

THE SAND HILLS OF THE OREGON DESERT.

A JOURNEY OF TWO DAYS.
BY CAPT. A. C. APPLIGATE.

One morning, bright and early, we left Silver Lake, in Lake county, for the Sand Hills, on the sage plains, about thirty miles distant, in an easterly direction. We were on a general campaign on the Oregon Sahara, and were provided with a complete outfit of camp equipment, borne on mules and hardy Cayuses, while we, buskined and spurred like knights of the olden time, bestrode some of the toughest steeds in Lake-land, and as we were all mountain men—five in number—and considered good, we anticipated a pleasant and successful tour through this very interesting region. Our line of march was for some distance on the Ochoco road, across a sage plain bounded on the north and south by low ranges of juniper hills, presenting too much sameness in its outlines and vegetation to be of much interest.

To the left of our course was a peculiar looking conical mountain, rising to an altitude of perhaps 2,000 feet above the surrounding plain, surmounted by a basaltic block perhaps 200 feet high and a half mile in circuit. This prominent land-mark, called by the settlers on Silver Lake, Table Mountain, could be seen by us afterwards from mountain summits fifty or sixty miles to the eastward.

The sage plain which we were crossing, is a favorite wintering place for the thousands of cattle now in that section, the sage brush, which grows several feet high, providing them with protection against the chilling winds which sweep over these plains in winter, and the scattering bunch-grass and more abundant sweet sage, a little deep green shrub about a foot high, furnishing ample food for them when the snow is not too deep. This does not often occur, for there is comparatively little snow-fall in the land of sage and sand, and there is no danger to stock, except in the most severe winters.

After following the Ochoco road some fourteen or fifteen miles, we came to the base of the Juniper hills, at the northern boundary of the plain, where we took the road leading southeast to Mr. Button's ranch, some three or four miles distant, on an alkali lake. At the lake we found Mr. Button, an experienced mountaineer and hunter, residing in his little cabin with a single *vaguer* as his companion, and gradually growing into a fortune by raising fine horses. Here we spent the night, encamped amid the white alkaline effluence near the lake shore, lulled to rest by the rippling of waves among the swaying tules. Here were a thousand water-fowls, principally of the duck family. There were the little top-knotted fellows so quail-like in their appearance, the fine old mallards floating around fearlessly within a few yards of us, and some other varieties which neither of us remembered seeing before in all our wanderings. Among the sedges and tall grasses, near the lake shore, were numerous nests, from which our hunter gathered a bountiful supply of eggs for our breakfast.

The next morning we went on our way across the sage plains eastward, towards the Sand Hills, now only ten or twelve miles distant, Mr. Button accompanying us as guide. In that vicinity was the much-spooken of "Tomb of the Giants," or "Boneyard," where the petrified remains of pre-historic animals are found in large numbers, and with the help of Mr. Button we hoped to find this interesting place. On nearing the sand hills, we were surprised to

see what appeared to be smooth-mown meadows, covered all over with new hay, raked and ready for hauling. On nearer approach we found, that all over the smooth hills of greenish-white sand, were little conical mounds, densely covered with green-foliaged shrubs three or four feet high. Perhaps at one time there was but a single shrub where now each little hillock stands, penetrating the sands to a great depth with its long fibrous roots. The sands, always drifting, gradually blew away from the tenacious shrub which resisted, with its long arms deep into the sand, until it was left alone with its sand heap. This it gradually made green and beautiful by sending out leafy branches from the roots all over the surface of the mound. Some of these mounds were only four or five feet high, while others were not less than fifteen or twenty, and they were all so densely overgrown with the foliage that they presented a remarkable contrast to the smooth, sandy field around them. Those who traverse these plains a few centuries hence, will perhaps find that the smooth sand-fields are no more, but instead, rolling hills covered with bunch-grass, and the various shrubs, which grow so thrifflily on the so-called Oregon Desert.

