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Published Saturday. Address all communications direct to the office. WESSIEL PRINTING CO. PUBLISHERS. Courier Building, 1122 N Street. TELEPHONE 253.

FAMOUS DEATH VALLEY.

A LAND OF DESOLATION WHERE FURNACELIKE HEAT PREVAILS.

Neither Man Nor Beast Able to Withstand the Awful Temperature—A Proposed Government Exploration—The Legend of the Princess's Curse.



ENTRANCE TO DEATH VALLEY.

California, near the Arizona line. Imagine a narrow strip of arid plain, shut in between two mighty mountain walls, the peaks stretching up into a burning sky.

"When," said one of the most experienced of travelers to the writer, "I stood at the entrance to the weird place there was something unearthly in the view. A gray haze, bounded by the fatal mirage, hung over the surface. The level of the basin, 175 feet below tidewater, was a blackish gray, with scarcely a piece of vegetation to rest the eye.

"Long before a white man ever looked upon the spot it was called Death valley by the natives on account of the direful influence it exerted upon man and beast. The ground between the lofty ridges that rise on either side is an alkali paste into which the horse sinks to his knees. Hair and hide are eaten away by the strong substance, and unless one can find the paths which cross the plain, death will come before half the distance has been passed."

There is something uncanny about the whole appearance of things in the valley—the absence of vegetation, the long, level reaches of white sand, looking in the twilight like a lake, and the quiet, which is unbreakable. But greatest and most fearful of all is the heat. As into a natural furnace the sun's rays are poured, without a cloud to mitigate the intensity. When Professor Gilbert, the famous geologist, succeeded in crossing a narrow arm of the valley almost twenty years ago, escaping only with his life, the thermometers in his saddle bags ran up to 150 degrees and then burst.

The first white man who ever visited Death valley was Capt. Bendire, a California Forty-niner. He made his attempt to cross it in 1849, and was unsuccessful in more than skirting the edge. He took back tales of the terrible place, and immediately a number of miners, excited by the additions to his recital made by the Indians, determined to explore the region in hopes of finding gold. Fitting themselves out with plenty of tools, and carrying enough water to last ordinarily for three days, they started, a company of four.

Slipping rapidly down from the shelf of rock that surrounds the plain, they found themselves in a journey of two miles 5,000 feet below the starting point. Their aim was a precipitous bluff on the opposite side, taking in what appeared to be an oasis with trees growing thereon midway across the valley. But their water supply diminished rapidly. The air, much drier than even that of Saham, and the great heat put their bodies through a kind of an evaporating process. So fast did this evaporation go on that a gallon of water only lasted as a pint in an ordinary atmosphere. Even with their abundant supply, before they had been out a day their blood grew thick and fever stared them in the face. Near where they camped the first night they found the dried up form of an Indian, and beside it a large gold nugget.

Wild with hope they toiled on, intending to push up to one of the gorges that reached into the valley from the west, at the head of which they hoped to find a spring. But they did not know which to seek, and after toiling to the head of one, and finding nothing but bare and parched rocks, one of the party went mad with heat, and they were forced to abandon him. Before night two more laid down to die, and the solitary survivor was clambering the rocks with feverish haste, endeavoring to escape from the alkali sink in which his friends had perished. They did not need burial. Their bodies shriveled up to mummylike forms, and may lie where they fell through all eternity, staring up at the brazen sky. The water at last reached civilization a mere skeleton of his former self.

In 1873 a party of emigrants was crossing the plains on the way to southern California.



LOOKING ACROSS THE VALLEY.

Arrived at the mountain range they saw three great chains stretched out before them, the Inyo and the Argus mountains forming the most westerly one, the Paramint being next to the east, and the Arangoza the third, still farther east and nearest them. East of the Arangoza range is the Arangoza desert, and to the west Death valley. They struggled across the former stretch of sand and cactus, and the horses were nearly worn out when they pulled into the awful region of the latter. They had not gone far when the animals grew too weak to pull the wagons. With a heroism worthy of the occasion, the unmarried men put the women and their husbands on the best horses and sent them over the back trail, believing that they would be able to reach the last stream that had been passed.

In a few moments a cloud of dust hid their friends from the eyes of the self-sacrificing band. The families succeeded in getting to water, and finally, having waited three days for the half dozen noble men behind to overtake them, pushed on to California. A year afterward two of these

brave fellows appeared broken down in health, and told how after a desperate effort they alone of the six had reached the mountains and been saved by a passing shower. Death valley itself never sees a shower. The rainfall is dissipated by the hot air, and even the tremendous storms in Arangoza valley, which send at times a river a mile in width around the end of the range and thence northward, never moisten the dry earth. The flood is dried up and lost before it has penetrated many rods into the ovenlike section.

