

MAGNIFICENT MONTANA.

Some Excerpts From Gov. Crosby's Report to the Secretary of the Interior,

Setting Forth the Greatness and Grandeur of the Territory as Well as Some Wise Suggestions to the Powers that be.

We have to thank Governor Crosby for a copy of his recent report to the secretary of the interior from which we take the following extracts of interest to every reader of the RIVER PRESS, with-in and without the territory:

POPULATION.

At the time of the census of 1880 Montana had less than 40,000 inhabitants. That same year witnessed the entry of the first railroad within her borders. During the ten preceding years the population had barely doubled, but within the last three years it has advanced from 40,000 to upwards of 80,000, according to the most careful and reliable estimates. In a territory so vast as Montana, being exceeded in area by only two states and a single territory, the accession of a million inhabitants would still leave it sparsely settled. While it is true that much of its surface seems adapted, so far as yet known, to a scanty population engaged in pastoral pursuits, other sections, covering probably a fourth of its area, creviced and underlaid with mineral wealth, is certainly destined to give homes and employment to a dense population at no distant day, furnishing a home market for a large share of its agricultural products. Bearing in mind the fact that the railroad has only been completed for about two months, too late to accommodate the immigration of the present year, it is quite within reasonable bounds to predict that the population of Montana will swell to 200,000 within the next three years. There are some things interfering with the rapid settlement of the territory that deserve the attention of the general government for their reduction or removal.

INDIAN RESERVATIONS.

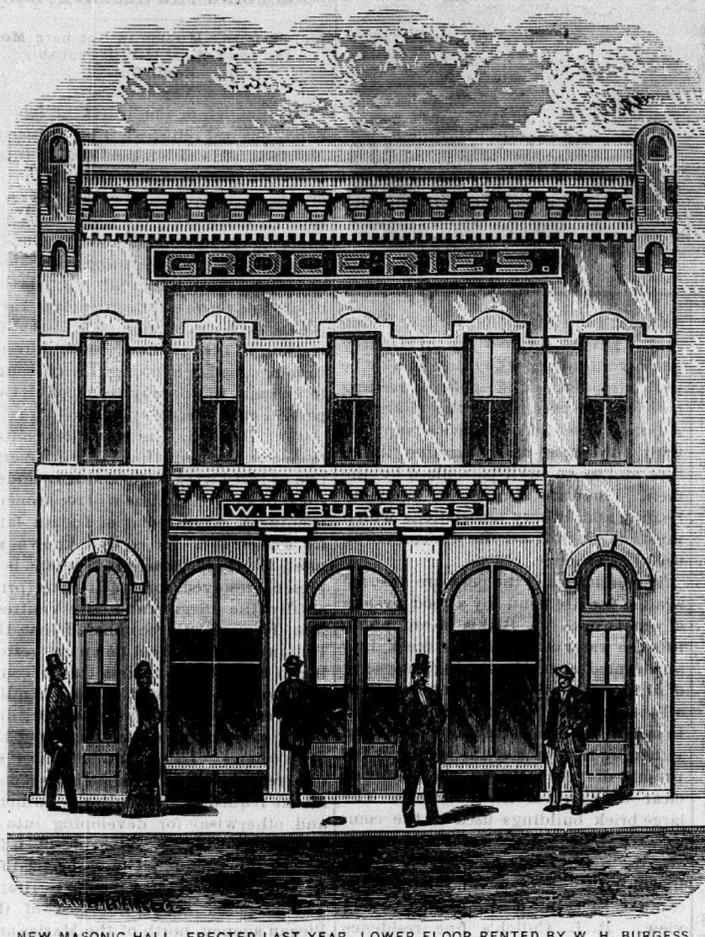
Nearly two-fifths of the entire area of Montana, as large as the entire state of New York, is covered by Indian reservations. Yet the highest estimates of the number of these Indians do not make more than 18,000. These reservations, as is usual, cover the most desirable portion of the territory, the best watered, most fertile, and desirable valleys, while the vast continuous reservation lying north of the Missouri river, and stretching from the eastern border to the crest of the main range of the Rocky mountains, upwards of 22,000,000 acres, is almost entirely a high, rolling, grassy plain, well adapted for grazing, and much of it for the growth of small grain. The vast herds of buffalo that once ranged these plains have been destroyed or driven off, and the poor Indians, who are the nominal possessors of this rich grazing country, capable of furnishing meat for a nation, are actually in a starving condition, and would only be too glad to exchange lands worthless to them for some of the comforts and necessities of life. As a committee of both houses of congress has been visiting the borders of these reservations the present season, it may be reasonably expected that their report will fully represent the necessity of cutting down their enormous size, and settling the Indians in severally on what they can make use of in a civilized and peaceable way of life. I am of the opinion that now the territory is traversed by one of the main transcontinental lines, able and eager to throw out branches through every principal valley, and advertising for immigration as a private enterprise, the demands for the immediate future of settlement are not at all to be judged of by the slower growth of the past twenty years.

