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June 16, 1859.—1y.

AN OVERLAND JOURNEY.

XXIX

California.—The Yosemite.

BEAR VALLEY, Cal., Aug. 14, 1859.

I left Sacramento on Monday morning last, traveling by stage to Stockton, 48 miles nearly due south, crossing the Mokelumne, and keeping first the Sacramento and then the San Joaquin a few miles on our right, and Mount Diablo conspicuous still further west. We traversed a level, fertile plain, sparsely wooded near the rivers—a plain which should be, but is not yet, densely peopled, and very productive. There are some fine orchard gardens near the cities, and might well be many, but a good part of the intermediate country is uninclosed, and the residue mainly devoted to large ranches (or loose and slovenly cattle husbandry), and in less degree to the growing of small grain—Wheat and Barley. The stubble indicates good crops, but there is not a sufficient area devoted to them. Uncertainty of land titles—that paramount curse of California—is attributed as the cause of this inadequacy of cultivation, which I trust is not to continue.

Stockton is situated on a bayou of the San Joaquin, at the head of regular steamboat navigation on that river, which makes it the third city of California, with 15,000 inhabitants, and an extensive carrying trade. The better dwellings are in good part surrounded by fine gardens, well filled with delicious fruit. In some of them the primitive, wide-spreading oaks have been preserved, giving them an aspect of beauty and coolness most grateful to those recently arrived from the Plains. Stockton has the State Insane Asylum, and a very interesting commencement of a Cabinet of Natural History; better still, she has an Artesian Well 1,000 feet deep, bored at a cost of \$10,000 and pouring forth a copious and unfauling stream, some feet above the surface of the earth. Deep as it is, it penetrates only successive strata of what appears to be alluvial deposit, never touching bed-rock. Artesian Wells are becoming common in California, and I trust are yet to play an important part in the development and extension not only of her Agricultural but also of her Mining industry, now crippled (especially in the south) by the general dearth of water. I have a suspicion that all the water hitherto obtained by cisterns or ditches, so expensively constructed, could have been procured far cheaper by digging Artesian Wells, which, however multiplied, could hardly fail, at the foot of the Sierra Nevada, to strike copious fountains at an unobtainable depth.

I left Stockton next morning in a carriage with a friend who proposed to go through to Bear Valley (75 miles) before sleeping—a feat which I doubted the ability of any span of livery horses to accomplish. My doubt was misplaced.—Good horses, an early start, careful, considerate driving, frequent watering, and the dry, bracing air of California, carried us through by a little after 10 p. m., and our team would readily have gone ten miles further had we required it. I judge that sixty miles of just such roads would have been as hard a drive in any State east of the Rocky Mountains.

Our general course this day was east by south, passing mainly over moderately undulating prairie of very unequal but generally indifferent fertility, and crossing successively, at intervals of about twenty miles, the small rivers Stanislaus, Tuolumne, and Merced, all flowing from the mountains westward into the San Joaquin, and all rendered turbid by the mining operations in progress on their banks or in their beds. The Stanislaus runs through a belt of rather light and thin Oak, some two or three miles wide; the others have a few scattering Oaks, and that is all. There is considerable husbandry—mainly of the rearing order, near Stockton and along the rivers aforesaid, but very little industry of any kind on the naked prairies between them, and not a drop of running water, except, perhaps, a spring or two under some of the low hills which have a tolerably steep side respectively. There are a very few deep holes in some of the Winter water-courses at which cattle still find drink, though of a bad quality. One settler from Massachusetts, who lives mainly by cattle-growing, informed us that he came around Cape Horn eight or ten years since, has now about ninety head of cattle, which are fast increasing, and intends to erect a wind-mill this Winter, by whose aid he will be able to have a good

