and private dealings with the chemical factory and with the mint's assayer, Mr. Harazthy. In regard to the chemical works, Birdsall had lent Mahan, one of the owners, $5,000 to help start the factory, for which Birdsall had received twenty-five per cent ownership. The transaction, however, had been made public since Birdsall saw no reason to conceal it. In the meantime he had sold his interest in the factory to Farmer, Chase, and Company, and had maintained no private interest in the company since that time. Concerning his association with Harazthy, there was nothing legally wrong, though he may have been guilty of impropriety. Harazthy had invented a gold refining process which he had wished to try out on a large scale. Since it was not possible to do this at the mint, Harazthy and Birdsall had agreed to make a contract with Adams and Company to establish an assay office to evaluate the government gold used in the experiment.

\[1\]Ibid.
Before the experiment could take place, however, Birdsall had changed his mind and would not agree to the contract.\(^1\)

If, however, the affair with Harazthy were not indicting enough, Browne felt Birdsall's association with the chemical factory was too much in bad taste. He called then for Birdsall's resignation. In a last attempt to convince the Department to accept the superintendent's resignation rather than to remove him suddenly, Browne reminded Guthrie that Birdsall had faced more difficulties created by situations beyond his control than had anyone in any establishment of a mint. Consistently he had to work with poor materials or none at all; it had been difficult to get advice from the parent mint; and there had been no way to stop inconveniences, such as lack of funds. Yet despite the fact that he had made errors in judgment and policy, Browne pointed out, if one would compare his record with that of others in his position serving on the Atlantic Coast, Birdsall would be shown in a favorable light.\(^2\)

Concerning Birdsall's successor, however, Browne

\(^1\)Browne, San Francisco, 4 November 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 312.

\(^2\)Ibid.
was most hesitant in November 1855 to suggest a name: "I know of none here for whose business capacity and integrity of character combined, I would be willing to vouch."\(^1\)

Although a certain Major Roman was considered by many to be the best of the applicants for the job, Browne's investigation of his affairs had uncovered some objections: he was a man more convivial than businesslike. A better selection, Browne felt, would be B. F. Washington, whose merits Browne had listed at length in regard to another matter several months previously. Certainly, there was no one at the mint who could fill the position, the employees being either unqualified from a business point of view, or of such questionable character as Harazthy would soon prove to be that a selection from that force would encourage improbity. The matter, Browne felt, should be settled by Guthrie appointing someone from the Atlantic Coast.\(^2\) The situation was relieved, however, by November 17, when Browne impressed upon Peter Lott, the new mint superintendent, the views of the Department about how mint affairs should be conducted.

\(^1\)Browne, 4 November 1855, to Guthrie, loc. cit., 311.

\(^2\)Ibid.
Meanwhile, it would be another eight months before enough important matters at the mint necessitated Browne's presence.¹

After dealing in July with some false accusations against I. M. Eckfeldt, the coiner of the mint, Browne was informed in August that the mint was drawing upon its emergency store of acids.² The chemical factory of Farmer, Chase, and Company had been forced to close down because the nitrate of soda they ordered had not arrived in San Francisco. There was fear that the vessel had been lost at sea.³ By September the mint was threatened with a stoppage unless a supply of acids could be obtained. Should such an event occur, the public would be flooded with private coin, and all the past evils attendant to such an event would arise. To Browne the situation was the last straw! He had pointed out to the owners of the chemical works several months previously that they should keep an emergency supply

¹Browne, San Francisco, 17 November 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 315.

²Browne, San Francisco, 3 July 1856, to Guthrie, NAB, 350. See also Browne, San Francisco, 4 August 1856, to Guthrie, NAB, 353.

³Browne, San Francisco, 20 August 1856, to Guthrie, NAB, 361.
of acids. They had refused, however, excuses themselves by saying they could not afford it. With the advent of the emergency, though, the owners were sufficiently embarrassed to agree in the future to keep an extra supply of material on hand, or, they were willing to sell their factory to the government at cost, $20,000. To this offer Browne responded eagerly. And in a letter to Guthrie on September 3, he pointed out the advantages of government ownership of the chemical works. The factory would be run properly, and it would not be embarrassed by a lack of supplies.¹

Finally during the last week in September, a cargo of nitrate of soda arrived in San Francisco.² Yet the ship bringing the supply was unnecessarily prevented from landing for five days. Browne was sure that private parties interested in keeping the mint suspended had caused the delay. In response to this situation, Browne ordered a steamer tug to tow the ship to port. The cost was paid by the superintendent of the mint, when Farmer, Chase, and Company refused

¹Browne, San Francisco, 3 September 1856, to Guthrie, NAB, 372.

²Browne, San Francisco, 4 October 1856, to Guthrie, NAB, 376. The ship which brought the nitrate of soda was the Jenny Lind, a Chilian brig.
to assume the expense. The government, however, would not suffer a loss, Browne remarked, for the towing charge would be deducted from the first bill sent by the chemical factory to the mint.¹ Mint matters were not at an end, however, and Browne was to spend the next several months gathering evidence to remove Harazthy, who had become the melter and refiner of the mint, because of his dealings with a metallurgical firm.

Mint matters were not, however, the only affairs that Browne investigated from September 1855 to October 1856. In October 1855 the major item was the continued abuses of the Passenger Act of February 22, 1847. Overcrowding on the boats carrying Chinese immigrants was not the only complaint. In addition the steamship line bringing settlers to California via the Nicaraguan route had crammed over two hundred more passengers aboard each ship than the law provided.² The collector of customs in San Francisco, whose duty it was to prefer charges, had received no help from the district

¹Ibid.

²Browne, 19 October 1855, to Guthrie, loc. cit., 303. The ship carrying two hundred surplus passengers was the Sierra Nevada.
attorney.\textsuperscript{1} If only, Browne had felt, a conviction could be won, an example would be set and further breaking of the law would cease.\textsuperscript{2} In November the public had complained even more loudly when the loss of life due to cholera\textsuperscript{3} aboard the overcrowded ships became known.\textsuperscript{4} When Browne had investigated why the United States District Attorney did not bring suit against the steamship companies, he found that technicalities in the law would obstruct a conviction. The remedy for this, Browne felt, was to make a test case so that Congress would know just where were the weaknesses in the law in order to strengthen it.\textsuperscript{5}

By far, however, the most important matter Browne brought to the attention of the Department was the famous court suit of the Limantour claimants.\textsuperscript{6} In January

\begin{enumerate}
\item Browne, San Francisco, 4 November 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 314.
\item Browne, 19 October 1855, to Guthrie, \textit{loc. cit.}, 303.
\item Browne, 4 November 1855, to Guthrie, \textit{loc. cit.}, 314.
\item Browne, 19 October 1855, to Guthrie, \textit{loc. cit.}, 303.
\item Browne, 4 November 1855, to Guthrie, \textit{loc. cit.}, 314.
\item For a summary of the character and claims of Jose Y. Limantour, see J. S. Hittell, "Limantour," \textit{Overland Monthly}, II (February, 1869), 154-60. \textit{Cf.} Hubert Howe Bancroft,
\end{enumerate}
1856 Browne had been approached by a lawyer, Mr. Gale, whose clients stood to lose some land if the Limantour claim were accepted. He had informed Browne that the government was also threatened with the loss of much valuable property. Gale had felt that the government should support the defense against the claimants. Conversely on February 19 Browne was instructed to look into the alleged frauds which gave support to the claimants. He found that the general public was correct in their feelings that the claim was built on false information. The evidence, though, was in Mexico and no one except the government could afford to send someone there to gain the necessary proofs. Moreover, Browne suggested a man of great energy and legal knowledge as well as one who had intimate familiarity of the case, Mr. Inge, former United States District Attorney. By coincidence Inge was preparing to leave for Washington on another matter. It would be well, Browne observed, for the government to talk with him.

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1Browne, San Francisco, 4 January 1856, to Guthrie, NAB, 328.

2Browne, San Francisco, 5 April 1856, to Guthrie, NAB, 342.
The details of serving as special agent in the Treasury Department were made more bearable to Browne by the frequent opportunities he found for travel. And during 1855-56 Browne made the most of them, combining business with pleasure. A trip to Marysville, California was in order in October 1855. At this small town, in the District of Sacramento, Browne found the registrar of the land office paying $250 rent per month when the same building could be rented for only fifty dollars. Moreover, business was so slow in the area that Browne felt the district could be better administered if it were incorporated into the District of San Francisco.1 Four months later, in February 1856, a tour of the San Joaquin Valley revealed no change there in the amount of business. Not only were affairs dull at Marysville, but at Sacramento, Stockton, and Benicia there was almost nothing to do. It was evident that the districts in which they lay, Sonoma, Sacramento and San Joaquin, could best be conducted by inspectors attached to San Francisco—thus eliminating the salaries of three full collectors.2

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1 Browne, Sacramento, 29 October 1855, to Guthrie, NAB, 308.

2 Browne, San Francisco, 27 February 1856, to Guthrie, NAB, 336.
Furthermore, a third trip made a few weeks later, in the last part of February, revealed no further increases were needed.\footnote{Browne, San Francisco, 3 April 1856, to Guthrie, NAB, 341.}

Tours made in April, May, and September 1856 did create some excitement for Browne.\footnote{Browne, San Francisco, 20 May 1856, to Guthrie, NAB, 345. Since there was no imperative need that he travel to southern California at this time, Browne paid a guide fifty dollars and expenses to escort him through the wilderness out of his own salary. Browne made the trip for he wished to see that part of the state which he had not yet explored.} On April 20 Browne, two inspectors, and a guide traveled through the San Joaquin and Tulare Valleys to investigate cattle smuggling. At Visalia they were told that a war had broken out between the settlers and the Indians in the southern part of the state. Troops from Fort Miller and Fort Tejon were trying to restore order in the Tulare Valley. Browne's opinion was that the war would spread from San Diego to Puget Sound with great disaster not only for the settlers but to the Indian reservations upon which so much money was being spent. As far as the cattle problem, which became the least of Browne's worries, was concerned it was impossible to collect any
duties because of the way in which the cattle were sold. Browne communicated this fact to Guthrie on May 20, using it to support his contention that no duty should be charged for cattle since stock raising was the principal industry in southern California. He felt a law removing the duty on cattle would encourage settlers to fill up that sparsely settled part of the state. With this and other matters reported to Guthrie, Browne made an additional trip to Marysville late in August 1856, where he corrected a minor abuse.¹

In September he took advantage of a momentary lull in his business in California to take a steamer to the Northwest.² Browne was not surprised to see the region as quiet as he had predicted. The only important change in revenue affairs was an increasing waste of Federal funds. Instructed³ to travel to Astoria to examine certain financial

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¹Browne, San Francisco, 2 September 1856, to Guthrie, NAB, 369.

²Browne, San Francisco, 19 January 1857, to Guthrie, NAA, 1.

³Ibid. In this letter, Browne remarks that he was in the Northwest in September, 1856, in order to carry out Guthrie's instructions to look into certain claims made by
claims of the collector of customs, Browne paused on his way to visit the settlements of Port Orford and Gardiner. In both places Browne observed that nothing had changed since his call two years before. The few towns in the area were small and quiet while business was at a standstill. At Gardiner the collector had nothing to do but watch over a small dwelling place and a vacant shanty. With these conditions in mind, Browne renewed his suggestion made in 1854 that the entire Oregon Coast be attached to the District of Astoria.

At Astoria Browne found more to report to the Treasury Department than only his investigation of the collector's claims. While the special agent was examining these claims, which he found to be inadmissible, he

the Collector of Customs of Astoria, Oregon, John Adair. Although he mentions he reported his findings to the Department in September, no trace of the document can be found.

1Browne, 17 April 1856, to Guthrie, loc. cit., 343.

2Browne, 19 January 1857, to Guthrie, loc. cit., 1. In a letter dated October 5, 1856, Browne wrote to Joseph Lane, Oregon's Delegate to Congress, that he had just sent his report about these claims to the Treasury Department. He commented to Lane that he had rejected the claims "because there was no actual expenditure of money on admissible grounds, and no actual services rendered upon which compensation could be based." Browne felt, however, that the
received complaints about the behavior of the crew of the revenue cutter assigned to the Columbia River.\textsuperscript{1} The ship lay for most of the year at anchor in the Columbia while the crew, having nothing to do, periodically went ashore, got drunk, and bothered the settlers. Browne could see no excuse for any of these matters. In a letter to Guthrie, he pointed out that the cutter could well be kept busy during nine months of the year. New anchorages along the Columbia could be sought out, while frequent cruises along the coast would help discourage smuggling. In Puget Sound, moreover, he remarked that the revenue cutter there should be kept in constant service from Olympia to the Straits of Fuca, touching at all the ports that were visited by vessels.\textsuperscript{2} Charges collector, John Adair, should be given some relief by Congress: "That General Adair is equitably entitled to relief, I am clearly convinced. I know how much good he has done for the public good, and how little profit he has derived from it. His eight years of suffering and isolation at the port of Astoria have resulted in no pecuniary reward. He is now in destitute circumstances, not from any fault of his own but from his zeal in affording relief to immigrants and others, who have from time to time, been quartered upon him at Astoria." Browne, San Francisco, 5 October 1856, to Lane, Washington, Joseph Lane MSS, University of Indiana.

\textsuperscript{1}Browne, 19 January 1857, to Guthrie, \textit{loc. cit.}, 1.

\textsuperscript{2}\textit{Ibid.} In 1864 Browne satirized the inactivity of the revenue cutters and the government's toleration of the
of fraud, inefficiency of the postal system, and unsatisfactory conditions of the military roads reached Browne at this time. Before he was able to investigate these affairs, however, it was necessary to go back to San Francisco where pressing business called for his attention. He wrote to Guthrie, though, that he wished to return to the Northwest to examine these matters.

When Browne returned to San Francisco from the northern districts in early October 1856, a letter he had been expecting from Guthrie awaited him. Browne had complained constantly of the frustrations of his work. Whatever he suggested from his trying, boring, and generally unpleasant investigations was accepted only a few times:

"Hard labor, constant wear and tear of mind, the ceaseless situation in an essay entitled "My Official Experiences," which appeared in his book Crusoe's Island, 264-66. About the cutter stationed on the Columbia, Browne commented that "if she has ever been known to chase anything larger than wild ducks, the fact must have been hushed up from some motives of public policy." Ibid., 265. His observations about the Jefferson Davis struck the same note: "The revenue cutter at Puget's Sound . . . finds occasional occupation in chasing porpoises and wild Indians. It is to be regretted that little revenue has yet been derived from either of these sources. . . ." Ibid., 266.

1Browne, San Francisco, 2 October 1856, to an unknown person (probably Guthrie), NAB, 378.
struggle against my fellowmen, have almost worn me out at last, and, if it were not for my family, I would sell out my lease of life for a small consideration."\textsuperscript{1} Aware of Browne's feelings, Guthrie replied to ask what could be done for him regarding a change of position. Browne wrote that his hopes in that matter "had been growing shadowy for some time past."\textsuperscript{2} But, if Guthrie could procure for him a diplomatic position, Browne would feel his efforts had been amply rewarded. He pointed out to Guthrie that a circular from the Treasury Department had been sent to all consuls and commercial agents in September 1855 requesting from them a wide variety of information for the guidance of the Treasury Department in its instructions to collectors about the evaluation of foreign goods. Browne observed that if consuls could be of so much service to the Department with which they were not connected "how much more service might be rendered by an Agent sent directly from the Department. I propose to visit all the Consulates of the Pacific, including the Asiatic ports; then to visit all the Consulates of

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{2}Ibid.
the Mediterranean, and so on until all the important ports of the world are visited. This I propose to do at my present compensation and traveling allowances. It is merely an extension of my duties."

