

THE UPPER MISSOURI AND THE GREAT FALLS.



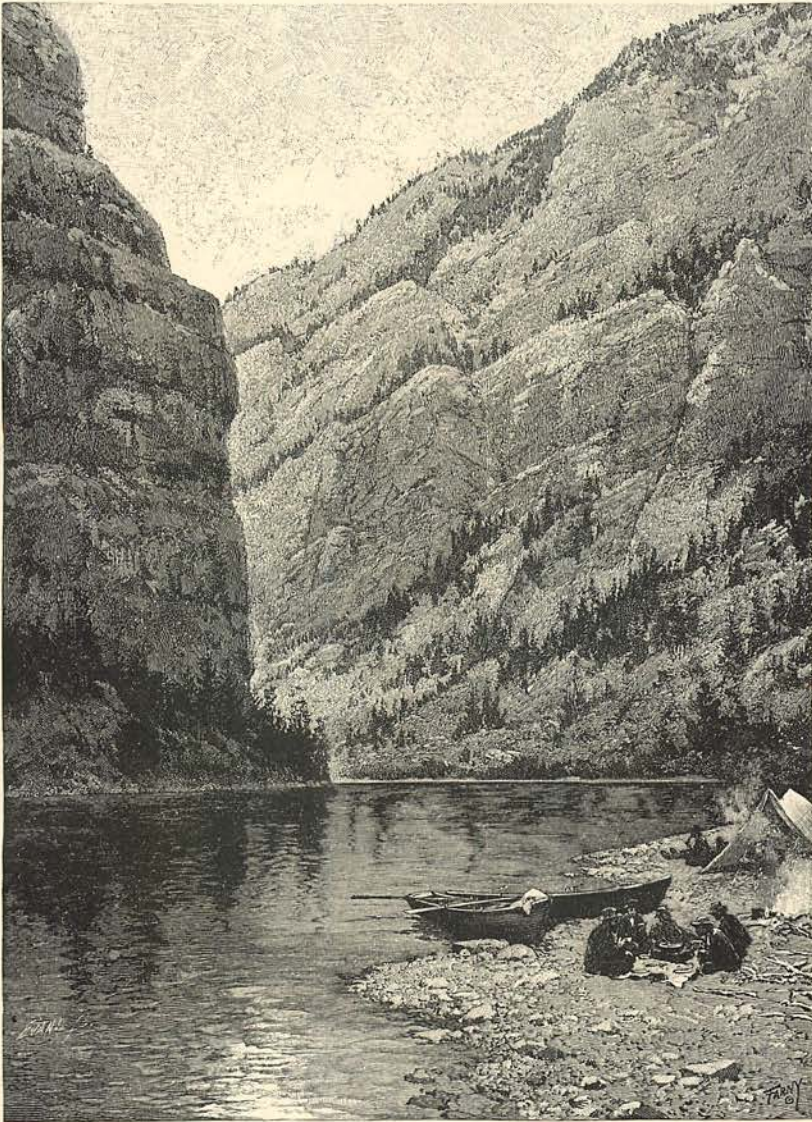
IT was a CENTURY expedition in its plan, and its object was to descend the Missouri River in a skiff from some point near Helena, Montana, to the Great Falls, to make a portage around the falls and follow the river down to Fort Benton, and thence, by some sort of land transportation, to cross the country to the Yellowstone through the cattle and sheep ranges. When it came to start from Helena, however, a number of citizens joined it for the purpose of making the trip to the falls, so that there were two skiff-loads instead of one. The pilot, whose old title of colonel had lately been changed to commodore by the Helena newspapers, by reason of his having seven times braved the perils of the rapids and the passage through the Gate of the Mountains, was a man of resources. He had provided but one boat, and, in the free Western fashion, he laid hands upon a small craft that the governor of the Territory had constructed with the view of making a voyage, put it on wheels, and started it for the river in the wake of the larger skiff. The governor was to have gone with the expedition, but was hindered by some public duties. If he could not go his boat could, the commodore reasoned; and go it did, never to return, for there is no such thing as getting up the river with any sort of craft.

Now, Helena, where the boats were built, is some twelve miles from the Missouri, and the departure of the expedition was not so impressive an affair as its members might have wished. The appearance of the two skiffs on wheels, loaded with provisions and camp equipage, with the company following, some on foot and some in a "jerky," was by no means heroic. Nevertheless, the people of the town, accustomed to seeing all sorts of queer "outfits," witnessed our departure without any vociferous demonstrations of hilarity, restrained, perhaps, by the blue pennant which the commodore had set up on the prow of his flagship.

The day was the 16th of September, and though the high mountains of the main divide of the Rockies were white with new snow, the oats were not yet harvested on the ranches in the Valley of the Prickly Pear, through which we passed, so late is the maturing of grain in the high latitudes and on the high altitudes of Montana. At Stubbs's Ferry we put the boats into the water. Stubbs seemed

to keep a ferry chiefly for getting his hay across to his barns from his fields on the farther side of the river. There was a road that ran up into the foot-hills of the Belt Range, but no one could tell where it went to or why anybody should travel it. Stubbs's Ferry is about a hundred miles below the junction of the three rivers which form the Missouri—the Jefferson, Madison, and Gallatin. For much of that distance a railroad follows the course of the stream and the banks are sparsely inhabited by ranchmen, but below the ferry the river rushes through a series of profound cañons, and until it gets out of the Belt Range and into the great plains of eastern Montana, the country it traverses is singularly savage and desolate.

