

snow-plow. Here there is sage brush and a branching cactus that grows into little bushes, and one single prairie dog is espied. The roads may be traced at a distance by a smoke of white dust following some chance cowboy on his pony or Mexican on his burro. One looks to be overwhelmed with dust in the car, but for some reason the dust does not appear. How it is prevented is not clear; one is used to being smothered with dust on railroads in much less dusty countries. It is clear we are getting further south. Windows are open here and there through the train and people sitting by them bareheaded; the sun is warm, the air balmy, no wind stirring; it is like one of those inspiring days of which we in the northern states get one in the early spring of some years, and in other years none at all. Can this be their home? New Mexico would perhaps not be such a bad place to live in that case; and in truth the inhabitants say it is not. All the two hundred passengers are rejoicing in the sun and air. The number of old people, very old, wrinkled, white-haired, trembling people, on the train is noticeable; one can but hope that California, whither they, with most of the other passengers are bound, may have nothing worse in store for them than this day.

Along the rim of the plain to the west are the mountains, the Rockies; always a few shining white peaks in sight, among which one is evidently Taos Peak, a handsome broad, square topped mountain. This is the region to which a number of the famous frontiersmen retired, when they began to be attracted with advancing years, by the idea of a life, not *too* quiet, but more restful than the life of the rifle and the pack. Here is Maxwell City, named for a companion of Carson and Fremont, who married a daughter of Colonel St. Vrain (or of Beaubien, some say) and owned at one time nearly two million acres of land surrounding this town. Maxwell is long dead, but his huge ranch is said to be still intact, being now the property of a German syndicate. And here is Wagon Mound, a famous landmark on the old trail; but it is perplexing to find *two* mounds, one on each side of the railroad, each having on its rounded summit, the distinct dome with clean-cut sides which the plainsmen likened to a wagon top. Just below here the two branches of the trail, which diverged away back on the Arkansas, reunited. Here Colonel Doniphan's regiment was encamped for two days and "an adventurous fellow by the name of George Walton" gained renown among his comrades by clambering to the top of the wagon.

#### The Pecos.

"Las Vegas;—forage purchasable." This is the extent of Captain Marcy's comment in his old itinerary, but it is less than justice today. Forage is still

purchasable in Las Vegas, but it is dealt out at a hotel that it is an artistic pleasure to look at, and consists of such a dinner as travelers seldom meet; too good for any but a very honest traveler, to misquote an old writer. Here too, one meets with a surprising mark of consideration from the manager, who approaches each table in the course of the meal and remarks in a confidential tone that we have some twenty minutes yet to spare; a pleasing courtesy indeed; one would think he might have traveled himself, and after galloping through a wayside meal, seen the engine stand sizzling on a side track for half an hour, waiting for a connection. This jewel among eating houses is called after Castaneda, a private soldier of Coronado's band, whose diary is one of the classics of this region; let us hope that he found something particularly good to eat when he passed this way 360 years ago.

Now we are in the Pecos valley, and we have to cross over into that of the Rio Grande, the Great or Brave River of the North, as the Spanish called it. It is but 65 miles and yet it takes the rest of the day, and one could wish it might take a week, for it is (in the writer's opinion) one of the beautiful rides of the country. Its beauty consists in this, that while it is a mountain road, winding in and out between the bright sunshine and shady recesses where snow banks lie, yet its path lies for hours high up on the mountain side, where the observer overlooks the valley of the Pecos far and wide and has the main chain of the Snowy Range always to hem in his view in the distance. Perhaps the main charm of it is in the nature of the Pecos valley itself, which is a thing as different from a valley in the Alleghanies as it is from a Rocky Mountain gorge. It is wooded, and the trees are evergreen, while the soil is red; and it is a world by itself, full of little hills and valleys of its own, and puzzling effects in light and shade, and so vast that one can only guess at sizes and distances in the great panorama that lies before him. When you have not seen it before, and are not expecting it, and hardly know what it is, and do not at all know where the train is going next nor what new variation the next curve will bring in sight, when, in a word, novelty and expectation add their peculiar charm to a landscape wonderfully charming in itself, you are likely to find this altogether the part you will remember longest out of a ride that has not contained a dull mile from its beginning.

#### The Old Church.

The business done on this road is evidently enormous. All trains seem to be drawn by two locomotives, with sometimes one or two more to help them uphill; the one in front is equipped with a light snow-plow as a seasonable precaution. So huge and heavy are these

engines that it seems incredible that one of them should need help in pulling any train whatever; the conclusion one comes to is that the limit of possible power in the individual locomotive has been reached in them, so that when still more power is demanded it can only be secured by doubling them up. We meet, it seems, miles of freight trains in this afternoon's run, bearing the fruits of California and the wares of the Orient to the East and Europe. We come to a standstill on a shelf on the mountain side; above us on our left rises a snow streaked cliff, on the right deep down below us and running off into infinite distances is the fascinating Pecos valley. We are in no hurry; this is good enough. We lean from the window and enjoy all the pleasures provided for the senses of seeing, smelling and *breathing* in this historic region. Back, by the way we have come, the striking outline of Starvation Peak arrests the eye; how did this prospect look to those whose crosses still peer over the edge of that rock at the stream of traffic passing beneath? Then here comes the train we are waiting for; the two iron monsters that lead it swim gently by our windows, immense, slow, irresistible; all in black, with their boiler-iron cabs, they are more like battleships than like ordinary locomotives; each has its one great gun pointing skyward, and the muffled thunder of their exhausts quickens to a volley as they pass over the switch and plunge onward toward the valley below.

"Look, look quick," says the well-informed person, passing down the aisle; "that red blotch yonder is the ruins of the old Pecos church, built in 1537." Whether his chronology is correct or not the old Pecos church is a most interesting fact. But there were two churches there, one "Aztec" and one Catholic; there was also a pueblo, said to be worth digging into to this day. The vast original extent of these sanctuaries is shown by the number of paintings and other loot from the "old Pecos church" for sale at surprising bargains in the shops of Santa Fe; but this is verging on archaeology, which is too large a subject to be broached in this paper.

#### Coronado.

What appears to be certain is that the explorer Coronado, of whom Nebraskans have heard a good deal, passed through that now deserted village before us, both going and coming, in his expedition in search of golden cities on the plains more than three centuries and a half ago. And it seems wonderful, and somewhat shameful as well, to an amateur investigator from Nebraska, where we are in doubt as to the course of trails traveled by a mighty emigration only forty years ago, to hear the students in this country say, in speaking of that straggling ancient band, "behind that