Such was Browne's plea. It would have suited him exactly. For a variety of reasons, however, the appointment was not made. It is not unwarranted to suggest that in the course of the three years Browne was a special agent, he had made influential enemies in Congress who would not stand for rewarding a man who dealt a serious blow to their patronage powers. Browne knew this and frequently told Guthrie that many people worked against him in Washington. In any case, the government found Browne to be too important in his position as special agent to change his job. Consequently, in the next few years he would be asked by various government departments to conduct investigations into their affairs. Not the least of these agencies was the Indian Bureau for whom Browne conducted a series of investigations during the winter of 1856-57.

From September 1855 through September 1856, Browne

1Ibid.
wrestled with a number of perplexing problems. Only after much difficulty was he able to salvage the reputation of L. A. Birdsall, the Branch Mint superintendent, while he spent much time establishing the affairs of the mint on a sound basis. The continued business recession in California necessitated the removal of many able revenue officers. And in the Northwest he found the revenue cutters to be doing little more good than harm. All in all, Browne found his job to be distasteful, but he was beginning to resign himself to his fate: he might have to serve many more years before his service would merit him the chance to enter the diplomatic corps of his country.
CHAPTER VII

CUSTOMS MATTERS AND INDIAN AFFAIRS

IN CALIFORNIA, 1856-57

The storm of headaches developed from his revenue assignments turned into an outright gale when the Indian Bureau requested Browne to investigate conditions on the California reservations. In November 1856 Browne had received his instructions. During the winter of 1856-57, he had collected information on the California reservations which foretold of their ruin. The Commissioner of Indian Affairs would find little in Browne's reports which commended the Indian Service in California. His second report on the conditions of the reservations contained his first written attack on the treatment of the Indians. In March 1857 Browne wrote to James Guthrie, Secretary of the Treasury, and enclosed a copy of the report which he had submitted to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs.¹ Browne attempted to

present as many facts as possible about reservation conditions, together with suggestions for improvements. He described the adversities of Indians in contact with white men, explained the need for the Army to cooperate with reservation officials, and pointed out the desirability of an official survey of the California reservations.

Browne began by commenting that the weather had adversely affected the Indians. A two-year drought in the San Joaquin Valley, where many had been collected on reservations, caused widespread starvation. Both the reservation near Fresno and the Indian farm north of Visalia were useless. Browne pointed out, though, that the weather was only partly to blame. He believed that mismanagement of funds and shirking of duty were largely responsible for the dismal condition of the government charges. To lend substance to his accusations, he cited the nearby Nome Lackee Reservation as an example of a successful operation. Here, he said, "great energy has been displayed by the Superintendent and Agent in the management and supervision of this reservation, which is one of the most flourishing on the Pacific Coast."^1

Meanwhile, white settlers continued to encroach upon lands set aside for the Indians. Chaos was the result. Matters got so completely out of hand that the San Joaquin Valley Indians were subjected to a war of extermination by discontented white settlers. Surprisingly enough, however, it was these troublesome whites who got the worst of the business. After some helpless Valley Indians had been murdered, the wild tribes of the mountains wreaked vengeance on the whites and beat them in two or three battles. Although these events interrupted the peace of central California and threatened the destruction of the reservation system of the state, Browne found the Army unwilling to enforce the law. "Indeed," he wrote, "the state of California might just as well be relieved from the presence of a military force, for the commanding officer has always been adverse to giving any assistance to the federal or civil authorities."^1

^1Ibid., 960-61. It was the repeated refusals of the Army to aid Browne in carrying out his duties that aroused his general displeasure with the military and caused him to pen sarcastic comments whenever possible. An example of this sarcasm is found with remarks about a cavalry detachment which accompanied him and Charles Debrille Poston, Superintendent of Arizona Indian Affairs, on a trip south of Tucson in January 1864. "They were good-humored, obliging and sober, and not one of them stole a pig or a chicken during the entire trip." J. Ross Browne, "A Tour Through Arizona,"
The reservation system was threatening the peace of California. Yet if the government wished to prevent the extermination of the Indians, reservations appeared to be the best plan. Without such a system, Browne observed, the Indians would be subjected to abuses such as those perpetrated in the Los Angeles area. There the policy pursued toward the Indians was "infinitely worse than the peonage

Harper's Magazine, XXX (December, 1864), 26. Aurora Hunt has interpreted this remark as an indication of Browne's enthusiasm for the men of the escort. Aurora Hunt, The Army of the Pacific: Its Operations in California, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, Oregon, Washington, Plains Region, Mexico, Etc. 1860-66 (Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1951), 133. The present writer maintains, however, that Browne meant to be more critical than friendly. But whatever opinion Browne held of the California Volunteers, at least one officer definitely felt hostile toward him. Commenting on Browne's and Poston's request for an escort to insure their safety from the Apaches, Colonel Nelson H. Davis wrote: "Indian superintendents, agents and traders in Arizona just now are, as such, bores and nuisances to the military department and should be placed in abeyance." Colonel Nelson H. Davis, Ass't. Inspector General, Tucson, Arizona, 2 March 1864, to General James H. Carleton, Headquarters Dep't., New Mexico, The War of the Rebellion: a Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, Ser. I, Vol. XXXIV, Pt. 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1891), 593. What Browne wrote about the disposition of Davis' men would have served as a pointed reply: "Volunteer soldiers are stationed all over town—at the mescal shops, the monte tables, and houses of ill-fame—for the preservation of public order, or go there of their own accord for that purpose, which amounts to the same thing." Browne, "A Tour Through Arizona," loc. cit., 24.
of Mexico; [it was] slavery in its worst aggravated form.\textsuperscript{1}

The vineyard owners and city officials were fostering a vicious cycle which scandalized Browne. After working in the vineyards all week, where they were poorly fed and seldom clothed, the Indians were paid for their labor with whiskey. Invariably they got drunk. For their misconduct the Indians were thrown in jail and fined. Then, unable to pay the fine, they were hired out to the vineyard owners in order to work out the penalty. At the end of the week, they were again paid with alcohol, starting the cycle once more.\textsuperscript{2}

Although those who perpetuated this system defended their actions with numerous excuses, Browne found each one untenable:

To this I would remark that if the vineyards can only exist on the degradation of an unfortunate race of man, however low on the scale of humanity, the sooner they stop the better... Must such a state of things exist in an enlightened age and in a community of which people professing to be


\textsuperscript{2}\textit{Ibid.}
civilized on the ground of an alleged benefit to a few unprincipled and rapacious individuals?¹

Furthermore, the condition of the Indians at the Tejon--the reservation Browne described in his first report to be progressing very well--was now so discouraging that Browne considered the reservation a failure. The officials were allowing their charges to regard themselves as charity cases rather than encouraging them to be self-sufficient by farming the fertile soil of the reservation. Instead of taking handouts, the Indians should put to work the high intelligence Browne had seen them demonstrate. For a small sum, he thought, the government could hire teachers who would promote the proven abilities of the Indians in successful farming.²

Mendocino, the largest of the California reservations, especially disappointed the agent. Browne observed that Superintendent Henley by 1856 had built up the Mendocino


²Ibid., 954. Browne knew that the mission system controlled by the padres had succeeded admirably well. The Indians had been easily taught to farm large plots of land successfully. Certainly, Browne felt, the California Indian was an intelligent and adaptable human being.
so well that it was able to comfortably support the warlike tribes of the area. A year later, however, progress was seriously retarded by the presence of white settlers in the vicinity of the reservation. The establishment of the reservation was causing, moreover, a conflict of interests among miners and squatters.\(^1\) The miners were glad to have a source from which to draw cheap labor to their diggings, but the squatters felt that the desirable farm land on the Mendocino was rightfully theirs.

As unsatisfactory as matters appeared, Browne was not yet ready to condemn the reservation system as unworkable. He offered a series of suggestions which he hoped the government would put into operation immediately. Among these was a proposal to gather together all the California Indians at a central point, for which the Cape Mendocino area seemed admirably adapted.\(^2\) If this plan were carried out, two purposes would be served: not only would the Indians be civilized in due time by a concentration of

\(^1\)Ibid., 960.

\(^2\)Browne described the Cape Mendocino area in glowing terms, pointing out how it could be used to fill most of the needs of the Indians.
efforts to fill their needs by a centralized administration, but the Indian service would be a far less costly proposition to the government.¹

Early in 1857, having submitted his report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Browne turned his attention to customs matters. Improvements in the implementation of the government's Indian policies were not forthcoming, though. As a matter of fact, the conditions of the Indians were growing increasingly worse as the reservation system demonstrated more opportunity for abuse. It appeared that every increase in funds appropriated for an extension of the system brought more corruption. The best the Indian Bureau could do, it seemed, was to order another investigation. The examination would have to wait, however, until Browne found time during the summer and fall of 1858.

During the next six months from October 1856 to May 1857 Browne attended to the usual variety of investigations

¹If the Indians were collected at a central reservation, the government could make substantial savings by releasing one-half of the labor force then serving the many reservations. The largest saving, however, would be in transportation, the need for which would be limited if all the Indians were at one place. Browne pointed out that the Indian service was spending enormous funds to pay for the shipping of goods from San Francisco to the reservations.
for the Treasury Department while he also kept a closer vigil on the course of Indian affairs. In October the only matter important enough to report to Guthrie seemed to be the sudden hostility of Conrad Wiegand, the mint assayer, to the Democratic party. After gaining a written confession from Wiegand that he was the author\(^1\) of a vicious newspaper article attacking the party, Browne accepted Wiegand's resignation.\(^2\) Moreover, the assayer openly supported the San Francisco Vigilance Committee, deliberately defying the Administration's orders that no Federal officer could have any dealings with that organization.\(^3\) From a close inspection of the situation, Browne felt that Wiegand was a bit mentally deranged.\(^4\) Meanwhile, Browne felt, Mr. Snyder, the assistant assayer, would be able to do Wiegand's duties well, since his background and reputation were enough to qualify him for that position.

\(^1\)Browne, San Francisco, 4 October 1856, to Conrad Wiegand, San Francisco, NAB, 382.

\(^2\)Browne, San Francisco, 4 October 1856, to Guthrie, NAB, 380.

\(^3\)Browne, 4 October 1856, to Wiegand, loc. cit., 382.

\(^4\)Browne, 4 October 1856, to Guthrie, loc. cit., 380.
November, too, evidently brought only a few revenue matters to Browne's attention. The most interesting of these was the all-important issue of pushing the Federal court suits against those whom Browne had gathered evidence to establish convictions of fraud. For instance, the Hammond case had been on the docket as early as September 20, yet it was now November 19 and still nothing had been done. When Browne asked the district attorney why so many delays had occurred in these cases, he was informed that the court was busy with another matter. The only other affair Browne felt strongly about during November was closing the Folsom case, which would establish the government's right to a good deal of property.

Similarly, Treasury matters investigated in December did not call for a great deal of correspondence. Of the issues that he did wish to comment on, one involving the

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1Browne, San Francisco, 20 September 1856, to Guthrie, NAB, 374. Hammond's trial had finally come up in court on Friday, September 19, but was recessed until the following Monday. Browne remarked to Guthrie that the district attorney now had all the proofs necessary to gain a conviction.

2Browne, San Francisco, 19 November 1856, to Guthrie, NAB, 383.
eviction of Elizabeth Hart, a respectable widow with children to support, from the grounds of the Marine Hospital especially caught his attention.\(^1\) Browne felt that though the government had every legal right to remove her, she was a poor woman without any means to support herself. Her husband, who had purchased the property which was fraudulently sold to him since it belonged to the government, paid for the land in good faith. If it were taken from her now she would be desperate. Consequently, it would be well, he said, if the government allowed her at least $2,500, the value of the lot, while the government would get the house worth $3,000.\(^2\) There was an additional matter that Browne felt strongly about. On December 19, he wrote to Guthrie that the next day a steamer going to the East Coast would leave San Francisco. On board would be a crowd of passengers who worked in various capacities for the government. They were headed for Washington to besiege the new administration for confirmation in their positions.\(^3\) Browne regarded these

\(^1\)Browne, San Francisco, 19 December 1856, to Guthrie, NAB, 391.

\(^2\)Ibid.

\(^3\)Browne, San Francisco, 19 December 1856, to Guthrie, NAB, 388. The Democrats had returned to power in 1857, and
people as being no longer employed by the government, since they had walked off their jobs, despite Browne's refusal to grant them leaves of absence. He felt he had been correct in discharging them, for the attitude they had demonstrated made them unfit, he felt, for duty as Federal officials.¹

Before the fall of 1856 was over, Browne was again asked to visit the Northwest. The government needed someone to report on the conditions of the Indian reservations in Washington and Oregon. With the Rogue River war over, thousands of dollars were being spent to maintain the Indians on reservations in order to preserve the peace. Exactly how well the reservations were serving their purpose the Treasury Department was anxious to know. By a letter dated November 4, 1856, therefore, Browne was instructed to tour the reservations of Washington and Oregon and submit a report on their conditions.² For this task, a more suitable man could not

¹Ibid.

²Browne, San Francisco, 3 March 1857, to Guthrie, NAC(35), 940.
have been chosen. Since 1854 Browne had not only investigated customs affairs for the government, but he had examined in detail several of the major frauds in California Indian matters. After these investigations, Browne, following his usual manner of conducting official business, had sent to the Treasury Department long, detailed reports which analyzed the situations in depth. Marshalling his facts in a formidable array, Browne had hoped to stimulate his superiors to correct the abuses perpetrated on the California Indians. When Browne completed his tour of the reservations in the Northwest, he upset many people with just that sort of report.

It was nine months, however, before Browne was able to carry out this assignment. For a number of reasons he was unable to leave for the Northwest until August 1857. In the first place, he was in the middle of several investigations of various fiscal matters in San Francisco. Not only was he expected to take the witness stand in the United States Circuit Court, but examinations of Indian affairs,

1From 1853 to 1859, Browne was asked periodically to pause in his duties for the Treasury in order to carry out instructions for the Indian Department. The Commissioner of Indian Affairs called upon Browne to report several times on the conditions of the reservations in California. Browne's reports on these matters can be found in NAC(33-37).
customs business, and mint frauds were occupying almost all of his time. Nevertheless, he found time to seek out information relative to the reservations in Washington and Oregon in order to be better prepared to conduct the proposed investigation.\(^1\) Aware, though, that the Indian Department was growing impatient, Browne requested a suitable extension of time, pointing out how busy he was and that such a tour would be utterly impractical during the rainy season then in full swing in the Northwest when travel there was seriously impeded. Consequently, he was disappointed when the Commissioner of Indian Affairs recalled his instructions in a letter dated January 3, 1857. He wrote to Guthrie, however, that since he planned to conduct another tour of the revenue districts of the Northwest when the rains abated, "it would require but little additional time and no additional expense to the government to visit the Indian Reservations."\(^2\) It would not be, though, until August 1857 that he would find time to carry out these instructions.

