

A PILGRIM'S PROGRESS.

Editorial Etchings of Montana's Delectable Valley of Sun River—Pastoral Pastime Among its People.

With nothing to do but wait for freighters, who were bringing with certain slowness type and material for this paper, it occurred to us that our time could be employed with profit and pleasure by visiting the district of Sun River and making the acquaintance of its genial people. Happy thought! and straightway to Sun River we went as fast as that useful old relic of past time—the stage—could carry us. Some one has said that each inhabitant of this planet, during a lifetime of three-score and ten years, eats his peck of dirt. But we will aver that passengers on the Benton and Helena road consume that amount in ten hours. Passing time equally in social converse with Major Maginnis and swallowing potions of our virgin soil, we at last and long after dark reached the gem of the valley, Sun River Crossing, penetrated to the marrow with the searching chill of the autumn evening. The massive and elegant proportions of R. S. Ford gave us first and cordial greeting, and the stove in George Steell's store gradually reduced us to our normal condition of mellow amiability.

It was not until the following morning that we were enabled to get a fair impression of the surroundings of this pretty village. Then we felt that our wanderings were at an end, and that in this vale we would be content to light our earthly camp-fire, and stay with it until its fires should die out, and even preempt our six feet of earth under its ashes.

There is a similarity of association in this tree-covered plain with the past of our lives, and we mortals cannot deny our nature or shake off, if we would, the force of our early impressions. The country around looks parched and barren, although covered with a luxuriant growth of nutritious bunch grass, but a half mile on either side of this beautiful stream, from which the town takes its name, is drawn a magic line wherein all is bloom and changing verdure. Give me a grove of fine old trees, even if they be only the cottonwoods of this valley. They give to the landscape a languid and dreamy air, brightened by the soft azure that floats over the distant hills, toning the harsher elements into quiet harmony—like the mists that give to our day dreams a touch of unreal reality—reducing a weary mind into harmony with it all. But the day dreams of a lively imagination gradually fade away as the bustle of the morning brings in the disturbing element of duty—tiresome from its eternal monotony and the competition for our daily bread.

Now we become acquainted with the people of this valley with the easy receptivity which only Western folk know how to display, and there is a heartiness in it that is lacking in crowded communities where the brotherhood of man is sadly forgotten in the struggle for existence. Nothing can be pleasanter than for a stranger to come among these people; if he has the slightest impress of a gentleman, or comes with even the smallest intention of business or with the poverty of Job's gallinaceous fowl, he will be received with an eager courtesy that has not the slightest tinge of being forced or false.

Sun River Crossing is the center of what is incomparably the finest, prettiest and richest agricultural and stock section of Montana, and does an amount of business entirely disproportionate to its size. The class of goods sold indicates a population who have passed the trying period of frontier life, and reached the pleasant situation of the well-to-do, and even to the extreme unctious of the very wealthy. Articles of luxury, *vertu* and *bris-a-brac* find ready sale, and the druggists, J. Steele & Co. have them to dispose of. George Steell and Milot & Co. do the merchandizing and both firms carry immense stocks and are doing a rushing business. Mr. Steell is the old stand-by of this section, while Mr. Milot has been in operation but little over a year. Where the people come from to buy all these goods is the first thought of the pilgrim, but they disappear somehow, and the cry is still for more. John Largent owns the popular hotel known by his name, and the house is presided over by I. S. Corson, whose smile, always childlike, never ceases, and whose painstaking knows no rest. This house is superior, both in its architecture and accommodation, to most of the abodes of mine host in Montana, and can be termed first-class in every respect. Mr. Largent has also a granary nearly opposite the hotel, which has a capacity in its two stories of nearly 300,000 pounds. B. W. Murray is doing a prosperous wagon-repairing and blacksmithing business, and has besides a fine herd of cattle. We were taken wholly by surprise when we recognized in his features those of one with whom the associations of childhood and youth are closely interwoven; and together we recounted the days of Auld Lang Syne, and the people who were connected with our oldest and pleasantest memories. We thought we could detect in him a feeling akin to homesickness, and a desire to re-visit the old scenes and to see the old boys—and, perhaps, court the old girls—as we reminded him of the landmarks and associations that revived in his mind memories long lain dormant. But, Murray, do not go back; cherish the old faces with whom your golden past is associated; cherish the old landmarks with your strongest memory. The old boys are gone—scattered to the corners of the

