



The Shirley Letters: From the California Mines, 1851-1852

Louise Amelia Knapp Smith Clappe

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The Shirley Letters, written from the mining camps in 1851 and 1852, are something valuable and rare--a portrait by a woman of an era dominated by men. They offer a vivid picture of gold rush life, from accounts of "murders, fearful accidents, bloody deaths, a mob, whippings, a hanging, an attempt at suicide, and a fatal duel" to bars lined with "that eternal crimson calico which flushes the whole social life of the Golden State," and the rare and welcome luxury of oyster feasts. With the "wild grandeur and awful magnificence" of the Sierra as background, this classic account presents a picture of the gold rush that is at times humorous, at times empathetic, and always trustworthy.

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