Going still farther on, we found a considerable area covered with rank looking grass, which was arranged in rows, as if drilled by hand. This was curious, and led us to investigate another device of nature to hold fast the drifting sands and gradually cover them with vegetation. We found that each row of grass grew on a long root, a little less than a hay cord, running in a direct course near the surface of the ground, and sometimes of great length. On these long roots the blades of grass grew, only a few inches apart, forming well defined rows.

Crossing over a ridge, we came down into a little valley perhaps a mile in length, and not more than a fourth wide. In this were two small alkali lakes or ponds, two or three hundred yards apart, filled with little brown water-fowls with curious tufts on their heads, and stilted, long-billed snipes. These birds were apparently unacquainted with our species, for we rode up within a few feet of them, and they only seemed annoyed when we came too close to the nests which were numerous amid the grasses on the beach.

A large area near the lakes was frosted with little shells, and we found some petrified bones—only broken fragments—along our route, as we crossed the little valley to the sand hills beyond. Passing over this last range of low sand hills, we came into a valley where the low ridges and mounds were densely covered with grass and shrubs. Beyond this valley was a long, volcanic ridge, covered with sage and scattering junipers, and with a single grove of pines on the west side—the only pine trees, I believe, in this part of the Oregon Desert. In the valley we found a spring of tolerably good water, bubbling up out of the sand and forming a pretty little meadow. Here we encamped, and sat around our sage-brush fire until long into the night, talking over the adventures of the old pioneers who sometimes, away back "in the days that tried men's souls," missed their way and wandered for days and even weeks, foot-sore and half-famished, through these cheerless wastes, until the old Cascades were reached at last, and they threaded their way through the mighty forests to the land of promise beyond. Our own adventures with wild beasts and wilder men, on the frontiers, came in for their share of the conversation, and in this part of the programme, we found our friend of a

day, Mr. Button, one whose thrilling life experiences had made him a peculiarly interesting story-teller.

The next morning we rode back to the two little lakes and spent several hours among the remains of the ancient animals, which were much more numerous than we were led to think by our casual investigations of the day before. Among the sage brush, half covered by the sand, we found what were apparently the bones of horses, petrified, and seemingly nearly twice as long as the corresponding bones of the horses we rode. There were other bones more massive, probably of the mastodon and other giant mammals of the olden time. On the north shore of one of the ponds was a black mass of volcanic scoria, forming quite an extended field, sloping down from the sand-hills to the shore of the pond. Distributed all over this were broken pieces of petrified bone, which at some former time, when the lake was many miles in extent, perhaps, were probably carried up here by the waves. I also found in this lava bed a finely formed stone pestle and several shallow mortars, indicating that the Arabs of the Oregon Desert used to do their milling here, perhaps before the advent of the grasping pale-face.

But it was reserved for me to accomplish the great achievement of the day. Crossing over a low range of sand-hills to the southward, my horse sinking down into the loose sand half way to the breast at every step, I found partially imbedded in the sand a shoulder-blade thirty-five inches in length, weighing, although the thinner portions were broken off, not less than forty or fifty pounds. Going back to the top of the nearest mound, I waved my hat and called to my comrades, who assembled, wonder-stricken, around this remnant of an old-time giant. Here Mr. Button, placing the bone carefully on the saddle before him, bade us good-bye and left us for his lovely ranch, while we rode on back to the little spring among the sand-hills, the next morning to continue our way eastward, through a trackless region, towards the Wagon-tire Mountains.

ASHLAND, July 13, 1877.

THE EDEN OF OREGON.