In the division of the party between our two boats, the artist and the writer took the smaller one, which had been pirated from the governor, and recruited for its crew a wandering Californian and a Helena journalist. The artist took the steering-oar, reassuring his companions as to his ability to run rapids successfully with the information that in his younger days he had navigated lumber-rafts on the Alleghany River; the writer sat in the bow, to give warning of breakers ahead and shove the boat off when she grounded on shoals; the Californian proved almost a Hanlan at the oars, and the Helena journalist was detailed to work the pumps, which consisted of an old tin can and a cup. The remainder of the party, numbering eight, embarked in the long-boat, and as they had with them the cook, the "grub-stake," and the tents, their craft was an object of much interest, about meal-times and at nightfall, to the occupants of the smaller skiff. At other times each of the boats kept its own course, and the skill of the commodore was only required to manage his own craft. By the camp-fire, however, when the day's run was over, the tents were pitched, and the supper was eaten, he came out strong with tales of Indian fights, of Vigilante hangings, and of all manner of wild frontier adventures. He had been through the civil war and numerous Indian campaigns, and carried two bullets in his body. At one time he had held a prominent Federal office in Montana. In later years he has taken a great fancy to the wild rapids and gorges of the Upper Missouri and delights to conduct parties of adventurous travelers through them. The business cannot be profitable, but there is lots of fun in it for the old gentleman; and his bronzed face, sil-



THE CAMP IN WHITE ROCK CAÑON.

very hair and whiskers, and scarlet handkerchief light up the dark cañons of the river two or three times every season.

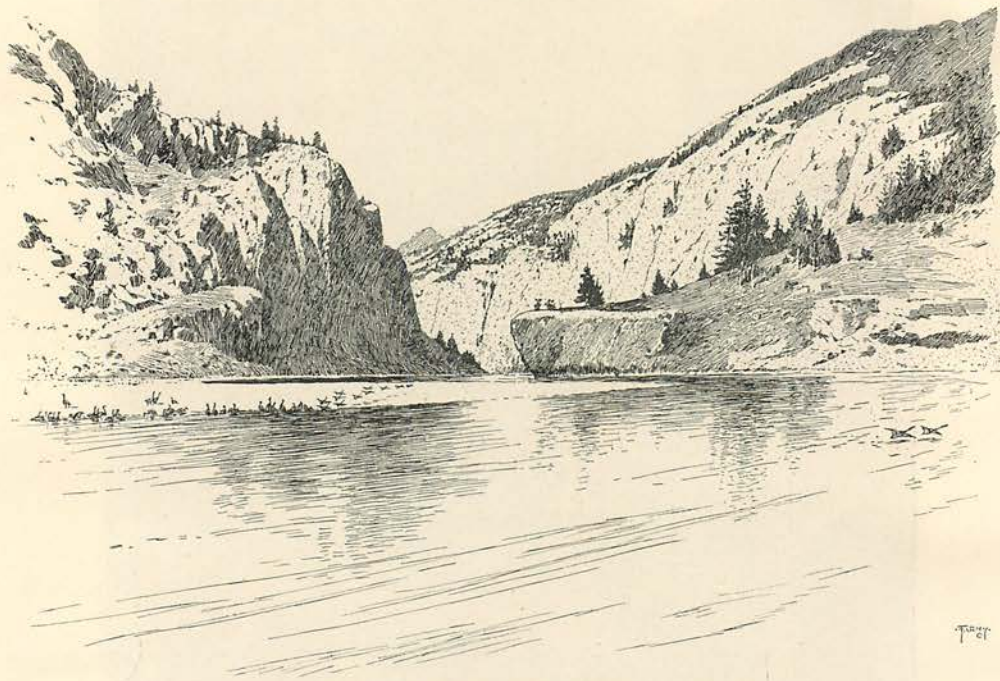
In floating down the stream there was a quiet exhilaration which grew upon the travelers as they became accustomed to the moods and ways of the strong green river, and were convinced that it meant no harm when it whirled them around a rocky promontory or swept them swiftly through a seething rapid; convinced, too, that with stout arms and oars they were the masters in any case, and could keep off from half-hidden rocks and away from dangerous shores. The water was clear and cold, and as good to drink as any spring water.

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Occasionally there was a little stretch of grassy bottom along one or the other bank, fringed with a thicket of wild-rose bushes, the branches all beaded with coral-red berries; but most of the way huge cliffs of reddish rock or steep mountains, thinly clad with pines, rose abruptly from the water's edge. The strata in the cliffs were bent and twisted in curious ways. Occasionally broad green bands ran through the gray or red rocks, indicating the presence of copper. A solitary ranch was passed the first day of the voyage, and for many miles there was a vestige of former human occupancy in the shape of a long-abandoned flume, that once furnished water for placer-mining. It had cost

a hundred thousand dollars, the commodore said, and had never paid back the money. Montana, and all the mining Territories, abound in such monuments of misplaced enterprise. The old adage about mining for the precious metals, that more money is put into the ground than is taken out, would probably not hold good for universal application, but it fits most mining districts. The solitude and silence on the river grew oppressive as twi-

When enlisted for THE CENTURY expedition he was newly out of jail, a fact that did not in the least put him out of countenance. He regarded himself as a victim of Chinese cheap labor. When in Missoula, cooking in a hotel, he could not get on well with the Chinese assistant in the kitchen, and therefore knocked him down. The landlord took the Chinaman's part, which so enraged Nick against the Mongolian element in general, that he



