

sands for three or four miles," he says, then they left her on a sand-bar and walked ashore.

This recalls the case of the smart man who once sold a number of honest people through steamboat tickets from Pittsburg to Denver, by way of the Ohio, Mississippi, Missouri and Platte rivers.

Eight hours from Omaha, we come to the Forks of the Platte, which Fremont reached twenty-three days after he "sat out," as he called it. The difference between the two confluents is striking; the North Platte is a handsome stream, wide, swift and clear; the South resembles the lower Platte, most trifling of rivers. Here is the town of North Platte, whence Buffalo Bill emerges to astonish the world; here Fremont crossed the river, buried a barrel of pork for future reference, and divided his party, himself ascending the South Fork, in the direction of Long's Peak. We are therefore now in his immediate path; but not for long, for the Union Pacific presently quits the Platte and heads for the interior of Wyoming. Nothing happened to him in the interval, except that they found that the sugar had been forgotten, which so dampened the spirits of the party that they went to bed in the sulks. "The worst of these mishaps is," says the captain, significantly, "that they make people ill-humored;" and the next day the suffering German topographer was sent back to join the North Fork party.

It is still the same vast undefined valley; only immediately below the junction, have we seen anything like the richly-carved bluffs of the Missouri. A short distance above again, there appear certain yellow mud cliffs, steep to the river's edge; these are O'Fallon's Bluffs, a landmark on the old Pike's Peak trail, which was forced to leave the river-bottom and climb over them. The river, when we can see it at all, seems a most inconsiderable water-course; one would think that a man might cross it in the dark without knowing it was there; it is traversed at intervals by a kind of elevated sidewalk.

The railroad is a finer piece of work than the river; heavy rails, burnt ballast, today at least entirely free from dust, and the straightest of tracks. The gangs of laborers encountered at intervals display the brown faces and flashing smiles of southern Italy. Always, since we entered the Platte Valley, there has been a wagon road on one or both sides of the line; many are the farmers and school-children we have met, but never a horse has shied. The engines are not so heavy as the locomotives of some of the Eastern roads, but their six tall drivers tick off the rails at the rate of fifty to sixty miles an hour; their tires are all painted white, and every smoke-stack has a dish-pan on top of it, in the fashion of twenty years

ago, naturally gratifying to a CONSERVATIVE. One notices how short and stout are the telegraph poles used; many are seen fifteen to eighteen inches in thickness and not more than as many feet in height. Along here they seem subject to attack from some enemy, which makes large holes in them in which some kind of bird builds its nest. Or is there a bird that has the gift of excavating nest-holes in telegraph poles?

When bed-time comes we are traversing a cattle-country, where an occasional ranch and the omnipresent school-house are visible, but never a tree. Wild cactus and the habitations of the great red ant show that we are approaching the Rockies, and at Cheyenne, as we learn on the return trip, the Great Plains are past and the road strikes in among them. In fact, it is only about thirty miles to the highest point on the line, a windy jumble of those worn and rounded red rocks that characterize the lower divides of the Rocky Mountains. From this point a grand chain of peaks, the main snowy range, is in sight; southward, no less an individuality than Long's Peak, and you may even discern that sacred spot where the Pinto Hoss ate loco-weed, if the day is clear; to the north, a magnificent object called Elk Mountain, which remains in sight through the greater part of a day's ride; you lose it and you find it again; the entire circuit of its huge bulk is often revealed to you, a rare virtue among mountains, and today it is pure white from base to summit. It is the northern buttress of the Medicine Bow range, and the whole system hereabouts sends its meltings down the North Platte. Though it is the latter part of May, there is a great quantity of snow in sight; it lies thick in every draw and ravine, often close beside the track.

Now there is sage-brush everywhere, but it has been discovered that such country is good for sheep, and they swarm like bugs on many a mountain-side. Prairie-dogs do not seem to be numerous on this line, but one is seen occasionally, standing in his perennial amazement at the spectacle we present, his mouth open and paws pendent, as if he had just dropped his work. Here is a cliff near the track, at the foot of which is a wreckage of skeletons of sheep, which either drifted over the edge in a blizzard, or were stampeded over by wolves. Here is one of those malefactors, lean, mean and yellow, who slinks across the track after the train has passed. A frequent sight is the carcass of a steer in a corner of the wire fence; possibly the work of blizzards also. We stop to minister to a heated journal, and the passengers swarm out to treat their lungs to the air; a fat man steps to one side and, sighing, picks up the dried head of some

venerable ram with curling horns, which he says is the head of a mountain sheep, and which he, sighing, lashes with a great deal of string to the rear coupler of the train. He says it is to keep off the ghosts; it serves at least to make an honest brakeman swear when, at the next junction, another coach is hooked on behind.

Twenty-four hours from Omaha, we are traveling through a great basin or trough, whose sage-brush sides confine the view, and where only an occasional gap reveals some dim mountain-shape walking along the horizon. This is the continental divide; it is hours in length, but at the end of it we are in touch with the Pacific; for here is the historic Bitter Creek, whose waters, through the channels of the Green River and the Colorado, find their way into the Gulf of California. Fremont's route lies fifty miles to the north, through that natural gateway which the Oregon emigrants and the fur-traders employed, and which was called the South Pass because it was south of that found by Lewis and Clark in 1806 at the headwaters of the Missouri. Many travelers over the South Pass speak of the ease of the ascent from either side, and of the close scrutiny necessary to detect the point of the divide; it is so on this line; there is nothing like a sharp ridge to denote where the backbone of the continent lies. The manifest reason why the South Pass route was preferred is that it lay throughout in river valleys, assuring water and forage; whereas the Union Pacific traverses a veritable remnant of the mythical Great American Desert, and a feature of its traffic is a thing not met with on many roads, the water-car.

Presently we find ourselves on a down grade in a distinct valley, which soon narrows into a canyon with high rocky walls, and then we are thundering down a typical mountain gorge, where a fine impetuous river dashes around corners with a noise that rises above the racket of the train. The walls are garnished with an assortment of those peculiar souvenirs which the early travelers dedicated to the devil, with a lavishness that must have been embarrassing at times to that useful spirit. The West is full of slides, punch-bowls, teapots, gates and other odds and ends for which he can have really very little use. They are the things the tourists love to contemplate, however, and all hands are busy at the windows; the literary matching their adjectives against the Wahsatch Mountains, the pious extolling the wisdom and power of the Creator as manifested in the wonders of the Devil's Slide. We are behind time, and the train flirts around corners at a reckless rate, quite unmindful of the unhappy CONSERVA-