

## NORTH AMERICA.

### CALIFORNIA: A SCENE IN THE GOLD REGION.

THIS now important country was discovered by the Spaniards in 1543, but it was not until more than two centuries after, that they made any attempt to colonize it. A Franciscan friar was sent out with the first settlers, as Missionary President, and a vigorous effort was made to christianize the inhabitants after the usual Romish fashion; that is to say, the natives were captured and enslaved, and then compelled to conform to the religion of their conquerors. This mode of conversion was, of course, far from being of an attractive character; and the native tribes, which had once been numerous around the mission, gradually receded and withdrew into the interior.

In 1822, California became a province of revolted Mexico, and the mission soon began to feel the influence of these political changes. The new Government directed the liberation of all Indians who had good characters, and were supposed to be able to maintain themselves. But for such a transition it was found that the Christian Indians were wholly unprepared; and many, having gambled away their clothes, their tools, and even their land, speedily became either beggars or thieves. Thus the results of these missions, so far from being of advantage to society, were found to be embarrassing and injurious. New difficulties also arose. The pecuniary supplies from Mexico dried up; the great source of income, "the pious fund of California," became diverted from its original purpose, and eventually a law was passed by the Congress of Mexico for entirely removing the missionaries, dividing their lands amongst the Indians and settlers, and appropriating their funds in Mexico to the use of the state.