continent—only a few are left, and you will find their epitaphs written up there in the same old cemetery, more populous now than ever; the old girls have disappeared, many of them from the face of the earth. The old familiar landmarks, too, have rotted away or been destroyed by the iconoclastic hand of progress. Do not go back, I repeat, for you will leave your tenderest memories buried with your friends, and find yourself a curious relic of the past.

But this youngest scion of our great family, Montana, is all life, without a memory beyond the present, and just emerging from its chrysalis, and the melancholy of old reminiscences is soon lost as we enter into its spirit and at the same time the door of Tom Cristy, who keeps refreshments for the weary and cheer for the despondent just over Milot's store. Mr. Devine keeps its prototype across the street, and lovers of billiards will find in both houses the necessary implements for this fascinating pastime. The latter gentleman also keeps a bowling alley, a brewery and a restaurant.

The residents of the Crossing are very enthusiastic in their praise of the South Fork as an agricultural section, and through the courtesy of Mr. D. B. Traxler, who supplied us with an amiable and staunch specimen of horse flesh, we were soon on our way thither. Under sun as hot as moves over Sahara, we plodded along, through Fort Shaw, past the sterile bluffs which mark the course of some ancient river, until we reach the ranch of Stewart & Loomis, which has recently been opened; they have a fine property and harvested twenty-five acres of grain, which they claim is but little short of average. They did not irrigate their crop, and express the belief that irrigation is unnecessary. This is the beginning of ranch property, which continue on almost uninterruptedly to the foot of the Rocky Mountains. We took a good dinner with T. W. Avery, who keeps a public house on his ranch for the benefit of the passing traveller. He believes himself grievously imposed upon by taxation, and says his quota is just the same as if he was running a first-class hotel instead of only now and then catching a weary or belated traveler; and it must be admitted that there is something here that needs mending by our ubiquitous legislators. Still up the valley, past ranches in all stages of development, but between us Sun River and a rapid declining day, both of which prevented a closer inspection, and we regretfully passed by, leaving them in the lonesome shadows of the bluffs just behind. Spurring our Pegasus along, we in due time reached the "Forks," and, passing over the bluffs to the left, get a view of the whole valley. It is impossible to describe this vale as it appeared to us when viewed from these hills at the close of this beautiful autumn day. Fifteen miles of wide expanse of valley, bounded on either side by gently sloping bluffs, and in front by the seemingly impassible Rockies, with their ragged profiles standing out in bold relief against a sky of dark and cloudless blue and lit up with the radiance of the setting sun, with sombre shadows in the gulches and various shades on their darkening sides; over the whole the gauzy veil of the Indian summer is settling down, tinted with a purple hue—giving to the whole a seeming of such stuff as dreams are made of. From their feet is flowing the river, glinting in the mellow sunlight here and there where it escapes from the guardianship of the yellow-crested trees and winds through expanses of meadow with the greenness of earlier days not yet gone. And the twilight, settling down gradually, shuts out the details one by one until all are lost, and only a shadowy, romantic foreground is left of the beautiful picture—all the world like some oriental transformation scene.

Tired and hungry, we pulled up before the door of Phil Layton, whose ranch, just emerging from the roughness of all things new, is the first on the left hand road as you go up the valley. At his invitation we stopped for the night, and passed the evening in conversing on the needs of the district and we thank him for the many themes of interest pertaining thereto which he added to our note-book. Talk continually until after midnight, and then into unconsciousness, only to be awakened therefrom by the announcement of breakfast. Then to horse and up the valley, stopping along the way where any evidence of human existence was manifest.

