

ON OUR NEIGHBOR'S DOORSTEP.

[FLORA BULLOCK.]

THROUGH THE HEART OF THE BLACK HILLS.

I'm sitting on a stick of wood
With a lantern at my knees,
Near enough a good camp fire
So my nose won't freeze;
With the grub-box for my table
And tin cups a setting round;
While the other folks are spreading hay
And bedclothes on the ground.

"Sunbonnets and blankets" was the bugle call for Monday morning early at the M-bar K ranch, for we were to start on a little camping trip through the Hills to Deadwood. Right here let me warn you if you should ever set out on a similar journey not to forget the approved head gear nor the bed clothes,—take twice as many blankets as you think you will need. Not that care on your part will do much good; you are bound to freeze o' nights, blankets or no blankets, and though you wear your shaker to the very limit of possibility you will reach home again with a nose that is a source of torture and much greasing to yourself and of unending amusement to your friends—they talk about saving coal oil, and so on, until you are forced to retort with Cyrano de Bergerac—"Be it known unto you that I am proud, proud of such an appendage." Consequences complexion are as the snap of the fingers if you have been fortunate enough to go overland through the Hills; for that is the only way to see and enjoy them in all their glory.

Five grown and still growing people—for tenderfeet gain weight at the rate of a pound a day—with a tent, a good sized grub box, valises, blankets, shawls, and whatever et ceteras we happened to think of before setting out, make a good heavy load for two horses to pull up and down the hills and canyons. If horses could talk, I am afraid our two big grays would have used drayman's language some times. For Hill roads are usually made as they have to be, not with much of a sense for comfort. As a rule there is only one road possible, and that a very bad one. A five days' trip gives you more jolting than you have ever thought your constitution would put up with, and you gain considerable respect for your physical make-up before you are on level terra firma again. And as for horses and wagon, we thought we escaped well with only one piece of ugly acting and a broken wagon tongue.

Our way led us through Beaver valley with the great mount Pisgah, from whose sides come the springs that furnish water for Newcastle and Cambria, to the west, and the Limestone range well known to every Hill man, on the east. A ten mile drive up grade brought us out on Canyon Springs prairie, one of those high level places stretching out for many miles. Here we found reminders of Nebraska, for grain grows without irrigation, though the glory of the corn fields is wanting. A cow boy told me with some gravity that the reason they do not have to irrigate up here is because the dew is so heavy that it breaks the grass down—a statement I am better prepared to believe after four nights in camp among the Hills. This fertile land has been taken up for many years though it is twenty-five or thirty miles from Newcastle. It is pleasant to see real trees—not pines—again.

It was here we began our triumphal march among the flowers. "It was roses, roses all the way" that we saw, but so much of the land is under cultivation in some fashion here that the flowers are not unmolested in their beauty. Yet you can count at least two dozen different kinds of flowers while your wheels turn around twice along the road and you become prepared for the wonderful

and inexpressibly beautiful maze of purple, gold, white and blue that in some places makes a never to be forgotten picture for you. I have seen impressionist paintings which were even subdued likenesses of the glory of the meadows we threaded our way through that "sunny summer day." Just at this season you can find nearly all the flowers of the year in bloom somewhere, as the altitude suits them. The early wild roses, pink, cerise, and pure white are here, with the purple mint flowers and thistles, the blue harebells and wild peas, the yellow brown-eyed Susans, golden rod and sunflowers brown-faced, with intelligence enough to look always sunward, yellow-faced, often with their backs to the sun, the daisies, white and yellow and heliotrope, white flowers of many varieties, but more delicate than all, the lovely butterfly lily or grass flower, as some call it, lifting up its white petals in the stoniest places or in grassy corners all over the mountain sides. Every once in a while a new flower gains the ascendancy and the landscape turns from purple to yellow or white—always a soft blaze of color set off against the cool green of the pines, or of the still more beautiful blue tinged spruces. Oh, you go clean daft over the wild flowers that spread out before you or melt away behind in a purple haze. You may wish that you were a botanist and could name every flower and had your pressing book along. Yet the picture that the millions of flowers make is as nameless as beauty itself, and as little to be repeated as Rosenthal music; and as for a pressed posy—as some one has said of translated verse, it is like a boiled strawberry. No, leave your Gray and your Bessey at home if you go overland through the Hills in midsummer, and lay no vandal hands on all this sweet flower garden. To me this wealth of color was a surprise. They tell so much more of the hills and pines, the red rocks and the white. But the flowers are one of the chief glories of the Hills. I think, one misses very much if he stick to the cushioned coach and wear good clothes and veils. Some of us will never be happy in heaven unless there is a Black Hills meadow there.

Cold Springs canyon is a pretty grassy place, which we were very glad to reach for a two o'clock dinner after a long ride without finding water. Here we found a little spring and soon a brook, then again a log fence closing in one of those long hay farms which follow the brooks in these narrow canyons. Here, too, we came out of the pine country into valleys where the beautiful blue spruce grows. Such fine Christmas trees of all sizes, looking as if they had been trimmed by a careful gardener. We noticed with wonder that they grew on but one side of the winding canyon.