During a visit to Southern Oregon on the 15th of July, we observed in the gardens of Messrs. O. Coolidge, at Ashland, and Peter Britt, at Jacksonville, some magnificent fig-trees. They were in full bearing, and the fruit was just turning ripe, whilst the second crop was commencing to form. A very excellent article of grapes also grows in this county, and at Mr. Britt's place we tasted a one-year old claret of his own growth and manufacture; and we very much doubt if it can be surpassed in the much boasted of California vineyards. Gold is found in Jackson county, and thousands of dollars have been taken out, as is proved by the washed out hill-sides as seen from the road leading from Roseburg to Jacksonville, whilst millions still lie buried awaiting the advent of capital. All the grains and fruits known to the tropics grow here to perfection. Extend the Oregon & California railroad to Jackson county, and she is capable of supporting the entire present population of Oregon.

GRAY'S Music Store is the most complete on the Pacific Coast. The latest publications, as well as all kinds of Musical Merchandise, can always be found in their salesrooms in Odd Fellow's Temple. Here is also the agency for the world renowned Bardett Organ, as well as the ever favorite Steinway Piano. A visit to Portland is not complete without having called at Gray's.

CLARENCE B. BAGLEY, Esq., editor and publisher of the *Olympia Courier*, honored the city of Portland with his presence a few days ago. Mr. Bagley is an intelligent and sociable gentleman, a good writer, and publishes one of the best papers in the territory.

"How's your father?" came the whisper,
"Baahful Ned the silence breaking;
"O, he's nicely," Annie murmured,
Smilingly the question taking.
Conversation flagged a moment;
"Hopeless Ned essayed another;
"Annie, I—!"—then a coughing;
"And the question—'How's your mother?'"
"Mother! O, she's doing finely!"
"Fleeting fast was all forbornee,
When in low, despairing accents
Came the climax, "How's your parents?"

THE WEST SHORE, Portland, Oregon, is one of the very best literary papers in America. Its columns abound with rich reading, the cream of family literature.—*Central City (Neb.) Courier*.

MESSRS. JACOBS BROS. & Co., of this city, are manufacturing extensively clothing of a very superior article, of Oregon City Mills cloths. Our readers should always ask their merchants for clothing made from Oregon City cloth, for not only will they then receive a most excellent article, but also help to build up our State by patronizing this home industry, which gives employment to many skilled laborers.

A SKILLFUL MECHANIC.—Some time ago we made mention of a magnificent monument in course of erection by Wm. Staiger, the Salem Stone Cutter, over the grave of ex-Mayor Monroe, at Odd Fellows' Rural Cemetery, near Salem. By our Salem exchanges we see that the monument is now completed, and all of the papers there are loud in their praises over the taste and skill displayed by Mr. Staiger in this work of art. The *Willamette Farmer*, in speaking of it, says: "It is one of the latest and most striking monuments, a really beautiful memorial of affection and remembrance, which would well grace Laurel Hill or Greenwood." Any of our readers desiring to erect a memorial to some departed friend, would do well to call on Mr. Staiger, as his taste and skill are unsurpassed in this State.

GEO. W. TRAYER, the enterprising agent for the Home Sewing Machine, has now arriving and on the way, a large shipment of these favorite machines. Our readers will do well to consult our advertising columns, and note the immense reductions made by Mr. Trayer. No excuse now for going without a sewing machine.

HIRSTEL & Co., of No. 77 Front street, receive by every steamer large shipments of the very latest publications, as well as all the novelties in the Stationery line. A person might call there almost daily, and always find something new. Their arrangements with Eastern publishers and manufacturers are complete, and merchants from the interior will find it to their advantage to give them a call or send them an order.

The old established house of Meier & Frank, occupying the extensive warehouse cor. of Front and Yamhill, do a very large business. Their stores are always crowded, as their patrons find it advantageous to deal with them. They are reliable and worthy of patronage, and their stock of General Merchandise is very large.

At the Pacific Boot and Shoe Store of Champlin & Hollabaugh, No. 77 First street, can always be found a complete assortment of fine and heavy Boots and Shoes for ladies', men's and children's wear, at prices to suit all classes. They have none but the very best goods in stock, and purchasers will find it to their interest to give them a call.