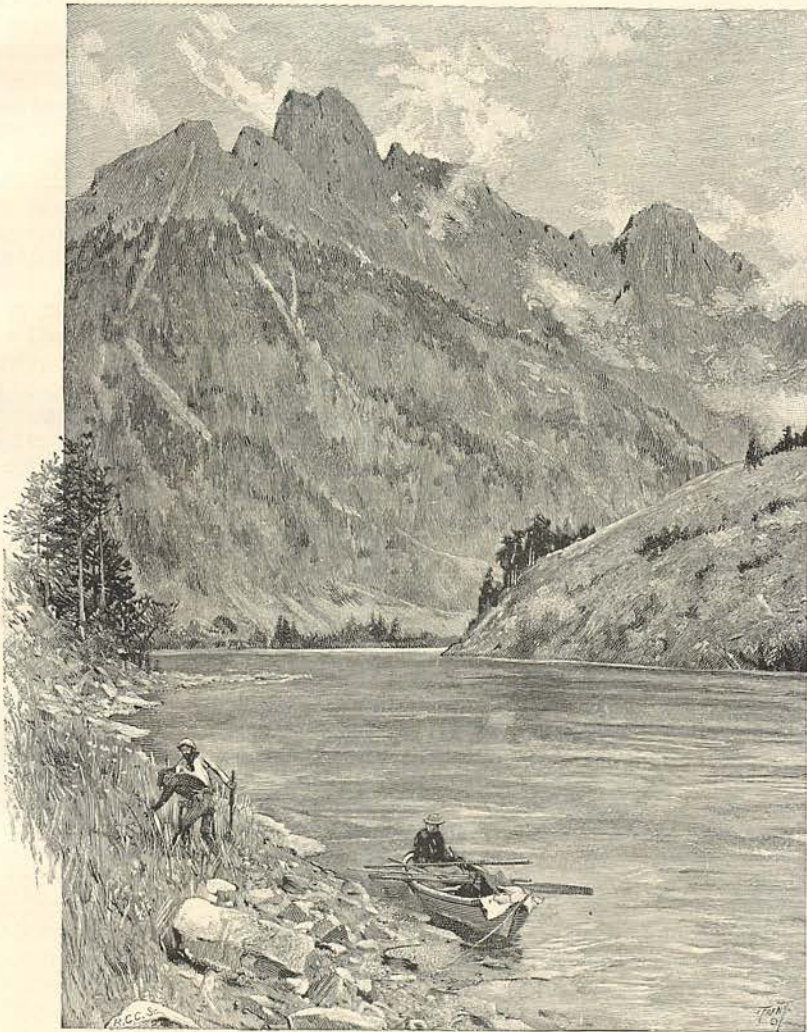
THE GATE OF THE MOUNTAINS.

light began to fall. There was no sound save the rippling and gurgling of the water. The boat slipped along as quietly as the funeral barge in Tennyson's "Lancelot and Elaine." Weird profiles and masks looked down from the rocky walls. The talk and laughter, and the shouting for echoes, that had made the voyage a merry one so long as the sun shone, had ceased, and there came upon the wanderers a sense of loneliness and mystery, as though they had set out to penetrate an unknown wilderness. It was a relief to all to tie up to the bank at dark, to light a camp-fire, pitch the tents, and unload the boats; and the efforts of the party to eat supper on the ground, in darkness made visible by the flickering fire, were amusing enough to restore good humor all around.

Nick, the cook, was a droll frontier character. For twelve years he had cooked for exploring parties, engineers, and railway builders all the way from Minnesota to Oregon.

rushed into the street and proceeded to run amuck against all the Celestials he met. Before the police could secure him, he had prostrated three or four by vigorous kicks and fisticuffs. He was an amiable fellow in the main, however. His coffee was good, but his views on the Chinese question were a little too aggressive.

The second day's run took the boats through the Gate of the Mountains, a narrow cleft in the Belt Range, through which the river runs at moderate velocity after the preliminary rush of a rapid. The precipices are of grayish rock, about fifteen hundred feet high, and the riven mountains are covered with pines. The sheer cliffs and the warped strata show that the passage has not been worn by the action of the water, but was opened by some great convulsion which tore the solid mountains apart. Very grand and impressive is this deep cañon, but with the bright blue sky above and the sunlight on the pea-green river below, it did not



BEAR'S TOOTH MOUNTAIN.

seem gloomy, like the two smaller cañons we had passed the day before. All through Montana people talk of the Gate of the Mountains, but very few have visited it, from the fact that it is inaccessible by road or bridle-path and can be seen only from a boat. The name was bestowed by Lewis and Clarke, the explorers, who passed through it in canoes on the 19th of June, 1805, on their way to the Pacific coast. They also gave it the alternative designation of the Great White Rock Cañon. Two sons of the Chevalier Vendrye, the French explorer, passed through it as early as 1742, and were probably the first white men to gaze upon its frowning precipices.

