MYSTICAL AUSTRALIA

DESCRIPTION OF THE GREAT SOLITARY DESERT.

Marvelous Canons Never Penetrated by Rays from the Sun—How the Native Dresses, and Some of the Barbarous Customs.

(Special Letter.)


AN ABORIGINE.

THAT portion of Australia which is known as the Solitary desert region is practically an arid desert. There is no doubt that at some former period it had an abundant and certain rainfall, producing a rich and luxuriant vegetation. But the rainfall has diminished to almost vanishing point, and sometimes three years intervene between the tropical downpours. The country has at some period been covered by showers of volcanic ashes, saturated with water, and much of this sand has become cemented into desert sandstone.

The sense of solitude and desolation that oppresses one in these sand hills is most appalling. From the time you enter them you are dominated by the one desire to get out of them. Many a poor fellow never has got out of them, but has perished from thirst. With the exception of the plaintiff wail of the dingo or the hum of the ubiquitous blow fly, absolute silence reigns. As far as the eye can reach in every direction over the plains there is nothing to be seen but bare shining stones, having a polished surface, from the sand continually blowing over them. They are locally known as "gibbers" (hard g). As a traveler puts it: "These gibbers are a geological feature to be remembered. If we looked out to the horizon we looked over gibbers the whole distance. We traveled all day for weeks over gibbers; we slept at night upon gibbers; we even found small portions of gibbers in our food." The MacDonnells are three parallel ranges of mountains running east and west and separated by narrow valleys; the most remarkable of these, which has been mapped by the explorer, has been named "Horn Valley." The total length of this extraordinary valley is 100 miles, and it is only 400 yards in width. It is flanked on both sides by rugged wall like ranges of rock 700 to 800 feet in height. The only passes are the narrow rocky gorges through which the watercourses pass.


RIVER GORGE IN MACDONNELL RANGE.

There are no permanent streams in Central Australia, but in times of tropical rains immense volumes of water rush down from the barren hills. The Finke river is the largest of these water courses; it drains an immense area, running north and south, and has many important tributaries. One of the extraordinary features of this country is that the Finke river, taking its rise north of the MacDonnells and running southward, impinges on the first of the ranges, running east and west. One would expect that the river, on striking this solid wall of rock at a right angle, would be deflected from its course, and would flow along the foot of the range, but not so; the mountain chain is rent asunder at this point, and a deep and rocky gorge is formed, having walls of bare rock over 1,000 feet in height, between these river passes. Some of these cliffs are so nearly vertical that the sun hardly ever penetrates into the gloomy depths of the gorges. The river then crosses the Sandy valley, and a like phenomenon occurs. The second mountain chain is rent asunder in the same manner, and the river passes through to the third parallel range, which again is opened for its escape on the south side. The Central Australian aborigine is the living representative of a stone age, who still fashions his spear heads and knives from flint or sandstone, and performs the most daring surgical operations with them. His origin and history are lost in the gloomy mists of the past. He has no written records and few oral traditions. In appearance he is a naked, hirsute savage, with a type of features occasionally pronounced Jewish. He is by nature light hearted, merry, and prone to laughter; a splendid mimic, supple-jointed, with an unerring hand that works in perfect unison with the eye, which is keen as that of an eagle. He has no private ownership of land. He cultivates nothing, but lives entirely on the spoils of the chase, and although the thermometer frequently ranges from 15 deg. to over 90 deg. Fahr. in 24 hours, and his country is teeming with furred game, he makes no use of the skins for clothing, but goes about during the day and sleeps in the