LIVE STOCK.

A few figures compiled from the auditor's office from most recent returns will show the rapid growth of another leading industry of this territory—stock-growing. Last year the number of cattle was returned at 287,210, of the value of \$4,699,812. This year the same item figures at 475,000 head, valued at \$14,250,000. Last year the sheep were returned as numbering 362,776, of the value of \$1,018,124; this year at 700,000 of the value of \$2,100,000. The number of horses has increased in the year from 67,000 to 90,000, and in value from \$3,197,020 to \$6,787,000. The increase has not been more in quantity than in quality. The expense of raising stock in Montana is as little as well can be in any part of the world. Very little shelter or feeding is found necessary, even in winter, the average loss is very light, rarely over 5 per cent; and the annual profits are from 25 per cent. to 50 per cent.

INCREASE OF ASSESSABLE WEALTH.

Last year showed a total assessment of \$33,211,312, an increase of \$9,170,511 over the preceding year, but the increase for the present year, not yet fully completed, is greater still, and already shows a total of \$46,560,300. This is greater than



NEW MASONIC HALL—ERECTED LAST YEAR—LOWER FLOOR RENTED BY W. H. BURGESS.

the assessment returned by Colorado for 1881 by nearly four millions, and nearly double that of the state of Nevada last year. But handsome as this showing is it fails to do the territory justice, for it does not include a dollar for the mines, whose net income alone is taxed, but whose market value would exceed \$50,000,000, and carry up a total of wealth of \$100,000,000.

INDEBTEDNESS.

In connection with its wealth, it is proper to state Montana's indebtedness. The territory does not owe a dollar, and the aggregate indebtedness of her thirteen counties is under \$1,000,000, mostly incurred for the erection of court houses and other public buildings, and for the construction of roads and bridges. It must be remembered that the price of all building material has been excessively high, and so are the costs of administering justice, supporting the poor and insane. The showing, for a new country, where everything had to be created at high prices for all labor and material, and high rates of interest on all indebtedness, is certainly creditable. Only one county has ever made default in the payment of interest on its bonded debt, and that reproach will soon be wiped out.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

Montana has no cause to envy her sister territories in any respect. She is better watered, has a more healthful and equable climate, richer mines and of greater variety, and a home market for all her bountiful soil can produce. Such confidence have her people in their ability to support a state government, with an early prospect of a full quota of population to entitle them on that ground to admission as a state, that the last territorial legislature authorized a call for a constitutional convention, with a view to submit the constitution framed to the vote of the people in November, 1884. The convention will assemble in January next, and the members thereof, who are representative men of ability, have already been elected.

The people of Montana are earnest in their desire to exercise the full rights of citizenship by effective representation in congress and a participation in the choice of a chief magistrate of the nation.

There is no wish of a reduction of territory, but on the contrary a very strong desire to expand its practical area by a large and immediate reduction of the Indian reservations within its borders.

The condition of the territory is prosperous and peaceful, and the resident population have a kindly welcome for immigration from the old states and Europe. Murders and robberies are of rare occurrence, and the hardships which met the early settlers at every step are among the things of the past, and in no part of the American continent are greater inducements offered for safe and profitable labor and the investment of capital than in our great, grand, and progressive territory.

Mr. Zimmerman, from the upper Marias, informs us that good coal has been struck near the mouth of Dupuyer creek. The vein at one place is fifteen and at another six feet thick.

You can buy a good pair of blankets for \$3.50 at the cash sale at Gans & Klein's.

FOLLY.

The much talked of invasion to the reservation before it is opened to settlement by act of congress is sheer folly. It is the duty of the United States authorities to protect the rights of the Indians by keeping the whites from appropriating their (the Indians') lands, and it is certain they will do so. Fort Assinaboine is right in the heart of this coveted country, and those who are rash enough to defy the authority of the United States by seeking to possess themselves of lands still owned by the Indians will be taught at the point of the bayonet that it is a rash undertaking. The boys in blue have little else to do just now, and it would be an easy task for them to make it warm for the bold, bad "invaders." Even if the country were open to settlement, wisdom would hardly dictate a movement there at this inclement season; but when to do so is to defy the federal laws and become subject to the punishment provided for such infringement, the act is then one of consummate folly. There is no occasion for this "invasion," as within a few months at most the reservation will be cut down and will then be free to all. Besides any extensive movement, such as the talked of invasion, might awaken a feeling of distrust at Washington and delay for another year or more the opening of that country. The portion of the reservation to be surrendered by the Indians is large enough for all, and those who wait until congress gives them a right to "invade" that section, selecting a more auspicious season to do so, will fare much better than those who may be rash enough to go before.