In January 1857 Browne submitted a long, detailed

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\(^1\) Browne, 3 March 1857, to Guthrie, \textit{loc. cit.}, 940.

\(^2\) \textit{Ibid.}, 940-41.
report summarizing his activities for the Treasury Department since 1855. During that time, he observed, he carried out instructions to investigate a variety of subjects and made suggestions he thought "would best subserve the interests of the general government." He pointed out that since 1855 he was able to save the government $300,000 because some of his suggestions were implemented:

New laws and regulations based upon a sound system of public policy have gone into effect, and although it cannot be denied that some abuses yet remain to be corrected, it must be generally conceded that a great and beneficial change has taken place. This has been owing chiefly to the enforcement of a rigid system of accountability, and an inflexible administration of the laws.

Browne then launched into the body of his report which pointed out over twenty-five matters that he had investigated since 1855, but which had not yet been acted upon. He hoped that L. Q. Washington, the Deputy Collector of San Francisco, who was leaving for Washington the next day--

1Browne, 19 January 1857, to Guthrie, loc. cit., 1.
2Ibid.
3Ibid.
4Ibid.
January 20—would be able to impress people in the capital that prompt action on these matters was essential if changes for the better were to be maintained.

Throughout the spring of 1857 Browne continued his job as agent of the Treasury Department, though he continually paid closer attention to what was happening on the California Indian reservations. By March he uncovered a plot on the part of influential people to have the government patronize a private company which would smelt and refine the gold used at the Branch Mint.¹ Browne was sure that intrigues of that sort would soon result in great frauds during which time the government would lose thousands of dollars.² The proposed company was led by none other than A. Harazthy, the melter and refiner of the mint, who was waiting action on his resignation.³ That the company was actively injuring the Branch Mint Browne felt sure. As more

¹Browne, San Francisco, 5 March 1857, to Guthrie, NAB, 398.
²Ibid.
³Browne, San Francisco, 4 May 1857, to Howell Cobb, Secretary of the Treasury, Washington, NAB, 399. With the change in administration, James Guthrie was replaced by Cobb, President Buchanan's selection.
pressure was put on the government to grant a contract for private smelting and refining of the gold, the mint grew more inefficient. For example, returns to depositors had not been promptly made for some time. And Browne was not satisfied with the explanation given to him by Harazthy. It was Browne's feeling that the melter and refiner was trying to delay the business of the mint, so bankers and other interested parties of San Francisco would support his desire to establish a private company.¹ In due time Harazthy would be removed.

After March had passed, Browne began to address his reports to Howell Cobb, the Secretary of the Treasury for the new administration. With the change of government came other personnel replacements, one of which was another collector of customs for the San Francisco District. In regard to the new collector, Browne hoped he would not give into the pressure brought to bear on him by his influential associates: to replace the old revenue force with friends of those who had helped him procure his appointment. Browne wished he would act with "the same firmness, integrity and

¹Ibid.
discretion" that made the new administration regard him favorably.¹ Browne foresaw, however, that the collector would have a difficult time doing his job well unless he followed a fixed policy issued by the Department. The sectional differences that affected the party in California would obscure the fact that only the Secretary of the Treasury could make appointments, not the collector, who could only suggest recommendations. Of course, Browne realized that it was customary to accept the collector's nominees, because he would be responsible for their conduct. Thus he should have a voice in selecting his subordinates. But a great evil, Browne pointed out, had grown up in California in nominating people, "an evil which has done more to encourage dishonesty and bring the public service into discredit than any other in the catalogue of official abuses. Open bargains have been made in the Legislature; debts incurred to be paid out of the public treasury, corrupt and incompetent persons placed in positions of trust, as a consideration for services rendered, ² while the better

¹Ibid.
²Ibid.
class of aspirants were left out. "So far as the influence of the Custom House is concerned, the result has never been satisfactory either to the government or to the incumbent—loss of money and litigation being the fruits of the system in the one case, and failure to secure the end in the other." It was not surprising, then, that of all the revenue officials who had served in the San Francisco district since 1854, Browne could list only eleven who had faithfully done their jobs consistently well.

On May 5, with the spring nearly over, Browne received a renewal of instructions to carry on investigations for both the Treasury Department and Indian Bureau. Evidently, J. W. Denver, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, regarded Browne highly enough to postpone the investigation he had previously suggested until the special agent was free to conduct it. In his reply to Denver, however, Browne, in all honesty, wished to make his position clear: he expected to be busy with Treasury matters, but would do his best for

1Ibid.
2Ibid.
3Browne, San Francisco, 20 June 1857, to Denver, NAC(35), 967.
the Indian Department. It would not be, however, until August that he could act on these instructions. Meanwhile, the trouble anticipated from Harazthy, the mint assayer and refiner, had come.

There had been extraordinary losses of gold at the Branch Mint prior to June 1857. Browne assessed the causes to working a small establishment beyond its capacity, laboring at night over long periods of time, poor condition of the flues, stealing of bullion, and failure of the melter-refiner to determine the daily wastage so a remedy could be developed. The investigation showed that Harazthy may have practiced fraud. It was Browne's opinion that he had allowed more than $135,000 in gold to be wasted, much of it clinging to the sides of the flues. Browne, therefore, told Harazthy to turn over all his property in trust to the United States, to facilitate matters if a judgment was rendered against him.

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1Ibid.

2Browne, San Francisco, 4 June 1857, to Guthrie, NAB, 403. Browne still wrote to Guthrie at this time, even though Guthrie was no longer Secretary of the Treasury.

3Ibid.

4Browne, San Francisco, 4 June 1854, to Guthrie, NAB, 404.
After Browne threatened him with jail for embezzlement, Harazthy turned over to Browne's care personal property worth $150,000. To Browne, this whole business was aggravating. Instructions from the Department were ample enough to guard against such a result. There just was no good reason the loss was not reported earlier. In his letter of June 4 Browne reminded Guthrie that a year ago he had recommended the removal of Harazthy on suspicions that he was dishonest: gold was escaping through the chimney; Harazthy must have been well aware of that. How the Department would now act Browne would wait to see. Meanwhile, he cleared away some minor revenue business and set out with Thomas Henley, the California Superintendent of Indian Affairs, for a tour of the reservations.¹

This trip of inspection, conducted intermittently between June and November, caused Browne to recommend drastic measures to save the reservation system and insure the safety of the Indians of the Pacific Coast. His report emphatically stated that the reservations were not doing the job they were set up to carry out. Although the government was spending thousands of dollars for the reservations,

¹Ibid.
the condition of the Indians was growing increasingly worse.¹ Browne felt that two facts had to be accepted before any real progress could be made: little or no improvement could be expected from adult Indians; and the separation of the Indian children from the adults would be the only way that Indian behavior would change.² Adults of any race, Browne pointed out, find it difficult to change their lifetime mode of behavior. Children, on the other hand, can be molded into civilized individuals. In any case, Browne asked, would it be more cruel to separate children from parents than it would be to allow them to grow up in an atmosphere of vice and degradation?³

Browne then suggested⁴ a scheme by which the Indian children would be taught to lead a self-sufficient and


²Browne, San Francisco, 14 January 1858, to Denver, NAC(36), 10.

³Ibid., 11. "No people are harder to civilize than Indians who have freedom implanted in them by nature. They have an aversion to labor and to the monotonous routine of civilized life. After living civilized for years, they will return to the wilds; but the youngsters will not rebel if their associations are civilized." Ibid., 12.

⁴Ibid., 14.
civilized life. To begin with, they should be sent to school starting at age five. Upon reaching fourteen they should be taken, gradually or by force, from their parents. Placed on a farm, each male would be taught farming skills, while each female would learn domestic duties. All should learn English. Although occasional visits to their parents would be permitted, prolonged association between children and adults should be avoided. The last phase of the plan suggested that at age eighteen each Indian should be apprenticed to a respectable white settler for a term of two or three years. 1 Through June and July, Browne continued to make his investigation. By August, however, he felt compelled to return to San Francisco in order to prepare for his trip to the Northwest.

By the end of May 1857, Browne had experienced some shocks about the government's affairs in California. It was

1Ibid., 15. Browne added that the Indian Bureau was being deceived by its own agents. He was aware that Indian officials wrote flattering accounts of the Indians under their supervision. But, said Browne, they were "in general colored by the natural desire to promote the continuance of the system, and probably a laudable hope that it will eventually end successfully." Ibid., 13. And, said Browne, to maintain the Indians upon those lands "in their present condition is to introduce a new species of slavery." Ibid., 15.
enough that revenue matters were in a constant state of improbity. Now he learned that malfeasance was running wild on the Indian reservations as well. During the fall of 1856 he visited several of the reservations and saw the degradation of the Indians, a condition which the Indian agents were encouraging by doing little for their charges. Browne immediately submitted a plan to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to relieve the situation. While awaiting action on his proposal he turned his attention to revenue matters and waged more battles against frauds at the Branch Mint and procrastination in the courts.
CHAPTER VIII

TWO REPORTS ON INDIAN AFFAIRS IN THE NORTHWEST, 1857, AND A BROADSIDE OF COMMENT

To Browne, the tour was to be merely routine. Certainly he did not expect to produce two reports which would kindle many smoldering controversies into sizeable blazes. The first of these reports, dated November 17, 1857, spelled out the generally unsatisfactory conditions of Indian affairs in Washington and Oregon.\(^1\) The press of the region which was campaigning for the Federal government to pay for the destruction to private property due to the late Indian war was hypersensitive to any criticism of the Northwest. Browne, then, was as savagely attacked in the newspapers as much as he had attacked the deplorable conditions of Indian affairs throughout the northern territories. The second\(^2\)

\(^1\)HED 39.

report, dated December 4, 1857, on the other hand, drew praises from the press, since it supported the settlers in their claims against the Federal treasury. When Browne blamed the missionaries, however, for playing a major part in encouraging the war, he came under widespread fire from that group.

The investigation took five weeks to complete.¹ When he had finished, he had visited every reservation and agency in Washington and Oregon.² With the aid of Captain

¹The actual inspections of the reservations began on August 25; by September 29 Browne had visited all the reservations west of the Cascades. *HED* 39, 4-27 passim. By October 1 he had toured the region east of the mountains. [Salem] *Oregon Statesman*, 29 September 1857.

²An inspection of the Indian situation in the Northwest was not the major reason Browne visited the area. He expected to spend much of his time investigating revenue affairs. Since few of his comments about customs matters have survived in the National Archives, however, it has been necessary to search for information in the manuscript collections of various Federal agencies. In pursuing a lead at the Collector of Customs' Office in Seattle, the author stumbled across the letter book kept by the revenue officers at Port Townsend for the 1850's. A perusal of the letters which had been copied into the book in 1857 revealed that Browne spent some time in Port Townsend in the fall of 1857 while examining Indian affairs. At that time he requested that the collector, Morris Frost, compile a list of the amount of lumber shipped down the Pacific Coast by the various mills on the Sound. Morris Frost, Collector of Customs, Port Townsend, Washington, 10 September 1857, to Browne, San Francisco, Port Townsend Letterbook, 1857, Office of the
Charles Jeffries Sprague, whom he had hired to help him with the examination, Browne examined the accounts of all the agents, held councils with the Indians both east and west of the Cascades, obtained valuable testimony bearing on the war debt, and detected several frauds practiced by contractors upon the Indian Department. He estimated that he had covered more than two thousand miles in the North-west. When he visited the Willamette Valley and the region east of the Cascades, he availed himself of Army detachments.

Collector of Customs, Seattle, Washington. While visiting Frost, Browne also asked him to remove the superfluous inspector at Bellingham Bay. Ibid. In another letter, Frost complained to Browne that the Marine Hospital at the port was inadequately staffed, and he hoped that Browne could do something to provide a full-time, qualified physician. Frost, Port Townsend, undated letter (probably September 1857) to Browne, San Francisco, Port Townsend Letterbook, 1857, Seattle.

1Charles Jeffries Sprague (ca. 1820-96), a native of Maine, attended West Point in 1840. In the Mexican War, he was cited for gallantry and bravery at the battles of Contreras and Churubusco. During the Civil War, he served as an Army paymaster for the Union. He retired April 12, 1887, nine years before his death. Francis B. Heitman, Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army, from Its Organization, September 29, 1789, to March 2, 1903 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903), Vol. I, 912.

which escorted him to the various reservations. Moreover, while he was in the Sound area, he enlisted the revenue cutter Jefferson Davis to provide him with transportation.

The burden of official business did not press upon Browne continually, though. While visiting the regions east of the Cascades, relief was provided by General Joseph Lane, who lent him some excellent fellowship. Upon his return to San Francisco, Browne wrote to Lane, who in the meantime had sailed to Washington, D.C., to thank him for his comradeship:

I frankly admit that if it had not been for your interesting reminiscences of Indian life and genial anecdotes of men and things (to say nothing of the gentler sex) Sprague and myself would have had a sorry time of it. But we got through delightfully, and now look back upon the trip as an episode in life to be treasured in the favorite nooks of memory.

Sailing from San Francisco August 15, 1857, Browne and Sprague reached Rainier, on the Columbia, August 19. By

1Oregon Statesman, loc. cit.
2HED 39, loc. cit.
3Browne, San Francisco, 4 November 1857, to Lane, Washington, Joseph Lane MSS, University of Indiana.
4Ibid., 2.
the second week in October, the pair had examined the affairs of six reservations and four agencies. During those six weeks, Browne found little to commend about the conditions of Indian matters. Despite the efforts of well-qualified Indian agents, the reservations were failing to civilize and make self-sufficient the Indians. At nearly every turn, the agents met with opposition from their charges. The Indians countered every attempt to coerce them to work with threats to desert the reservations. The government, they felt, had deprived them of their natural

1 Sometime during the last week in September, Browne and General Lane stopped at Salem, where they made plans to visit the reservations east of the Cascades. Oregon Statesman, loc. cit.

2 Browne defined the difference between a reservation and an agency. He commented that where a reservation is established by the regular Federal laws concerning them, an agency is made under the general provisions of the acts of Congress which appropriated a fund for the maintenance of law and order. Therefore, although the local agencies were called reservations, they did not exist as such under any authority of Congress or by a proclamation of the Indian Department. HBD 39, 6.

3 The reservations Browne inspected were Puyallup, Nisqually, Squoxin, Chehalis, Grand Ronde and Siletz. The agencies he visited were Fort Kitsap, Port Townsend, Tom-Whik-Son and Penn's Cove. Ibid., 4-27 passim.

4 Ibid., 6.
heritage; thus, they demanded that the government support them. In summarizing the Indian point of view, Browne stated, "They cannot be made to understand why the government should take their country away from them and compel them to work for a living."  

