

THE SHOSHONE FALLS.



PROCEEDING by the Oregon Short Line northwesterly from Granger, Wyoming, on the Union Pacific, the first object of interest to the traveler is the Fossil Mountain, seven thousand feet above the sea

level, where abundant specimens of fish embedded in clay are to be obtained. Thence descending to the valley, with spurs of the wide-spreading Rockies on each side, one is borne along the banks of the beautiful Bear River. Distant from Granger 146 miles is the hamlet of Soda Springs, Idaho, destined to be the great sanitarium of the West. Here we diverge from the Bear River, which takes a sudden turn at the opening of the valley and pursues its course 150 miles in a southerly direction until it pours itself into the Great Salt Lake. The greater part of the distance traversed by the railroad from this point is over a bed of solid lava, that is to say, for 320 miles, until it reaches Caldwell. Beyond this station, which is situated at the mouth of the luxuriant Boise Valley, a veritable garden for its whole extent of fifty miles, the country is susceptible of irrigation, and will at a future day be able to support a population larger than that of some of the New England States.

As we penetrate the mountain range, on entering the Port Neuf Cañon, we find that the fire king did not attempt to throw the lava above the plain, but left the green and wooded hills unscathed. Skirting the banks of the stream that dances gaily along at their base we come to Pocatello, the junction of the Utah and Northern Railroad. Huge blocks that have been blasted out are thrown up on the sides of the track, and all around there is a dreary expanse of sage-brush growing upon a thin soil formed by the accumulated dust of centuries. Far away in the distance are the snow-clad peaks of the western spurs of the Rocky Mountains, and at intervals of the immense plain extending to their base, blue buttes stand up like islands in the sea. Occasionally we pass a wagon-train of slow-toiling emigrants. This unbroken monotony, with its attractions by no means small, is first interrupted when we reach the American Falls, twenty-five miles from Pocatello, where the Snake River is spanned by a substantial iron bridge. The name of "falls," which is perhaps correctly applied to all falling water, is mis-

leading to those whose understanding of the word is abruptness or suddenness of descent. They turn away their eyes and exclaim, "They are only rapids after all." Crossing the river our course lies in a direction nearly due west, while the tortuous stream so appropriately named the Snake bends for a time to the south, twisting in coils as it crawls through the deep ravine hollowed out for itself in the lava. The scanty bunch grass is yet enough for the support of cattle, who descend through occasional gorges for their water. These migratory herds prefer the richer grasses of the mountains and the streams of the cañons for their summer sustenance, resorting to the bottoms only in the winter season, when the snow is never too deep to prevent them from cropping their food. Thus the ranchmen here enjoy a great advantage over their fellows in the higher altitudes, who are obliged to cut and put up their hay. The river hereabouts would be entirely useless but for its value to the herds on the winter range, as it runs too low to be made available for the purposes of irrigation.

From the American Falls onward to Shoshone, eighty-two miles, the railroad traverses a country of the same characteristics already described. Desolation is everywhere written upon its black surface—rifted chasms and volcanic excrescences only varying its dark monotony.

The town, or, as the settlement is called, the city of Shoshone, is but the hundred-times-repeated duplicate of the new municipalities of this Western region—the only greater merit it can claim being that it is larger than many others. Brigham Young first established the rule, which has become universal in this region, that all the streets of his empire should be exactly eight rods wide. Conformity to another of his laws cannot now be strictly observed, as it is interfered with by the courses of railroads. In Utah every building faces one of the four cardinal points of the compass, the streets all running from north to south or from east to west. The incoming Gentiles have not improved upon the Mormon architecture of log and adobe houses, which, if not beautiful, are at least picturesque. The Gentile idea is that of flimsy shingle structures which can be easily taken to pieces and moved with the frequently removing towns. There is a stage line from Shoshone City to the Shoshone Falls over a nominal distance of twenty-five miles, but which is really thirty,



ENGRAVED BY E. KINGSLEY.

GREAT SHOSHONE FALLS.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY W. H. JACKSON & CO.

and seemingly a great deal more. Let it be remarked here in parenthesis that in June the water of the Snake is at its height, whereas at the time of our visit, early in October, it had fallen twelve feet; but this subtraction from the full volume is balanced by more agreeable weather and the torpidity of the rattlesnakes. The same always dreary plain extends to the base of the mountain range south of the river, the only sign of life being the half-way station, where the relay of stage horses is kept and fed on the hay and water carried to them. We knew that the river rolled between us and the hills, but it was so far beneath the surface that it was nowhere visible. Suddenly, just at the dusk of evening, we came to the abrupt precipice, and at the same instant the mighty roar of the cataract greeted our ears.