At the south end of the valley are some deep pools, fed by wonderful underground springs. They never overflow, nor is it known that their level ever changes. Silent, dark and lonely, they are like great brown eyes looking up from the ghastly white stretch of horror. In them are found fish unknown elsewhere in the world, and which have no eyes. Surrounding the valley are other remarkable natural features. Sixty miles southeast is the Devil's Playground, a dreadful waste across which a furnace-like wind constantly blows. The black lava and hot sand of the plain radiate the heat of the sun, so that looking down from some eminence the whole landscape is tremulous to the eye, and seems instinct with life. Near this is Dead mountain, where the temperature is 140 degs. in the shade the year round. On the east side the precipitous rocks are much broken up, and the sun shining on the white points and angles makes the mountain look from a distance as if whole conventions of ghosts were there assembled. The Indians believe on this account that the place is the abode of their dead warriors. Hence its name, and the mystical tales which are connected with it.

But Death valley is not to remain a terra incognita. The United States government has planned an exploration which will, if such a thing is possible, lay bare its secrets. Two parties will go into the valley from opposite sides, and the department of agriculture will have the fruits of the expedition arranged at Washington and shown as a warning and a study. Especial attention will be given the animal life of the valley's environs, and if any living thing exists in the place itself specimens will be obtained. Experts will collect plants, woods, rocks, soil, and indeed everything possible. The explorers will carry an abundance of supplies, and will not venture into the valley until they have accurately located springs and streams, so that they can reach them in case of necessity.

Perhaps among the wonders of the strange region none is more noteworthy than the legend of the ruins of a pueblo or castle, said by the Indians to exist in Death valley, and which may have been the four miners' oasis. Long ago, so the tale runs, Death valley was a fertile kingdom presided over by a beautiful and fair haired queen. She commanded her subjects to build her a mansion, and for years



RUINS OF THE PUEBLO.

they toiled, dragging stones and wood across the level space between the mountains and the chosen site. As the palace neared completion her majesty grew impatient, and at last pressed even the prince, her daughter, into the service of the builders. Then, because the workmen seemed slow, she strode among them and lashed their naked backs with a heavy whip.

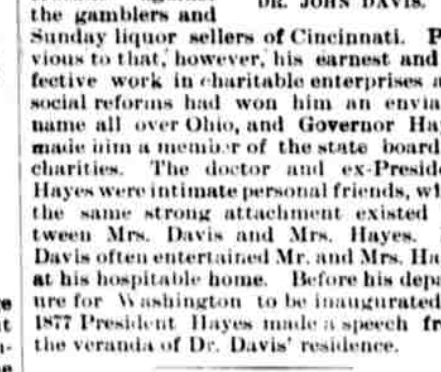
The laborers dared not complain, but when she struck her daughter, the slender girl, roused to wrath, cursed her mother and the valley, immediately dying as a result of the severe tasks she had been made to perform and the abuse heaped upon her. The sun never ceased thenceforth to pour its fiercest rays upon the kingdom, and it was made a desert, and the queen and her subjects died of thirst and heat. The pueblo, parched and baked, stands half completed, and in the almost constant mirage which floats over the valley its dim outlines, white and ghastly, are reported to be often visible.

CHARLES MOREAU HARBEE.

END OF A USEFUL LIFE.

The Career of Dr. John Davis, Who Expired Suddenly the Other Day.

Dr. John Davis, who died very suddenly one evening not long ago at his home in Cincinnati, had attained prominence not only as a physician but also in public affairs. He was a native of Ohio, and had reached his seventieth year when death's summons came. His wife, whom he married in 1849, survives him. Dr. Davis attained prominence outside his profession some years ago as president of the Law and Order league, which made a persistent and partially successful crusade against the gamblers and Sunday liquor sellers of Cincinnati. Previous to that, however, his earnest and effective work in charitable enterprises and social reforms had won him an enviable name all over Ohio, and Governor Hayes made him a member of the state board of charities. The doctor and ex-President Hayes were intimate personal friends, while the same strong attachment existed between Mrs. Davis and Mrs. Hayes. Dr. Davis often entertained Mr. and Mrs. Hayes at his hospitable home. Before his departure for Washington to be inaugurated in 1877 President Hayes made a speech from the veranda of Dr. Davis' residence.