Tying up the boats that day for the noon lunch of ham and bread, we found upon a

grassy plateau some relics of former occupancy that seemed to indicate that the spot had been the scene of a tragedy. There were two "foundations," a few rods apart. A "foundation" in Montana means four logs laid across each other so as to form a square, and is a legal notification of intent to build a cabin and take up a claim. The two "foundations" so near together were evidences of a dispute about the title to the little strip of meadow land, on which the occupants perhaps expected to find gold. Within one of the log quadrangles we found bloody clothing, sodden and mildewed, a rusty ax, a camp-kettle and a coffee-pot, some blankets, and many other articles. The imaginative members of our party speedily constructed from these materials a story of murder—the victim thrown into

the river, and the guilty man fleeing horror-stricken from the scene of his crime.

Below the mountain gateway a boiling rapid carried us swiftly past one of the great landmarks of northern Montana — the Bear's Tooth Mountain. It rises in a series of cliffs some two thousand feet above the river channel, and on its forest-covered summit stands a huge irregular, turret-like rock with broken crest. This rock, possibly three hundred feet high, gives the mountain its name. It is plainly seen from Helena, which must be at least forty miles away as the crow flies.

Below the Bear's Tooth the character of the shores of the river changes. The great chasms of distorted strata cease, and though there are numerous cliffs and pinnacles, they are of soft brown rock, much worn by the action of wind and rain. Profiles and faces become so numerous that only the most striking are remarked. I remember the Egyptian mummies suspended high above the water; a strongly marked, majestic, and serene face with beard washed by the waves, which I called the River God; and two gigantic statues known as the Old Man and the Old Woman. Of ruined castles, broken towers and battlements, huge archways, and other familiar effects of fantastic rock-work, there were too many specimens to name or notice at length. The mountains gradually broke away into steep hills, between which were grassy valleys running down to the river's brink. This region of singular rock effects extends for about forty miles below the Gate of the Mountains and ends abruptly. Beyond, stretch out the great plains. A huge wall, beginning at the river and running up an acclivity for three or four hundred yards, marks the boundary between the two regions, and is the last outwork of the Rocky Mountain system in this direction.

In the afternoon of the third day of the voyage the crew of the small boat, having gotten some miles in advance of the commissariat in the big skiff, determined to forage on the country for supplies. A pair of horses grazing on the bank indicated that there must be a ranch near at hand. In Montana every human habitation outside of the towns is a ranch. There are hay ranches, grain ranches, milk ranches, horse ranches, cattle ranches, and chicken ranches. The word has traveled all the way from northern Mexico to the British possessions, amplifying its application as it advanced. The ranch which we found, after scrambling through the thicket of rose-bushes and willows that formed a stout natural hedge all along the shore, defied classification under any of the above terms. It displayed a little of everything that could be done in

the way of Montana agriculture. On a broad bench, surrounded by mountains, were small fields of hay and grain, and a big irrigated vegetable garden, where potatoes, corn, beets, turnips, tomatoes, and watermelons were growing. A log cabin with one door and one window, and a log barn flanked by hay and straw stacks, stood far back from the river. A man clad in a brown canvas suit and a wide-brimmed felt hat, which is the universal costume of all who do outdoor work in Montana, was digging potatoes. He leaned on his hoe and very closely scanned the four men approaching him, as if to satisfy himself whether their intentions were hostile or peaceable. When told that we were well-disposed travelers floating down the river, at that moment bent only on getting something to eat, he became quite friendly. "You're welcome to the best I've got," he said. "Pick an armful of roasting-ears, and I'll rustle up a fire." He limped on to the house while we hunted for tender ears on the dry stalks. He proved to be the only occupant of the place, and his cabin of one room was kitchen, dairy, granary, and bedroom combined. Its only decorations were a huge rude painting of a four-horned goat, and a singular robe of some strange fur. He explained the possession of these treasures by saying that some years ago he went to South Africa to dig for gold. The robe he bought from a native chief, and the picture represented a goat he had brought back and exhibited in "the States," with small financial success. He came to Montana from Ohio as a young man in the early days of the gold migration, and after his African adventures he had returned to these wild mountains, concluding that this country suited him as well as any he had seen. "Lonesome? Well, not particularly." He had always "bached it" (lived as a bachelor). Next winter his nephew was coming to live with him. A raft went down the river once a month. Once a year he went to Helena for his supplies. There was no wagon road to his place, and bacon was the only thing he could pack out to sell. He fed his milk and vegetables to his hogs.

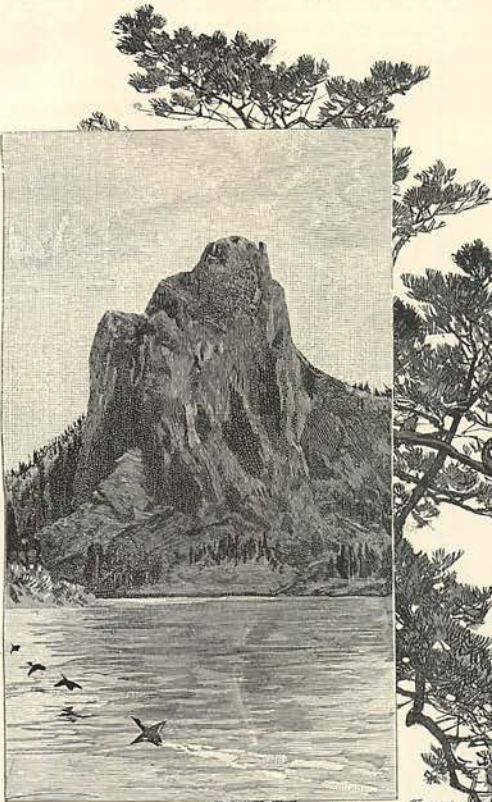
The prospect for a square meal did not look favorable at first view of the cabin, but we underrated our host's resources. He roasted potatoes under the embers in his little box-stove and corn above them, and upon it he fried bacon and made coffee; with plenty of milk and cream, with tomatoes for salad and watermelons for dessert, we made a capital dinner. There was room at the rough board table for only two, so the others took their plates and cups to the wood-pile outdoors. Our host refused to take money, invited us to come again, and following us to our boat, as a last

act of hospitality he gathered for us some choke-cherries in a thicket near the river.