garden at once and a fine fruit-orchard within a few years. (Wind-mills located over wells or other reservoirs of water, which they raise for use in irrigation, are very common in Stockton, and are rapidly going up throughout middle California.) He has to go seven miles for his fuel, fencing-stuff, &c., on the Stanislaus. His nearest neighbors, on the road we traveled, are some five to ten miles distant, but I believe he has nearer. He is doubtless richer here than he was in Massachusetts, but I cannot realize that his family are happier or more favorably situated for mental and moral improvement, there being no school within reach, and the children depending for instruction on their New-England mother alone. But their children will not have New-England mothers—and what then? I fear this cattle-ranching, with long intervals between the ranches, is destined to half barbarize many thousands of the next generation, whom schools can hardly reach, and to whom "the sound of the church-going bell" will be a stranger.—Most of the agriculturists of this region, however, came here from Missouri or Arkansas, or Texas—many of them from Missouri or Arkansas by way of Texas—and do not seem to regard common schools as essential to civilized life.

We crossed the Merced 60 miles from Stockton (all these rivers are crossed by toll-bridges or ferries—charges, \$1 each) just before sunset; and now our road became rugged and bad as we rose the first of the foot hills of the Sierra.—Thus far, we had seen few traces of mining save the muddy colored waters of the rivers; but seven miles further brought us to Quartzburg, in the center of a nearly washed-out valley of gold-bearing gravel; and thence our way led seven miles further, over a far higher foot hill, into Bear Valley, where we found friends and grateful rest. The next day I devoted to an examination of Col. Fremont's mines and works, of which I may speak hereafter, but must now hurry on to the Yosemite.

I left Bear Valley, two hours later than was fit, at 6 a. m. on Thursday, resolved to push through to my immediate destination that night. My friend had preceded me thither to Mariposa, 12 miles on our way, to complete preparations for the trip; but we were unluckily delayed here again by misapprehensions and the presence of animals for attendance on a camp-meeting, so that it was high noon when we reached the end of the wagon road, 12 miles below Mariposa, where the saddle is the only resource, while it is still nearly 40 miles (many of them steep ones) to the Yosemite fall. Every one assured us that to get through that day was impossible, yet I had no more time to give to the journey, and must try. My friend is a good rider, while I can barely ride at all, not having spent five hours on horseback, save in my visit to the Kansas Gold Mines, within the last thirty years. But the two gentlemen from Mariposa who accompanied and guided us knew all about the journey that we didn't—which is saying a great deal—so we pressed buoyantly, confidently on.

Hussey's Steam Saw-Mill, where we mounted (or rather I did, for the rest had done so before), marks pretty fairly the division between the Oaks of the lower and the Firs of the higher elevations, though the two of course melt into each other. As we rose gradually but steadily, the White soon faded out, then the Black, and last the Live Oak, though the genuineness of this last is disputed, while the Yellow, Pitch, and Sugar Pines, Cedars, and Balsam Firs became more numerous and stately, till they at length had the ground almost wholly to themselves, save that the Manzanito and other shrubs (mostly evergreens also) clustered on nearly every opening among the trees. There is little or no precipice or bare rock for miles, and we rose along the southern face of the ridge overlooking the Chocoma Valley, until we seemed to have half California spread out before us like a map. Our range of vision extended south to the tule lake, or immense morass, in which the San Joaquin has its source, and west to the Coast Range, which alone barred the Pacific Ocean from our view. Still rising, we wound gradually around the peak of our first mountain through a slight depression or pass, and soon looked off upon the valley of the South Fork of the Merced, which opened for miles north and east of us. On this side, the descent is far steeper, and we traversed for miles a mere trace along the side of the mountain, where a mistop must have landed us at least a thousand feet below. In time, this too was left behind, and we descended fitfully and tortuously the east end of the mountain to the South Fork, where, on sixteen miles from Hussey's end but five from the Big Trees of Mariposa, we halted for rest and food. Before six, we were again in the saddle, crossing the fork and winding up over another mountain northward, with a precipitous descent of at least two thousand feet beside us for a mile or so. A steep ascent of half a mile carried us over the divide, whence we descended very rapidly to Alder Creek at the northern base. Following up this creek over a succession of steep pitches, interlarded with more level patches, we bade adieu to daylight at "Grizzly Cat," a spot noted for encounters with the monster of our American forests, and thence crossed a ridge to "Summit Meadows," a