The water is compressed in many places like that of Niagara below the Suspension

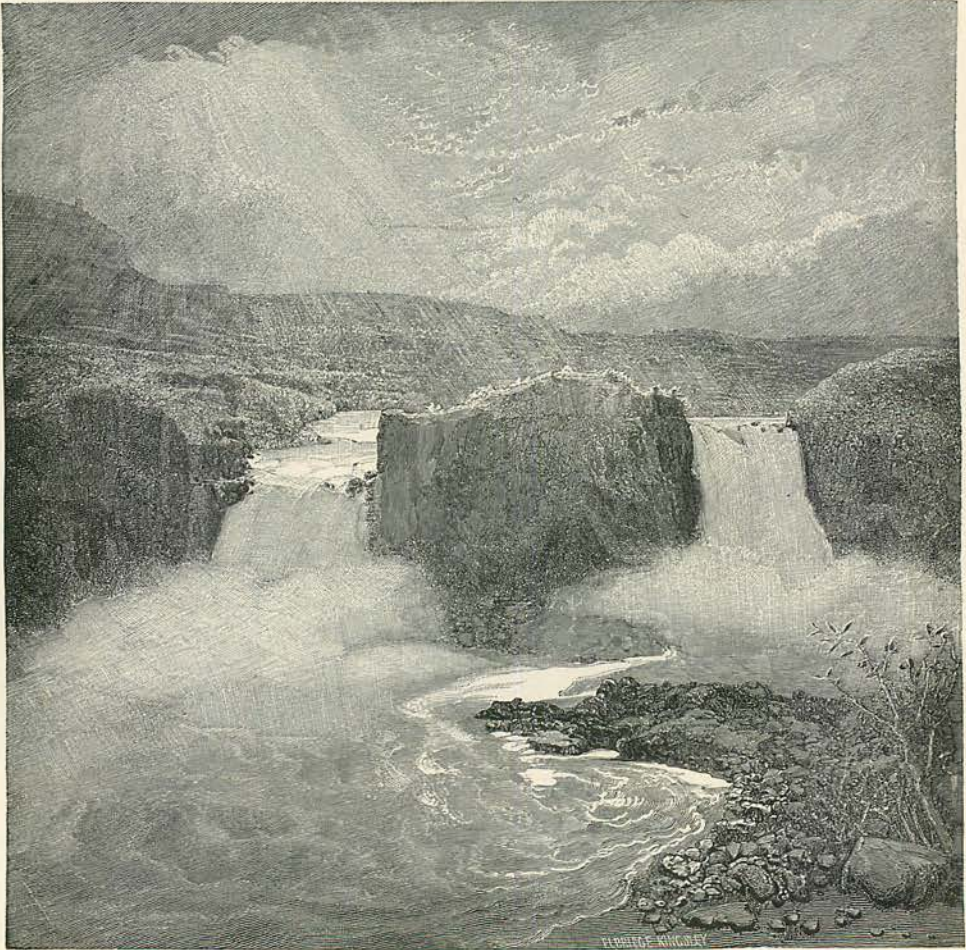
Bridge; and at its narrowest limit, 700 miles farther on in its course, even after it has been joined by the Columbia, a greater stream than itself, it is confined between the unyielding rocks at the Dalles, where it becomes only one-tenth of the width at Shoshone when it takes its fearful leap of 210 feet from the abyss above into the greater abyss below. It was at the rim of the upper chasm that we had now arrived. Here it is that the river, in ages beyond our computation of time, had formed out of the solid rock a basin 800 feet in depth and half a mile in width, and had constituted itself into a lake whose surface must have been level with the plain on which we stood and looked down upon the meadow left by its receding flood when it had escaped through the gateway it had patiently been cutting out for innumerable years. At great expense and patient labor a zigzag road has been made along the perpendicular descent of 800 feet. Alighting

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from the wagon and tying the front and hind wheels together, we led our horses down this rather perilous path to that little bit of meadow upon which was pitched a large, commodious tent, serving the purpose of a hotel quite as well as the frame building which has since been erected on the other side of the river.

At length the rays of the morning lighted up the vast encircling panorama of grotesque crags and imaginary castles which had darkly frowned upon us from their exalted heights, and amidst this gorgeous display our steps were led to the brink of the great cascade.

At Niagara the water spreads widely at the



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LITTLE SHOSHONE FALLS.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY W. H. JACKSON & CO.