Sale of Telegraph Lines.

On the 22d inst. the abandoned telegraph lines between Bismarck and Fort Buford (208 miles) and between Fort Bennett and Fort Meade (169 miles) were sold to the highest bidder. Alex. McKenzie, of Bismarck, bought the first named for \$1,090, and E. Nagle the other for \$2,000. Mr. McKenzie expects to establish a telephone line between Bismarck and Washburn and Buford.

Tom Morgan, who has been superintending the handling of the freight business of T. C. Power, at Custer City, on the Northern Pacific, came in on Tuesday's coach from Billings. Some 6,000,000 pounds of freight were handled there by him this last summer. Tom says that every one there is waiting for the Crow reservation to be thrown open for settlement, as that will give them a fine ranch and stock country on the south side of the Yellowstone. Junction city expects then to loom up into a city sure enough. Billings was so thoroughly boomed by the railroad in order to sell town lots that the town now finds itself ahead of the surrounding country and will have to go slow awhile for the settlements to catch up.

From T. F. Morgan, who stopped at Maiden a few days enroute from Junction City, we learn that the Collar mining and milling company paid off all claims against them on Thursday or Friday of last week. Payment was not made when he left the camp, but Tom saw a telegram from Gen. Meade, stating that he would leave St. Paul on a certain date prepared to meet all obligations of the company. This will be good news for all interested at Maiden.

WOOL GROWING IN MONTANA.

At present the wool of the territory brings within our borders from abroad one million dollars yearly, while the increase of our flocks leaves an additional installment of one million to our permanent wealth. Of all the moneys that enter the territory none are so widely distributed and remain so permanently with us. It is fair to assume, then, that no other industry deserves more attention and study from those having the material interests of our territory at heart, both at present and in the future.

What representations shall we make, in the light of our past experience, to induce the placing of capital by strangers into this business?

Unfortunately, or, perhaps, fortunately, all men do not see the same thing in the same light. To one, 50 per cent. in the sheep business is always in sight, while the risks are but darkly shadowed. To another, storms, disease and disaster are seen and noted, and nothing will induce such an one to take a part in it. Both are right, and both can produce plenty of evidence to prove their position correct. Some see the successful, and are powerfully impressed; others are equally impressed by the disasters they have seen and heard of. Why is capital by hundreds of thousands invested in government securities at 3 or 4 per cent., when it might return fifty or upwards in sheep? It is because the risk is great just in proportion as the possible percentage returned is great. When wool growing in Montana is conducted upon a plan that will return over 50 per cent. in a year upon the capital invested, it is also conducted upon a plan that is liable to reduce such capital from 50 per cent. to total loss. Ten thousand dollars invested in a band of 2,500 sheep may be placed upon the range in the hands of a herder. The expense of herding is reckoned at \$600; a cabin, \$100; taxes and one or two other things make up an expense of perhaps \$1,000. Lambing and shearing expenses are counted in, and then \$4 per head figured from wool and increase from the flock. The sheep that cost ten thousand returned ten thousand less a few insignificant expenses, or we will say 60 per cent. on the capital invested. We have often seen the thing figured out something after this fashion. Something approximating this has been done, but in how many instances? It might be that a winter mild and without snow or storm would accompany the first conditions; it might be that a spring perfect in all respects for lambing would accompany these first conditions, and it might be that a band contained no old sheep; in fact a hundred things might all conspire to make a success of the venture, but nevertheless it is a pure game of chance—simply gambling.

As above remarked such happy hits have been made, but they have worked in the end incalculable harm. People are only too apt to think that what has been done can be done again, both in their own experience and in that of others. While they do not exactly lose sight of the disasters that may have followed from such management, they are fascinated by the brilliant successes, and take desperate chances, especially, unfortunately, if they are using some one else's money.

Another party handling this band of sheep might build corrals to protect his stock from wild animals, invest in horses and machinery, and put up hay in case deep snows should come, build covered sheds for cold and stormy weather, employ plenty of help at the lambing season—in short, conduct the business as it is now managed by most every wool grower in Montana—the result will be a decrease in the probable per centage by one-half or to about 40 per cent., and a decrease in the risk to about one-tenth. Further than this a party might build water proof sheds, put in crops of roots and grain, and prepare to house and feed his stock for five or six months in case they would be the least exposed if taken on the range—in this event the probable per centage would be reduced one half again, or to say 20 per cent., and the risk to perhaps one twentieth that of the first case.