That afternoon we ran the Half Breed Island rapids, the only formidable obstacle to steamboat navigation on the Missouri above the falls. The gunwales of the boats were raised by nailing on boards, canvas was stretched over the bows, and thus protected against shipping water, we pushed into the

and the Great Falls that is accorded a name and the round dot on the map which indicates a town. The name was Ulidia, and the town consisted of a store and post-office, a hotel, a saloon, and two dwellings. The hotel had but three rooms, and its single bedroom was occupied by the landlady. Guests were lodged in a lean-to attached to the store on the opposite side of the road. South of Ulidia the Chestnut Valley stretches out at the foot of the Belt Mountains in brown undulations to the horizon, the Little Belts bounding it on the east. It is sparsely inhabited by prosperous stock-raisers, mostly from Missouri. One has grown so rich that he spends most of his time in Paris; another passes his winters in New York. I need hardly say that there are no chestnut-trees in the valley, or indeed in all Montana. If there were, the inhabitants would have found another name for them. A current ferry crosses the river at Ulidia, and a road leads north-west to Fort Shaw and the stage road from Helena to Fort Benton, which keeps far back from the river to avoid the cañons and broken mountain ranges. The country is open and grassy, consisting of rolling plains diversified by buttes and rock-crested ridges, and is a part of the great grazing ranges of eastern Montana.

To float down a rapid river through magnificent and varied scenery is a pleasant mode of travel, but when the river grows lazy, as does the Missouri after it gets out into the plains, and its banks are mud walls topped by screens of cottonwoods and willows, and you must pull hard at the oars under a hot sun to make any satisfactory progress, the business assumes quite a different aspect. After five or six hours of this sort of navigation, leaving Ulidia on the fourth day of the journey, we tied the boat up to the bank for the main body of the expedition to pick up, and engaged a ranchman to take us across country in his wagon to Sun River. This ranchman lived in a log house of two rooms, and had a homestead of 160 acres, on which he cut hay to feed the horses of the cavalry at Fort Shaw. He got six dollars a ton for the hay, and had cut about two hundred tons. His girlish wife—she was only eighteen—put the baby in a hammock made from an old piece of bagging, and cooked for us an excellent dinner of prairie chickens shot that morning from the kitchen window. In the living-room of the cabin the log walls and the rafters which supported the



CENTURY BUTTE.

tumultuous current island—a little quite jubilant lightly our craft and how easy rowing, to give thus avert the drifting broadside to the current and being rolled over like a log. The first plunge of the rapids is about half a mile in length; then comes a little stretch of quiet water, and then a second descent, of a quarter of a mile. To sweep along with the swift rush of the seething waves, past the fast-receding shores, was wonderfully exhilarating.

By dint of some hard rowing, with the aid of a rather sluggish current, we that night reached the only place between our point of embark-

at the head of the nervous at first, but when we found how danced over the waves it was, with steady her steerage-way and only danger, that of drifting broadside to the current and being rolled over like a log. The first plunge of the rapids is about half a mile in length; then comes a little stretch of quiet water, and then a second descent, of a quarter of a mile. To sweep along with the swift rush of the seething waves, past the fast-receding shores, was wonderfully exhilarating.

dirt roof were hidden by cotton sheeting, and there was a sewing-machine, a rocking-chair, a canary bird, a white counterpane on the bed, and a few pictures. The husband had saved enough from his wages as a teamster to buy a team and wagon and build a cabin. In a few years he will be an independent ranchman with money in the bank, and will undoubtedly take his family back to Illinois to visit the old folks and show them how young people can prosper in Montana. He represents the new element in the population of Montana, and the hermit who entertained us the day before was a type of the old element.

stream, with an occasional clump of cottonwoods on its banks. At the place where we forded it the bottom was paved from side to side with large square rocks as smooth as flagstones. Far to the northward could be seen the snowy peaks of the main chain of the Rockies, where the river has its sources. Southward, towards the Missouri, was a white speck on the horizon, which was the goal of our day's journey. It was after dark before the little speck had grown to a house and we had found shelter for the night at the ranch of the Montana Cattle Company. The fall round-up for the Sun River district was in progress at the time, but



GREAT FALLS OF THE MISSOURI.

The agricultural valleys and the great grazing ranges of this enormous Territory are fast being occupied by active young men who refuse to lead the lonesome bachelor life of the old times, and who wisely lay the sure foundations of success by marrying, and creating for themselves homes, however humble they may be at the start.

We drove across rolling plains covered with dry bunch-grass. An enormous square-topped butte on the northern horizon gave character to the landscape. The surface of the country dipped suddenly into a narrow valley through which ran Sun River, the Medicine River of Lewis and Clarke's map—a clear, shallow

the cattle were sixty or seventy miles distant on the Teton River. The beeves were to be driven northward to the Canadian Pacific Railway for shipment to the Eastern markets. All the cattle transportation for the country north of the Missouri and that immediately south of the river is now done by the new Canadian road. The drive is not so long as that to the Northern Pacific in the Yellowstone Valley, and the grazing on the way is said to be better.