Although the Indians refused to accept the virtues a life of farming might offer, they quickly established as habits many of the white man's vices. At the reservations at Puyallup and Nisqually, arable land was left untilled while the Indian men lay in the shade gambling. Moreover, the Squoxin and Chehalis reservations were frequently scenes of Indians debauched with liquor. And Browne was especially vitriolic when he condemned the unscrupulous group of white men who derived their livelihood by selling whiskey to the Indians. Throughout the Sound region, small bands of Indians were at best under nominal control. Those that maintained contact with white men were victims of consumptive

\[1\] Ibid.
\[2\] Ibid., 15-21 passim.
\[3\] Ibid., 14-15.
\[4\] Ibid., 14.
and venereal diseases. It was evident to Browne that if the government wished to save the Indians by discreet expenditure of Federal funds, it would be necessary to keep the Indians on the reservations away from any white men except the agents appointed to guide them. In remarking about conditions in Washington Territory, Browne summed up a particularly undesirable situation:

But so long as large bands of Indians, in a condition worse than pure barbarism, are permitted to roam at large, committing petty depredations wherever they can, lounging idly about the farms, consuming the substance of the settlers, affording a profitable trade to the worse possible class of whites that can infest any country, there will be very little hope for the territory of Washington.

Near the end of his tour, Browne had an opportunity to listen to the specific grievances of five of the more important chiefs. At Browne's request, M. B. Metcalfe, the agent at Siletz, invited the chiefs to assemble at the Siletz, where Browne, who was the government's spokesman, wished to hear about and reply to any complaints the Indians had. Each chief complained about the same three points.

1 Ibid., 22.
2 Ibid., 15.
3 Ibid., 27.
In the first place, the government had not given them the land and presents they were promised. Secondly, sickness raged among the tribes. And finally, they were confused about exactly who was the "Great White Chief," the President. After recording these remarks in detail, Browne offered an explanation and made a promise to the chiefs. He replied that although the President could not prevent white settlers from farming the land, the Indians had been given reservations to live upon. Furthermore, he continued, it was necessary that they should stay at these reservations and be content with the flour and beans the government gave them. Meanwhile, Browne said, the "Great White Chief" would decide in a fair way who owned certain lands the Indians claimed by treaty. If any land was given to white settlers, however, the Indians would be paid for it. But until the President decided about these issues, he remarked, the Indians should stay on the reservations.¹

¹Ibid., 47.
criticism from the Army.\footnote{Edward J. Steptoe, Fort Walla Walla, 19 October 1857, to Major W. W. Mackall, San Francisco. U. S. Congress, House, \textit{Indian Affairs in Oregon and Washington Territories}, Ex. Doc. 112 (hereinafter referred to as HED 112), 35th Cong., 2nd Sess., Series 958, 4-5.} Craig informed Steptoe that Browne had assured Chief "Lawyer" of the Nez Perces that Governor Steven's treaty of Walla Walla would become law. Upset by this news, Steptoe quickly dispatched a letter to his headquarters in San Francisco:

Considering that this statement is in direct opposition to what the Indians have been told by us, and to what I believe all of them desire, it seems to me in very bad taste to say the least of it. Mr. Brown [sic] could not possibly have known that the treaty will be ratified, and even if he had, the proper time to enlighten the Indians on the subject is obviously after it has become a law of the land. He had no right to unsettle the Indian minds on a point respecting which his convictions are probably no stronger than the opposite belief of many others in daily intercourse with them. I will simply add that in my opinion, any attempt to enforce that treaty will be followed by immediate hostilities with most of the tribes in this part of the country. \ldots\footnote{Ibid.}

At Army headquarters the matter was considered important enough to communicate to J. W. Nesmith, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for Washington and Oregon. In his reply to the Army, on November 18, 1857, Nesmith exercised
a good deal of tact and diplomacy. While he did not wish to alienate his friend Browne, it was necessary to satisfy the Army. Consequently, he set down an innocuous statement of fact, saying merely that if Browne said the treaty would go into effect, he had information Nesmith did not have.

The superintendent hastened to add, though, that he had told the Indians that any treaty would be inoperative until Congress ratified it.


Browne and Nesmith maintained a close friendship for many years. While the special agent was in the Northwest in 1857, he visited the superintendent and his wife. Browne, San Francisco, 2 February 1859, to Nesmith, Salem, Oregon, James W. Nesmith MSS, Oregon Historical Society. Moreover, in response to Nesmith's gift of some fruit trees, Browne invited the couple to Oakland to stay with his family in 1859. Ibid. During the course of the next year, Nesmith and his wife accepted Browne's invitation and spent some time at the Brownes. Commenting upon that visit, Browne remarked that "it was among our most pleasant reminiscences. . . ." Browne, Frankfort, Germany, 15 November 1861, to Nesmith, United States Senator from Oregon, James W. Nesmith MSS, Oregon Historical Society.

3HED 112, loc. cit.

4Ibid.
If Colonel Steptoe was quite alarmed at Browne's remarks about the treaties, Captain Christopher Colon Augur was outraged by the special agent's comments concerning Fort Hoskins, Augur's post.\(^1\) When Browne's letter about the conditions of Indian affairs in the Northwest was published, a copy reached Fort Hoskins. Although the captain felt he could not knowledgefully dispute most of what Browne wrote, he angrily disagreed with Browne's observations about the uselessness of the fort.\(^2\) Browne wrote:

I have made diligent inquiry of the principle settlers, and find, without exception, they regard it as a nuisance, and are opposed to its continuance there. They say it's a detriment to them instead of a benefit. As to any practical protection, they consider such an idea simply preposterous . . . Every soul at the agency might be murdered a week before the tidings could reach Fort Hoskins. What is to prevent the Indians from cutting off all communication. If they commit a general massacre, they will take good care that news of it shall not reach Fort Hoskins until they are several days upon their journey towards the

\(^1\)A history of the post has been written, Oscar Winslow Hoop, "History of Fort Hoskins," *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, XXX (December, 1929), 346-61.

\(^2\)Christopher Colon Augur, Fort Hoskins, Oregon, 27 April 1858, to Colonel Samuel Cooper, Adjutant General of the Army, Washington. This letter appears in Appendix 32, 72-78, of Hoop's manuscript deposited at the Oregon Historical Society.
mountains of the Umpqua, the only direction in which they ever attempt to escape.¹

Augur wasted no time to defend the position of the fort. In a letter in April 1858, he wrote to the Office of the Adjutant General a long narrative which not only clearly justified the location of the post, but sarcastically insinuated that Browne was at least a poor judge of military affairs, if not an outright liar.² To support his remarks, he sent along thirty affidavits from settlers who lived within three miles of Fort Hoskins. Only two of the statements, Augur observed, corroborated Browne's views. As a matter of fact, only three settlers saw Browne when he passed through. And it seemed that only one of them, whom it was well known to be opposed to the fort, even spoke with him. Concerning the utility of the fort, Augur gave his assurance that the nearby Indian agency was well within the range of the post's cannon. Moreover, the area around the fort was constantly patroled. In any case, Augur continued, there were no Indians living between Fort Hoskins and the farms of the settlers. Satisfied he had vindicated the

¹HED 39, 39.
²Augur, 27 April 1858, to Cooper, loc. cit.
the location of the fort, the captain closed his letter by suggesting that "if it should be deemed proper, I would like it [the letter] to be seen by the Hon. Sec. of the Interior whose Agent Mr. Browne was and whose confidence he has abused."¹

With such evidence arrayed so convincingly against Browne, it is, at best, difficult to defend his statements. One can only examine what possible reasons he had in making them. It is doubtful that Browne prepared his observations with malice. If he wished any action to be taken, it would be to correct the abuse of Federal funds while protecting Indian and settler alike. If Browne were guilty of anything, it would be of generalizing. Traveling through a country he saw devastated by the late war and understanding the state of hostile dissatisfaction of the Indians' minds, he may well have concluded that Fort Hoskins could not protect many settlers from attacks by bands of savage Indians wandering around the region. These groups of Indians were demonstrating the same sort of behavior in the fall of 1857 which they showed during 1856 when the war broke out. Furthermore,

¹Ibid., 78.
Browne had brought with him from California several bitter and frustrating experiences he had suffered with the Army. On his tours of the California reservations, the Army had refused to assist him in his duties to the Indian Department. During those times Browne was forced to sit by while discontented whites massacred many helpless Indians. Consequently, it was a combination of several feelings and thoughts that caused Browne to draw up his remarks about Fort Hoskins.

If, however, observations made in the *Puget Sound Herald* represented the predominant feeling of the settlers of the Northwest, Colonel Steptoe and Captain Augur did not stand alone in their criticisms of Browne. In a review of Browne's report, in the edition of April 23, 1858, the editor took issue with nearly the entire document. Its main fault, he observed lay in its inaccuracy. He felt that Browne had traveled much too rapidly to view the true state of things. Consequently, the "time allotted or taken up in the investigation, or else his capacity, was not equal to

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1*NAC* (35 and 36) *passim.*

the task assigned to him; for he seems to have done it all in a few weeks, and what he has done is exceedingly unsatisfactory."¹ He disagreed with Browne over the number of loose Indians roaming around, the degree to which the people of Washington had civilized the natives, the usefulness of Fort Townsend, and the ability of the military to protect the citizens. The editor concluded his attack upon the special agent's opinions with the hope that Browne's expected report on the causes of the late Indian war would be "less open to criticism."²

To these arguments the Olympia Pioneer and Democrat, on May 7, 1858, replied that the document had been received favorably in general by the people in Washington.³ It was the opinion of the Olympia newspaper that Browne's letter was on the whole "truthful and correct, more so than could have been expected from the limited period allowed him for investigation."⁴ Furthermore, although some of its details

¹Ibid.
²Ibid.
³[Olympia, Washington] Pioneer and Democrat, 7 May 1858, 2.
⁴Ibid.
were defective, it was felt at Olympia that Browne's motives sprung from a desire to do justice to everyone.¹

Of all the repercussions to the report, the one that excited the most controversy in the Northwest and endured the longest, stemmed from Browne's evaluation of the character of the inhabitants of Port Townsend. The tour of the customs districts and Indian reservations brought the special agent to the port on August 30, 1857.² There Browne was scandalized by one of the most deplorable examples of Indian contact with a low class of white men he had ever seen. The once powerful and intelligent chief of the Clallams, the "Duke of York," was allowed to inhabit a large shanty in the town, was provided with enough whiskey to keep him drunk for most of the year, and was periodically encouraged to beat two Indian women who lived with him. That the people of the settlement tolerated such degradation stimulated Browne to conclude: "With very few exceptions, it would be difficult to find a worse class of population in any part of the world."³

¹Ibid.
²HED 39, 7.
³Ibid., 8.
When the white man arrived at Port Townsend, Washington Territory, he found ample opportunity to debase the local Indians with alcohol. The effects liquor had on the chief of the Clallam tribe were described by Browne on a number of occasions. To illustrate the poor effects, Browne published his sketch of the chief, who had been laughingly renamed the "Duke of York" and his wives called "Queen Victoria" and "Jenny Lind," in "The Coast Rangers," Harper's Magazine, XXIV (February 1862), 299.

In reply to Browne's comments that the people of Port Townsend were debased in part because they permitted the Indians to be terribly degraded, Thomas Somerville in his article "The Mediterranean of the Pacific," Harper's Magazine, XLI (September 1871), 481-98, remarked that the citizenry of the port had changed and that the "Duke of York" and his wives were industrious, well taken care of, and maintained much prestige.
Consequently, when Browne's report reached Port Townsend, as it circulated throughout the territories, the citizens of the town grew outraged. Some civic leaders drew up two public letters addressed to Browne and published them in the *San Francisco Bulletin*. The first of them,¹ sent by the Bulletin's Port Townsend correspondent, served as a bitter introduction to the second,² signed by several members of the settlement, which accused Browne of misrepresenting the town and asked him to prove his allegations. Instead of retracting his remarks, however, Browne replied in the *San Francisco Globe* with a bitingly sarcastic "apology" which exposed the port to be worse than he had first described.³

Although the whole affair was cited for its humor in newspapers along the Pacific Coast, the people of Port Townsend nursed a bitterness which gnawed at them for another decade. They demanded more than the support they were given in the Olympia *Pioneer and Democrat*, a newspaper on the

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¹ *San Francisco Bulletin*, 6 April 1858, as it appeared in the Olympia *Pioneer and Democrat*, loc. cit.


Sound which defended the reputation of Port Townsend although it reprinted Browne's answer with favorable comments.¹ Concerning Browne's remarks about the people of the port, it countered,

We are personally acquainted with a number of the residents of that place and can say from knowledge that a better and more respectable class of citizens have not an existence within the Territory. Mr. B. could probably have found as degraded a few at times within the town of Olympia, as anywhere in the Territory, and we presume no place is entirely exempt of persons of this character.²

Spurred by Browne's "apology," the Port Townsiders, eager to vindicate themselves, conducted a vigorous public correspondence with the special agent in the San Francisco papers.³ Browne, however, would retract nothing. As a matter of fact, he took credit for the town's sudden prosperity during the Fraser River gold rush.⁴ He pointed out

¹Ibid.
²Ibid.
³Murray Morgan, The Last Wilderness (New York: Viking Press, 1955), 39-43. In this book, the author gives a decent account of Browne's affair with the people of Port Townsend. Although he has skilfully demonstrated the humor of the situation, he did not recognize the bitter undercurrents that flowed beneath it.
⁴Browne, Crusoe's Island, 282.
to the inhabitants that the miners who had used the settlement as a supply depot before leaving for Canada knew of Port Townsend only because he had publicized it.¹

But Browne had not yet quite finished with his comments about how uninviting was Port Townsend. While visiting Puget Sound in 1864, where he was instructed to determine which town, Port Angeles or Port Townsend, was the better place for a port of entry,² he saw additional evidence that Port Townsend was an unpleasant place. Consequently, when his book Crusoe's Island was published that same year, people found he had appended to it a funny satire, "The Great Port Townsend Controversy, Showing How Whiskey Built a City."³ Furthermore, Browne was unimpressed with a scheme to promote Port Townsend as a great commercial city. He remarked that the only evidence of promotion was a lone signboard nailed to a rustic cabin being used as a saloon. Inside was a typical sight of Port Townsend: six beachcombers were sitting on greasy benches around a greasy

¹Ibid.

²Cornelius H. Hanford, Halcyon Days in Port Townsend (Seattle: Apex Publishing Company, 1925), 37.

³Ibid., 270-83.
table, playing poker, and drinking out of the same black bottle.¹ Browne did not make any more friends in Port Townsend during 1864.

The Port Townsenders had a chance to prepare for Browne’s next visit. In the midst of his survey of the mining industry of the western slope of the Rocky Mountains,² Browne made his fifth visit to Puget Sound in August 1867. The people of Port Townsend, who had anticipated his arrival, gathered at Fowler’s Wharf to welcome him.³ They had roused the "Duke of York" to greet Browne with a bottle of "Tangle-leg," the whiskey which "built a great city." Before his departure, Browne was coaxed to try another sample of the famous "Port Townsend Whiskey."

It was reported that he "pronounced [it] a decided

¹ Hanford, op. cit., 30.

