



The Silverado Squatters

Robert Louis Stevenson

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The Silverado Squatters (1883) is Robert Louis Stevenson's travel memoir of his two-month honeymoon trip with Fanny Vandegrift (and her son Lloyd Osbourne) to Napa Valley, California, in 1880. The Silverado Squatters provides some interesting views of California during the late 19th century. Stevenson uses the first telephone of his life. He meets a number of wine growers in Napa Valley, an enterprise he deemed "experimental", with growers sometimes even mislabelling the bottles as originating from Spain in order to sell their product to sceptical Americans. He visits the oldest wine grower in the valley, Jacob Schram, who had been experimenting for 18 years at his Schramsberg Winery, and had recently expanded the wine cellar in his backyard. Stevenson also visits a petrified forest owned by an old Swedish ex-sailor who had stumbled upon it while clearing farmland—the precise nature of the petrified forest remained for everyone a source of curiosity. Stevenson also details his encounters with a local Jewish merchant, whom he compares to a character in a Charles Dickens novel (probably Fagin from Oliver Twist), and portrays as happy-go-lucky but always scheming to earn a dollar. Like Dickens in American Notes (1842), Stevenson found the American habit of spitting on the floor hard to get used to.

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