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June 16, 1859.—ly.*

AN OVERLAND JOURNEY.

XXXI

California Physically Considered.

SAN JOSE, CAL., AUG. 27, 1859.

The State of California may be roughly characterized as two ranges of mountains—a large and a small one—with a great valley between them, and a narrow irregular counterpart separating the smaller from the Pacific Ocean. If we add to these a small strip of arid, but fertile coast, and a broad sandy desert behind it, lying south west of California proper, and likely one day to be politically severed from it, we have a sufficiently accurate outline of the topography of the Golden State.

Such a region, stretching from N. lat. 32 deg. 30 min. up to lat. 42 deg., and rising from the Pacific Ocean up to perpetually snow covered peaks, 15,000 feet high, can hardly be said to have a climate. Aside from the Alpine crests of the Sierras, and the sultry deserts below the Mohave and Santa Barbara, California embodies almost every gradation of climate from the semi-arctic, to the semi-tropical. There are green, fertile valleys in the Sierras which only begin to be well grassed when the herbage of the great valley is drying up, and from which the cattle are driven by snows as early as the 1st of October—long before grass begins to start fresh on the banks of the Sacramento. There are other valleys upon and near the sea coast where the frost and snow are strangers, rarely seen, and vanishing with the night that gave them being. Generally, however, we may say of the State that it has a mild, dry, breezy, healthy climate, better than that of Italy, in that the sultry, scorching blasts from African deserts have here no counterpart. Save in the higher mountains, or in the extreme north-east, snow never lies, the earth never freezes, and Winter is but a milder, greener, longer Spring, throughout which cattle pick up their own living far more easily and safely than in Summer.

The climate of the valleys may be said to be created, as that of the mountains is modified, by the influence of the Pacific Ocean. Sea-breezes from the south west in Winter, from the north west in Summer, maintain an equilibrium of temperature amazing to New Englanders. San Francisco—situated on the great bay formed by the passage of the blended waters of the Sacramento and the San Joaquin—the former draining the western slope of the Sierra Nevada from the north, as the latter does from the south—is thus, as it were, in the throat of the bellows through which the damp gales from the Pacific are constantly rushing to cool the parched slopes or warm the snow clad heights of the interior. I presume there was never a day without a breeze at San Francisco—generally a pretty stiff one. This sea-breeze is always damp, often chilly, and rolls up clouds which hide the sun for a part, at least of most days. Though ice seldom forms and snow never lies in her streets, San Francisco must be regarded as a cold place by most of her visitors and unacclimated Summer denizens. I presume a hot day was never known there, and no night in which a pair of good woollen blankets were not esteemed a shelter and a comfort by all but extremely hot-blooded people. Thick flannels and warm woollen outer garments are worn throughout the year by all who have or can get them. In short, San Francisco is in climate what London would be with her Summer rains transformed into stiff and almost constant breezes.

—The soil of California is almost uniformly good. The valleys and ravines rejoice in a generous depth of dark vegetable mold, usually mingled with or resting on clay; while the less precipitous hill sides are covered by a light reddish clayey loam of good quality, asking only adequate moisture to render it amply productive. Being a stream of water almost anywhere, save on the naked granite and you invite a luxuriant vegetation.

—Yet the traveler who first looks down on the valleys and lower hill sides, of California in mid-summer is generally disappointed by the all but universal deadness. Some hardy weeds, a little sour, coarse grass along the few living water courses, some small far-between gardens and orchards—rendered green and thrifty by irrigation, form striking exceptions to the general paralysis of all annual manifestations of vegetable life. High

up in the mountains, he has found green valleys whereon the snow doubles lingered till late in June, leaving the soil saturated like a wet sponge for a month later; and there are swampy meadows whereon the coarse grass grows thick to a height of several feet; while beds of delicate flowering plants, sheltered by the tall forests, maintain their vitality on the mountain slopes till late in August; but he passes out of the region of Evergreens into that of Oaks as he descends to a level of some 3,000 feet above the ocean, and green valleys, luxuriant meadows, and mountain-glades of flowering plants still living, salute him no longer. The Oaks gradually become sparse and scattered; their dark foliage contrasts strongly with the dun, dead, herbage beneath between them; as he descends to the plains, the Oaks vanish or become like angels' visits, while a broad expanse of dried up pasture-range vies with occasional strips of Wheat or Barley stubble in evening the protracted fireweed of the Summer drought. His vision sweeps over miles after miles of stubble and range whereon no sign of vegetable life—not even a green weed—is presented; he sees seven-eighths of the water courses absolutely, intensely dry, while the residues are reduced from rivers to scanty brooks, from brooks to tiny rivulets; and he murmurs to himself—"Is this the American Italy? It looks more like a Sahara or Gobi."