him. He can travel from point to point for hundreds of miles through the pathless bush with unerring precision, and can track an animal over rocks and stones, where an Europena eye would be unable to distinguish a mark. He is a keen observer, and knows the habits and changes of form of every variety of animal or vegetable life in his country. Religious belief he has none, but is excessively superstitious, living in constant dread of an evil spirit which is supposed to lurk round his camp at night. He has no gratitude except that of the anticipatory order, and is as treacherous as Judas. He has no traditions, and yet continues to practice with scrupulous exactness a number of hideous customs and ceremonies which have been handed down from his fathers, and of the origin or reason of which he knows nothing. Ofttimes kind and even affectionate to those of his children who have been permitted to live, he still practices, without any reason except that his father did so before, the most cruel and revolting mutilations upon the young men and maidens of his tribe. A scientist recently returned from this desert thus describes the native: "In returning from the Horn expedition my only companion was a semi-civilized nicknamed Slim Jem. He was quite nude, and rode my second horse. He was the most tacitturn native I ever met; and only once, when our food ran short, and I suggested to him that he should tighten his girdle so as to engender a feeling of repletion, did I rouse him to a sense of repartee, and he exclaimed: 'Me big one hungry.' On our first arrival at Crown point on the river Finke, I invited him to the camp at dinner time to get something to eat. I didn't tell him not to dress for dinner, because I knew he wouldn't. He was a sort of king in his own country, and had brought his queen with him. He was dressed in a coat of black grease plus a bone through his nose. She was also dressed in a coat of black grease, plus the crown jewels, consisting of a dog's tooth necklace. They were not announced; it was quite unnecessary; I knew when they were approaching. They came with a fair wind. I could tell when they were between me and the camels. We dined early, and I think they enjoyed their dinner."

IN SHETLAND.

One of the Most Remarkable Sights to Be Seen There.

(Special Letter.)

The Shetland Islands exhibit some startling and picturesque arrangements in rocks, one of the most remarkable examples of which lies off the southeast coast of Bressay, and is known as the Noss. It is famous, not only for the peculiarity of the formation, but also for a strange and dangerous custom which prevails there. The Noss is called an island, and it answers to the definition, since it is certainly an extremely solid "body of land" and the bleak northern sea foams completely around it. But it looks more like a huge black "stand-pipe," for it is a cylindrical column 160 feet high, its flat top having an area not much larger than an ordinary village dooryard. A child could almost throw a stone across it. It is said that more than 200 years ago a reckless bird hunter, tempted by the eggs of the numberless sea gulls which whitened the top of this giant column, and further influenced by the promise of a cow, actually succeeded in scaling the almost perpendicular wall of rock and establishing a sort of rope bridge between the island and the mainland. When he had driven his stakes and secured the ropes, his friends entreated him to be the first to try the new device. But whether he had shrewd suspicions as to its safety, or whether he was prompted by mere bravado, certain it is that he refused, and chose rather to return by the same perilous track by which he had come. But as he was slowly and painfully toiling down from the dizzy height, his foot slipped, he lost his hold, and then—there was no one to claim the promised cow, but the sea claimed one more victim. Nevertheless, the fruit of his bold endeavor remained, and it is still there to substantiate the story.


A SHEEP PASTURE.

for the bridge of rope between Bressay and the Noss is still maintained. The thrifty northern farmer, whose means of existence in these bleak isles are not calculated to excite envy, saw that there was a bit of good pasture on this summit; so he made a kind of wooden chair or cradle just large enough to hold a man and a sheep; and in this primitive way he still transports his flock, one at a time, over to this little browsing place.

Russia's Big Pipe Line.

The hundred-mile pipe line of the Natural Gas Company of Pittsburg is at present the longest in the world, but a line is building in the Caucasus from Michailove to Batoum, which is [illegible] Russian verst, or 150 miles long. It will be finished within a few [illegible]. It and its estimated cost will [illegible] weeks, 5,000,000 rubles ($3,000,000) [illegible] exceed

Success [illegible]

Frank Ball of [illegible]uincy, Ohio, during

CALIFORNIA SNOWS.

REGIONS WHERE WHOLE TOWNS HAVE BEEN BURIED.

The Winter of 1890 in Plumas County—Horses Had to Wear Snowshoes as Well as the Men—A Remarkable State.

THE popular impression of California is a region of perennial summer, where the orange, fig, lemon and pomegranate flourish and flowers bloom the year around; but this is true only of the lowland counties, says the New York Post. California is a remarkable state. Some of its counties are as large as many states and as barren as some very poor ones.