From comfortable quarters in the dwelling of the cattle ranch we drove down the Sun River Valley to a ferry that led to the site of a prospective town just above the upper fall of the Missouri, called Great Falls City.

Placid as a Minnesota lake in summer-time, the Missouri glides along between banks shaded by cottonwoods. Its waters are ruffled only by flocks of wild ducks and geese. There are no indications that it is about to plunge over a series of cataracts and rapids and make an aggregate fall of five hundred feet in a distance of about twelve miles. So hemmed in by steep banks are the cataracts, that their roar is muffled and is scarcely heard until one is close upon them. The first leap, succeeding a long rapid, is twenty-six feet in perpendicular descent. This is called the Black Eagle Fall, and was so named by Lewis and Clarke from the circumstance of an eagle having her nest on an island below the fall. Viewed from the high bank above, this cataract is not very impressive. It has too much the look of a great mill-dam. The eye soon wanders from the fall to the stately landscape, spread out to the north and west—to the billowy brown plains, the black masses of the Belt Mountains, and the white pinnacles of the Rockies, far up towards the Canadian line. The appearance of the Black Eagle Fall suggests its future use. Some day it will drive saws, spindles, and mill-stones. About four miles below is a nameless fall, of fourteen feet—nameless, no doubt, because hardly noticeable from its proximity to the beautiful Rainbow Fall, a sheer descent of forty-seven feet. The water is nearly equally distributed over the whole breadth of this superb fall, and its curve of white and light green, tinted with rainbow hues, is wonderfully symmetrical. Only in one place is it broken a little by an indentation in the ledge which gives to the plunging flood a deeper hue of green. Otherwise the fall might be criticised as “faultily faultless.” The best view is from the bottom of the gorge. On the south bank of the river there is a break-neck path that leads down to the foot of the cataract. Here the spray clouds and rainbows, and the lovely aqua-marine tints of the water, show to best advantage.

Below the Rainbow Fall is the Crooked or Horse Shoe Fall, which has a perpendicular descent of nineteen feet. This fall, the Rainbow, and the smaller fall above can be seen at once from a projecting bluff. Not far off is an enormous spring, shaped like an open fan with an outer radius of three hundred feet, which discharges into the river, over a series of wide, low terraces, an enormous quantity of pure, cold water. This tremendous outpouring seems to be rather the mouth of a hidden river than a simple spring. Various names were suggested by the visiting party, for it had hitherto borne no other name than the “big spring.” Finally all agreed to christen it the Giant’s Fountain.

Eight miles below the Rainbow are the Great Falls. Perhaps a third of the river’s volume plunges down a precipice eighty-seven feet high, the rest descending over broken shelves of rock, in a multitude of cascades. After Niagara this fall must rank as the greatest cataract on the American continent. We could only see the entire breadth of the fall from a single point on the extreme verge of a crag jutting over the cañon. There was no way of getting down into the gorge to the water’s edge, which is about four hundred feet below the general level of the country. The deep crease in which the river runs is entirely lost to view a quarter of a mile away. Its lips seem to close up, and appear like the many modulations in the grassy plain, so that a traveler riding across country might come almost to the sheer verge of the cañon before he would suspect that he was approaching one of the great rivers of the world.

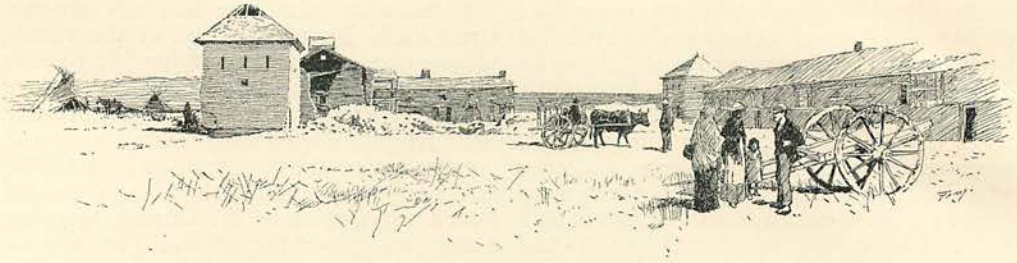
We returned to the new town to spend the night, and late in the morning we were joined by the party in the boats. We had gained a day’s time by striking across the country to Sun River and following its valley to the Missouri.

We portaged the boats around the falls the next day, getting them out of the water and upon wagons by dint of much tugging and lifting, with the assistance of the entire population. By the time we had traveled twelve miles of rolling country and had gotten the wagons down the precipitous banks of a *coulé* leading to the river and launched the boats it was 2 o’clock, and we were still twenty-four miles from Benton.

The stream was shut in between Bad Land bluffs—miniature mountains of blue clay and brown mud with streaks of lignite coal and strata of soft sandstone, all worn and seamed by the weather and showing many fantastic shapes. The aspect of these queer formations was dreary and sinister. “If this is God’s country,” remarked the Californian, “it must be because he is still at work on it.”

Night fell long before we reached the town. There was no moon, and it was impossible to see the shores, the shallows, or the rapids. Nothing was visible but a little gleam on the water a few yards around the boat, and the black bulk of the tall cliffs. Then came the welcome sight of lights ahead. Soon we were safely ashore and sitting down to supper in a comfortable hotel, very tired and very happy.

