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GREAT FALLS TRIBUNE.

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EARLY SPRING FLOWERS.

WRITTEN FOR THE TRIBUNE.

Who has not, at least when a child, enjoyed the pleasure of going out in search of wild flowers on the first of May? Often, I remember, on that date the spring was so backward that scarcely a blossom could be found. Winter had such firm hold upon the earth he seemed reluctant to let go his frosty grasp. No warm wind from the great Pacific reached that region to send him flying northward with scarce a moment's notice and for this very reason, that winter stayed so long, every sign of spring was the more welcome. The growing willow catkins, "pussy willows" were plucked before bursting, their leathery coat removed by small and eager fingers and the silky down of the "pussies" stroked and caressed in a way that would be much better appreciated by their four-legged namesake. The first few flowers to be found seemed strange and new each year. There was the bright, yellow buttercup nestling closely in the prairie grass and often accompanying it what we called goslings, more properly termed wind, or pasque flowers. These two, always among the earliest to appear, were more closely associated with the coming of spring than any others. Soon the delicate wood anemone, the blood-root and various species of violets could be found, and spring and spring flowers had come in earnest.

Of them all, the blood-root was an especial favorite with its pure white bud peeping out of the encircling leaf, and appearing so suddenly from the damp earth, when all about were fallen leaves and dead grasses. Then too, the orange-red juice it was ready to shed from every wound, lent additional interest to this trim flower of the groves. Whence came the brilliant color? and wherefore? Whatever its significance, it proved a most convenient substance for staining each other's hands and faces in careless sport. We thought the flower's one fault to be that the odd, roundish leaf would come up separate from the flower stalk, no matter how carefully pulled by childish hands, thereby taking away much of its attractive appearance when growing. Indeed, a blossom without its accompanying leaf or leaves is often robbed of half its beauty.

In an early season, all of these flowers and some few others, could be found from about the middle of April and onward, but it would be rare indeed to find a single plant in bloom on April 1, or in the last few days of March. In this latitude in Montana, although farther north than the region alluded to above, it is not uncommon to find several species of plants in bloom by the beginning of April. I well remember taking a ride some years ago over the high prairies near the Belt mountains, after an unusually severe winter. It was the first of April and a day perfect, even above Montana days. The sun shone bright and warm, and just the lightest of spring-like breezes came from the west. Long banks of fleecy clouds lay spell-bound over the main chain of the Rocky mountains, which stretched for miles along the horizon to the westward. Here and there clouds and snow-capped peaks mingled in a brilliant whiteness that but increased the intense blue of the elsewhere spotless heavens. Great beds of snow, drifted deep by winter gales, covered half the ground, but on the warm hillsides and bare knolls, already blades of green grass could be found several inches high, and no less than three species of flowers were noticed commonly in bloom. One, coming over a slight rise, a full chorus of frogs burst suddenly on the ear. They were in a small pond formed of melting snow. On approaching every voice was hushed, but our back was scarcely turned before first one, and then another shrill voice piped up, and soon the momentary scare was forgotten in the attempt of each cold-blooded individual to drown out his neighbor's shrillness by his own.

Nearly all the early spring flowers are distinctively prairie species, well adapted to grow with slight moisture, and to withstand both cold and wind. The majority are perennials, with tough, fibrous roots which sometimes send up two or three growths of foliage and blossoms, only to be cut down by frost, till finally the season is sufficiently advanced to allow the seeds to form and ripen. Often the plants are so low that the blossoms scarcely appear above ground and the highest winds effect them no more than the gentlest breezes. This lack of long and delicate stems and branches is noticeable among the earliest species of several very different families of plants. Of the pulse family is a species of rattle-weed (Astragalus triphyllus) growing in dense flat tufts an inch or two high, with the flowers wedged in between the leaves so as scarcely to be recognized. This plant blossoms early in April, probably the first of all its kind, so abundant in the West. The ripe seeds in the pods of many species having stems and branches, sway back and forth and rattle in the passing breeze, whence the plant takes its name of rattle-weed, but little less than an earth quake would be required to sway the pods of this particular kind.