succession of mainly narrow grassy levels, which wind in and out among the promontories of more or less shattered granite which made down from the mountain peaks on either side, but pursue a generally eastward direction to pour their tiny tribute into the Great Chasm. Our route led us six or eight times across these Meadows—which were often so boggy as to require a very nice choice of footing, across the generally wooded promontories which deflected the probably continuous meadow into what seemed to us many, until we stood at length, about 10 p. m., on the brink of the awful abyss and halted a moment to tighten girths and take breath for the descent.

—And here let me renew my tribute to the marvelous bounty and beauty of the forest of this whole mountain region. The Sierra Nevada lack the glorious glaciers, the frequent rains, the verdure, the abundant cataracts of the Alps; but they far surpass them—they surpass any other mountains I ever saw—in the wealth and grace of their trees. Look down from almost any of their peaks, and your range of vision is filled, bounded, satisfied by what might be termed a tempest tossed sea of evergreens, filling every upland valley, covering every hillside, crowning every peak but the highest, with their unfading luxuriance. That I saw during this day's travel many hundreds of Pines eight feet in diameter, with Cedars at least six feet, I am confident; and there were miles after miles of such and smaller trees of like genus standing as thick as they could grow. Steep mountain-sides allowing these giants to grow, rank above rank, without obstructing each other's sunshine, seem peculiarly favorable to the production of these serviceable giants. But the Summit Meadows are peculiar in their heavy fringe of Balsam Fir, of all sizes from those barely one foot high to those hardly less than two hundred, their branches surrounding them in collars, their extremities gracefully bent down by the weight of Winter snows, making them here, I am confident, the most beautiful trees on earth. The dry promontories which separate these meadows are also covered with a species of Spruce, which is only less graceful than the Firs aforesaid. I never before enjoyed such a tree-feast as on this wearing, difficult ride.

Descent into the Yosemite is only practicable at three points—one near the head of the valley, where a small stream makes in from the direction of the main ridge of the Sierra, down which there is a trail from the vicinity of Walker River, Utah—a trail practicable, I believe, for men on foot only. The other two lead in near the outlet from Mariposa and Coulterville respectively, on opposite banks of the Merced, and are practicable for sure-footed mules or horses. We, of course made our descent by the Mariposa trail, on the south side of the little river which here escapes from the famous Valley by a canon which water alone can safely, if at all, traverse, being shut in by lofty precipices and broken by successive falls. My friends insisted that I should look over the brink into the profound abyss before clambering down its side, but I apprehending giddiness and feeling the need of steady nerves, firmly declined. So we formed line again, and moved on.

The night was clear and bright, as all Summer nights in this region are; the atmosphere cool but not really cold; the moon had risen before 7 o'clock, and was shedding so much light as to bother us in our forest path, where the shadow of a standing pine looked exceedingly like the substance of a fallen one, and many semblances were unreal and misleading. The safest course was to give your horse a full rein and trust to his sagacity or self-love for keeping the trail. As we descended by zigzags the north face of the all but perpendicular mountain, our moonlight soon left us, or was present only by reflection on the opposite cliff. Soon the trail became at once so steep, so rough, and so tortuous, that we all dismounted, but my attempt at walking proved a miserable failure. I had been riding with a bad Mexican stirrup, which barely admitted the toes of my left foot, and continual pressure on these had sprained and swelled them so that walking was positive torture. I persisted in the attempt till my companions insisted on my remounting, and thus floundering slowly to the bottom. By steady effort we descended the three miles (4,000 feet perpendicular) in two hours, and stood at midnight by the rushing, roaring waters of the Merced.

