



L. W. Hastings

LANSFORD W. HASTINGS' PROJECT FOR
THE INVASION AND CONQUEST
OF
ARIZONA AND NEW MEXICO
FOR THE SOUTHERN CONFEDERACY.

By WM. J. HUNSAKER

THE career of Lansford W. Hastings, a native of Ohio, was typical of the decade aptly characterized by Meade Minnigerode as "The Fabulous Forties." He was a lawyer by profession, energetic and ambitious, an adventurer, and an interesting descriptive writer, with, as stated by Ghent in his "The Road to Oregon," "what we should now call a Napoleonic complex." In the spring of 1842, at the age of twenty-three, he went to Independence, Missouri, which was the rendezvous of Santa Fe traders and Rocky Mountain trappers. There he joined a party of 160 persons which was about to leave for Oregon. May 15 the party started on its perilous journey. At the end of the first month he was elected captain and leader of the train, which position he held until the arrival of the party in Oregon in the fall of 1842. The trip was full of adventure and attended by many hardships. Hastings and a companion left the train to inscribe their names on Independence Rock, Utah, and were captured by savage Indians, but the Indians released their captives, who caught up with the train. This incident is graphically described in Hastings' "Emigrants' Guide."

In the spring of 1843 Hastings led a smaller party from Oregon to California. After arriving in California, it is stated by many writers, he formed the plan of repeating the performance of Sam Houston in Texas, by overthrowing the California government, and establishing

an independent republic, with himself as president Clelland, in his "American Period in California," says:

"One man, indeed, Lansford W. Hastings, whose activities as an emigrant guide have already been spoken of, had in mind the definite purpose of making himself the president of the new republic."

Hastings returned to Ohio by way of Mexico and Texas. In 1845 he published at Cincinnati "The Emigrants' Guide, to Oregon and California," copies of which are in the Bancroft collection at Berkeley and the Huntington Library at San Marino, California. In this book he paints glowing pictures of the soil, climate, scenery and other features of California, of all of which so much has been said and written; predicts that it will be crowded with a vast population "affording all the enjoyments and luxuries of civilized life." In the closing sentence of the book he stated he contemplated "the time, as fast approaching, when the supreme darkness of ignorance, superstition, and despotism, which now, so entirely pervade many portions of those remote regions, will have fled forever, before the march of civilization and the blazing light of civil and religious liberty; when genuine *republicanism* and unsophisticated *democracy*, shall be reared up and tower aloft, even upon the now wild shores of the great Pacific; where they shall forever stand forth, as enduring monuments, to the increasing wisdom of *man*, and the infinite kindness and protection of an all-wise and overruling *Providence*."

Charles Kelly, of Salt Lake, in his history of "The Hastings' Cut-Off" and other early trails, relates the following incident, which throws some light on the activities of Hastings in Ohio upon his return from California:

"Whiskey!" shouted the bronzed and thirsty traveler to the man behind the bar.

"Yes, sir," answered the bartender. But as he reached for a bottle he paused.

"Say, aren't you Hastings, the famous temperance lecturer from Ohio."

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"Sure," replied the traveler, "and—well, by golly, if it isn't my old friend, the Reverend McDonald."

Thus, about the year 1850, two men who had helped shape the destinies of the state of California, renewed their acquaintance over the bar of Vioget's saloon in San Francisco. The bartender had formerly been a Methodist minister; his customer was California's first press agent."

Hastings returned to California, arriving at Sutter's Fort Christmas, 1845. In the spring of 1846 he left California to secure more settlers. He was particularly active at Fort Hall, diverting emigrants from Oregon to California. While he was thus engaged the war with Mexico was fought and ended, and on his return to California he found Commodore John D. Sloat had taken formal possession of California, at Monterey, July 7, 1846. Thus ended Hastings' dream of a Pacific Republic, but not his Napoleonic complex.

Hastings was a member of the California Constitutional Convention of 1849. He moved, with his family, to Yuma, Arizona, about 1860, where he lived for several years.

Joseph D. Fish, in his manuscript, observes that during the War of the Rebellion the recovery of Arizona by the Confederates was constantly agitated; and that L. W. Hastings had laid before the president of the Southern Confederacy a plan to wrest Arizona from the Union, but that the plan was not attempted as the Confederates were too weak in the west to undertake it.

In a letter to his daughter Isabel (who was in the Convent of the Dominican Sisters at Benicia, California), dated Mazatlan, Mexico, April 10, 1863, Hastings instructed her to inform Sister Mary Thomas that his reason for not writing her by the same mail was that he had just arrived from the interior where, he stated, he had been for the last three weeks. October 3, of the same year, James A. Seddon, Secretary of War, Confederate States of America, in a letter to Lieutenant-General E. K. Smith,

dated at Richmond, stated Hastings desired authority to organize an expedition to Arizona, and had laid before him a proposition, having in view the accomplishment of this proposed end, which plan was inclosed with the letter. After expressing some general views, Secretary Seddon said that he was submitting the matter to General Smith for the exercise of his own discretion, but having no great confidence in its feasibility, and only sanctioning it "if decided on by your own superior judgment." In a communication to President Jefferson Davis dated Richmond, December 16, 1863, Hastings stated he had recently come from California for the purpose of obtaining the cooperation of the Confederate Government in a great and important enterprise, which, upon his arrival within the Confederacy he had submitted to Generals Magruder and Smith; that General Smith had written to the Secretary of War and directed that he (Hastings) proceed to Richmond to lay the matter before the President; that on his arrival in Richmond President Davis was absent, whereupon he had submitted the matter to the Secretary of War in the nature of a proposition "to retake and permanently hold the Territory of Arizona, to establish and maintain the Confederate Territorial Government therein, and establish a permanent thoroughfare through that territory, and thus maintain an unbroken intercourse between California and the Confederacy, to be accomplished by forces drawn wholly from California; that he had just returned from Shreveport for the purpose of presenting the matter to President Davis in person." The latter was accompanied by a plan in which Hastings proposed to return by way of Mexico to California, there raise from three to five thousand troops to be introduced into Arizona as miners and emigrants to Mexico, with which he would reduce the U. S. forts and capture the troops and take and hold all federal property in that territory in the name of the Confederacy, establish a Confederate Territorial Government, keep communication open from the Pacific to Tex-