While California is famous as being the land of flowers and for its mild winters, it is also the land of extraordinary snowstorms, which may be seen under many and varying conditions. Perhaps the most attractive exhibitions are seen in southern California, where from the San Gabriel valley one can watch the snow falling in the mountains while standing in the orange groves, surrounded by flowers and all the conditions of summer. The mountains are then covered with snow down to the 2,500-foot level, and the dwellers in the valleys go up the trails and the mountain railroad and, bringing down huge snowballs and snow men, deposit them in the fields of wild flowers, effecting the change in fifteen or twenty minutes, to the wonder of the tourists.

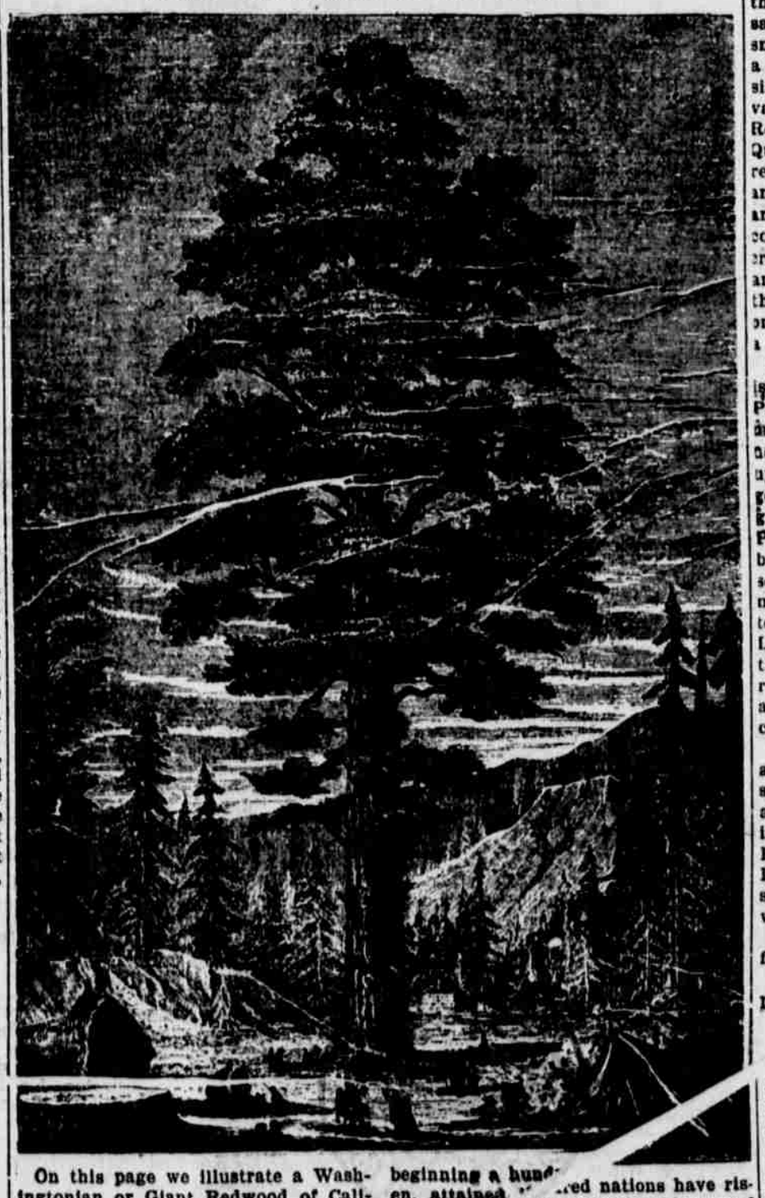
The winter of 1890 was one that will long be remembered in Plumas county. In the town of Quincy the snow was nine feet deep on the level without drifting, and where it drifted it was heaped up in literal snow mountains. It so happened that a man from the east was obliged to go to a town named Eureka Mills on some business of importance and after some difficulty obtained a guide who would take him over the mountains. Their horses wore snowshoes as well as the men, and some of the snow they passed over, judging from the trees, must have been forty or more feet deep. The supposed locality of the Mills was finally reached. The range of hills near which the town stood was there, but the town was, to all intents and purposes, wiped out. Finally smoke was seen rising from the snow, which, when approached, was found to come from a spliced chimney, far below which was a house; as the snow had fallen the occupants had spliced the chimney, keeping pace with the deposit.