² For Browne’s appointment as Commissioner of Mines and Mining, see supra, 3, fn. 2-3. Although many of the statistics he collected were supplied by several qualified experts, Browne added a great many himself. For a discussion about the authenticity of Browne’s statistics, see the Congressional Globe, 40th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1868, Part III, 2130, 2144, 2624, 2687-88. Since he was engaged in gathering material for his report from 1866-68, it is probable that he visited Port Townsend during August 1867.

improvement since his last visit."¹

Before the fall of 1867 had ended Browne once again reminded the citizens of the port that their whiskey was the world's worst. He sent them a recipe for making the only suitable bitters which would restore a man's ability to drink Port Townsend's whiskey. The recipe for "Dr. Horse-trotter's Tonic Bitters" is as follows:

Take four horses hoofs, one peck horse manure, and one pound dried calamus or sweet-flag root, digest the same ten days in three gallons sour beer, then add one pound rusty nails, half a pound bitter orange peel, half a pound bruised cardamon seeds, and ten gallons cheaper kind of whiskey; keep the whole in a warm place ten days longer, then filter and bottle for use.²

It would seem, then, from all outward appearances, the inhabitants of Port Townsend and J. Ross Browne had at last cemented a friendship. In Murry Morgan's The Last Wilderness, the author observes that the settlers' anger with Browne subsided after he reminded them that the public correspondence exchanged between them put Port Townsend on the map as a supply depot for the Fraser River gold rush.³

¹Ibid.
²Weekly Message, 21 November 1867, 2.
³Morgan, op. cit., 39-43.
Another writer, C. H. Hanford, pointed out in *Halcyon Days in Port Townsend*\(^1\) that Browne felt enough friendship in Port Townsend to tease the citizens about a promise that he would speak to a syndicate of Boston merchants which would make the port a rendezvous for whaling ships.\(^2\) Browne probably reminded them that he had some influence to complete such negotiations, since he was once a sailor aboard a whaling vessel. Despite these attempts, however, to demonstrate that the protagonists finally joined in friendship, it is evident from reading the Port Townsend *Weekly Message* of November 21, 1867 that the settlers were still rankled by Browne's attack on the appearance of the town and the character of its citizens. In a regular news item about a sabbath school concert, the writer revealed the true feelings of the populace:

> We would have been glad had Ross Browne and other traducers of this town have been present and seen how many among the audience were composed of old beachcombers, as the sarcastic Browne called them. It is an evidence that our rough garbed men from the logging camps and farms have souls capable of appreciating the harmonies of the children's choir,

\(^1\)Hanford, *op. cit.*, 30.

\(^2\)Ibid., 25.
and hearts big enough to contribute to the support of the Sabbath School.¹

Despite a number of attacks on the accuracy of his first report, Browne was pleased to know his views had gained general acceptance. With his observations published by Congress and distributed to interested people throughout the country, Browne felt encouraged to submit an additional report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs.² This document, dated December 4, 1857, was aimed primarily at recovering for the people of Oregon and Washington the wealth they had seen destroyed by the Rogue River war. In a letter to J. W. Nesmith, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Northwest, Browne mentioned his plans: "No doubt General Lane, Governor Stevens and myself will be able to affect some change for the better so that past liabilities can be paid. Do not despair. It will be all right yet."³

It would seem, therefore, that Stevens, Lane, Nesmith, and Browne agreed to work together to bring to

¹Weekly Message, 21 November 1867, 2.

²HED 38.

order Indian affairs in the Northwest. While it was Browne's job to lay as many facts of the matter as possible before the Indian Department and Congress, the others carried out their tasks. Nesmith was asked to follow the government's instructions, especially those concerning disbursements, as explicitly as possible, probably so no criticism could be leveled at the superintendent's administration.  

Meanwhile, Stevens and Lane traveled to Washington, D.C., where they campaigned among various Congressmen for support for the claims of the settlers of the Northwest. To facilitate their task, Browne sent Stevens an advanced copy of his report on the causes of the Indian war. The Indian Department received its copy as official correspondence later. Stevens, feeling the report was a "convincing exposition of the whole question

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1 Ibid.

2 One of the Congressmen Stevens spoke with was Charles Billinghamurst, Representative of Wisconsin. Isaac Ingalls Stevens, Washington, 6 February 1858, to Charles Billinghamurst, Washington, Isaac Ingalls Stevens MSS, University of Washington.


4 Stevens, Washington, 29 December 1857, to Nesmith, Salem, Oregon, Isaac Ingalls Stevens MSS, University of Washington.
and will do an infinite good before Congress and the country, "1 used it to great advantage.

Lane, too, contributed his share. Not only did he lend his prestige to Browne by escorting him throughout the territory east of the Cascades, but he defended Browne from the special agent's attackers in Washington, D.C. Browne felt he had a great deal of reason to suspect that certain people in the nation's capitol wished to overthrow him. He asked Lane to make it known to the Indian Department and the Secretary of the Treasury that he had done his best for the government.2 But, Browne continued, "if the malice of bad men should prevail against me, it will not do me any material harm. With a good heart and a clean conscience, I can make my way through the world without public office. All I want is, that the truth shall be known and justice done."3 A few weeks later, then, Lane wrote a letter to Browne in which he hoped to dispel from Browne's mind every particle of

1Ibid.

2Browne, San Francisco, 4 November 1857, to Lane, Washington, Joseph Lane MSS, University of Indiana.

3Ibid.
anxiety. He remarked: "Since my arrival here I have improved every opportunity to do justice to your exertions in behalf of the best interests of this Government, and tomorrow morning I shall surely and most certainly call upon Secretary Cobb and give my evidence as to what I know to be the truth."^2

In writing the report, Browne based his remarks mainly upon the information he gathered from Federal officials and leading citizens of the territories. Taken together their testimonies supported Browne's own contention that the Rogue River war was the natural result of emigration and settlement. It was a case where the white men, with a superior technology, overwhelmed the primitive resistance of the Indians who attempted to oust them from the Northwest. Furthermore, Browne observed, the struggle had its parallels throughout history. The specific causes of the late Indian war could, however, be attributed to the unseemly behavior

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1Lane, Washington, 2 December 1857, to Browne, San Francisco, Joseph Lane MSS, University of Indiana.
2Ibid.
3HED 38, 2.
4Ibid., 2-10 passim.
of many of the white men who settled the region. Not only were the Indians infected with venereal and consumptive diseases, illnesses which decimated their population, but they were dragged into all types of quarrels between groups of settlers.¹

Squabbles, Browne continued, between various missionary groups, international disputes among several nations, and misunderstandings common to the settlers of the region all adversely affected the Indians and encouraged them to drive the whites out for all times.² One chief, Leschi of the Nisquallies, used the Protestant-Catholic argument to incite the Indians to revolt, telling his people that the white man wished to take the Indians to hell. That the white man was the enemy of the Indian was also spread by the Mormons who hoped to gain the Northwest for themselves, Browne observed. The impending war between the United States and England brought the Yakimas into an international dispute. The

¹Ibid.

²For an excellent account of the acrimony Browne stirred up in relation to the arguments concerning the various missionary groups, see George N. Belknap, "Authentic Account of the Murder of Dr. Whitman: the History of a Pamphlet," Papers of the Bibliographic Society of America, LV (1961), 319-46.
tribe, tied by several marriages to employees of the Hudson's Bay Company, were led to believe that the Americans wished to take the land away from the Indians. When the Yakimas continued to see the Hudson's Bay Company operating after the treaty of 1846, Browne pointed out, they surmised that the United States was not strong enough to remove an enemy.

Moreover, rumors of the defeat of the Americans by tribes of the Great Plains reached the Indians of the Northwest, increasing their confidence that they could beat the white men.¹ It was no wonder, then, that the war broke out. If the government wished to settle the affair once and for all, a complete reappraisal of the situation was imperative, Browne pointed out.

¹See HED 38, 2-15 for Browne's comments about the summary above.
By October 11 Browne was back in San Francisco, writing his reports on the Indian reservations of Washington and Oregon. Before he could finish the two documents, a number of revenue affairs called for his attention. As one might suspect, many of these matters concerned the Branch Mint, where Browne discovered that a series of thefts and frauds had been committed while he was away at Puget Sound.¹ These matters had to be corrected. During October and November 1857 the production of coin slowed up. The public protested that their deposits for coinage were being kept at the mint for ten to fifteen days when before they received their money in two to three days. The explanation was that the pressure of work, however, had increased while the frauds were rectified, and the public had to be satisfied until January 1858 with slower production.²

¹Browne, San Francisco, 11 October 1857, to Cobb, NAA, 10.

²Browne, San Francisco, 4 January 1858, to Cobb, NAA, 19.
Throughout January Browne reminded the Department that the expenses of the revenue districts on the Pacific Coast could be reduced even further. For one thing, he repeated his suggestions that the districts of the San Joaquin Valley were unnecessary: although it had been three years since he first suggested it, he still held the same opinion.\(^1\) The San Francisco district also merited additional reductions. In September 1855 when Milton Latham was collector, salaries had been reduced and the number of revenue officials had been cut down so that the district was run efficiently, despite the fact that expenses were cut twenty-five per cent.\(^2\) At that time, however, it was felt other reductions could be made. Now enough time had elapsed to prove that twelve minor inspectors should be released to coincide with the general decrease and leveling off of trade in San Francisco. The port was conducting business as regularly as was any other American port.

During the first two weeks in February, Browne toured the districts of Los Angeles and San Diego. At San

\(^1\) Browne, San Francisco, 4 January 1858, to Cobb, NAA, 20.

\(^2\) Browne, San Francisco, 16 January 1858, to Cobb, NAA, 22.
Pedro he found the collector renting a small room for twenty dollars per month, when a new building could have been built on the government's reservation only half a mile away. At San Diego business was so slow that he recommended the district be abolished and attached to the District of Los Angeles. This state of affairs existed because Browne had recommended that the main source of revenue, duty on stock, be abolished. He had told the Department that the cattle trade dominated southern California. Congress, therefore, in the fall of 1857, removed the duty from cattle, hoping to encourage immigration to that part of the state.

From December 1856 to May 1857, Browne continued to collect information about the Mendocino Reservation. If Indian matters along the coast seemed dismal, the specific abuses at the Mendocino were examples of the worst. If such conduct were allowed to continue, it would spell the doom of the entire system. In March 1857 Browne had reported to Washington that the Mendocino was enjoying some success due to Henley's foresight. Within eleven months, however,

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1Browne, San Francisco, 10 February 1858, to Cobb, NAA, 29.

2Browne, San Francisco, 12 February 1858, to Cobb, NAA, 24.
conditions on the reservation had decayed thoroughly. Browne listed a long series of abuses\(^1\) which attacked the management of the reservation so violently that he felt compelled to write at the end:

I have been induced to make this report from a sense of public duty. Meaning no prejudice against any of the parties to gratify, it is with great reluctance that I will state any facts, or submit any views calculated to injure them in the estimation of the Department. But it is important to the Indians, who are doomed to suffer much under the best circumstances, and equally important to the public service, that the truth be known.\(^2\)

\(^1\)Among these abuses was the supply of inferior goods to the Indians. Reflecting upon this fraudulent practice Browne commented sarcastically in 1861: "The blankets, to be sure, were very thin, and cost a great deal of money in proportion to their value; but, then, peculiar advantages were to be derived from the transparency of the fabric. In some respects the worst material might be considered the most economical. By holding his blanket to the light an Indian could enjoy the contemplation of both sides of it at the same time; and it would only require a little construction in architecture to enable him to use it occasionally as a window to his wigwam. . . . The shirts and pantaloons were in general equally transparent, and possessed this additional advantage, and they very soon cracked open in the seams, and thereby enabled the squaws to learn how to sew." Browne, *The Coast Rangers*, 38.

\(^2\)Browne, San Francisco, 19 April 1858 to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, NAC(36), 46. The document was entitled "Report of J. Ross Browne, Special Agent in Relation to the Condition of the Indian Reservation of Mendocino" (hereinafter referred to as "Mendocino Report"), NAC(36), 33-46.
Although it had been some time since Browne had been instructed to report on the Mendocino, it was at the suggestion of certain other special agents, H. J. Anderson and Murray Whallon, that he finally made the investigation.\(^1\) These men called Browne's attention to several newspaper reports and gave him verifying verbal testimony of serious abuses on the Mendocino.\(^2\) At a meeting with the two special agents, it was agreed that Browne should look into the matter, since he was the only one among them with authority to make an examination.

Upon his arrival on the reservation, Browne was surprised to find a great many white men employed at various tasks. Most of them were laboring at a new sawmill, while another was keeping a privately owned store. The presence of so many whites seemed peculiar to Browne. On former visits to the Mendocino, Henley had expressed to him that

\(^1\)The Indian Bureau had asked for his aid by a letter dated May 1, 1857. *Ibid.*, 33. He had looked, though, into Indian affairs in Washington and Oregon from August to November 1857. Now in the middle of April 1858, he was ready to submit more results of his examination of the California reservations.

\(^2\)H. L. Anderson and Murray Whallon, *San Francisco*, 18 April 1858, to Cobb, NAA, 327.
because of the adverse effects of the white men upon the Indians he hoped to keep the two separated. Moreover, to put his plan into operation he used Federal money to buy out settlers in the area surrounding the reservation. And as expected the presence of whites was harmful to the Indians, who were not paid the wages they were promised for working at the mill, while their stock suffered when government grain was used to feed the working oxen of the mill.

The worst was yet to be reported, though. Despite the stocking of the reservation with plenty of provisions, "the condition of the Indians was deplorable in the extreme. . . . In all my experiences on Indian Reservations, I have seen nothing so bad as this—no suffering so palpable and so calculated to arouse the sympathies."¹ Some of the regularly employed workers on the reservation explained to Browne that only the Indian workhands at the mill were issued rations, but only for themselves, not to share with their families. The result was that many Indians died of starvation.

The presence of the sawmill was the particular object of Browne's invective. He observed that the mill was

unnecessary since other mills in the area adequately supplied both the reservation and the nearby settlers with lumber.\(^1\) Moreover, Browne continued, the accumulation of logs would soon destroy the salmon fishery, which was important to the Indians' food supply.\(^2\) The worst offense, however, was the presence of a low class of whites who were hired to run the mill. It was obvious to Browne that the reservation lands and government funds were being used for private purposes.\(^3\)

On May 4 Browne sent another letter to Washington with additional evidence that the Mendocino was the site of fraud.\(^4\) Since his visit to the reservation in mid-April, Browne had returned again, whereupon he took verbal testimony about the mismanagement of Federal money. He spoke mostly with Henry L. Ford, the subagent, and Alexander

\(^1\)Ibid., 45.
\(^2\)Ibid., 44.
\(^3\)Browne traced the reason for the poor condition of the Mendocino to mismanagement: "The true causes of these abuses, in my opinion, will be found in the possession of the fund appropriated by Congress for the relief of the Indians, from its legitimate purpose to objects of private and pecuniary advancement." Ibid., 42.

\(^4\)Browne, San Francisco, 4 May 1858, to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, NAC(36), 70.
McPherson, the owner of the sawmill. Concerning the starving condition of the Indians, Browne related, none of those men felt that the Indians were abused that much. True, they agreed, the Indians had suffered some during the winter, but the weather was to blame. Whatever wrongs Browne pointed out each placed the blame on someone else.1 Evidently the special agent had taken the officials of the Mendocino by surprise. Although Henley had been given a copy of Browne's report of April 19 he had made no explanations to Browne. And it appeared that no attempt had yet been made by the recreant officials to agree about how to handle the matter.