Yet this, like most hasty judgments, is a very unsound one. These slopes, these vales, now so dead and cheerless, are but resting from their annual and ever successful efforts to contribute bountifully to the sustenance and comfort of Man—Summer is their season of torpor, as Winter is theirs of death. Dead as these wheat fields now appear, the stubble is thick and stout, and its indications are more than justified by the harvest they have this year yielded. The California State Register gives the following as the officially returned Wheat yield of the State for the last three years:

Years.	Total Acres in Wheat.	Total Product.
1856	171,869	3,879,032
1857	164,642	3,295,484
1858	186,464	3,568,669

Giving as the aggregate of three years' growth of Wheat, 19,653,185 bushels from 522,975 acres, or more than twenty bushels per acre. I am confident that the aggregate yield of the Atlantic States for these same three years did not exceed ten bushels per seeded acre. The average yield of Barley throughout the State, according to these returns, is about twenty-five bushels, and of Oats something over thirty bushels, per seeded acre. I know the majority will say "These are but moderate crops;" and so they may be if compared with what might be grown, and in particular instances are grown; but if compared with the actual average yield of small grain throughout the Atlantic States, they are large indeed.

California—though very little of her soil and produces good crops of Indian Corn, owing to the coolness of her Summer nights and the want of seasonable rains—now grows her own bread, and may easily grow far more. Estimating her population at Half a Million, her last year's crop exceeded seven bushels per head, which is an ample allowance; and this year's crop is still better, with a larger area sown.

But, while only 756,734 acres in all of the soil of this State were cultivated last year (which still shows an increase on any former year), there were 1,169,813 acres of inclosed land—with of course a much larger area of unclosed—devoted to grazing. Cattle-growing, was the chief employment of the Californians of other days, and cattle-growing, next after mining, is the chief business of the Californians of 1859. There are comparatively few farms yet established, while ranches abound on every side. A corral into which to drive his wild herd when use or security is in question, and a field or two in which to pasture his milch cows and working cattle, are often all of the ranch that is inclosed; the herd is simply branded with the owner's mark and turned out to range where they will, being looked after occasionally by a mounted *ranchero*, whose horse is trained to dexterity in running among or around them. Stables for horses I have seen; but such a thing as an honest, straight-out barn has not blessed my eyes in connection with any farm since I left civilized Kansas—if even there. A Californian would as soon think of cutting hay for the sustenance of his family as that of his herd. In fact, Winter is, after Spring, his cattle's best season—that in which they can best take care of themselves with regard to food. From August to November is their hardest time. But the herbage which rendered the hills and plains one vast flower-garden in Spring is, though dead and dry as tinder, still nutritious; its myriad flowers have given place to seeds which have the qualities of grain; and, if the range be broad enough, cattle which have naught to do but forage contrive to eke out a pretty fair living. But it were absurd to suppose that a single crop of dead herbage can afford, acre for acre, equal nourishment with the constantly renewed grasses of an Eastern pasture; and many herds suffer from want of consideration of this fact. As ranches are multi-

plied and herds increased, a change of system becomes inevitable. The cattle-grower must fence off a portion of his range and sow it to Indian Corn, to Sorghum, to Turnips, Beets, and Carrots, wherewith to supply the deficiency of his Summer and Fall feed. Then he can keep a much larger herd than is now profitable if possible, and may double his annual product of Cheese or Butter. At present, I judge this product to be smaller per cow or per acre in California than in almost any other State, except what is made in the high valleys of the Sierra Nevada.