Of wild parsley, a species of Hog's Fennel, or Ponceanum (P. villosum) may be cited, with its bright yellow clusters of small flowers almost resting on the ground. Several other early species of this family are quite similar with their low, spreading foliage and blossoms. Among composites is a species of Townsendia (T. sericea), with several clustered, white, aster-like blossoms, scarcely peeping out above the surface of the earth. The leaves are so reduced in size as to be scarcely recognizable, and the whole plant when dug up proves to be little more than blossoms and roots. Several specimens of this last, almost in bloom, were found during the warm weather in February of this year. The figwort family has an early representative in what is known as Synthyris (S. alpina). The first specimens found are only a few inches high and well protected by a covering of dense, woolly hairs. The flowers are purplish, crowded together in a short spike. Then there is the Moss Pink (Phlox Douglasii) belonging to the polemonioid family, frequently to be found by the last of March in full bloom. It acquires the name moss from the dense, mat-like appearance of its stems and leaves. The flowers themselves resemble in form those of the taller cultivated species of phlox of the gardens. Two other very early spring flowers, but mostly confined in this country to the mountains, belong to the crocifera family. One is a small buttercup (Ranunculus glaberrimus), specimens of which I have collected as early as April 9th. The other is the common Wind-flower already mentioned, and appearing at about the same time, or even earlier than the preceding.

Before the close of April a good variety of plants may be found in bloom, but new forms do not seem to appear as rapidly as in regions where the weather is less subject to sudden changes. One of the most showy plants of the latter part of this month is a species of pulse known as Thermopsis (T. rhombifolia). The bright yellow cluster of flowers much resembles the cultivated pea in form and has a delicate perfume not common among Montana plants. Another plant growing on the elevated prairies towards the mountains is Balsamorhiza (B. sagittata). A cluster of coarse, more or less arrow-shaped leaves, surround a stem bearing rather large, usually solitary heads of yellow flowers, not unlike sunflowers. Often the plants are in full bloom the last week of April, and later in the season when all traces of flowers and seeds have disappeared, the harsh, dried leaves still remain to rustle in the autumn breezes, and but recall to mind the rapid changes of everything having life. The roots of this plant constitute an article of food among various Indians.

A family of plants not yet noticed are the violets, at least three species of which may be found in bloom in April. The yellow-flowered kind (V. Nuttallii) is the most widely distributed, growing everywhere on hillsides. A blue violet (V. canina var. adunca) and a larger growing species with white flowers (V. Canadensis) are limited to damp grounds. And last, but not least of April blossoms, is the Yellow Eritrillaria (E. pudica), of the lily family. It is usually formed on damp and more or less shaded slopes. The handsome, solitary flower nods upon its stalk, but as the pistil enlarges and ripens, the stem straightens out, bearing the large, egg-shaped pod erect.

The above is not a complete list of plants blooming in April, but simply includes some of the common and more striking forms. R. S. W. Big Sale. A St. Louis syndicate last week purchased 1200 head of cattle from stockmen in Walla Walla at \$24 a head. They are negotiating for another purchase of \$80,000 worth. The cattle are to be taken into the British possessions, north of Montana, for grazing.

The conductors and drivers of nearly every street car line in Cincinnati have given the company until this week to answer a demand for twelve hours at \$2, to be paid daily.

Helena's Opium joints.

The majority of the citizens of Helena are not aware of the extent to which the degrading and debasing habit of opium smoking is carried on in their midst, so says the Independent. Not alone among the Chinese, but among the white, men, women and girls of tender age are being gradually drawn into the vicious circle, the fumes of the pipe encircling its victims in a deadly coil from which extrication is almost impossible. About a week ago three girls of respectable parentage were seen to enter, either in a fit of curiosity or otherwise, an opium joint on the southwest corner of West Main and Outlaw streets. They stayed in this den about an hour, and out of regard for their parents the police, who saw them enter and emerge, refrained from arresting them and from divulging their names.

There are in Chinatown about six "joints" or opium dens that have more or less patronage among the whites. Some members of the demi monde are regular customers, although their female clientele does not end there. The male patrons are more numerous, however, and chiefly recruited from among the professional gamblers.