The town of Fort Benton has played a part in the commerce of the far North-west out of all proportion to its size. In its best days it had a scant thousand of settled inhabitants, but twice that number of transient sojourners

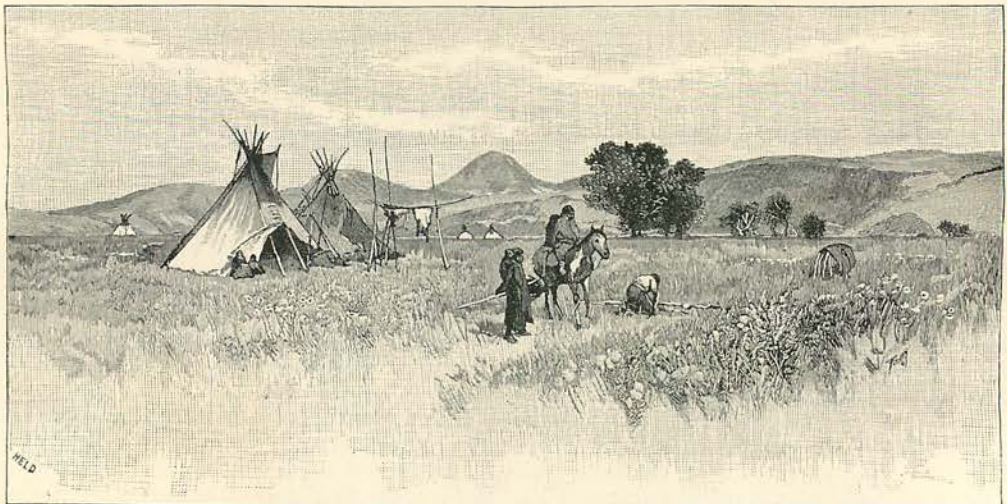


RUINS OF FORT BENTON.

were often domiciled in its log and adobe buildings. Probably it has now a stable population of fifteen hundred at least, but the wild throng of buffalo-hunters, wolfers, teamsters, French-Canadian half-breeds, boatmen, and miners that once filled the streets has departed, leaving a peace and serenity behind that is not at all enjoyed by the citizens. Formerly the trade of Benton extended far up into the British territory, reached westward and south-westward for five hundred miles, and to the southward embraced all the country as far as the Yellowstone. Goods were brought up the Missouri by steamboat from St. Louis, 2500 miles distant, until the railroad reached Bismarck, in Dakota, when that place became the point of departure for the fleet of flat-bottomed, light-draught boats. The season of navigation was short, lasting only from May to midsummer, though sometimes two or three boats went up after the autumn rise in the river. A few years ago the boats had to run the gauntlet of hostile Indians, and every wood-yard was a stockade. Old captains tell of the days when they had to stop and wait for enormous herds of buf-

falo to swim the stream. The boats brought the year's supplies for the mining-camps in the Rocky Mountains, for the Indian agencies and the military posts, for the cattle ranches, and for the Canadian mounted police. Long trains of wagons, drawn by mules or bullocks, transported the goods over vast desolate plains and through lonesome mountain gorges. The arrival of the first boat in the spring was a great event in the little frontier hamlet which had been cut off from the world for eight months. The necessity of laying in a year's stock at once caused the trade of Benton to fall into the hands of a few strong firms controlling large capital, having branch stores, and owning the freighting teams that distributed the goods over all the immense tributary territory. Each of these firms had a motley army of retainers and dependents—teamsters, trappers, hunters, and Indians. Their big stores survive the trade that once filled them with customers.

The channels of commerce in the Northwest have changed of late, and Fort Benton is left stranded between two railroads. On the south and west the Northern Pacific has



MEGAN CAMP ON TETON RIVER.

cut off the business of nearly all the mining country and much of the cattle country, and on the north the Canadian Pacific has taken away the traffic of all the Dominion posts, agencies, and police, and of the fur-trapping Indians and half-breeds over the line. There is nothing left for the town to live upon but the trade of the cattle and sheep ranches in the country close at hand. Most of the boats that used to come up the river have been withdrawn, and those that arrived last season with light freights could get no return cargoes, there being no more buffalo skins to carry. It would not be appropriate to say that in Benton all the week seems like Sunday, for in prosperous times Sunday was the busiest and noisiest day. There used to be a saying in the Yellowstone country that "West of Bismarck there is no Sunday, and west of Miles City there is no God." Benton was probably never so good as now. In time the town will rebound from its present depression, and with the development of the resources of the neighboring farming and grazing country will again be prosperous, but in a different way. The dramatic features of its old life as a remote outpost of civilization are gone forever.*

The town is built on a bank by the river-side surrounded by grassy hills. Climb the hills, or cross the river by the current ferry and scramble to the top of the lone mud cliffs, and you see that the stream runs some hundreds of feet below the general level of the country, which is a rolling plateau. The town is a queer conglomeration of handsome new brick structures and old cotton-wood log huts, with a few neat frame houses painted in the fashionable olives and browns. One is astonished at the size of the hotel, of the mercantile establishments, of the court-house, and of the buildings of the two newspapers.