DR. JOHN DAVIS.

A Minnesota Jury Experiment. An experiment in jurisprudence is being made in Minnesota which will be closely watched and the results carefully noted. By an amendment to the constitution five-sixths of a jury are authorized to render a verdict in all civil cases, and judged by the laws of common sense this is an eminently just and sensible conclusion. The decision of ten men out of twelve is more apt to be honest and reasonable than the enforced agreement which the twelve have reached after being imprisoned behind guarded doors for hours in order to drive or starve them into unanimity.

Marked Decrease of Insanity. Insanity shows a decrease in New York state according to the latest statistics. A forthcoming official report will show 523 cases of lunacy in 1890 as against 508 in 1889. About one-half the afflicted are from New York city and Brooklyn.

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TWO SINNERS.

There was a man, it was said one time, Who went astray in his youthful prime. Can the brain keep cool and the heart keep quiet

When the blood is a river that's running riot? And the boys will be boys, the old folks say, And the man's the better who's had his day.

The sinner reformed, and the preacher told O, the prodigal son who came back to the fold, And the Christian people threw open the door With a warmer welcome than ever before.

Wealth and honor was his to command, And a spotless woman gave him her hand, And the world eyed their pathway with flowers-a-bloom, Crying "God bless lady and God bless groom."

There was a maiden went astray, In the golden dawn of life's young day; She had more passion and heart than head, And she followed blindly where fond love led, And love unchecked is a dangerous guide, To wander at will by a fair girl's side.

The woman repented and turned from sin, But no door opened to let her in; The preacher prayed that she might be forgiven, But told her to look for mercy in heaven; For this is the law of earth, we know, That the woman is scorned, while the man may go.

A brave man wedded her after all, But the world said, frowning, "We shall not call."

Mr. Julian Hawthorne has in hand a History of Oregon, to be published next autumn, and a schoolbook, to appear about the same time; but, except his regular newspaper work, that is all. He is taking a year off, as it were.

Col. John Hay's sole occupation this winter will be the editing and preparing for the press of the Complete Works of Lincoln. He has received many proposals to write personal articles about Lincoln, but never intends to write anything more on that subject. Mr. Nicolay will write a few more articles for The Century, but the article in the November number is the last that Col. Hay will write.

Col. T. W. Higginson's main work this winter will be the Military and Naval History of Massachusetts, which has been officially entrusted to him by the state. He is also preparing a life of his ancestor, Francis Higginson, first minister of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and author of New England's Plantation. This is for Dodd, Mead & Co.'s series of Makers of America. Col. Higginson has also promised for January a lecture before the Nineteenth Century Club of New York on Americanism in Literature; or, The New World and The New Book; and he is to make the chief address at the centennial celebration of the Massachusetts Historical Society, in the same month. Besides this, he has a certain amount of regular work to do for The Nation and Harper's Bazar. Col. Higginson is in much better health this winter than last.

SOUTH LINCOLN.

R. Murphy left for Omaha Thursday.

Mrs. Eva Tait, of Kansas, is the guest of Mrs. T. W. Tait.

Miss Hattie Curtis and father left Tuesday for Chicago and will return Saturday.

Mrs. Funke, of Spirit Lake, Iowa, is visiting her sister, Mrs. Pearson, 1114 C street.

Mr. Jones, of Kansas City, was the guest Tuesday of Mrs. W. Gallup, 1441 Rose street.

Mrs. Maggie Doran, who has been visiting her mother and friends at Bedford, Iowa, returned Thursday.

Miss I. Hale arrived Tuesday from Wyoming and is visiting her mother, Mrs. Redfield, for a few days.

J. R. Burks, of Beatrice, was the guest of his brother, J. M. Burks, while attending the convention of Modern Woodmen.

Mrs. Harvey Glenn, of Biggsville, Ill., who has been visiting her parents, Mr. and Mrs. S. Small, returned home Thursday after a three weeks' visit.

George Moore, of Brownfield, a delegate of the Modern Woodmen, and also a nephew of Mr. Gallup, was their guest while attending the state convention.

The Young Ladies' Missionary society of the Plymouth Congregational church will give an entertainment at their church next Wednesday evening. The program will consist of music, singing and recitations. A small admission fee will be charged. Come one, come all, and enjoy a treat.

AUNT SAMANTHA.

Ladies will find a complete line of fine shoes and all the latest styles at the proper prices at Sherrin's Boston Shoe Store.