

AHEAD O' TIME.

IN a far, western, Pacific-washed state, lies the low, fertile Grande Ronde valley. Around it, jealously

guarding it from the outside, busy world, circle the picturesque Blue mountains, whose sides are so softly dimpled by nature's tender touch, and over which lingers ever a soft, purplish haze.

Once, in years long dead, this was the Indians' summer home. Here, in the clear streams that, leaping down through the narrow canyons, from the mountain fastnesses, wind and glide away through the valley, they caught the speckled salmon-trout. In the deep, rank rye grass, growing there, waist-high, they chased to death the deer and antelope; and in the long, fragrant, summer evenings, the blue smoke from a hundred camp fires curled upward to the blue vault above.

One by one, the crickets sent out their shrill chirrup, and the frogs began their noisy croaking. The last red gleam died out of the western sky; the howls of a hungry wolf came down from some mountain recess; a night-hawk darted downward with its lonely, plaintive cry; and night closed over the "Happy valley."

Now, as then, the speckled trout leap and flash through the clear streams that glide away through the valley. But fields of waving grain have taken the place of the deep, rank grass, and towns are built where once the Indian wigwams stood. And over the mountains, and down through the canyons, and away over the fertile fields, like a shining serpent, climbs and falls, and winds the railroad. With it, came the stir and

business and discontent of the outer world, and vanished the idle, dreamy, happy days of the past.

In one short year everything was changed. In the shadow of the Blue mountains, just where the railroad entered the valley from the west, a new town sprang into life; a fast, noisy, jolly town, made up, chiefly, of railroad people—gay, good-hearted men, who worked hard all day, and treated their friends royally at night; men who had but one religion—their engines and their wives—and who would have shot a man dead for doubting the worth of the one, or the truth of the other. And merry, laughing women, who found life all sunshine, until, sometimes, a husband or lover was brought home dead, or crippled for life. Yet, even then, they found such tender sympathy, and so many strong arms ready to help, that they were still forced to see a little silver lining in their storm-clouds.

In a little hastily built, double-sided house two engineers lived all alone. One "run" to the West, the other to the East. When engineer Leavett came in late at night after a "hard run," he found a good, warm supper, prepared by engineer Haslyn, awaiting him. On the following evening he was the host, and his friend the guest; and many were the fancy dishes each tried to prepare for the surprise and pleasure of the other.

They had been firm friends for years. Leavett, although the elder, had "fired" for Haslyn, and had received many favors at his hands, so he said, in years gone by. They had been in wrecks and snow blockades together, and once Has-