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The Herald

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RICHARD R. SWENSON
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Monmouth Meditations

Traveling the Heights

There is very little in this world worth having that is attained without difficulty and we were early advised that the way to the Yosemite was long and rugged. A melancholy gentleman met in a Northern California camp, had just come from there and was sure that only one description would fit the mountain roads leading to the valley and that was terrible. Did he not know? He did to his sorrow. He had just come from there and a broken spring in his Ford was the price he had paid for a rather dubious pleasure. We were not so heavily loaded as he was. That was in our favor. But those roads. He shook his head and relapsed into a foreboding silence.

Again in a Stockton vulcanizing shop another type of traveler was met who had made the acquaintance of Sierra roads and lived to regret it. He had driven a large touring car over soft dirt roads up impossible grades and was certain and positive that it was not worth while. There was nothing in the valley to repay one for the strain

and trouble of reaching it. He knew for he had been there. How about the big trees, were they as hard to get at? Worse, if anything, he asserted.

In a garage in Yosemite village, a gentleman who had driven in one route and who had then the job of getting out again, ventured to ask a repair man if there was any better road out than the one he had taken coming in. The repair man grunted as he tugged at a refractory nut with a heavy wrench. "Well", he said, "Which ever road you take you will wish you had taken the other" His words had especial significance for he had a good object lesson a few feet away. A large Studebaker with its front held up by a travelling crane awaited attention. One support of its fender had been broken in two. Mud guard and foot board were torn from their fastenings and elevated at an abrupt angle. One front wheel also paid tribute to the force of the impact the car had sustained when it ran into a tree. Nevertheless it is amazing that mountain roads are as good as they are. Time was when it took a sure footed burro to travel them and now we roll over them with a panting gasoline Dan Patch ahead of us and are vexed because we cannot travel fortyfive miles an hour. Apparently the danger of mountain traveling is not so much the grade or the soft dirt but the fellow traveller who is in more of a hurry than safety warrants. The sort of thing that makes wrecks out of nervous people is the knowledge that on the continuous curves, despite the numerous warning signs that caution the traveller to take a sober pace, you will come without warning on some one headed in the opposite direction, taking the middle of the road and speeding like an arrow at a target.

We got our start in mountain climbing by degrees. The mountains south of Roseburg prepared us for the Siskiyou where we reached an elevation of 4522 feet. The climb started shortly after we left Ashland and was so gradual that the Ford climbed it almost entirely on high. The green timber and easy going with the ever changing scenery all made for a pleasant morning. At the top we saw that automobiles were not the only sort of vehicles that can climb mountains for the trains of the Southern Pacific were there also passing to and from California and Oregon.

We had not reached the bottom on the California side when the Oregon paving ended. The wooded slopes of Oregon ended at about the same time, and we got a taste of those sun scorched areas that are so plentiful in Northern California. We passed the California line on a down grade, speeding merrily along and did not get time to see a rather important sign erected there warning motorists that they must register and procure a California permit. Not seeing it, we failed to register and get the permit until our attention was officially called to the fact some days later, which is another story. Our observation leads to the belief that just about one automobilist in fifty who enters California, complies with the law and gets the permit. Again in the camp at Sisson, which is almost in the shadow of Mount Shasta, we were warned of

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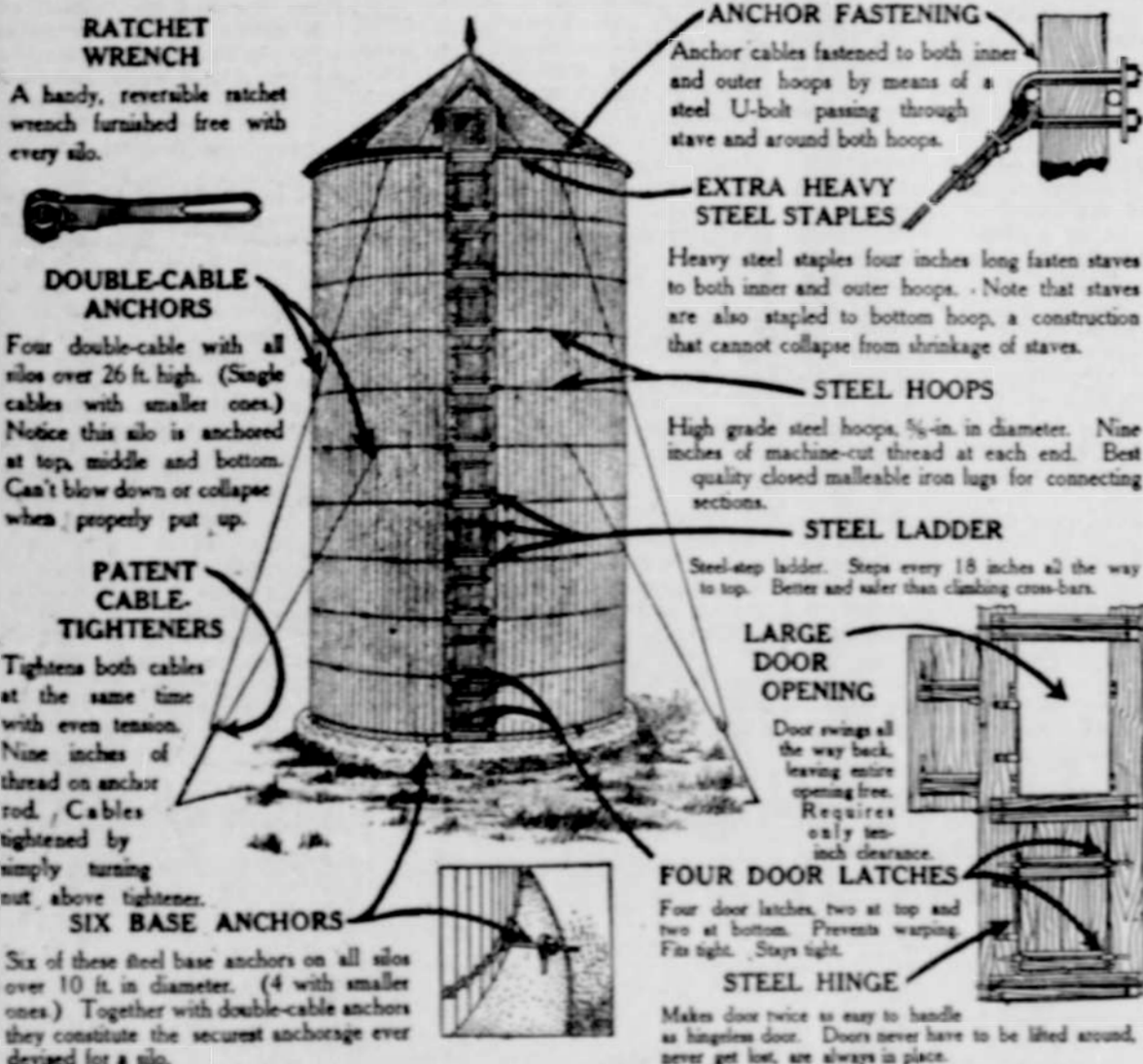
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