As a fourth instance we may conceive a case where a party satisfied with a return of 4 per cent. might take precautions that would render the risks scarcely less than those pertaining to an investment in government bonds.

I have entered into this matter to this extent in hopes that the question of what return is to be expected from money invested in sheep here may be more clearly understood. Those ignorant of the returns of the first instance mentioned above with the business conducted as safely as the party mentioned in the third instance.

Those persons thinking of placing capital in sheep in Montana must be shrewd enough to see that if such were the case, sheep here would be worth upwards of ten dollars per head to-day. They must see that just in proportion as they expect such fabulous returns from

people handling their money here, will those persons be encouraged to take risks that they should not take, in the hope that they may realize that which is expected of them.

It is the belief of the writer that there is no business in the country paying 30 per cent. that is safer than wool growing in Montana when it is conducted with the expectation of making that return.

The failures, I believe it can be shown, have been either through gross mismanagement or the effort to make upwards of 50 per cent. per annum upon the investment. Some years when we have fine winters—for the business as now conducted depends for its success very largely upon the weather—upwards of 40 per cent. may be made, while other years with severe winters will take off the old ewes and late lambs, reducing the percentage to half the above amount, or even much less than that.

The tendency among wool growers here is now unquestionably to the doing of a safer business by taking additional precautions against severe weather and disease, expecting thereby in the end, if not immediately, a better return. There are a few, however, who still say that when they have to put up hay and build sheds for their sheep they are ready to go out of the business—that they can better afford to lose a band of sheep once in four or five years than to do those things. It is the marvelous percentages made by those men some years that give birth to the famous yarns so often repeated concerning the wonderful profits in sheep raising; it is their years of large or total losses that makes the business appear so very uncertain. Does any one believe that in the long run they can make as much as he who makes large outlays, does a safe business, and contents himself with a comparatively small return.

We would simply say this to those expecting to invest here in sheep, be satisfied with a reasonable return, and do not expect to double your capital every two years if you do not thoroughly understand the risk at which it is done.

Montana wool is unquestionably the favorite territorial or range-produced wool now thrown upon the market; there are climatic conditions which make it light and strong, and range conditions that keep it free from troublesome burs and sand or dirt. And if we do say so, "as ought not to," perhaps, there are a set of intelligent and progressive wool growers established here, and coming among us, who will see that everything is done that can be done to keep up and advance its good reputation.

A few words in regard to the relation of the general public to the sheep business may not be amiss.

The sheep to a larger extent than any other animal is the friend of man. What the buffalo has been to the Indian, namely, his food and shelter, the sheep has been and is to the white man. The most healthy meat he can eat, and by far the most desirable and useful clothing he can wear is furnished by this animal. Through a wise policy of our nation this industry has attained its present gigantic proportions in this country. The most prosperous nation in the world through a protection of its industries feeds and clothes itself. Sheep husbandry has grown up with us under this system. How can any one doubt that the millions of wealth it has created here, and is circulating yearly among hundreds of thousands of farmers and manufacturers, and through them to every citizen of the republic, has been dearly bought. How can any one doubt that it was ever or is now best that this really immense matter of wool production should be given over to the stranger, and that we should be left to the mercy of the foreigner. It is the duty of the tens of thousands of wool growers in this country to watch with diligence the acts of parties and of their chosen representatives in regard to a wise regulation of the tariff. It is also the duty of every citizen to weigh well the questions, as all are indirectly interested, of tariff and free trade. Shall we be self-supporting, self-containing, free and a prosperous people, or shall we tie both hands and feet by placing ourselves at the mercy of foreign nations? What industry is more conducive to this independence, and hence deserves the fostering care of all our people more than that one which so directly feeds and clothes us? There certainly is no industry in which every one is so directly interested, and which they should more closely study before forming hasty conclusions concerning the fancied advantages that might be derived from a free trade system. Is it best to quarrel with our friends? Because there may be those that believe the protective goose that lays the golden egg is a silly bird, does it necessarily follow that she should be killed because it costs a little to feed her? Will those who fancy that the feed costs more than the eggs are worth review the question more in an impartial light, leave theoretical economy out of the question and come down to the practical and hard facts of what has been, and is, and may be expected for the future for our whole people.

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Sec. Montana Wool Growers' Ass'n.