1Henley maintained that the sawmill was needed on the reservation, for it provided labor for the Indians. It was not his fault if McPherson did not pay them their promised wages. The sawmill owner, on the other hand, declared he had every intention of distributing to the Indians their money; and he would certainly replace any provisions from the government stores that his men had used. Regarding the labor used to cut down the trees for the mill, McPherson admitted that he wanted to hire more white men for the job, but Henley volunteered the labor of the Indians, which was cheaper. Ford denied any blame by observing that he had merely acted upon the verbal and written orders from his superiors, when he gave McPherson government stores. Smith pointed to frauds in which the storekeeper paid large sums to the mill workers, which were then covered by vouchers for goods furnished to the Indians. Ibid., 70-73. Cf. John Walton Caughey, California (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1946), 389. For a summary of Ford's part in these events see Fred B. Rogers, "Bear Flag Lieutenant," California Historical Quarterly, XXX (June, 1951), 166-75.
Browne pronounced these excuses "frivolous and untenable." He observed that if the weather was bad that was all the more reason to keep the provisions out of private hands. In conclusion he remarked that the Mendocino Reservation was at its end for the abuses perpetrated there were fatal to the Indians. Such comments stirred some action in Washington. Browne's charges of fraud and mismanagement against Henley were given serious consideration by Jacob Thompson, Secretary of the Interior, and Charles E. Mix, Commissioner of Indian Affairs. On June 23, 1858, Thompson dispatched a note to Mix which called for an investigation:

Under all the circumstances it is proper that the matter should be impartially, but at the same time rigidly investigated, and I, therefore, approve your suggestion that a special agent be sent out to investigate the special conduct of Superintendent Henley and to examine and report upon the condition of the various reservations in California.  

For this task they chose Goddard Bailey.  

1 Jacob Thompson, Secretary of the Interior, 23 June 1858, to Charles E. Mix, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, NAC (36), 996.  

2 Ibid.  

3 Very little is known about Goddard Bailey. Of the few times he appears in American history, the best known is his association with William Russell, the coaching and freighting pioneer of the Trans-Mississippi West. With
While Bailey was preparing to leave Washington on July 5, Browne discovered that proving his charges against Henley and his associates was going to be more difficult than he had anticipated. In any case, his reputation for their failure to get a substantial mail contract in 1860, the firm of Russell, Majors and Waddell was nearly bankrupt. Only a miracle, it seemed, could save the company. Russell tried to provide that miracle, but failed. That fall in Washington he met Bailey, who passed himself off as a dealer in state bonds. Bailey listened sympathetically to Russell's sad story, and agreed to loan him $150,000. The loan was made, but not out of a bond company's funds. Instead Russell discovered that Bailey had embezzled the money from the government, using his position as a clerk in the Department of the Interior. Rather than to expose the fraud, Russell persuaded Bailey to take increasingly more, until $870,000 was stolen in all. Finally, Bailey realized he had stolen a staggering amount; he sent a broken-hearted confession to President Buchanan. A day later he and Russell were jailed. Bailey's relations with Russell during this time is explained by Raymond W. Settle in his paper "The Role of Russell, Majors & Waddell in Western Overland Transportation" which appears in The American West: an Appraisal. Papers from the Denver Conference on the History of Western America, Robert G. Ferris, ed. (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 1963), 87. For a discussion of this episode, see Ray Allen Billington, The Far Western Frontier (New York: Harper, 1956), 291. Bailey also appears, interestingly enough, in the story of the first Overland Mail trip. Carrying out his duty as special agent of the Post Office Department, he was a passenger in the Butterfield coach that left St. Louis on September 15, 1858. For his role in this event, see LeRoy Hafen, The Overland Mail, 1849-1869 (Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1926), 92-96. Cf. Raymond W. Settle and Mary L. Settle, Empire on Wheels (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1949), 98-120 passim.
making honest reports was being threatened, for Henley had in the meantime met with the officials of the Mendocino and had hurried off documents to Washington which contradicted Browne's reports. Among the affidavits enclosed were those of Robert White, the overseer, a Mr. Warren, the teamster, and S. F. Hinkley, the carpenter, all of whom denied what Browne reported they had said regarding mismanagement.\(^1\)

Browne reminded the Department, however, that he had witnessed horrible scenes of starvation: "Many were lying on the bare ground, without a rag of clothing, groaning as if in extreme suffering."\(^2\)

This turn of affairs was mirrored in Browne's letter of July 2 to Washington. He observed that the verbal testimony he was given was being retracted. In reply to this event, Browne pursued two courses. First he described in more detail the testimony of those who now claimed that he had misunderstood them. Secondly Browne gathered written corroboration of his charges from reliable sources. If the Department chose to believe Henley, then Lieutenant Gibson,

\(^{1}\)Browne, San Francisco, 2 July 1858, to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Washington, NAC(36), 79.

\(^{2}\)Ibid., 80.
Captain Sprague, and other gentlemen of respectability and standing, whose letters to Washington had supported Browne's observations, "must suffer under the odium of having made similar misrepresentations." Moreover, Browne referred the Department to the official reports of Lieutenants Orde and Livingston on the condition of the Fresno Indians, recently sent to the War Department.

By August 1858 Browne's investigation of the Mendocino Reservation was known throughout the state. He began to receive communications of abuses upon other reservations. In the Fort Miller vicinity certain settlers complained that no attention had been given to the Indians for some time. To support this charge, Browne solicited a letter from a Dr. Edgar of the Fort Miller garrison. In the San Joaquin Valley conditions were growing worse. The Indians around Fresno and those at Campbell's Farm on King's

1 Sprague was an old acquaintance of Browne. He had served as Browne's assistant during the tour of the reservations in Washington and Oregon. Supra, 157.

2 Browne, 2 July 1858, to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, loc. cit., 85.

3 Browne, San Francisco, 2 August 1858, to Mix, NAC (36), 102.
River were not benefiting from the government funds allocated to them. Moreover, he discovered that Henley had not visited the Tejon in over two years. Traveling around to all of the reservations in California and hearing reports of mismanage­ment in Indian Affairs throughout the state, Browne concluded that the system was too big for the superintendent to give it adequate attention.  

Although Browne had spoken with Henley several times since April when the report of malfeasance was submitted to the Indian Bureau, it was not until the beginning of August that the special agent was able to examine a copy of the superintendent's explanation to the Department. Upon reading the report, Browne wrote to the commissioner that Henley had done him an injustice by not telling the whole truth.  

1Ibid., 104. Although Browne was quite busy soliciting testimony to prove that Henley's contradictions of his reports were the results of collusion, he nevertheless was always ready to make an observation which would improve the Indian service in California. Certain that the written evidence he was marshalling against Henley would buttress his reputation for honesty, he did not allow himself to grow bitter or vindictive. To Browne, there was little reason to grow angry, for he understood human frailties when large amounts of money were involved. If Henley were dismissed, Browne could only hope that his successor would not be quite so corrupt.  

2Browne, San Francisco, 3 August 1858, to Mix, NAC (36), 112.
Attacking, for the most part, the presence of a sawmill on the Mendocino, Browne was able to show inconsistencies in Henley's policies. If the mill was so beneficial to the Indians, Browne asked, why were they not sent out to labor at other mills where they would have received higher wages? Furthermore, how could Henley explain the presence of fifty or sixty white men on the reservation, hired to work at the mill, when the superintendent had used Federal money to buy out squatters using land adjacent to the Mendocino because he wished to separate the two races?\(^1\)

Even though Henley might be able to explain the inconsistencies in his policies, Browne felt that the superintendent would be hard put to escape censure for speculating with government funds. Browne pointed out that Henley possessed $23,000 worth of land bought on a salary of only $4,000 per year, an amount difficult to amass after only four years of service.\(^2\) Browne remarked that he was always under the impression that Henley was not rich when he came to California in 1854. In any event, Browne could not

\(^1\)Ibid., 112-115 passim.

\(^2\)Ibid., 121.
approve of Henley's actions:

In either case, the speculations in which he has been engaged have not been beneficial to the Indians under his superintendency. A public officer occupying so responsible and arduous a position and regularly paid for his services owes his time and services to the government and to the unfortunate class of beings with whose welfare he is charged, and should not be engaged in private speculations of such a character as necessarily conflict with his official obligations.¹

Meanwhile, Goddard Bailey had arrived in San Francisco.² Sent out to investigate the whole affair, Bailey left August 4 with Browne and Henley on a tour of the reservations.³ Since Bailey would submit a full report of the trip, Browne decided he would limit his own report to verbal

¹Ibid., 122.

²There is a general misunderstanding about Bailey's role in investigating Indian Affairs in California. One author implies that both Bailey and Browne were specifically sent out to examine the truth of reports that the Indians were being abused by mismanagement of government funds. Averam B. Bender, The March of Empire: Frontier Defences in the Southwest, 1848-1860 (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1952), 24. Documents indicate, however, that it was Browne who made the Indian Bureau aware of these abuses. By July 1858, when Bailey was sent out to investigate, Browne had already been communicating repeated abuses on the reservations for two years. Bailey, in effect, was examining the veracity of Browne's reports. Cf. Rogers, "Bear Flag Lieutenant," loc. cit., 166.

³Goddard Bailey, Special Agent of the Treasury Department, 3 August 1858, to Mix, NAC(36), 99.
and written testimony relevant to the charges he had pre-
ferred against Henley. 1 Consequently, on September 4 Browne
sent to Washington a forty-four page report of the investi-
gation. 2 It contained information from the various people
the three met on their way. And set down in Browne's impres-
sive style, the remarks cemented his case against Henley.

On almost every reservation, Browne recorded testi-
mony that revealed overspending of Federal money. Although
the Indians on the Nome Lackee were in good condition, they
had harvested a crop which fell below expectations. More-
over, the government could have purchased grain more cheaply
than it had cost to grow it on the reservation. 3 To Henley's
contention that an insufficient water supply made inoperative
the reservation's grist mill, Browne replied that he saw
enough water there in August to run a much larger mill. In
any case, the mill was in a dilapidated and broken state.
Regarding the employment of Indians at some salt mines eight
miles beyond the reservation, Browne observed that the

1 Browne, San Francisco, 4 September 1854, to Mix,
NAC(36), 189.

2 Ibid., 189-235.

3 Ibid., 190.
Indians used so little salt that it would be cheaper to purchase it.\footnote{Ibid., 193.} Furthermore, at Nome Cult the government was being blatantly defrauded by the practice of grazing private and Federal stock on the same range.\footnote{Ibid., 194-201 passim.} And Browne could prove that the government paid the shipping expenses for this private stock from the place of purchase to the pastures.

Browne cited several instances when written and posted Federal regulations were openly violated. Although Indian women were not permitted to mix with white men, the squaws were encouraged to work near McPherson's laborers at the mill at Mendocino. About this practice Browne wrote:

If therefore, it is deemed beneficial to the Indians to make beasts of burden of the women, instead of instructing them in the art of weaving and making clothes, then it must be admitted that the object is attained. They are becoming rapidly civilized upon this theory. If this were the only use made of the women, it might be considered an error in judgment, but there is reason to apprehend that their morals are not improved by packing slabs of dirt in the company of white men.\footnote{Ibid., 206.}
Moreover, R. K. Dodge, a San Francisco merchant, was allowed to violate the law when Henley permitted him to keep a private store on the reservation.\(^1\) Henley defended the operation of the store by observing that Dodge intended to erect a hotel nearby, whose guests the store would supply. Browne remarked that a hotel was a peculiar structure to have on a reservation which Henley wished to discourage whites from visiting.\(^2\)

At the conclusion of his report, Browne summarized the effect malfeasance was having upon the Indians:

Whilst Congress is passing appropriations for their benefit, and the civilized world is impressed with the belief that the government is pursuing a humane and liberal policy towards them, they are dying off day by day, of neglect and cruelty. Influences are brought to bear against them in such a form that without some radical change in the system of relief, no good can ever result from the attempts made to improve their condition.\(^3\)

\(^{1}\)Ibid., 208.

\(^{2}\)Ibid., 209. Dodge also kept a barrel of whiskey at the store. Browne pointed out that if he planned to drink that much liquor he was not a man to keep in the Federal service. Furthermore, if the whiskey fell into Indian hands, it would be deleterious to them.

\(^{3}\)Ibid., 235.
All during September Browne continued to collect evidence of mismanagement and to report his findings to the Department. He hoped that by the end of the month his report on Henley would be completed.\(^1\) On September 18 he submitted a detailed report to Commissioner Mix, proving that the government had been defrauded in purchasing supplies for the Mendocino Indians and contrasting the success of the Spanish mission system with the failure of the American reservations.\(^2\) There was no excuse, Browne demonstrated, why the Mendocino Indians were starving. Vouchers for goods purchased for the reservation indicated that 3,450 Indians were adequately provided for. Moreover, 1,500 Indians, according to Ford's testimony, left the reservation with permission in order to gather seeds in the mountains during the winter. Yet the 300 remaining Indians that Browne counted on the reservation were starving.\(^3\)

It was a great disappointment to Browne that the

\(^1\)Browne, San Francisco, 4 September 1858, to Mix, NAC(36), 238.

\(^2\)Browne, San Francisco, 18 September 1858, to Mix, NAC(36), 241-67.

\(^3\)Ibid., 243-44.
reservation system of California had failed. He remarked sadly that, "a humiliating contrast is presented between this result and that attained by the Spanish missions of California."^ Although the United States had spent millions to support a system that had completely failed, despite employing "the aids and art of civilization,"^ a few Jesuit missionaries had maintained before the arrival of the Americans an extensive mission system, with but little except their own ingenuity. Under the padres the Indians had proven they could intelligently use the land to grow crops and raise stock. Stating again that enough money had certainly been expended for their benefit, Browne then asked why the Indians had not prospered under American guidance.\(^3\)

Then, as usual, Browne offered a few suggestions for and comments about the Indian service in California. He felt that "taking into consideration the frailties of human nature and the incitements to pecuniary profit held out by the annual expenditure of so large an amount of public

\(^1\)Ibid., 253.
\(^2\)Ibid.
\(^3\)Ibid., 265-66.
money," an ordinary change in personnel would not remedy the situation for long. The root of the evil must be eradicated, he observed. To this end he proposed that the funds appropriated for the Indian service be drastically reduced. Even the numbers of officials should be cut down, while those who did remain in the corps should be paid only the current rate for labor in California. Furthermore, on each reservation land should be set aside for each chief, who would direct the raising of crops which the Indians should be permitted to enjoy. And there should be a careful check made of all reservation expenses.

With Bailey's report submitted to the Department of Indian Affairs, Henley and his agents were soon relieved of their duties. Browne, however, did not stop investigating the conduct of Indian officials in California. Late in September Browne informed the Indian Bureau of a very serious state of affairs at Humboldt Bay. The citizens of

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1 Ibid., 266-67.
2 Ibid., 267.
3 Goddard Bailey, Washington, Special Agent of the Treasury Department, 27 October 1858, to Mix, NAC(36), 276.
4 Browne, San Francisco, 29 September 1858, to Mix, NAC(36), 433. He submitted for the commissioner to consider
the town had drawn up a series of resolutions which were, in effect, a declaration of war against the Indians of the area who recently had killed some white settlers and committed much depredation.