The ranch property on the left bank of the river, going up, are all good, and a description of each would take space unparalel and writings all monotonous. Drew & Heldt have six hundred acres: forty under fence and fifty plowed and ready for next year's operation. Next is N. A. Lewis with 320 acres. Then follows the school section, held by a prior claim of Mr. Hogan. Richard Ancharud comes next with a quarter-section—600 acres under fence and 40 under the plow. French & Metcalf follow with a ranch just located. Thomas Pemburn comes next, and nearly opposite W. Douglass and Wm. DeBray follow with good ranches, all in the order named. They are raising hay, oats, wheat, and vegetables and report good crops of each. Mr. DePrez and Durkins & Bros. are the last on this bank—the former breeding fine horses, and the latter considerably interested in sheep. In fact all of these gentlemen are more or less interested in the stock business. Crossing the river we are soon at the junction formed by the South Fork and Elkhorn creeks, where Mr. Goss has located one of the finest farms in the valley. Across the Elkhorn is the property

of David Patte. This gentleman is erecting a sawmill—circular in style—and with it a shingle machine. The capacity of the mill will be 4,000 feet of lumber per day and about 15,000 shingles. Mr. P. is filling a long felt want, and his labors will in time add the beauties of cottage architecture to this valley of Aiden. He is also improving a fine ranch. Above is the sheep pasture of Mr. Haskell, who has between three and four thousand head; and his home, under the shadows of Haystack Butte, is in a most picturesque situation. Close by is the splendid property of Mr. Ford, who has 400 acres under fence, and 40 under the plow; he is also heavily interested in cattle and bids fare to become one of the magnates of the future. Next is Mr. Carpenter, who has just opened up a quarter-section. Then Mr. Schmidt with a thoroughly developed property. Messrs. Corson and Leapiere are the last, under the massive walls of the Rockies.

Halting awhile to take a backward view of the valley, with its everchanging but always beautiful aspect, and then down again on the opposite bank without stopping until we reach the property of Mr. Erue. This gentleman was engaged in threshing a large crop of oats which he had raised from an 80 acre field. Next below is the school house, presided over by Mrs. Jennie Reynolds, a daughter of O. B. Totten, of Helena. There are 78 children of school age in the district at present; last year there were only 35—a gratifying increase that bodes well for the future of the valley. The school building is a comfortable, well-built log structure with a good roof, and roomy enough for the time. Wm. Converse has the next ranch as the river flows, followed by Mr. Walworth, both new settlers. Charles Casey and Stephen Barube follow with good ranches.

But the closing day warns us to accept the proffered hospitality of Mr. Hogan, and we cross the river to the boundary of the prettiest ranch that lies out of doors. Mr. Hogan's house is situated away from the road, half hidden by the beautiful groves of cottonwood and willow that surround it. Neater too than usual in a bachelor's retreat is its interior, and the art *cuisine*, as practiced by his special artist is not better nor more abundant elsewhere. There is an exhilaration not to be described in riding along with these beautiful surroundings in this magnificent weather of the Indian summer; and one can hardly repress gushings of bucolic sentiment on the inspiration of the scene. Why will ye stay, you who are wedded to a set of dismal books in somber counting rooms? or you who dole out goods to testy humanity? or you who blindly grope over musty records making hapless briefs? or you who delve with weary scissors and pointless pen, making tiresome amusement for those who read? Why will ye sit and grumble at your fates, when surcease pure and refreshing beyond measure may be had under the shadows of these mountains and by the side of this matchless stream, where

The trout, in patience, all unfried—
Unconscious of the angler's hook—
Lazily floats in the limpid tide.
Or, darting, shows his mottled side—
Predestined victim of the cook.
Chickens, leading a weary life,
Seek not the Nimrod's bolt to flee;
Far from this cold world's toil and strife,
Longing, in vain, for the carving-knife,
Or to be served in a friicasse.

While game of larger note is watching for a period of excitement, when miserable marksmen shall fire and miss.

But we set out to avoid bucolic gushings, and here we are in it up to eyes and ears. But we really couldn't help it, led on by the spirit of reverie, and visions of castles in Spain, which will weave their dreamy and intangible nothings in spite of will and common sense.

But now we must close, lest we tire our readers with much ado about things which are of interest only to a part of them; but we will say our say again, for we have left things unsaid which are of more than passing interest for the people of this district.