—Fruit, however, is destined to be the ultimate glory of California. Nowhere else on earth is it produced so readily or so bountifully. Such Peaches, Apples, Apricots, Nectarines, &c., as lead the trees of this valley, and of nearly every valley in the State which has had any chance to produce them, would stagger the faith of nine-tenths of my readers.—Peach trees only six years set, which have borne four large burdens of fruit while growing luxuriantly each year, are quite common. Apple-trees, but three years set, yet showing at least a bushel of large, fair fruit, are abundant. I have seen Peach-trees four or five years from the States which have all the fruit they can stagger under, yet have grown three feet of new wood over this load during the current season. Dwarf Peaches, just stuck into the black loam, and nowise fertilized or cultivated, but covered with fruit the year after they were set, and thenceforward bearing larger and larger yields with each succeeding Summer, are seen in almost every tolerably cared-for Fruit-patch. I cannot discover an instance in which any fruit tree, having borne largely one year, consults its dignity or its ease by standing still or growing wood only the next year, as is common our way. I have seen Green Gages and other Plum-trees so thickly set with fruit that I am sure the plums would far outweigh the trees, leaves and all. And not one borer, curculio, caterpillar, apple worm, or other nuisance of that large and undesirable family, appears to be known in all this region. Under a hundred fruit trees, you will not see one bulb which has prematurely fallen—a victim to this destructive brood.

—Of Grapes, it is hardly yet time to speak so sanguinely as many do; for years will be required to render certain their exemption from the diseases and the devastations known to other lands of the vine. But it is certain that some kinds of Grapes have been grown around the old Jesuit Missions for generations, with little care and much success; and it does not appear that the more delicate varieties recently introduced are less thrifty or more subject to attack than their Spanish predecessors, and Vineyards are being multiplied and expanded in almost every farming neighborhood; single vines and patches of choice varieties are shooting up in almost every garden throughout the Mining region, and there can be little doubt that California is already better supplied with the grape than any other State of the Union. That she is destined soon to become largely and profitably engaged in the manufacture of Wine, is a current belief here, which I am at once unable and disinclined to controvert.

—That California is richest of all the American States in Timber, as well as in Minerals, I consider certain, though the forests of Oregon are doubtless stately and vast. Even the Coast Range between this valley and Santa Cruz on the south-west, is covered by magnificent Red wood—some of the trees sixteen feet through, and fifty in circumference. In Soil, I cannot consider her equal to Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, or Minnesota, though the ready markets afforded by her Mines to her farms probably render this one of the most inviting States to the enterprising, energetic husbandman. But it must be considered that not half the soil of California can ever be deemed arable; the larger area being covered by mountains, ravines, deserts, &c. In fact, when one-fourth of the entire State shall have been plowed and reduced to tillage, I judge that the residue might better be left to grow timber and grass. Steep, rocky hill-sides, on which no rain falls from June to November, can never be tilled to much profit.

—This persistent Summer drought is not an unmixed evil. It is a guaranty against many insects, and against rust, even in the heaviest grain. Grain and Hay are got in at far less cost and in much better average condition here than they can be where the Summers are not cloudless nor rainless. Weeds are far less persistent and pestilent here than at the East; while the air is so uniformly dry and bracing, and the days so generally tempered by a fresh breeze, that the human frame maintains its elasticity in spite of severe and continued exertion.—I was never before in a region where so much could be accomplished to the hand in Summer as just here.

And yet—and yet—my early prejudices in favor of a refreshing shower occasionally are not fully overcome. I dislike to look for miles across so rich and beautiful a valley as this of San Jose, and see paralysis and death the rule, greenness and life the exception. I dislike to see cattle picking at the dry, brown herbage, and can't help thinking they would like a field of sweet, green clover, or thick blue grass a good deal better. This may be a mistake on my part, but, if so,

it is one that does credit to their discernment and taste. And I like to see a garden planted in well-grounded reliance on the rains of Heaven—not dependent for its very existence on the "saki" or artificial brook, which I am always glad to see flowing into a field, no matter on which side of the Rocky Mountains. I believe firmly in Irrigation; but I prefer land that there is some credit in irrigating to that which must be irrigated or it might better have lain uncultivated and unsown.

Of course, it is understood that Irrigation is exceptional, even here. All the grains are grown here without irrigation; but the small grains are hurried up quite sharply by drought, and in some instances blighted by it, and at best are doubtless much lighter than they would be with a good, soaking rain early in June; while Indian Corn and most Roots and Vegetables can only in favored localities be grown to perfection without artificial watering. I estimate that, if all the arable land in the State, fertile as it undoubtedly is, were seasonably planted to Corn and fairly cultivated, without irrigation, the average yield would fall below ten bushels per acre. Hence every garden throughout the State, save a part of those near the coast and within the immediate influence of the damp sea-breeze, must have its stream of water or it comes to nothing, and various devices are employed to procure the needful fluid. Of these, I like Artesian wells far best; and they are already numerous, especially in this valley. But ordinary wells, surmounted by wind-mills which press every casual breeze into the surface and are often pumping up a good stream of water while the owner and all hands are asleep, are much more common, and are found to answer very well; while some keep their little gardens in fair condition by simply drawing water, bucket after bucket, in the old hard way. In the valleys, and perhaps on the hill-sides as well, it is generally held that the Vine requires no irrigation after being set two years, and the better opinion seems to be that Fruit-trees, after two years' watering, do better without. I have not yet satisfied myself as to the feasibility of superseding Irrigation by Deep Plowing, though my strong conviction is that every orchard and garden should be dug up and pulverized to a depth of three or four feet; and that those so treated would thereafter need little, if any, artificial watering. I hope to learn further on this point.