For the first part of the night the roar of the water prevented sleep, but the steadiness of the noise at length lulled us to repose. On awaking in the morning the sound seemed to come from a different direction, and the change was explained by the fact that the wind had shifted during the night, thus bringing the echo from another place. Indeed, without the aid of a guide we should not readily have found our way to the cataract, as the echo, constantly moved about by the eddies of the wind, would have carried us out of our course. Daylight and sunshine on the upper plains were long in advance of their appearance in the basin below.

top, thus distributing its volume, but compressing itself at the end of its fall; whereas here the compression is made before the start. Preceding the grand leap there are no forewarning rapids giving notice of what the river is about to do, but silently it flows on as if it had at last reached its ocean level, and then, with one slight hint in its little side show of the Bridal Veil jutting out around a corner rock, it precipitates itself perpendicularly in one solid mass sixty feet farther downward than its great rival of the East. The whole width of nine hundred and fifty feet, both at top and bottom, is almost precisely that of Niagara on the American

side at the base. To ascertain the difference in the volumes of water, a very nice calculation should be made of the rapidity and depth of the current. To institute a comparison of the general effect, we refreshed our memories a few weeks later by a visit to Niagara. A mere look at Shoshone from the north side, on which we first approached it,—such a look alone as is too often satisfactory to tourists to whom obstacles in the way of seeing it all seem insurmountable,—gives but a faint idea of the magnificent whole. Preparations were in progress for a wire ferry at a distance of half a mile above the cataract, where the river is about four hundred yards wide. The ferriage at the time of our visit was conducted in a little skiff, which, with proper precautions, promises greater safety, as it is more manageable than a larger boat would be if accidentally the wire should be broken.

The timid visitor who satisfies himself with a view from the north side of the river departs with no conception of the infinitely more grand and impressive scene which opened to our view from the other side. One might as well be content with seeing Niagara from the American side, discrediting the story told him of the Horse-shoe Fall as viewed from the Canadian shore. These contrasts have a striking resemblance, for once arrived upon the southern bank of the Snake the whole contour is changed. The bend before unnoticed is made apparent. What seemed all straight is now a curve at the top, tumbling in upon itself at the bottom in a solid mass, striking the rocks with such force that it springs up again a hundred feet in a column of water, foam, and spray. To obtain the various views in which the cataract presents itself, no little toil is requisite. The labor of getting down, with the danger added, is quite as much as that of getting back. From one rock to another, jutting out from the straight wall, the trunks of pine trees have been laid with their branches cut off, so fashioned that they serve as steps, while a wet, slippery, hanging rope is supposed to afford some additional security. From a bit of flat rock where we take a temporary rest upon the way a curious view of the cataract is obtained through an aperture under the "natural bridge." The drawing from a photograph taken on this spot will indicate the space which distinctly represents a bear in an upright position. Descending nearly to the surface of the river below the falls and one thousand feet below the plain above them, we arrive at the curious cave upon which the name of Cathedral Dome has been most appropriately bestowed. It is 175 feet high and 40 feet square, the dome in which it culminates chiseled out by the swirling waters in just proportions and

awful grandeur thousands of years before Christopher Wren or Michael Angelo tried their 'prentice hands at architecture.

At one end of this mysterious sanctuary of nature there gushes out a cool, pure stream called the Baptismal Font, and through its open door comes the hoarse, reverberating music of the cataract playing its undying anthem. Its pulpit is everywhere, for if there be sermons in stones they are preached by these eternal rocks.

Below the Great Shoshone cataract, where the parallel of the river's contraction is nearly exact, the eye rests only upon bare, perpendicular crags a thousand feet high. First descends that four hundred feet of lava coating, and beneath it in their regular order the original surface of soil, the clay, and the granite. In some places where the soil was wanting, so that the devastating fire came in immediate contact with the clay, it burned it into brick, making a readily imagined picture of a city street with its long line of houses suspended in mid-air between the sky and the water.

The Twin Falls were yet to be seen. To reach them was the most difficult undertaking of the day. Climbing up the slippery ladders by which we had descended, and walking to the place where the skiff had been left, we embarked again and pulled up the stream a mile and a half, avoiding the current and whirlpools by keeping in the eddy until some impassable rapids were reached. Then, making fast the boat to a rock, we landed, and pursued our way for nearly two miles, not always on foot, but often swinging across the chasms by our arms or creeping like lizards over the lava boulders. This method of progression occupied more than two hours, when by a sudden turn we were brought face to face with the falls, so near to them that we were covered with their spray. Here above, the river flows on a plane two or three hundred feet higher than at the Great Shoshone, and is divided into two narrow channels separated by a rock. From each channel leaps a waterfall 70 feet in width and 182 in depth. Twins they are in age and size and beauty, tumbling joyously side by side in their wild play, dancing upwards in their spray and then twirling in each other's arms in whirlpools and eddies in their onward course.

It will appear by these notes that at the brink of the Twin Falls the gorge is about 400 feet high, at their base 182 feet higher. Allowing 200 feet for the descent of four miles of rapids, it would be, as before stated, about 800 at the brink of the Great Shoshone, and rather more than 1000 at its foot. These measurements are at least approximately correct.