as, maintaining unbroken intercourse between California and the Confederate states "so as to enable the thousands of Californians who desire to aid in the Confederate cause to do so at will and with safety;" that, in order to enable him to accomplish these objects all he required of the Confederate Government was a commission covering his acts in the premises, funds necessary to defray his personal expenses and transportation of volunteers who were without means.

In a communication dated Richmond, December 18, 1863, to President Davis, H. H. MacWillie, "Delegate Arizona Territory," Jno. A. Wilcox, F. B. Sexton, M. D. Graham, W. B. Wright and W. S. Oldham, transmitted a memorial from Hastings, who was then in Richmond, embodying an outline of a proposition for the recovery of Arizona and New Mexico, stating they agreed to the obvious necessity for such an enterprise and in the practicability of the plan, that Hastings had long resided in California, that they had the fullest confidence in his capacity and ability to accomplish all he might undertake, and believed the organization and direction of the proposed expedition could safely be entrusted to him with every prospect of successful consummation.

In a letter dated Richmond, December 29, 1863, to President Davis, Hastings requested, as a war measure, the granting to him of letters of marque and reprisal as an auxiliary movement. This request was submitted by Jefferson Davis to the Secretary of War for his advice. January 11, 1864, in another letter to President Davis, Hastings stated he had been informed by the Secretary of War that the government for want of funds, could not enter upon the enterprise he had submitted, which he very much regretted as he "did desire above all things to inaugurate and consummate the enterprise upon a large scale;" but as he desired "if permitted to aid the Confederacy in her present struggle for independence and to secure a home under the Confederate flag for her numerous

friends and admirers on the Pacific coast," he deemed proper to present the matter upon a scale conforming to the present ability of the government. He proposed, he said, to immediately return to California by way of Mexico, where he would perfect a secret organization, raise a thousand to fifteen hundred volunteers, who would furnish their own arms and transportation, etc. This letter was accompanied by a document styled "Modus Operandi," in which he stated he would immediately return to California, perfect secret organizations throughout that state, charter vessels, employ miners in the name of various mining companies, furnish transportation to emigrants in the name of the Mexican Immigration Aid Society, and at a proper time forward troops as miners and emigrants to Guaymas and the mines in the vicinity of Yuma; that a competent agent, not known to the people of the Pacific as ever having had any connection with the Confederacy, would either accompany him or leave the Confederacy for Guaymas with the necessary funds, within two months after his departure for California, which agent, having arrived at his destination would ostensibly act as agent of various mining companies and of the Immigrant Aid Society, settle freight and transportation accounts, furnish, when necessary, subsistence, arms, etc. That the troops would leave Guaymas in small squads by different routes, assuming to be miners and immigrants, that when a sufficient number of troops had arrived in the interior of Arizona and upon the Colorado he, Hastings, would find his way to that territory, having previously arranged to continue sending miners and emigrants "until the news shall have reached California that the Confederate flag floats in Arizona, after which time they will continue to send them as before, but by interior and unused routes." Immediately upon his arrival at the Colorado mines he stated he would perfect the organization of that portion of the expedition and without delay capture Fort Yuma, and cause all the arms, etc., captured

therewith to be removed to the Arizona side of the Colorado River; that he would then "with the aid of Greek fire, destroy the Fort and three steamers now on that river," thus completely demolishing at one blow the Federals' key and only means of transportation to that Territory; that he would enlist and muster into the service such of the prisoners as may desire to unite with him, parole the balance and send them across the Great Desert, and then by means of the trains already captured, remove everything valuable to the interior of the Territory. That thereupon the officer in command of the forces arriving by way of Mexico would be instructed to remain with his men in the character of miners and immigrants within the Mexican territory, if his safety shall require it, until he (Hastings) shall have arrived with the forces from the Colorado, to send out scouts and spies as miners to Fort Buchanan, Tucson and elsewhere so as to have the exact state of things throughout the surrounding country; but if the commander of the Mexican expedition should ascertain his forces were ample for that purpose, he would be directed to surprise and capture Fort Buchanan at once, being careful to allow none of the Federal civil officers to escape. He concludes by saying:

"By the aid of favorable circumstances and accumulating forces from the adjacent States and Territories, I hope to be able soon after accomplishing the foregoing purposes to dispose of New Mexico in a similar manner."

This ended the correspondence between Hastings and the officers of the Southern Confederacy, and marks the end of his second great adventure.

After the close of Civil War he promoted a project for the emigration of ex-Confederates to Brazil. He obtained a grant of a large tract of land in Brazil for colonization purposes. In the furtherance of that enterprise he published a book entitled "Emigrants' Guide to Brazil," the preface of which is dated Mobile, Alabama, June, 1867. He conducted one vessel loaded with emigrants

from the South to Brazil, returned to the United States for more, sailed with another shipload of emigrants, accompanied by his second wife, whom he had married the day before sailing, and died on that voyage. This colonization scheme was a failure.