Near the town, we visited the camp of a dozen lodges of Piegan Indians, who had come to stay all winter for the sake of such subsistence as they could get from the garbage-barrels of the citizens. A race of valorous hunters and warriors has fallen so low as to be forced to beg at back doors for kitchen refuse. In one of the *tepees* in the Piegan camp there was an affecting scene. A young squaw lay on a pile of robes and blankets, hopelessly ill and given up to die. In the lines of her face and the expression of her great black eyes there were traces of beauty and refinement not often seen in Indian women. Crouched on the ground by her side sat her father, an old blind man with long white hair and a strong, firm face clouded with an expression of stolid grief.

* Benton is on the line of the new railroad, and expects a new season of prosperity.

The Piegans and the Blackfeet, who inhabit the great reservation north and east of Fort Benton, have suffered grievously of late for want of food, and hundreds have died from scrofula and other diseases induced by insufficient nourishment. In fact, the Government has kept them in a state of semi-starvation. It is a long way from the Upper Missouri to the halls of Congress, where the money is voted for Indian supplies, and it is not easy to place on the proper shoulders the blame for the barbarity of issuing for a week's rations barely enough food for two days. The appropriations for these Indians have hitherto been based on estimates for their winter support only. In the season of roaming and hunting it was supposed they could pick up their own living, as they used to do with ease before the white buffalo-hunters exterminated the game which was their main dependence. Now, the buffaloes which used to roam these plains in great herds are gone. Occasionally a solitary animal is found, or perhaps a little "bunch" of half a dozen, lurking in a ravine among the Bad Lands, but an Indian might starve to death before he had the luck to find one. Knowing how desperate are the chances of killing game, the Indians crowd around the agencies and try to subsist on the scanty rations issued by the Government. A few, up at Fort Belknap, raise little patches of grain; but of the five or six thousand on the reservation north of the Missouri, probably there are not five hundred who can be called self-supporting. One of the Jesuit fathers from Flathead Mission visited the Blackfeet lately and prevailed upon them to let him take fifty of their children to be reared and educated at the Mission. Indians are strongly attached to their children in a passionate, unreasoning way, and as they are but children of larger growth themselves, living only in the present and incapable of much thought for the future, it is very hard to persuade them to part with the little ones. In this case the only consideration that moved them was the fear that the children would die for want of food, as many had already done. Father Palladimi told me that the speeches of the Indian chiefs at the council, where they told of the sufferings of the tribe and bared their emaciated arms and breasts to show to what a condition they had been brought by hunger, were thrilling bursts of savage oratory, even affecting listeners who could not, as he did, understand the spoken words. There seems to be but one humane and sensible course for the Government to take with these Indians. Their enormous reservation, now useless to them for the purposes of the chase, should be abolished,

and smaller ones containing good agricultural and grazing lands established, and they should be fed until they could be put in a way of raising crops and cattle. This course has lately been recommended by a commission sent out to examine into their condition.

The old adobe fort erected in 1846 by the American Fur Company, which served as a nucleus to the town of Fort Benton and gave it its name, is still in existence, though much dilapidated. The four towers at the corners of the quadrangle are in a good state of preservation, but portions of the connecting walls have fallen. The rooms where the trappers and traders used to count their profits and make merry are now a rookery of poor homeless people, and the court looks like the backyard of a block of New York tenement houses.

In one of the towers an embrasure is shown from which a cannon was once turned with terrible effect upon a party of peaceable Indians gathered outside the walls of the fort for traffic. The story is that a hunting party of Blackfeet drove off some cattle belonging to the fort, and killed a negro who followed them to recover the animals. The Burgess (the title borne by the commander of the fur-trading station) was a man of violent and revengeful disposition. When the Blackfeet

failed to give up the murderer, he determined to punish them Indian fashion, and waited until all apprehension of reprisals had been allayed in their minds and they had brought in their furs to barter for goods. Then he loaded his cannon to the muzzle with slugs and musket-balls, and, his men all refusing to put a match to it, fired it himself into a group of the unsuspecting savages.

The original trading fort on the Upper Missouri stood at the mouth of the Maria's River, twenty miles below Benton, and was built in 1828. This was abandoned in 1849, and old Fort Benton was erected eight miles above the present town and occupied for fourteen years. In 1843 the traders went down to the mouth of the Judith and built Fort Shagran. In 1846 they began work on the existing adobe fort and transferred to it the name of Benton. The American Fur Company sold the fort in 1865 to the North-west Fur Company, and in 1877 the Government leased it for a military post and occupied it four years. The town grew up slowly under the protection of the walls of the fort. These are the outlines of the history of a place whose trade extended over an area as great as that of all New England and the Middle States when it was itself only a collection of mud-roofed log huts and warehouses.

Eugene V. Smalley.



A SONG OF CHEER.

THE winds are up, with wakening day
And tumult in the tree.
Across the cool and open sky
White clouds are streaming free.
The new light breaks o'er flood and field,
Clear, like an echoing horn;
While in loud flight the crows are blown
Athwart the sapphire morn.

What tho' the maple's scarlet flame
Declares the summer done;
Tho' finch and starling voyage south
To win a softer sun;
What tho' the withered leaf whirls by
To strew the purpling stream,—
Stretched are the world's glad veins with
strength;
Despair is grown a dream!

The acres of the golden-rod
Are glorious on the hills;
Tho' storm and loss approach, the year's
High heartupleaps and thrills.
Dearest, the cheer, the brave delight,
Are given to shame regret,
That, when the long frost falls, our hearts
Be glad, and not forget!

Charles G. D. Roberts.