The first full, deliberate gaze up the opposite height I can ever forget it!—The valley is here scarcely half a mile wide, while its northern wall of mainly naked, perpendicular granite is at least 4,000 feet high—probably more. But the medium of moonlight that fell into this awful gorge gave to that precipice a vagueness of outline, an indefinite vastness, a ghostly and weird spirituality.—Had the mountain spoken to me in audible voice, or begun to lean over with the purpose of burying me beneath its crushing mass, I should hardly have been surprised. Its whiteness, thrown into bold relief by the patches of trees or shrubs which fringed or flecked it wherever a few handfuls of its moss, slowly decomposed to earth, could contrive to hold on, continually suggested the presence of snow, which suggestion, with difficulty refuted, was at once renewed. And, looking up the valley, we saw just such mountain precipices, barely separated by interven-

ing water courses (mainly dry at this season), of inconsiderable depth, and only receding sufficiently to make room for a very narrow meadow inclosing the river, to the furthest limit of vision.

—We discussed the propriety of camping directly at the foot of the pass, but decided against it, because of the inadequacy of the grass at this point for our tired, hungry beasts, and resolved to push to the nearest of the two houses in the valley, which was said to be four miles distant. To my dying day, I shall remember that weary, interminable ride up the valley. We had been on foot since daylight; it was now past midnight; all were nearly used up and I in torture from over eleven hours' steady riding on the hardest trotting horse in America.—Yet we pressed on, and on, through clumps of trees, and bits of forest, and patches of meadow, and over hillocks of mountain debris, mainly granite boulders of every size, often nearly as round as cannon balls, forming all but perpendicular banks to the stuporous torrent that brought them hither—those stuporous precipices on either side glaring down upon us all the while. How many times our heavy eyes—I mean those of my San Francisco friend and my own—were lighted up by visions of that intensely desired cabin—visions which seemed distinct and unmistakable, but which, alas! a nearer view proved to be made up of moonlight and shadow, rock and tree, into which they faded one after another. It seemed at length that we should never reach the cabin, and my wavering mind recalled elfish German stagers of the Wild Huntsman, and of men who, having accepted invitations to midnight chase, found on their return that said chase had been prolonged till all their relatives and friends were dead, and no one could be induced to recognize or recollect them. Gladly could I have thrown myself recklessly from the saddle, and lain where I fell till morning, but this would never answer, and we kept steadily on.

Time and the hour wear out the longest day,

At length the real cabin—one made of posts and beams and whipsawed boards instead of rock, and shadow, and moonshine—was reached, and we all eagerly dismounted, turning our weary steeds into abundant grass, and stirring up the astonished landlord, who had never before received guests at that unseemly hour. (It was after 1 a. m.) He made us welcome, however, to his best accommodations, which would have found us lenient critics even had they been worse, and I crept into my rude but clean bed as soon as possible, while the rest awaited the preparation of some refreshments for the inner man. There was never a dainty that could have tempted me to eat at that hour. I am told that none ever before traveled from Bear Valley to the Yosemite in one day—I am confident no green horse ever did. The distance can hardly exceed 30 miles by an air line; but only a bird could traverse that line, while, by way of Mariposa and the South Fork, it must be fully 60 miles, with a rise and fall of not less than 20,000 feet.

—The Fall of the Yosemite, so called, is a humbug. It is not the Merced River that makes this fall, but a mere tributary trout-brook, which pitches in from the north by a barely once broken descent of 2,600 feet, while the Merced enters the valley at its eastern extremity, over falls of 600 and 250 feet. But a river thrice as large as the Merced at this season would be utterly dwarfed by all the other accessories of this prodigious chasm. Only a Mississippi or a Niagara could be adequate to their exactions. I readily concede that a hundred times the present amount of water may roll down the Yosemite fall in the months of May and June, when the snows are melting from the central ranges of the Sierra Nevada which bound this abyss on the east; but this would not add a fraction to the wonder of this vivid exemplification of the Divine power and majesty. At present, the little stream that leaps down the Yosemite and is all but shattered to mist by the amazing descent, looks more like a tape-line let down from the cloud-capped height to measure the depth of the abyss. The Yosemite Valley (or George) is the most unique and majestic of nature's marvels, but the Yosemite Fall is of little account. Were it absent, the valley would not be perceptibly less worthy of a fatiguing visit.