Ah Sam, on Water street, has six bunks and at almost any hour of the day one or more are occupied by some opium fiend, either "hitting the pipe" or in the various attendant stages of intoxication. A house on the north side of Water streets contains fourteen bunks and is much patronized by the citizens of Wood and Bridge streets, a bank entrance from East Bridge affording a shady means of approach. Opium smokers are invariably ashamed of the habit, and when the case becomes chronic not only know and feel the depths of their degradation, but are peculiarly sensitive to it. A visit to the house mentioned at an early morning hour in company with a police officer, found six bunks occupied. Two white women were lying in separate bunks in a deathly, lethargic sleep, while one white man looked up at us with a silly giggle, evidently not comprehending anything or recognizing us, and sank back again on the bunk. A Chinaman with shrunk, pallid face, and skin drawn tight over the high cheek bones and receding forehead, was twirling the thick liquid around the end of a long needle and filling the pipe. Holding it over the lamp he ignited the bubbling and frothing drug, and with an air of supreme satisfaction inhaled the powerful fumes. The silence of death reigned supreme, not a word was said on either hand, and amid this horrible stench the lost and enslaved whites herded with the filthy Mongolians, unconscious even of their own degradation. Vice is usually made attractive, but there was nothing attractive here. Banks made of rough, unplanned boards, dirty sheets and dirtier pillows, a room about 10x10, with no ventilation, and the filthiest imaginable surroundings. What a fascination there must be in the pipe.

Ah Hung, or some such name, owns the shacks 1, 2, 3 and 4 on Outlaw street. In the first of these, after considerable delay, we obtained admittance. A white man of fine appearance had jumped from a bunk and was ready to leave when disturbed. He expressed himself as wishing to rid himself of the habit and "wished to God" he had never hit the pipe. He said he was "tapering off day by day." Yes, tapering off to the grave. There is a "joint" freshly patronized by a Wood street siren a little above Quang Hing & Co's. store on West Main and, one a door or so away from Tong High & On Kee's place.

The pipe stems are made of bamboo. About four inches from the end, the pipe is attached to the stem. The smoker, with a dexterous twist, takes on the end of a needle enough of the black extract to form the size of a pea and puts it into the pipe. The pipes are usually made of brass. He holds this over a small lamp and in a short time ignites, draws and exhales it in a few long inhalations. The effect on a beginner is to make him feel light headed and airy. He rapidly loses comprehension and finally falls into a heavy sleep.

The curse of opium smoking is a deadly one, and we trust the Territorial law-makers will legislate for its suppression. Like an octopus, it is extending its deadly creepers among our own people, and unless the tide is stemmed will cost the community dearly. The city council have recently passed an ordinance prohibiting the usage by Chinese women of houses situated on West Main, in Chinatown. To evade this ordinance, one Chinese shack on a corner has

nailed and boarded up the doors and windows fronting on Main street, and made a side entrance on the side facing on an alley leading to Clore.

The Bear's Paw Mines.

All of the old miners, especially those who took part in the Bear's Paw stampede of 1878, are still firm in the belief that gold and silver quartz exist there in large quantities, and when they can return without fear of molestation work will be resumed. The history of that stampede is familiar to all of our readers. Miners came back from the Black Hills; old prospectors who had abandoned the profession for years were lured to the Bear's Paw by the cheering reports which were almost daily received, but the collapse came when the military authorities interfered, and the miners were forced to discontinue their work. A few, more daring, quietly returned and commenced operations, to make a practical test of the richness of the ore. Dennis Halpin and Pat D. In line worked there all winter; they were supplied with tools, forge, etc., plenty of food, and were determined to ascertain for a certainty what there was, and during the winter they ran a tunnel in ninety-two feet. But further operations were stopped by some one stealing all of their food while they were at work. The following day all of their valuable tools were stolen. They then abandoned the work and returned to Benton to obtain more supplies. During their absence the tunnel was jumped by a Bentonite, and again jumped by another man from Milk river. Dennis has always believed that in a short time they would have reached valuable ore, other parties had rich claims there and when the time is ripe many of them will return. Rich ore has been found at the head of Gravelly conlee, and good placer prospects can be found on nearly all of the streams. Some of the ore which has been assayed runs up into the hundreds. The opening of the reservation will give an impetus to mining in the Bear's Paw, and notwithstanding their remoteness from the main range, men whose judgment in such matters is excellent declare that they will be found of exceeding richness, and will prove that Choteau county is not a non-mineral producing section.—Press.

A Deserted Montana Town.

B. C. W. Evans, writing from Bear Mouth to the Northwest Magazine, says: The other day I got a cayuse of a miner farmer near the station here, forded the Deer Lodge river and headed up Bear gulch for Bear Town. At the apex of the delta-like mouth of the gulch I passed through what was left of the old town of Bear Mouth. It has dwindled down to a number of frame log buildings, on each side of what once was the main street, and numerous tumble-down log cabins and shanties in the suburbs as it were. It looked deserted and gloomy—not a sign of life to be seen or heard. The quiet strangeness of a vacated mining camp is a peculiarity comparable to nothing else. Less than two decades ago Bear Mouth was all bustle and life. In some of the old log buildings where business was carried on, over \$100,000 were cleared in business, within the short time the town existed.