Browne felt that the feelings among the citizens of Humboldt Bay were at a fever pitch. Reflecting upon the recent Indian war in Washington and Oregon, Browne found that the causes for that outbreak and the one which was now threatened in California were similar:

Another expensive war has broken out—originating, as I conceive, like the first— not in the aggressiveness of white settlers for speculative purposes, but in the failure of the general government to pay the Indians west of the Cascades for their lands, and the apprehensions entertained by the more remote tribes that sooner or later they would be overrun and exterminated by the white race, unless they concentrated their energies and made a vigorous resistance. They saw before them the examples of the Yakimaws and Klickitats, driven from the lower Columbia to the mountains, without recompense for the possessing rights of which they had been deprived; and naturally became alarmed lest they should soon meet with the same fate.¹

As a matter of fact, twenty or thirty armed men had been waging a war of extermination against the Indians for

"the grave and important questions involved in the proposed action of the people of Humboldt." ¹Ibid.

¹Ibid., 435.
several months.¹

Much of the blame for the condition of Indian affairs in northern California could be laid, Browne contended, at the feet of Superintendent Henley. In the fall of 1857 he had been asked to place all the Indians on reservations. Now, a year later, these Indians were wandering about striking out at white men. Also, the Mendocino Reservation Indians were loose and heading for their original homes.² In reviewing the situation, Browne observed:

I reiterate the opinion that no practical good has resulted so far from the reservations—not because the system of colonizing and subsisting the Indians by their own labors is impractical, but because it has not been properly tested . . . [and, if the citizens of Humboldt Bay continue to make war] the fault will be attributed to the manner in which the affairs of this Superintendancy have been conducted.³

¹These men, Browne remarked, were the worst of the types found on the frontier. Even the citizens of Humboldt did not approve of their actions. Ibid., 436.

²Ibid., 437.

³Ibid., 439.
Although Indian affairs could very well have taken all of Browne's time, it was also necessary to monitor revenue matters through the summer and fall of 1858. There was evidently little to report, though some abuses did appear despite Browne's repeated warnings that such matters could be avoided. By the beginning of July, the public was again demanding that the Passenger Act of March 3, 1855 be enforced.\(^1\) Vessels bound for Victoria, British Columbia and the Fraser River were overcrowded. Although the district attorney had been notified to take action, he felt that the government could not win in court, since the wording of the law was contradictory. To Browne a simple solution would be to re-write the law clearly. Concerning the gold rush to the Northwest, Browne became aware of the need for an American consul to be stationed at Victoria to help

\(^1\)Browne, San Francisco, 3 July 1858, to Cobb, NAA, 26.
prevent the Hudson's Bay Company from taking advantage of the 20,000 Americans headed for the gold fields. Something had to be done: if a consul could not be appointed, a commercial agent should be sent out.¹

During the next twelve months, Browne spent much of his time dealing alternately with Treasury matters and Indian affairs. A great deal of his correspondence to Washington has probably been mislaid, however, for very few of his letters written from July 1858 to February 1860 have been made public. There were, though, a number of investigations he did make. As usual the mint came under examination. While Browne was pleased in July 1859 that the superintendent had made another satisfactory contract with Farmer, Chase, and Company to supply acids² to the mint, by the following November, trouble with the coining process had developed.³ The bankers of San Francisco had petitioned that R. W. Slocumb, the chief coiner, be fired for incompetency and neglect of duty. Under his direction a new

¹Browne, San Francisco, 3 July 1858, to Cobb, NAA, 30.
²Browne, San Francisco, 2 July 1859, to Cobb, NAA, 35.
³Browne, San Francisco, 19 November 1859, to Cobb, NAA, 9.
mintage of double eagles was made too thick. Upon investigat­
gating the matter, however, Browne found that a group of subordinates new to the job had not installed the new dyes correctly. And the resulting difficulty was not detected until too late. This situation was no one's fault, Browne felt.¹ In any case, Slocumb was doing a good job: from March to November 1859, he had always given prompt and regular delivery of coins.² Meanwhile, Browne carried out negotiations for the purchase of land by which the mint could either expand or move into a new building.³

Throughout the fall of 1858, Browne could not refrain from looking into Indian affairs. And by October 1858, he became exasperated with the condition of the Indian reservations in California. Moreover, the fact that he had not been paid by the government for several months increased his anger.⁴ In such a state of mind he wrote to

¹Ibid.
²Browne, San Francisco, 23 November 1859, to Cobb, NAA, 8.
³Browne, San Francisco, 20 November 1859, to Cobb, NAA, 10.
⁴Browne was instructed to charge his last three months (July-September, 1858) service to the Interior
his friend G. Rodman of the Treasury Department in Washington to "account for my long silence both in a private and official point of view."\(^1\) In this letter, Browne angrily summarized his actions for the Indian Bureau:

About four or five months ago, I discovered that something was wrong in the Indian service on this coast, and under authority from the Secretary of the Treasury previously given through the Secretary of the Interior, went to work to investigate the Affairs of the Indian Superintendency for this state. For three months past, I have been at it, almost night and day; and have at length succeeded as I believe, in exposing the worst series of frauds that I have ever encountered on this coast--which, as you know, is not deficient in that sort of abuse. Unknown to the members of the Cabinet, and with a strong array of political influence against my official acts, I have nevertheless succeeded in establishing every material fact charged, and arrested the misapplication of some $250,000 per annum. This is the reason why I have not written to the Department in general as late. As I wish it understood that I earn my pay by the sweat of my brow, I would thank you to inquire of Commissioner Mix what has been done in his office during the past three months.\(^2\)

Department. Although he had done so, he still was not paid; and to keep his family fed, he had to borrow at three per cent interest: "A few months more will eat up my little homestead, and then God knows what I shall do, for I don't." Browne, San Francisco, 1 October 1858, to G. Rodman, Washington, NAA, 37.

\(^1\)Ibid.

\(^2\)Ibid.
During October Browne continued to send to the Department of Indian Affairs letters which reported other abuses of government funds meant for fostering the prosperity of the reservations. At Tule River and the Tejon mismanagement was evident.\(^1\) In one letter Browne wrote a detailed description how the signing of blank vouchers was practiced during Henley's superintendency.\(^2\) He continued to uncover evidence that Henley had hired disreputable men to carry out some duties for the Indian Service.\(^3\) Still no orders for reform came from Washington. Consequently Browne felt compelled to write directly to Jacob Thompson, Secretary of the Interior, to remind him of the reports he and Bailey had sent: certainly those reports "can scarcely fail to satisfy you that there has been great abuse in this branch

\(^1\)Browne, San Francisco, 1 November 1858, to Mix, NAC(36), 524.

\(^2\)Browne, San Francisco, 11 October 1858, to Mix, NAC(36), 477.

\(^3\)During 1858 Henley hired J. R. Handenburg at $100 per year, to do odd jobs, such as going after stray Indians. But Browne pointed out that it was well known that the man stayed in Sacramento all during the period in question. Browne, San Francisco, 13 October 1858, to Mix, NAC(36), 512.
of the public service."¹

He pointed out to Thompson that "it is now a startling fact that after the expenditure of more than two millions of dollars the Indians are in a more helpless and unpromising condition than they have ever been."² Events around Humboldt Bay were growing worse daily, while the people of the southern part of the state were holding public meetings during which they complained that the Indians of that area were growing disaffected. It was apparent to Browne that the Indians of California "are a harmless and well-disposed race if treated with common humanity."³ The reservation system could work very well, for the character of the Indians would make them easily adaptable to such a plan.

Whenever they have had a fair opportunity, they have proved themselves docile and easily managed. They are easily trained to the habits of industry. All they want to make them perfectly contented, is plenty of food. Let them have that and there

¹Browne, San Francisco, 16 October 1858, to Jacob Thompson, NAC(36), 519.

²Ibid., 520.

³Ibid., 521.
will be little trouble in keeping them on the reservations.¹

By January 1859, the Secretary of the Interior finally had taken action to remedy the abuses on the reservations in California. A sharp reduction in expenses as Browne had previously suggested to the Indian Bureau had placed him in a delicate position. Officials in the Indian service were repeatedly asking Browne's advice about what agents should be released and by what method they should be paid. On January 18 he wrote to J. W. Denver, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, describing this situation and asking Denver to forward to California some policy.² Browne found himself in a very embarrassing position: people whom Browne had found guilty of malfeasance were now asking his advice about what to do.

Meanwhile, the trouble at Humboldt Bay had ceased. Although Browne could not prevent the massacre of several Indians,³ the survivors, two hundred men, women and children,

¹Ibid.

²Browne, San Francisco, 18 January 1859, to J. W. Denver, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, NAC(37), 14.

³These Indians were the tribes Cascousi Creek, Bear River, Ed River and others. Browne, San Francisco, 29 September 1858, to Mix, NAC(36), 436.
were finally rounded up by General William C. Kibbe, of the California State Militia and driven to Humboldt. The only reservation at which they could be sheltered feasibly was the Mendocino some distance away. How to remove them to Mendocino was the question confronting Superintendent Henley. Kibbe considered his duties at an end after rounding the Indians up. And since Henley had learned to fear Browne, he would do nothing without the latter's recommendation. Finally, Browne persuaded General Clarke to send a detachment to escort the Indians by boat and land to the reservation.

April 4, 1859 James Y. McDuffie replaced Henley as Superintendent of California Indian Affairs. With orders to tour the reservations, McDuffie arrived in San Francisco sometime before September 1859. His report of September 4 contained observations about seven of the larger reservations

1Browne, San Francisco, 18 January 1859, to Denver, NAC(37), 16.

2Ibid., 17.

and substantiated what Browne had reported to the Indian Bureau for more than a year. With the exception of the Klamath Reservation, the conditions of the Indians were generally poor. Although Browne was ordered to accompany McDuffie on this tour, his instructions from Washington arrived too late. He felt, however, that he need not visit the reservations to know their condition for fraudulent employees, who "have suffered the reservations to fall into a state of neglect and decay wholly at variance with the published reports of their prosperity," still remained on duty.

Although Henley had been replaced, abuses on the reservations still persisted and the results of old outrages were everywhere evident. At Nome Lackee Reservation Browne discovered that the agent, Vincent Geiger, had been

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1McDuffie, San Francisco, 4 September 1859, to A. B. Greenwood, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Washington, SED 46, 3-11. Greenwood had taken over from Mix, who had served as Commissioner of Indian Affairs only as a temporary appointee.

2Browne, San Francisco, 19 September 1859, to Greenwood, SED 46, 18.

3Ibid., 19.

4Except for the opinion that Vincent Geiger was an unsavory character, little is known about the man. There
defrauding the government since 1857.\(^1\) His latest misdeed involved the use of Indian labor to plant and reap a crop on land which was supposed to belong to the reservation but which Geiger had subsequently purchased from the county surveyor.\(^2\) To Browne one reservation was as bad as another. To spend money on them was useless. The reservation system was at an end.\(^3\)

To emphasize the fact that Indian affairs in California were deplorable in the extreme, Browne related one more incident. A man named Jarboe had been hired by the state government to pursue and kill as many Indians as possible. During the winter of 1860-61, the Indians who had been carried down to the Mendocino from Humboldt Bay had found conditions at their new home intolerable.\(^4\) Therefore, is, however, the published diary of Geiger and a friend, recording their experiences on an overland trek to California. David Morris Potter (ed.), Trail to California: the Overland Journal of Vincent Geiger and Wakeman Bryarly (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945).

\(^1\)Browne, San Francisco, 18 October 1859, to Greenwood, SED 46, 12-14.

\(^2\)Ibid., 13.

\(^3\)Ibid., 15.

\(^4\)Browne, The Coast Rangers, 43.
they left and went back to the Humboldt area. Deciding to get rid of these people altogether, Jarboe and a force of men massacred them. Browne described the slaughter in these words:

So they went in a body to the Indian camp, during the night when the poor wretches were asleep, shot all the men, women and children they could at the first onslaught, and cut the throats of the remainder. Very few escaped. Next morning sixty bodies lay weltering in their blood—the old and the young, male and female—with every wound gaping a tale of horror to the civilized world. Children climbed upon their mothers' breasts, and sought nourishment from the fountains that death had drained; girls and boys lay here and there with their throats cut from ear to ear; men and women, clinging to each other in their terror, were found perforated with bullets or cut to pieces with knives—all were cruelly murdered.¹

February 15, 1860 Browne was informed that his job as Special Agent for the Treasury Department had been terminated.² During the preceding six years, he had worked hard to report on the condition of the government's fiscal affairs along the Pacific Coast from San Diego to Sitka. Although many of his suggestions to remedy matters in the revenue service were carried out, those he proposed to protect the Indians of California by strengthening the reservation

¹Ibid.
²Browne, 17 March 1860, to Cobb, loc. cit., 41.
To call the public's attention to the atrocities committed against the Indians of California, Browne published an article in *Harper's Magazine*, XXIII (August 1861), 306-16, which outlined the destruction of the various tribes in California. There appeared on page 313 of that article the picture reproduced above, which shows the massacre of the tribe at Humboldt Bay.
system met with stiff opposition. Near the end of his service to the Department of Indian Affairs, he summed up his position by remarking, "With positive authority to arrest existing abuses, I might possibly succeed in stopping them, but my powers are merely advisory, and my advice is only followed when pacific and conciliatory."¹

¹Browne, San Francisco, 4 November 1859, to Greenwood, SED 46, 16.
CHAPTER XI

CONCLUSION: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF J. ROSS BROWNE

When J. Ross Browne died in 1875, he was for the most part forgotten. Textbooks of American history rarely if ever mention his name today. Yet his influence was widely felt during the nineteenth century. His *Etchings of a Whaling Cruise* helped correct the abuses in the American whaling fleet. A volume on southern Arizona, *Adventures in the Apache Country*, attracted more than one man to investigate the mining possibilities of that territory. Those who

1 Browne died on December 9, 1875. He was taken ill suddenly while on board a ferry taking him home to Oakland from San Francisco. He suffered an attack of appendicitis, and passed away that night at the home of a friend. See Rock, *op. cit.*, 46.

2 J. Ross Browne, *Adventures in the Apache Country: A Tour Through Arizona and Sonora. With Notes on the Silver Regions of Nevada* (New York: Harper's, 1869). Among the Arizona pioneers who were stimulated to come to Arizona by perusing Browne's book was Samuel H. Drachman: "While a resident of the stayd [sic] old city of Philadelphia I read Ross Browne's book on travels in Arizona, and finding a great deal of valuable information regarding the Country and its rich Mines, I was, as you might say, Electrified, and the desire to see Arizona grew upon me from day to day." Samuel H. Drachman Memoirs, 4 May 1885, Samuel H. Drachman MSS, Arizona Pioneers' Historical Society.
read his series of articles on Washoe mining felt better about not heading West,\(^1\) and the readers of his other books on travel were exposed to a world stripped of its deceptive trappings.\(^2\)

By the 1930's, however, Browne's influence had become increasingly apparent to scholars of American history. Francis J. Rock opened the scene in 1929 with a brief biography which pieced together chronologically the

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\(^1\) Browne wrote two series of articles about Nevada, one in 1860-61 just before his trip to Europe ("A Peep at Washoe," *Harper's Magazine*, XXXI [December, 1860], 1-17; [January, 1861], 145-62; [February, 1861], 289-305) and the last after a second visit made in 1865 ("Washoe Revisited," *Harper's Magazine*, XXX [May, 1865], 681-96; XXXI [June, 1865], 1-19; [July, 1865], 151-61). These works were viewed with amusement in the East. In the Washoe region, however, a number of individuals decried Browne for painting an unfavorable picture of Virginia City. See *Gold Hill* [Nevada] *Daily News*, 11 November 1863, 2. Yet anyone who had ever been to the area could not deny the truth of Browne's observations, though one resident was quick to add that changes had been made since Browne's time: "How often must I declare that Nevada is not what it was when Ross Browne visited it, and wrote those atrocious, though I doubt not truthful, tales about its mines and mills, and above all its furious Washoe zephyrs." Louise M. Palmer, "How We Live in Nevada," *Overland Monthly*, II (May, 1869), 457.