We traversed the valley from end to end next day, but an accumulation of details on such a subject only serve to confuse and blunt the observer's powers of perception and appreciation. Perhaps the visitors who should be content with a long look into the abyss from the most convenient height, without braving the toil of a descent, would be wiser than all of us; and yet that first glance upward from the foot will long haunt me as more impressive than any look downward from the summit could be.

I shall not multiply details, nor waste paper in noting all the foolish names which foolish people have given to different peaks or turrets. Just think of two giant stone towers or pillars, which rise a thousand feet above the towering cliff which forms their base, being styled "The Two Sisters!" Could anything be more maladroit and laudicrous! "The Dome" is a high, round, naked peak, which rises between the Merced and its little tributary from the inmost recesses of the Sierra Nevada already instanced, and which towers to an altitude of over

five thousand feet above the waters at its base. Picture to yourself a perpendicular wall of bare granite nearly or quite one mile high! Yet there are some dozen or score of peaks in all, ranging from 3,000 to 5,000 feet above the Valley, and a biseut tossed from any of them would strike very near its base, and its fragments go bounding and falling still further. I certainly miss here the Glaciers of Chamouini; but I know no single wonder of nature on earth which can claim a superiority over the Yosemite. Just dream yourself for one hour in a chasm nearly ten miles long, with egress for birds and water out at either extremity, and none elsewhere save at three points, up the face of precipices from 2,000 to 4,000 feet high; the chasm scarcely more than a mile wide at any point, and tapering to a mere gorge or canon at either end, with walls of mainly naked and perpendicular white granite from 3,000 to 5,000 feet high, so that looking up to the sky from it is like looking out of an unfathomable profundity—and you will have some conception of the Yosemite.

—We dined at 2 o'clock, and then rode leisurely down the Valley, gazing by daylight at the wonders we had previously passed in the night. The spectacle was immense, but I still think the moonlight view the more impressive.

Our faithful beasts climbed the steep acclivity at a little more than the rate of a mile per hour so that we had still had an hour or two of sunshine before us as we stood at last on the summit. I took a last long look into and up the Valley with the sun still lighting up the greater portion of the opposite cliffs, and then turned my horse's head westward. We reached, at 10½ p. m., the rancho on the South Fork, kept by a solitary man, who has no neighbor nearer than sixteen miles and there halted for the night.

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AWFUL.—The beautiful and accomplished daughter of a wealthy Albany merchant was found the other evening brutally drunk, lying in the street, with a party of boys piling leaves over her. The girl was richly dressed. She has become addicted to drink, and her parents are obliged to maintain a continual watch over her.

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The Administration Democrats of Nebraska are determined that it shall not be their fault if a republican delegate gets admitted to Congress, and now, after it was discovered that Daily, Republican, and 48 majority, a fraudulent return of 238 votes for Eastbrook comes in from Fort Kearney, where there are not twenty-five legal voters. This of course gives the certificate to Eastbrook, but the House will be sure to take it away from him in good time.

The New York Court of Appeals has decided that a person who has contracted to work for a given time, and before the expiration of that period is, "by the Providence of God," disabled from performing the service, can by his representatives recover for the labor already performed.—It is said that this question has never before been decided by the Courts in this country.

Perpetual Motion.