Moving around the chimney, the strangers found a chute leading down at an angle of 45 degrees and entering slid down to what proved to be the attic window of the house, thence making their way down the stairs into the buried residence. The entire settlement was buried under this terrible bed of snow and families were living from ten to twenty feet below the surface, using lamps by day as well as by night. The men were all miners, and as the mines were under ground certain work was continued. But there was much suffering, as on coming out of the mines some of the men were often unable to find their homes. Finally every one planted in the snow over his house a flagstaff with a flag, but even these were sometimes buried by the constant storms of this long-to-be-remembered year. The snow in the deep canyons became so deep that the miners who lived in them had to leave, fearing the avalanches which came rushing down the mountain side after every fresh storm. Finally the more open canyons became unsafe and one day, with an appalling roar, huge masses of snow went rushing down, crushing a large part of the town of Sierra City.

Possibly the most famous town for its experiences with snow is Gibbonsville, in Sierra county. Photographs show the tops of tall houses projecting from snow on the level. Snow fifteen feet on the level is common there in February and March, while snow thirty feet deep is uncommon. Then the houses are almost covered, many small ones being entirely concealed, the owners having to climb up and clear away the snow so that it will not crush in the roofs. All communication with the outside world is often stopped for days, and for weeks the mail is carried by specially selected men, who traverse the mountain on snowshoes, often accomplishing remarkable feats on the long, slender skis which they use.

The number of public lamps lighted in England and Wales is somewhere about 300,000.

GIANT REDWOODS OF CALIFORNIA.



On this page we illustrate a Washingtonian or Giant Redwood of California. These were first called Wellingtonians, in honor of the Duke of Wellington. Naturalists named them "Wellingtonia gigantea," and by that name they are still known in European books. The reason for this name given is that they were reputed being been discovered by an Eng[illegible]ed to have and naturalist named [illegible]glish traveler tation arose in the [illegible] United States to have the trees call[illegible] Washington. T[illegible]d after the name of is sequoia gi[illegible]e true botanical name give an ide[illegible]gantea. It is difficult to these tre[illegible] of the height and size of obtain[illegible]s. Some conception may be com[illegible]d by noticing in the picture the b[illegible]parative sizes of the people at its [illegible]se. The tree in the picture is between 300 and 400 feet in height, and the age is probably greater than 3,000 years. When Alexander the Great was leading his victorious army over the plains of Asia this tree was 900 years old. When Caesar was fighting the barbarians in Britain, this tree had already felt the breezes of a thousand summers. In fact, when it reared its [illegible]en, attained [illegible]ed nations have risbeginning a hund[illegible] decayed. [illegible] their highest glory and its fo[illegible]rteen kings has come and gone; Ba[illegible]bylon, the golden kingdom, has seen its day and has disappeared; Media, Persia and Greece have extended their rule through slow-moving centuries, and lastly the Roman power, existing for a thousand years, has prevailed and fallen. Yet this tree lives on, green as ever, and bids fair to be a living monument of vegetable nature centuries after all existing nations have passed away.

There are many of these large trees grouped sometimes by two and three sometimes scattered among other varieties of forest growth. Some of them range from 20 to 30 feet in diameter, and have bark from 12 inches to 48 inches in thickness. In one locality there are, or were, 86 of these large trees within a circumference of a mile but for the most part they are scattered. They grow on rich black and well-watered soil. Probably these trees are the relic of a past age, an age of gigantic vegetables and of gigantic animals. They should be protected from the vandal and be carefully pre[illegible]

WOMEN USE TOBACCO.

SOCIETY WORKING TO DOWN THE USE OF CIGARETTES.

Empress of Austria Has the Habit—Much Rejoicing in Some Circles Over the Attitude of the Young Czarina.

MDECROIX, the delightful president of the Society for the Prevention of the Abuse of Tobacco, must have jumped for joy at reading in the papers that the young czarina is so opposed to the use of cigarettes that she is trying to take some action in her own immediate circle against the habit of smoking, which has become quite prevalent among women in the best society in Russia, says Les Annales.