—Let me close this too long letter with a grateful acknowledgment to an emigrant—M. Sheals, I read his name—who found my trunk by the Three Crossings of Sweetwater (not in the stream, as I supposed it was) and brought it along over three hundred miles to Salt Lake City, where he delivered it to the California Stage Company, which forwarded it to me. Mr. S. writes that he found it in or beside the road broken open; but, as I do not wish any papers of consequence, I presume nothing of much value to me was taken from it. How it came in the road—the half mile between the station whence we started that morning and the place where I missed it having been twice ridden over in quest of it within half an hour after its loss—I have not yet been able to conjecture; and I will thank whoever can to shed even a ray of light on the subject. If Mr. Sheals will favor me with his address, he will add sensibly to the debt I already owe him.

HORACE GREELEY.

[[A tall, raw-bony Yankee was riding a diminutive specimen of the donkey tribe through the muddy streets of Gotham; and the animal being very stubborn, Johnathan found it quite difficult to accelerate his pace. He used the persuasive eloquence of a hickory stick, however and each blow he would draw out: "Get up, Bony-part! git up, I say!" A little Frenchman in passing, heard with rage, the name of his illustrious countryman applied to the ugly beast, and commenced heaping a volley of abuse on the head of the offending Yankee.

"Sair!" shouted the Gaul, "Sair, vat for you call that ugly beast Napoleon! Sair, I shall have de grande satisfaction."

"Git up, Boney part!" was the only response.

"Sair! monsieur! I say vat you call dat vagabone horse Napoleon!"

Hifalutin.

Perhaps the following may not amuse either yourself or your readers, but it did me. In our drug store I have a fellow clerk somewhat celebrated among his acquaintances as a concoctor and the utterer of dry jokes. He is a boyish looking youth, and officiates, when his services are required, behind the soda fountain. A few mornings since, a fashionable dressed, poetical looking young gentleman entered, and seating himself on a stool in front of the counter, in a choice selection of terms requested the clerk to prepare him a seidlitz powder. The following conversation, ridiculous in its earnestness, resulted:

Clerk—With Syrup?
Customer—(slowly and methodically)—I require it not as a refreshment. If the syrup vitiate not the effect of the compound, you may mingle with it such an amount of the substance as will render the potion palatable. Or, to be better understood—

Clerk—(interrupting)—I comprehend you perfectly. Permit me to assure you that the tendency of the syrup will be rather to enhance than diminish the purgative virtues of the drug.

Clerk—Indignant at observing that his style is affected by the other—Then proceed, miracle of medical literature and wisdom!

Clerk—With dispatch, confounder of fools.

Customer—Then if not struck, motionless, use haste.

All this was so quietly, so politely said, that although amused beyond expression at the conversation, I started in wonder at the parties. The Clerk evidently felt cut at the last remark of the other, but mixed the powder, which the stranger triumphantly swallowed, paid for, and started to leave the store, when—

Clerk—Should you feel any uneasiness in the region of the stomach, within the period of fifteen minutes, illustrious patron, attribute the cause to the accidental introduction into the draught you have just taken of some drug of vigorous effect and painful consequence.

Customer—(A trifle frightened)—If I do, do you I'll punch your head.

Clerk—I thought I'd bring you down to plain English; but I guess you'll find the powder all right.—Exit Customer with his coat tail standing straight out.

—The Richmond Whig illustrates the boasted chivalry of Virginia by publishing the following incitement to kidnapping and murder:

\$10,000 REWARD.—JOSHUA R. GIDDINGS having openly declared himself a traitor in a lecture at Philadelphia, on the 29th of October, and there being no process, strange to say, by which he can be brought to justice, I propose to be one of one hundred to raise \$10,000 for his safe delivery in Richmond, or \$5,000 for the production of his head. I do not regard this proposition, extraordinary as it may at first seem, either unjust or unmerciful. The law of God and the Constitution of his country, both condemn him to death.