About six years ago, we published the first description of a machine invented by Mr. James G. Hendrickson, of Freehold, New Jersey, "to go of itself." A model, which Mr. Hendrickson had made after whittling patiently for forty years, was brought into our office, and we found that it would go without any impulse from without, and would not stop unless it was blocked. The power was self-contained and self-adjusted, and gave a sufficient force to carry ordinary clock work without any winding up or replenishing. In short, we saw no reason why it would not go until it was worn out. Our announcement of the fact brought but a great deal of ridicule; the incredulous pointed at all of the projects to obtain a perpetual motive power which had failed in the past, and predicted the same disgrace to the new invention. Many scientific gentlemen visited it, and although they could not dispute the fact that it was "going," they nearly all attributed the movement to some hidden spring or ingenious trickery. The inventor was an old man, who had spent his whole life in pursuit of the object he had now attained. He had become so much accustomed to ridicule, that he was very patient under it; and the only reply he made to the cavillers who pronounced the thing impossible, was—"but it does go!" The notice which we printed attracted the attention of the curious, and for the first time in his history the inventor found a profit in his handiwork. He was invited to be present at various fairs and exhibitions of new inventions, and wherever he went his machines formed one of the chief attractions. Science however, turned up its nose at him, and determined to put him down. The professors were all against him, and as they had pronounced the whole thing a humbug, they determined to prove the truth of their assertion. Accordingly, Mr. Hendrickson was seized at Keyport, N. J., for practicing "jugglery" under the "Act for suppressing vice and immorality." At the trial, several builders, millwrights, engineers, and philosophers were called, and testified positively that no such motive power as that alleged could drive the machine, and that there must be some concealed spring within the wooden cylinder. There was no help for it; and the impo-ture must be exploded. An axe was brought, and cylinder splintered into fragments. Alas for the philosophers, there was no concealed spring, and the machine had gone of itself! But alas, also, for poor Hendrickson, the machine he again resumed his speculations and his jack-knife. His model once more completed, he had a new machine constructed of brass, hollow throughout, so that the eye could examine all its parts. This was brought to our office nearly two years ago, when we noticed it once more, and gave to our readers some of the facts we have now recalled. The inventor was trying to secure a patent for this discovery but the work went on slowly. The Patent Office required a working model to test the principle, and one was sent out to Washington. The moment the blocks were taken out, the wheels started off "like a thing of life," and during ten months that the model remained in the Patent Office, it never once stopped to breathe. The inventor had perfected two new machines, and made a very comfortable livelihood exhibiting them, prosecuting his efforts meanwhile to secure his patent, intending to apply the power to clockwork, for which it is peculiarly well adapted. Age crept upon him, however, before this point was reached; his highest art could not make his heart beat perpetual; and last Saturday afternoon he breathed his last, in the old homestead at Freehold. He had been so much persecuted by the incredulous, that he had provided a secret place beneath the floor of his shop, where his two machines were deposited. It was in the form of a vault, covered by a trap-door, which was locked, and the floor so replaced as to avoid suspicion. After his last illness commenced he made known this secret to his family, who examined to spot carefully, and found the contents exactly as described. The night after his death, the shop was broken open, the trap door pried off, and both models stolen. It is probable that the family in their visits had not taken the same precaution as the inventor, and some prying eyes had discovered the secret. Fortunately, the drawings are preserved, and there is a little machine, one of the earliest made, now running in Brooklyn, where it has kept its ceaseless ticking for nearly six years. Mr. Hendrickson leaves a family of four sons and four daughters, all of them, we believe, given to inventions. Had he died ten years ago, how emphatically would it have been said that his life has been wasted in the hopeless effort to obtain perpetual motion.—N. Y. Journal of Commerce.

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Potatoes.—Planting Single Eyes.

Lewis Bailey of Steuben County, N. Y., says that he planted of Pease-blow potatoes, one eye in a hill, 3 feet apart, and plowed and hoed twice, and made 39 pounds from one seed potato. Of Bermuda potatoes he made 160 tubers from one planted, 140 of which weighed 5½ pounds. Where seed is costly, or new varieties are wanted from a distance, this one-eye system of planting is worthy of attention.