M. Decroix would no doubt like to see the sovereigns of other countries imitate this example, for during the last few years the cigarette habit has been laying hold of women all over the world.

In France the association of men and women in all kinds of sports has been the cause of a greater degree of intimacy and has brought us to accept the cigarette, whose use is extending among young women of the most exclusive circles. Even the most critical no longer protest when two rosy lips send out a few puffs of smoke between a couple of games of tennis. Besides, our grandmothers loved tobacco. The Duchess of Chartres and the Duchess of Bourbon, under Louis XIV., even went so far as to smoke pipes; yes, pipes, my dears.

In all times Spanish women have smoked; and not only cigarettes, but cigars. Marbot, in his "Memoirs," tells us this without mincing matters. And they smoke in England and in the United States, although in the latter country it is only recently that women have begun to use tobacco. There was a story in Gil Blas not long ago to the effect that three young girls in Louisville, Ky., were seen smoking by a policeman and were arrested. The judge, although recognizing that the accused were not conforming to the proprieties, felt bound to release them because they were violating no law.

To confines one's observations to those in the highest places it may be said that the Empress of Austria smokes from thirty to forty cigarettes a day; the dowager empress of Russia smokes, but only in her own private apartments, while the Queen of Roumania, the Queen Regent of Spain, Queen Amalie of Portugal—who in this respect is following her mother's example—the wife of the Comte de Paris, and, lastly, the Queen of Italy, are all confirmed smokers. And yet M. Decroix is anxious that kings and princes and their august consorts should be the ones to set a good example! At one time, about two years ago, he had a hopeful moment.

It is well known that Queen Victoria is fond of snuff and that her son, the Prince of Wales, smokes cigars from morning until night. One day the newspapers announced that the prince, upon the advice of his physician, was going to give up smoking. There was great rejoicing in the Society for the Prevention of the Abuse of Tobacco, but prudence of the most elementary sort bade them take the precaution of making inquiries before indulging in too much rejoicing. So they wrote to London. Alas! The prince replied that there was no foundation for the report and that he was smoking just as he always had. At which M. Decroix nearly fell ill.

Another disappointment awaited him a few months after this. It was the sudden retirement of M. Casimir-Perier almost before he was fairly installed in the presidential chair. M. Casimir-Perier was the ideal president for M. Decroix, a president who did not smoke, or who smoked so little that it was not worth while mentioning.

M. Casimir-Perier resigned his office. And to whom?

To M. Felix Faure, who smokes a pipe!

Growth of Cities.

The fact that the big European cities have been growing so much faster than those of the United States is pointed out by Dr. Albert Shaw in his recent book on municipal government in Europe. In 1870 New York had 150,000 more people than Berlin; in 1880 Berlin had outstripped New York, and still maintains its lead. In 1875 Hamburg had 348,000 people and Boston 342,000; in 1890 Hamburg had 569,260 and Boston 448,000. Baltimore was once as big as Hamburg, but it has long been distanced. Breslau used to be smaller than Cincinnati; it has now distanced it. Cleveland and Buffalo and Pittsburg were all in 1880 bigger than Cologne, but Cologne was much the biggest in 1890. Dresden is growing more quickly than New Orleans. Hanover, though a sleepy place, is growing as qickly as Louisville or Jersey City.

Prince of Wales' Kindness.

The prince of Wales is ever the most thoughtful and kindly of men. Only a few mornings a go, attending the funeral services of a friend, I found his royal highness among the little congregation. It was as early as 10 o'clock in the morning, and the prince's duties are exceptionally arduous just now. The lady who had died was not among his most intimate friends, but a desire to show kindness and consideration for her sorrowing people drew him toward them at this hour of their grief and

GHOSTLY TEAS A PARIS FAD.

Uncanny 5 O'Clock Gatherings Under Phosphorescent Lights.