An Indiana girl was so mortified to see her lover eat with a knife, that she tried to commit suicide. A Montana girl would have hit him in the eye with a boiled potato.

The man who half the year sighs for a cot by the deep heaving sea, kicks like a steer when the land lord of an ocean hotel tells him he must sleep on a cot in the billiard-room until he can do better by him, after the Duke De Smith, or some other nobleman, leaves the house.

TERRITORIAL COURTS.

Territory of Montana, SS.—The undersigned, Justices of the Supreme Court of Montana Territory, being assembled at the seat of government for said Territory, hereby make the following order in relation to the times and places for holding the District Courts of said Territory, and order the same of record:

FIRST DISTRICT—E. J. CONGER, Judge.
At VIRGINIA CITY, in Madison county, the second Monday of November, and the third Monday of March.
At CALVERTON, in Jefferson county, first Monday of September, and the third Tuesday of February.
At BOZEMAN, in Gallatin county, the third Monday of October, and the third Monday of April.
At MILES CITY, in Custer county, the fourth Monday of September, and the fourth Monday of May.
SECOND DISTRICT—W. J. GALBRAITH, Judge.
In Deer Lodge county, at DEER LODGE CITY, second Monday in April; first Monday in September; first Monday in December.
In Missoula county, at MISSOULA, fourth Monday in June; second Monday in November.
In Beaverhead county, at BANNACK, first Monday in June; second Monday in October.
THIRD DISTRICT—D. S. WADE, Judge.
At HELENA, in Lewis and Clarke County, first Monday in March, and the fifth Monday in November.
At BISMARCK CITY, in Meagher county, the third Monday in April, and the third Monday in October.
At FORT BENTON, in Chouteau county, the first Monday in May, and the third Monday in September.
DEIUS S. WADE, Chief Justice,
J. CONGER, Associate Justice.
Attest:—I. R. ALLEN, Clerk.

W. S. WETZEL,

FORT BENTON, MONTANA.

Wholesale and Retail Grocer,

AND DEALER IN

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BOOTS AND SHOES, FURS AND PELTRIES,

WINES, LIQUORS AND CIGARS.

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Fish Bros.' Freight and Farm Wagons,

SHELF HARDWARE

TOOLS, CUTLERY,

Tinware, Crockery, Glassware, Toilet Articles

PATENT MEDICINES, PAINTS AND OILS.

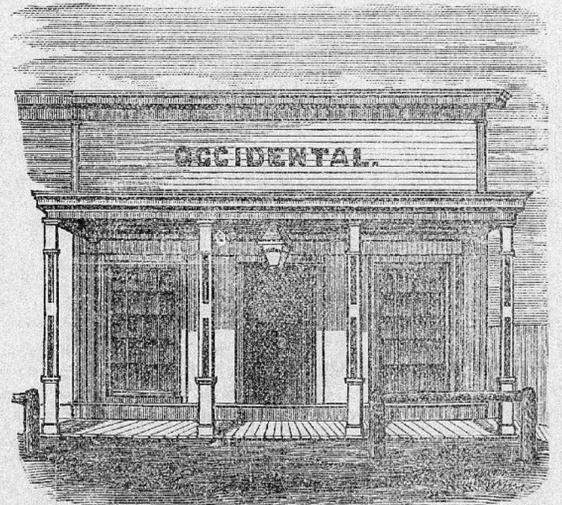
We have in store one of the best selected Stocks ever imported into the Territory, and the trading public will find it to their advantage to get our prices before buying elsewhere.

STORAGE AND COMMISSION.

Corner of Front and Bond Sts., Fort Benton.

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This popular Hotel is situated in the centre of the town, convenient to the business houses, and opposite the steamboat landing. A number of New Rooms have been recently added, and nothing is left undone which will contribute to the comfort and convenience of guests.

JOHN HUNSBERGER,

PROPRIETOR.

ALL COACHES RUNNING INTO FORT BENTON ARRIVE AT AND DEPART FROM THIS HOTEL.

WINE AND BILLIARD SALOON.

Best Brands of Liquor and Cigars.