A Large Lease.

Stockgrower's Journal: Maj. T. H. Logan, of the Home & Cattle Company, has just returned from Ottawa, Canada, where he has consummated a lease of two million acres of Her Majesty's real estate, lying something like 200 miles north of the company's range in Montana. The lease is for a term of twenty-one years and was made at the average price of three-fourths of a cent per acre, and by its terms the occupants of the land are released from all taxation during the entire term.

A Celestial Visitor.

A comet of unusual brilliancy is now journeying towards the earth at the speed of 50,000 miles in a second. The celestial wanderer will be visible the first of April, and about the middle of May will be only 12,000,000 distant, which is the nearest the flaming visitor will approach to this planet in its journey around the sun. The Milwaukee & St. Paul has arranged to build a branch from Scotland northwest through Hutchinson and Douglas counties, touching the southwest corner of Aurora county, and thence northwest through Brule county to some point between Chamberlain and Kimball, on the main line.

MEIANGE.

Senator Van Wyck, of Nebraska, has introduced the following bill to fill a long felt want in the territories, and especially in Montana: No lands granted to any railroad shall be exempt from local taxation by states, territories or other municipalities, on account of the lien of the United States for the cost of surveying and conveying the same, or because no patents shall be issued. Any such lands sold for taxes shall be taken by the purchaser, subject to the lien for such costs to be paid as the secretary of the interior may provide, the act only to apply to lands opposite to and co-terminous to completed portions of roads and in organized counties. If any railroad corporation required by law to pay the costs of surveying lands granted by congress shall for thirty days neglect or refuse to pay any such costs, after demand by the secretary of the interior, the attorney general shall at once commence proceedings to collect the same.

The Bay State Cattle company, of Nebraska, recently bought of the Union Pacific Railroad company 350,000 acres of land lying between North Platte and Ogallala.

There are few apparently respectable men who are either actively engaged in the anti-Chinese demonstrations, or lending the law-breakers moral support in the form of approval of their acts whenever they fall short of actual riot. There are not many of those, and when their cases are considered critically it is found they are but a squad of axe-grinders, who think they are doing good political work by making themselves "solid with the boys." In this they are grievously in error, and were that all, no one would take the trouble to allude to them; but, unfortunately, their connection with the agitation misleads those not familiar with the status of the movement, to believe that responsible citizens are engaged in this lawless crusade. Such is far from being the case, and our Eastern friends are assured that the business men, property holders, industrious and reliable working men and respectable citizens generally are almost unanimously opposed to every form of violence, intimidation or unjust treatment of the Chinese or any other foreign element in our midst.—West Shore.

A state and anti-Chinese convention at Sacramento, Cal., recently adopted a long memorial to congress. Resolutions were offered opposing violence, but advocating an uncompromising boycott, and requested the appointment of a committee to solicit subscriptions to hire ships to depart Chinese.

First Sheep Shipment.

Two thousand sheep arrived in St. Paul last evening from Montana, en route to Chicago, the first shipment this season. They came in double deck cars over the Northern Pacific, but will likely be sent from here in single deckers, the lines in the Northwestern Traffic association refusing to carry sheep in double deck cars. It is thought after April 1st these lines will either ship sheep in double deck cars or allow a discount of about 25 per cent. from cattle rates. Unless they do this the Montana sheep industry, to a large extent, will be ruined. The same charge for a car of sheep from St. Paul to Chicago has been made as on a car of cattle. The latter weigh double the amount of the former and bring double the amount of money when marketed, and the railroads will probably make a reduction in their tariff on sheep.—St. Paul Globe.

The Sandal Wood of Japan.

Passing by a shop you see cords of wood cut into small blocks about six inches long. This you learn is nothing short of shoe timber. These cords of wood will specially be converted into shoes of various sizes, at prices ranging all the way from four to twenty cents. The wood is called kiri, and is very light. The logs are still further lightened by hollowing out the center. So, in point of fact, there is little truth in calling the shoes heavy, although they appear so to the inexperienced observer. It must be admitted, though, that they are unreasonably clumsy. Sometimes the shoes worn by the ladies are lacquered, and are fastened by a velvet band passing from either side over the lower part of the instep, and between the first and second toes. With this same kind of wood are made bureaus, and the whole box is made adjustable in horizontal sections. Owing to the lightness of the wood these boxes may be filled with clothing, and carried off on the shoulders of the coolie in ease.