For satisfactory reasons I withheld my name from the public, but it is in the hands of the editor of the Richmond Whig. There will be no difficulty, I am sure, in raising the \$10,000 upon a reasonable prospect of getting the said Giddings to this city.

Richmond, Nov. 1, 1859.

From the Philadelphia Ledger.

Failure of the Fruit Crop.

The very great complaint in the interior of the State of a decline in almost all the established and most productive kinds of fruit, demands more attention than it has thus far received. Large sections of the interior of the State of New York and of Pennsylvania, that used to be celebrated for their peaches, now are hardly able to raise a crop. The Farmers all complain that the seasons seem too short for them to ripen, and if not plucked green, they rot on the trees. The frosts kill the buds in spring, or insect- or disease destroy the trees. This year there has been a tolerable supply of plums in the upper parts of our own State, but for several seasons past till now this has not been the case. The apple trees, too, many of them are bearing worse and worse annually. True, old trees are dying out and the fruit of young ones is thought to be inferior in quality. Insects multiply upon and spoil them. Such is the trouble. What are the causes? The gun and shot belt of the boys is doubtless one cause of the multiplication of insects. But there is something far back of this. It is a weak and rotten state of the fruit itself which most encourages and fosters the mischievous insects. And this weakness and rottenness is what must mainly be sought out as to its causes, and cured, if we would cure the evil.

When fruit trees were first planted in the State, it was in virgin soil. In Northumberland county, Dr. Priestly, and afterwards his son more extensively, imported some of the finest varieties of English fruits, especially the apple—And these not only prospered, but produced new and fine varieties. Most of the very best orchards in the surrounding counties were trees of the Priestly-raising. Some of these continue to bear to this day very finely, where the ground affords them sufficient nourishment. But where the soil is exhausted, so are the trees. We saw an orchard not long since where about half the trees were on a rich soil, and the other on a rocky, barren land, but slightly covered. The trees were planted at the same time in all, but in one case they were still vigorously bearing, and in the other hardly an apple could be raised.

It is probably the want of sufficient nourishment of the right kind, which lies at the basis of most of the much complained of failures in the fruit crops.—Many farmers think any soil good enough for fruit trees, and they raise exhausting crops of cereals from land, and then wonder it does not bear fruit. Or they plant trees where the same fruit trees were before, or where the soil is shallow and sterile, and rock lies close underneath.—The rapidity of growth does and must greatly depend upon a bountiful nourishment being at hand, to supply all the wants of the trees. If our farmers would make it a point to clear a piece of the richest timbered land as often as possible, when they wanted to set out an orchard, and plant their trees there, the fruit would be forwarder, and so escape many of the evils to which they are subject in not ripening. They would improve instead of deteriorating in size and flavor, and probably not be half so much infested and injured by insects. Where this is impossible, the object may be secured by surrounding the trees with virgin soil on planting, or by suitable manures and cultivation. Several of the finest nursery grounds in the whole country for fruit trees, are to be found as far North as Rochester.

In France, almost every production is cultivated in a distinct garden. Men devote themselves to one fruit on one flower, such as the rose or the peach, or the pear, or the apple. By careful cultivation the soil does not wear out, and there is a scientific study of the habits and wants of each fruit and flower which must be produced, or our productions will deteriorate.

We follow the English method of cultivating a variety, and it has this advantage, that different productions occupy better the whole time and are so far economical. There is, too, a vast advantage in the rotation of the crops. But this method requires for success a great variety in our practical knowledge and habits of industry. We have not yet obtained the wisdom which necessarily engenders in the course of generations from cultivating the same soil. In Ireland, we see the potato blight has again appeared—a disease clearly engendered by the exhaustion of some element of the soil not yet known.

Simple Cure for Croup.

We find in the *Journal of Health*, the following simple remedy for this dangerous disease. Those who have passed nights of agony at the bedside of loved children, will treasure it up as a valuable piece of information:

If a child is taken with croup, apply cold water—ice water if possible—suddenly and freely to the neck and chest with a sponge. The breathing will instantly be relieved. Soon as possible let the sufferer drink as much as it can, then wipe it dry, cover it up warm, and soon a quiet slumber will relieve the parent's anxiety, and lead the heart in thankfulness to the Power which has given to the pure gushing fountain such medical qualities.