In the restless effort to find new means of stimulating the jaded appetites of social pleasure-seekers France holds her own well, says the Nashville Banner. Her latest and the most freakish idea is the "5 o'clock phosphorescent tea," which is a combination of the stock in trade of spiritualistic fakirs with the schoolgirl tricks of a juvenile party. Five o'clock in France just now is the twilight hour, when curtains are usually drawn and lamps are lit. Instead of lamps the guests, the furniture and the cups and saucers furnish the light at the phosphorescent teas. On walls, ceiling, divans, chairs, carpets and costumes there is spread a phosphorescent substance that absorbs light during the day and at night causes the room to glow with a weird, unholy light. The effect is said to be so unearthly that every one moves about the room with a cautious, timid step and the conversation is involuntarily carried on in subdued tones, as though a funeral were the subject under discussion. Ghastly and ghostly seem the guests, weird and woe-begone the faces of the servants who hand around the gleaming tea-cups, while the hostess, in her phosphorescent costume, looks like an unholy wanderer from the spirit world. All that is needed to make the illusion of unearthiness complete is the presence of the ghostly musicians, who, half hidden behind banks of phosphorescent shrubbery, produce slow and mythical melodies from instruments that sparkle and flame with the same substance that illuminates the tea room. The substance used is a patent mixture that is guaranteed not to emit an obnoxious odor. With the ordinary phosphorescence the company would either have to meet with doors and windows wide open, to allow the sulphuric smell to escape, or run the risk of asphyxiation. So much of a success has it become, in fact, that the phosphorescent ball is an event that will come off in Paris shortly. The programme for the ball is based on the same idea as the tea, and the effect will be still more weird and striking. Instead of the sulphuric guests sitting quietly around a room discussing tea and exchanging gossip couples wrapped in gleaming garments of dull flame will glide around the darkened ballroom like spirits of the departed in the deserted halls of a ruined mansion.

Not Afraid of a Mouse.

Young and pretty Miss Lillie Cosgrove entered the postoffice at Grand Bend, Pa., a few days ago with several young ladies, and, clasping one of her legs at a point above the knee, looked fixedly straight before her. "Girls," she whispered to her companions "when those men go out I want to tell you something." The men soon departed, and she released her grasp upon her skirts, when a dead mouse fell upon the floor. She felt the intruder cavorting about her, but she never screamed a scream or tried to mount the table or the letter boxes. She just gripped him, stood quiet and squeezed the life out of that rodent's body.

Exhausted Resources.

"What are you bothering your father about?" asked the boy's mother. "I want him to tell me a story, and he says he doesn't know any." "Perhaps he will make up one as he goes along." "I asked him to. But he said he had been testifying before an investigating committee all day, and it had used up all his material."—Washington Star.

Progress in the South.

"How long have you been on this route?" asked the drummer of the conductor on a primitive southern railroad.

"Ten yeahs, suh."

"Indeed? You must have gotten on several miles south of where I did."—Detroit Free Press.

Came from Europe.

There were 96,227 cabin passengers landed at the port of New York from Europe last year. The number of steerage passengers aggregated 252,350.

BOOKS AND AUTHORS.

Prosecutor Pobiedonostzeff is desirous of having Tolstoi tried by the [illegible] synod of Russia for heresy.

Boehm's characteristic statue of Carlyle on the Thames embankment [illegible] Chelsea is to have its replica placed [illegible] Edinburg.

Olive Schreiner is about to pay a visit to England. Although she has published little during recent years she has not by any means been idle.

W. Clark Russell, the English novelist, has been an invalid for nearly twenty years. His tales of the sea have all been written in his London house it having been over fifteen years since he has seen the sea.

Zola has recently declared that Max Nordau, the author of "Degeneration," is nothing more than a "literary drayman," who has swept into his barrow all the absurdities and lies which were floating about concerning progressive men.

A physician, who is also a man of letters, Dr. Gustave Toulouse, has examined Zola, explaining all the mental as well as the physical habits of the author, and concluding that he is a "superior degenerate." Zola was delighted.

Jules Verne is at present busy in the execution of a plan to publish a series of stories bearing on different countries. Unlike many authors, he thinks of the plot last, letting it form in his mind as he reads up geographical, historical and other books of scientific nature on the part of the world he is to treat.