\(^2\) For a list of Browne's books, see Emma Miriam Lone, *Checklist of the First Editions of J. Ross Browne* (New York: L. C. Harper, 1930). Lone had made an attempt to list all of Browne's published works. The present author has found, however, many of his articles that Lone failed to search out.
Since it was Browne's habit to illustrate his published works with satirical sketches to emphasize the ridiculousness of situations, his treatment of life in Virginia City, Nevada in 1860 especially made his ideas plain to see. In the sketch appearing at the left, Browne satirized himself and other assayers in the town. The picture first appeared in "A Peep at Washoe," Harper's Magazine, XXII (January 1861), 160. The question of title, or who owned how much of what mine, was settled, according to Browne, in a variety of ways. The sketch at the right illustrates the recourse most frequently chosen. It was printed on page 154 of the article mentioned above.
major aspects of Browne's life. Although historians of California had always given Browne a prominent place among the state's pioneers,¹ scholars like Robert Glass Cleland have observed he was an honest delineator of California's agricultural possibilities;² Oscar Osburn Winther has cited Browne's "Washoe Revisited" as an important source on stage-coaching in California;³ Franklin Walker has pointed out

¹Almost every author of a history of California mentions Browne, if only as the shorthand reporter at the constitutional convention. Many historians have cited Browne for additional reasons. Browne's descriptions of a bull and bear fight (J. Ross Browne, "A Dangerous Journey," Harper's Magazine, XXIV [May, 1862], 747-49) has been quoted in books like Nellie Van de Grift Sanchez's Spanish Arcadia (Los Angeles: Powell Publishing Co., 1929), 42. Browne's observations about the Mariposa Estate are repeated in Frederick S. Dellenbaugh, Fremont and '49 (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1914), 416 and 465-66. Browne had been relied upon heavily by Cardinal Goodwin in The Establishment of State Government in California, 1846-1850 (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1914), 82-92 ff. Moreover, Browne made his works more attractive to the public with a frequent sketch of the things he described. The engravings of his art work have been reproduced in a variety of books and magazines, such as Albert Sheldon Pennoyer's (ed.), This Was California: a Collection of Woodcuts and Engravings Reminiscent of Historical Events, Human Achievements and Trivialities from Pioneer Days to the Gay Nineties (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1938), 76-87 passim.

²Robert Glass Cleland, The Cattle on a Thousand Hills (San Marino, California: The Huntington Library, 1941), 212-224 passim.

³Oscar Osburn Winther, Via Western Express and Stage-coach (Palo Alto, California: Stanford University Press, 1945), 61-66.
The usual story of how one fared at the mines was presented caustically, yet simply, in Browne's sketch, "Outgoing and Incoming," which was printed in "A Peep at Washoe," Harper's Magazine, XXII (February 1861), 298. Caricatures such as that portrayed the worst of Virginia City's life. Together with Browne's extensive remarks satirizing the Washoe district these prints offended a number of the area's citizens, which made it unsafe, so Browne jested, to return. Travel back to Washoe he did, however, in 1863. The drawing below is Browne's description of his "reception in Virginia City." This sketch appeared first in "Washoe Revisited," Harper's Magazine, XXXI (June 1865), 7.
that he was one of the most popular writers and lecturers in San Francisco;¹ and Effie Mona Mack has observed that Browne was Nevada's first "historian."² Perry Miller has found, moreover, that Evert Augustus Duyckinck, the well known and influential editor of several nineteenth century periodicals, regarded Browne as an important writer for his "New American Library."³


²Mack, History of Nevada, 353n.

³Perry Miller, The Raven and the Whale (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1956), 137-38. Evert Duyckinck (1816-1878) had a long, stormy, and illustrious literary career during the nineteenth century. Prominent among the authors and editors of the eastern part of the United States, Duyckinck edited the Arcturus, 1840-42, the Literary World, 1847 and 1848-1853, the Cycloedia of American Literature, 1855, Wiley and Putnam's "Library of Choice Reading," and several other important works of his day. Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone (eds.), Dictionary of American Biography, V (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930), 561-62. Duyckinck knew Browne in 1845 when he worked with him preparing the latter's manuscript about a whaling cruise which was published by Harpers as Etchings of a Whaling Cruise. See supra, 12-13. Prior to 1846, when the book was issued, Browne had published a number of magazine and newspaper articles about the voyage. After much researching, the present author has located what may be a complete list: "Killing a Whale," Western Literary Journal and Monthly Review, I (November, 1844), 29-30; "Bill Mann. Three Sheets in the Wind," Western Literary Journal and Monthly Review, I (December, 1844), 94-95; "Sketches of Zanzibar," American Review, II (August, 1845), 154-62; "The Ill Treatment of
This study has dealt with an aspect of Browne's life that hitherto has been given scant notice: his government service in the West and its association with reform in revenue and Indian affairs. In this last chapter an attempt will be made to evaluate Browne's contributions to the Federal service while a verbal portrait is painted of his personality. For it was Browne's unique character which gave the revenue and Indian services on the Pacific Coast a better reputation than they had in many other parts of the country.

From 1854 to 1858 Browne was the Special Agent of the Treasury Department in Texas and on the Pacific Coast. In 1858 and 1859 he was joined by H. J. Anderson and in 1860 he was replaced by Murray Whallon. During these six


1Anderson and Whallon, 18 April 1858, to Cobb, loc. cit., 327.

2Oregon Statesman, 1 May 1860, 1.
years Browne sent to Washington more than 1,000 letters, reporting on a great variety of Federal matters. His reports always reflected his concept that his work was highly important and must be done to the best of his ability. When he made recommendations, he always supported them with incontrovertible evidence. He felt that the fundamental aspect of his job was to uphold the law; consequently he made a vigorous attempt to enforce the law regardless of personal inclinations. Often he would sacrifice friendship if it meant a choice between friendship and the performance of duty. While always detailed, his reports were never tedious or superfluous: his smooth and interesting literary style made it easier for his superiors to remember his suggestions. Whenever possible he outlined in voluminous tables the condition of affairs. He was well acquainted, moreover, with the manner in which revenue and Indian affairs were conducted in other parts of the country, and often would make reference to them in his letters to the capital. Although he quickly discovered Federal officials in the West were often susceptible to corruption, he kept a sharp eye on those men who demonstrated honesty and ability and praised them without stint in his reports to the Department.
In itself the job of special agent was a most difficult one. It required constant and minute examination of account books, vouchers, and tables of exports and imports, and as well it called for the exercise of tact and personal diplomacy to an unusual degree. In 1864, upon returning from Europe, Browne wrote a sarcastic and penetrating article about his official experiences. Here he revealed typical situations he had faced. This description of his plight in attempting to reduce the number of employees in the customs service is an example:

As for inspectors of customs, how in the world was an agent to find out how many inspectors were needed except by asking the collector of the district, who ought to know more about it than a stranger? But if the collector had a half dozen brothers, cousins, or friends in office as inspectors, would it not be expecting a little too much of human nature to suppose he would say there were too many in his district? I reflected over the idea of asking one of these gentlemen to inform me confidentially if he thought he could dispense with a dozen or so of his relatives and friends without detriment to the public service, but abandoned it as chimerical. Then, to go outside and question any disinterested member of the community on this subject seemed equally absurd. Who could be said to be disinterested when only a few offices were to be filled, and a great many people wished to fill them? I would be pretty sure to stumble upon some disappointed applicant for an inspectorship, or, worse still, upon a smuggler. It is a well-ascertained fact that

1Browne, Crusoe's Island, 249-69.
disappointed applicants for office are always opposed to the fortunate applicants, and smugglers, as a general rule, have a natural antipathy to inspectors of customs. ¹

Day after day for six years Browne carried on his investigations for the government. Abuses were uncovered, reports written, and corrections made. Yet, when he revisited a particular place to determine the efficacy of his suggestions, he often found that improbity had returned. If it were not for two factors, Browne undoubtedly would have resigned. First, he was frankly desirous of acquiring a diplomatic position and had been assured in Washington that those whom he called the "powers that be" would look favorably upon him if he carried out his job well. Yet year after year no appointment came. The second factor which sustained him was the constant opportunity to travel: his job as special agent carried him to every corner of the Pacific Coast. It is doubtful that there was a man in the West in the decade of the 1850's who was better acquainted with the country beyond the Rockies than J. Ross Browne.

Despite his frustrations, Browne was able to work with such efficiency that by both investigation and example

¹Ibid., 252-53.
he contributed a great deal to the evolution of the Federal service on the Pacific Coast. It can safely be estimated that he saved the government nearly $2,000,000 in six years: savings were made in reductions of rents, in salaries not paid to superfluous employees, and in the enforcement of the laws against smuggling. His activities involving the San Francisco Branch Mint helped to save additional millions by discouraging the issue of private coinage and by correcting the waste of gold in the refining process. Government officials doubtless became more efficient when they knew that Browne was investigating them. The discovery of fraud in the various Federal offices brought Browne's recommendation of honest and able men to fill vacancies left by recreant agents. At the end of two years, therefore, the key positions in the government service on the Pacific Coast were filled with suitable persons.

After 1856 the Indian service west of the Rockies received Browne's careful scrutiny. Here he saw frauds and abuses that were more costly in their results and more reprehensible in their practice than he had ever seen.¹

¹For an excellent discussion of the government's policies toward the Indians and the Indians' response to
While the improbities of revenue matters could be estimated in the loss of money, the malfeasance rampant in Indian affairs was measured in blood. That the Indians were being massacred and starved to death Browne recognized as soon as he began his investigation of the reservations. Before the hapless natives could be exterminated by unscrupulous white men, Browne rushed off urgent reports to Washington describing the situation. Browne's acute observations to the Indian Bureau on the condition of affairs on the Pacific Coast stimulated the reforms that helped to end the genocide.

It is important to note that Browne's suggestions toward a general solution to the so-called "Indian question" were embodied in national policy a dozen years later. In the implementation of President Grant's celebrated "peace policy," Congress in 1871 decreed that Indian tribes were no longer separate nations, but were instead to be regarded as wards of the Federal government. One part of this plan was to take children of school age away from their parents and such programs, see Charles F. Marden, *Minorities in American Society* (New York: American Book Company, 1952), 315-42. For additional details, see the standard work on the subject, Loring B. Priest's *Uncle Sam's Stepchildren: The Reformation of United States Indian Policy, 1865-1887* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1942).
place them in boarding schools to learn the ways of the white man. Browne had suggested such a scheme in 1858. How much aware of Browne's suggestions were the proponents of the "forced assimilation" scheme of 1871 is an open question. It is clear, however, that Browne demonstrated an understanding of the problem in advance of his time.

Perhaps Browne's greatest contribution lies not so much in his direct influence of events but rather can be found in the fact that what he wrote—whether it be in his published works or in his correspondence—was an honest and clear picture of his time. If one wishes to know the state of revenue and Indian affairs on the Pacific slope in the 1850's, he should look to Browne's voluminous correspondence with James Guthrie, Secretary of the Treasury, and with that of the several Commissioners of Indian Affairs and Secretaries of the Interior. These sources had been largely untapped until the present study was undertaken. For a brief if satirical description of Browne's official life during the 1850's, one may readily consult his various works published by Harper and Brothers and the articles he wrote for the Overland Monthly. It is interesting to observe, however, that Browne wrote nothing for publication during
his years as special agent. He could never find the time; his duties were consuming. Yet, when he was free from official and personal restraints, he wrote with a vengeance. Frustrated by his experiences as a Federal officer, Browne gave vent to his disappointment in people in general with a slashing satire on the miners of the Washoe region in 1860.¹ A trip to Europe from 1860-63 should have cooled his fervor, but even from that distance he continued to castigate the procedures by which governmental policies were implemented.²

From 1860 to 1869 Harper and Brothers carried his literary bombs to the nation. In a seemingly innocuous book like Browne's *An American Family in Germany* one encounters passages like this:

... as for valuable facts and useful information, my proclivities in that line were thoroughly eradicated by long experience in the government service, where both facts and information, as I very soon

¹Browne, "A Peep at Washoe," *loc. cit.*

²While in Europe during 1860-63, Browne reflected upon the adventures he had in California during the 1850's. He wrote the following to James Nesmith, his old friend: "Since my arrival in Europe, I have been very busy writing up my California experiences. . . . In this precarious way, I manage to make out a living for myself and family." Browne, 15 November 1861, to Nesmith, *loc. cit.*
discovered, were regarded as irrelevant and imper­
tinent in official correspondence.\footnote{J. Ross Browne, *An American Family in Germany* (New York: Harper's, 1866), xiii.}

In 1861 he interrupted his narrative of a hunting adventure to insert a few edged remarks on the Indian service in California.\footnote{Browne, "The Indian Reservations," *loc. cit.*} Upon his return to San Francisco in 1863, he set out at once for Arizona\footnote{Browne's activities in Arizona during the winter and spring of 1864 have been published in various places. Before Browne hurriedly left for Arizona, he managed to make an agreement with the *San Francisco Bulletin* to publish letters describing his trip which he would dispatch from various points along the way. The "Bulletin" articles were the first public presentation of the "Adventures in the Apache Country," appearing in the issues of 16 January, 2 February, 9, 15, 18, 24, 25, and 26 March, and 8, 14, and 23 April, all in 1864. *Harper's Magazine* reprinted the newspaper accounts with minor changes, "A Tour Through Arizona," *Harper's Magazine*, XXIX (October, 1864), 553-74, (November, 1864), 689-711, XXX (December, 1864), 22-33, (January, 1864), 137-49, (February, 1865), 283-93, (March 1865), 409-23. In 1869, the articles were gathered to­gether and issued as a book.} where he found another oppor­
tunity to remind the government that its Indian policies had failed:

The result of my inquiries so far may be summed up in a few words: owing to fraud and mismanagement on the part of the employees of the government for a long series of years--as detailed in my reports to your department from 1856 to 1860--the reservation system has proved an entire failure. The fund
appropriated by Congress for the relief of the Indians has been diverted from its legitimate object in various ways; and the encroachment of white settlers on the reservations, and the improbability of securing either civil or military protection to the Indians, have rendered nugatory all the efforts of the Department to meliorate their condition.¹

If Browne chose to convey his thoughts on men and their foibles behind the veil of satire, there was still "unquestionably a solid core of truth" in what Franklin Walker calls his "bizarre recital." Professor Walker has written: "Stripped of its exaggerations and viewed soberly, it gives a good account. . . ."² To this, one might add that it would be pleasant indeed to "take your history a la Browne. While his points are powerful and provocative, his narrative is engaging and light. Even his official correspondence, in which he treated exceptionally dry matters, shows his flair for making the most ordinary extraordinarily interesting. Just as his travels over


primitive areas were arduous and tiresome, he reported on
dull and tedious matters. But the effect on Browne was
stimulating. He was, much like Theodore Roosevelt of later
times, a man of both deeds and words.
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