

SOME OF NATURE'S STRANGE FREAKS.

"Rim Rocks," Moving Lake And Dead Sea in Oregon.

Few people realize the beauty and grandeur of the rim-rocks of eastern Oregon, and Lake county has her share of these. In fact, many people do not know what they look like, and some do not even know what the word means. A correspondent to a leading paper of the state was horrified to see the name of these rocks, where he had referred to them, changed to "round-rocks" by the managing editor.

Throughout eastern Oregon, and especially what is known as the "desert" country, these rim-rocks are prominent features. The country is a succession of level plains, varying in width and length from a few miles to more than a hundred. These plains are often spoken of as plateaus, from their high elevation above sea level; in fact they are nothing more nor less than a succession of basins, in many cases resembling crater beds, for they lie among the mountain tops, only lower than the snow-capped peaks that have to be ascended from almost every point to reach them, and the tall rim-rocks that tower immediately above them. These plateaus or basins are separated by the rim-rocks and along one side or the other of the large lakes tower from a few feet to hundreds of feet in the air. The walls of these rocks are perfectly perpendicular, often possessing the appearance of having been constructed by skilled human hands. Layer upon layer of smooth rocks lie upon one another with the joints broken as carefully as modern masonry work, with pillars now and then many feet tall to support them on broader tables of rocks. These pillars, however, are close together, and although possessing various sides, from a triangle to an octagon, they fit perfectly together. At the top of these walls broad, level rocks lie, jutting out to several feet above the sides of the wall like the leaf of a table or the rim of a hat. It is impossible to descend from the top of this rim down the wall or to ascend from below to the top of the rim-rock, except where the wall is broken by crevasses or gulches or canyons. Many of the small plains thus surrounded have been the scene of wholesale slaughter in the past. Indians used to find deer and antelope browsing in these basins, and placing a guard at the only entrance or entrances, go among the animals and slaughter the entire band. The deadly way in which they used to fire upon immigrant trains from these rim-rocks is part of the history of the country.

A two days drive from Silver lake, the entrance way to the main "desert," brings one to the greatest wonder on the Pacific coast, possibly the greatest in the United States. Here is a rich fossil field covering hundreds of acres, in the midst of which is the wonderful "moving" lake. One does not see it move in fact, but the evidence is there to show that it moves, and there are men living in Lake county who can verify the fact that it is constantly on the move. Not only the water moves, but the lake changes its bed from time to time, and in the course of a few decades traverses considerable territory.

In this region there is a continuous exposure of sand beds. The sand is of the finest grain and is of unknown depth. It is always dry, as it seems to never rain to amount to anything at this

point, and what little rainfall there is in this section does not even dampen the dry sands, much less moisten the earth. At this point the wind blows a gale most of the time, and carries with it clouds of the sand. In a few days time the wind shifts the sand until a point that was high last week is a deep hole or pit this week. Then the wind changes and blows from another direction for a few days, and thus shifts the surface of the earth at this point again. The lake, which lies in these sand beds, is necessarily compelled to change its bed continually. As a wind sweeps out a hole on the north side the water must follow; then it changes to the east, then south and then to the west, so that one can see where it has traveled about the desert for years, never getting far from home, it is true, but still it travels considerable distances for a lake. It is a mystery to all who visit this section why the lake never dries up in such a place. There seems to be no springs and there is no stream to feed it, and the rainfall is light, and being constantly on the move, one would think it would be absorbed by the dry sands, but, within the knowledge of the first settlers of the country, this lake has never been dry and has neither grown larger nor smaller.

But the greatest object of interest to the scientist in this section is the fossil beds.

The entire sand-covered section is a fossil field. Animals for ages have come to this lake for water, and as the aged and sick ones have died, they have been covered by the dry sands and their bodies preserved in such a state so long that they have become completely fossilized. And as they have followed the lake in its travels, the consequence is that the field is a large one. The inexperienced who have picked up the petrified bones of these animals, find many, the species of which is unknown to them, and it is said that species have been found here that puzzle and interest the few scientists who have seen them. They have been hauled away by the occasional visitors, and adorn many of the yards of distant ranchers, but the field is still full of them, and the scientist may find work here for years to come.

Abert lake, commonly called the "Modern Dead sea," is better known. It is 20 miles long, with an average width of from 1 to 10 miles, and has a depth of from 1 foot to 18 feet. It lies in the desert proper, with tall rim-rocks towering abruptly above its eastern shore, while its western shore is at the foot of a long range of rock and sagebrush-covered hills. Its walls are so impregnated with alkali and other minerals that nothing can live in it. It is fed by a small stream, called the Chewaucan river and a few other smaller streams, and has no outlet. Its waters stand and evaporate until it becomes thick and takes on a dark color, and is death to every living thing. Chewaucan river, its principal feeder, is filled with fish. At the mouth of this stream there is a fall where the waters enter the lake. The unwary fish that have ventured or fallen over this fall are there in evidence to show that nothing can live in Abert lake. The shores of the lake at this point are composed of dead fish and fish bones. Tons of these bones could be gathered up, and at certain seasons of the year the shores are lined with fish in all stages of decomposition. When the fish first strikes the water of the lake it makes for the shore and tries to flounder out, and if it fails, hugs the shore as closely as possible, with its head out of water, until it dies. The geese and ducks, and other water fowl that abound in this section, do not even light upon the lake, except at the mouth of fresh-water streams.

There is a mystery also connected with a wagon which lies at the bottom of this lake. At the foot of the rim-rocks, at a point where they are several hundred feet high, this wagon lies in several feet of water. It has been there for many years. It is the belief that the Indians murdered immigrants near this point in early days and threw the wagon from the rim-rocks above to conceal their crime.—Paul De Laney in Portland Telegram.



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