

of the parity of moneys. Has anyone ever heard a greater absurdity?

It seems to me that we can safely relegate the money issue to the rear and turn to the momentous questions that have sprung up since Mr. McKinley took office, and wherein all democrats are united in opposition to his policy.

JACOB SCHOENHOF.

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OLD BILL WILLIAMS.

Travelers who have wished to visit the Petrified Forest and the Grand Canon of the Colorado in Arizona, have hitherto been obliged to take an all-day's ride or drive overland from the station called Flagstaff on the Santa Fe road. Now however, a rail connection has been provided, a branch line running up from the little town of Williams.

This is a place where some Michigan people have not set up a sawmill, and it has its name from Bill Williams mountain, under which it lies. The mountain in turn perpetuates the memory of a singular individual, whose name is likewise borne by a river a little further west, and no doubt by other landmarks in the vicinity as well. Old Bill Williams was a hunter and trapper of the earliest days, one to be named alongside of Kit Carson, Maxwell, Peg-leg Smith and the other traditional heroes of the far southwest. He was one of the first of that race, and was always called "old Bill" as far as record or memory goes back. He was apparently somewhat demented, and many queer stories are told of him. He had been, by his own account, a Methodist circuit-rider back in the settlements, but he lived for a great many years among the Indians. He would make a long stay with one tribe, becoming fully acquainted with its language and customs, until the spirit moved him to depart to another. The familiarity with various dialects which he thus acquired is said to have made him very useful to missionaries, whom he would aid in translating their sacred writings into the aboriginal tongues. This seems to have been the last flicker of divinity within him, however, for his life in the mountains was a succession of the wildest and most erratic adventures. In this wild life he also gained such a knowledge of the ins and outs of the Rocky mountains that he has the credit of having been surpassed in this kind of lore by only one man—Major Jim Bridger.

One story that is told of him is that he once established himself as a storekeeper in a Mexican town, meaning to get rich by trade. But at the first controversy with a customer over prices he lost both his temper and his relish for a commercial life, fired his entire stock of goods into eternal smash in the middle of the street, while the appalled greasers looked on from a safe distance; then he seized his Hawkins rifle and put off on

foot for the mountains, where he could have things to suit him.

The Mexicans are said to have considered him a demoniac, or one possessed by an evil spirit; perhaps his eccentricities also contributed to his security among the wild Indians, who looked with awe on any manifestation of the unusual in nature, and whom Old Bill no doubt impressed as very big medicine.

Williams was one of those pioneers whose stories are strung along with that of that brilliant adventurer, John C. Fremont. His contact with him was unfortunate, perhaps for both, certainly for the old man, whose memory is consigned to lasting obloquy by the record Fremont has left of their relations. It was on the latter's fourth exploring expedition, in the winter of 1848-9, that, having planned to cross the mountains by a southerly route and in the dead of winter, in order, as he said, to judge of the obstacles to railroad operation that the seasons would present in that quarter. He engaged the services of Old Bill Williams as guide.

The expedition met, as the explorer stated in a letter to his wife, with "events which have been so singularly disastrous as absolutely to astonish me with a persistence of misfortune, which no precaution has been adequate on my part to avert." This he seems to have laid mainly to the charge of Old Bill Williams. "The error of our journey was committed in engaging this man. He proved never to have known in the least, or entirely to have forgotten, the whole region of country through which we were to pass." In support of this sweeping assertion concerning a famous specialist in that line, who had given twenty-five years to the study of the country, one might look for the writer to give some instances, but none is adduced. The party was in a blizzard on the crest of the divide, lost all its animals and many men, and was reduced (on the authority of Senator Benton) to cannibalism; not all, but a few of them. But instead of the venerable guide having been as totally at sea as the passage quoted would imply, we have the statement that the route followed was selected by reason of "his positive assertion that the pass was there." It would seem quite possible, therefore, that the guide was right, and that it was the weather that upset the explorer's plans.

There is also a further complication to this matter, in a statement made by the late Colonel Inman, a man who was very wise in the verbal traditions of that part of the country. "The old mountaineers contend", he says, "that if Fremont had profited by the old man's advice, he would never have run into that death-trap. Williams explained to him that it was perfectly impracticable to get over at that season. The general, however, ignoring the statement, listened to

another of his party, a man who had no such experience."

There seems at any rate to be two sides to this story, though no doubt Fremont's will be the only one known to such of posterity as shall ever hear of Old Bill Williams at all.

How long he lived after this unfortunate affair is not known to the writer, but at last he was killed by Indians, and was then, if he carried out his ante-mortem plans, transformed into a buck elk. For he held to the doctrine of the trans-migration of souls, and knew just what kind of an elk he was going to be, and used to describe his future characteristics to his friends, that they might not shoot him on meeting him, after his death, among the mountains.

So much for the town of Williams, Arizona.

A. T. R.

BUFFALO.

One benefit that may be looked for, if such a collection of original documents as the Chouteau family's files contain, comes into accessibility, will be that something like a posthumous census of the buffalo can be made. Although it would not be surprising if Colonel Chittenden's forthcoming "History of the Fur Trade," which is anxiously awaited by many, were found to contain statistics on this subject, which will inspire a gratifying degree of confidence, coming from so painstaking an investigator.

Those who have come on the scene since the disappearance of the buffalo, find it hard to understand how those animals could have existed on the plains in such numbers as is represented, or how they could have been exterminated to the last one in so short a time. Passages like the following, which occur constantly in all the earlier books of travel, represent a state of things which it is difficult for one at this day to depict to himself:

"They once ranged from the Alleghanies to the Rocky mountains, from the frozen lakes to the Tierras Calientes of Mexico."—"As numerous, apparently, as the sands of the seashore."—"The prairie was black from horizon to horizon with the shaggy monsters."—"Rode for three consecutive days (in 1868) through one continuous herd, which must have contained millions."—"The train (in 1869) was delayed from nine until five by the passage of a herd across the track. Our vision was only limited by the horizon, and the whole vast area was black with the affrighted buffaloes as they rushed onward to the south."—"I am confident we looked upon 40,000 of them from one point."—"The face of the earth appeared to be covered with them."—"1350 square miles of country so thickly covered with these noble animals that when viewed from a height it scarcely afforded a sight of a square league of its surface."