After another ride of several miles we entered another canyon, whose name we did not then know, and found a wee little rill just big enough, it almost seemed, to fill our tin cup. A boy driving cows was a welcome and rather a curious sight, for we knew there must be an inhabited house near by. Not so very near though, as we learned, for we rode through the canyon for a long way before we saw the log house and barn. Then, with a strange sense of the convenience of things, our old Fanny shied, nearly dumped us into the creek and broke the wagon tongue. When you go camping take a mascot along, or include in your party some one who has a genius for being lucky. Then you can break the wagon tongue when you are in sight of a house after you have travelled twenty miles without seeing a smoking chimney or being barked at by a dog, you can pitch your tent with the portentous growl of mountain thunder in your ears, and the

cloud will pass off to the other side, you can go through a country where hail has ruined the crops and return home to find that it has rained half the time while you were gone and to enjoy very soon another terrific storm—you can do all this if luck is with you. A big stove and good firewood is something of a convenience, too, on the last night of July, if it is frosty, and clothes hung up to dry freeze stiff as boards. This the good people of the ranch furnished us, as well as sugar for our coffee, which was one of the et ceteras we left out. A log house set down at the foot of high green hills and shut in with just a square of sky above is the picture we have of our first camping place. The good mother told us, among other things, that in September, perhaps, there would be a school opened in a new house we had passed up the canyon, and that the children, nearly all of them big boys and girls, would at last have a chance to learn something. They raise hay and bale it to sell at Lead, which they call seventeen miles away.

The way to compute distance in the Hills, however, is to multiply the figures given by two, and allow also, in questions of time, for the bad roads. Lead City is a long, long way from the Mer-out hay ranch. It is the most atrocious road, just now at least, though I hope it is not always so full of ruts and mud holes. And yet this is one of the places you should not miss if you go overland through these Hills. For all the way down this wild canyon, among the great tall spruces, a lovely splashing stream keeps you cheerful company, fighting its way down, down to the crossing where you ford it and leave it to go on its way as the Spearfish river. For the little rill we quenched our thirst at is only the beginning of the most considerable stream of the Hills, and this canyon of the execrable wagon road is called the Big Spearfish canyon. We travelled less than a mile in the dewy coolness of the morning before the little brook, which, after the custom of mountain streams, sinks underground for some distance, came up again much reinforced and spread out in the valley very beautifully, inviting kodak pictures. I suppose few of the sight seers who have exploited the wonders of what they call the Spearfish canyon have ever visited this end of the canyon. It is perhaps just as well that the place is not made a boulevard, for there are few places to pass teams in the awful roads. Yet this valley is really prettier than the world famous one, where no wagon road at all leads; there are good camping places, plenty of fish, I suppose, and they say that if you are very quiet you can often catch a glimpse of the red deer. Even here, though, the everlasting attempt to utilize the water is in evidence. Away up on steep cliffs above you will see, if you look closely, sections of old wooden fluming. How it ever was placed there you can hardly imagine, and it seems that some lives must have been lost in the attempt, but there it is old and unused, suggestive of other wrecks and monuments of foolishly expended capital seen near or in every city of the land, I suppose. Perhaps the river objected to changing its vocation of simply being beautiful and sparkling for the sordid one of turning a mill wheel or irrigating potato fields.

The Spearfish is a wide clear stream when we ford it, and leaving it behind, find our way through a logging camp, and enter Ice box canyon. Spearfish is down, Ice-box is up and it is jolt, jolt all the way. When you have climbed to the crest of the hill you are in the land of everlasting holes in the hills, and can see the smoke of the Homestake mines and mills of Lead thinly in the distance. You know as you go on your way that there is more or less of

the glittering stuff that drives men mad in many a piece of rock that you crunch beneath your wagon wheels.

M-bar-K Ranch, Beaver Canon,
Newcastle, Wyo.

Pittsburg, Pa., August 9, 1899.

The following letter from Willie King contains his impressions of Pittsburg.

The scenery down the Allegheny river is grand. From about twenty to thirty miles of Pittsburg the river is lined with one continuous row of factories. And overhead it is all cloudy. I woke about 7 this morning and it looked like day break, so I rolled over. As usual when I thought it was about 7:30 I got up and it was 9:30. The sun does not get around till about that time here and then they say it is a clear day.

I went through the great pickle factory and was more than pleased to see the uniformed girls, all neat and clean. The dining room looking as clean as ours. The girls' lockers and bath room, and part of the hospital. They had several patients so I could not go in.

The best of all was their stable and rigs. They have several autos. And the horses are kept on the second floor, very cool, screen doors, just as neat as a house. Their hay is fed by machinery, so much—so often. They have patent horse cleaners and Turkish bath rooms for them, just the same as for men, except lounges. You should see the results, great big fat, sleek, gentle horses. Box stalls for those "under the weather."

Took the best line around the city and also one to Homestead on the Monongahela. Went through the glassworks and big steel works. I have seen it all.

This city has impressed me tremendously. It is all buildings and streets, no land or grass. I have seen the original tenement houses where the children do not see the sun until they are old enough to run away from home. All play on the streets.

Have seen several automobiles used as fire wagons, trucks and carriages.

The white and black population are equal. Well, must ring off.

W. H. KING.

As Castleton entered the Witherby house it took but a moment to see that some calamity had befallen. Only one week before he had stood in the quiet, well ordered drawing room, and said good bye to Mrs. Witherby as she waited for the carriage to take her to the train for her summer's outing. And now the scene of indescribable confusion that met his gaze on every side indicated but too surely that all was not as it should be. In the midst of it he discerned the figure of a wild-eyed and apparently half-crazy man, who ran up and down stairs, ever and anon, emerging from some room with his arms full of movables, threw them on the floor and muttered curses.

Castleton went up to him and grasped him firmly by the arm.

"My friend," he said to him, gently, as he took in the scene of disorder in all its completeness, "you are not well. You must come with me. What are you trying to do, anyway?"

Witherby's preoccupied face took on a shade of indignation as he shook himself off, and replied, sternly:

"Leave me alone. I am all right. I am only trying to find some of my things, that my dear, dear wife packed so carefully away before she left home."—Town Topics.

Mr. Bryan was listed by the assessor as a poor man, but he was not obliged to put a cash value on his political prospects at his own estimate.—Record.

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