

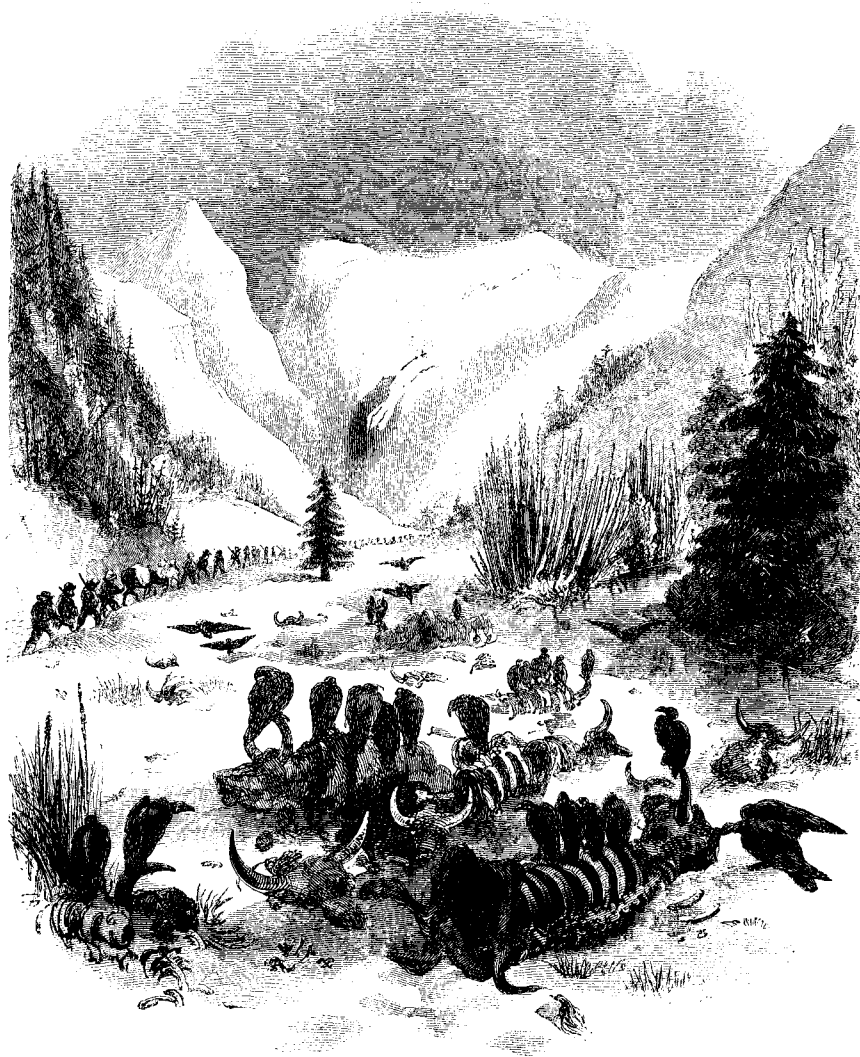
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A PEEP AT WASHOE.

BY J. ROSS BROWNE.

[Third Paper.]



CARSON VALLEY.

AS luck would have it, a perfect hurricane sometimes in gusts so sudden and violent that swept through the cañon from Gold Hill; it was utterly impossible to make an inch of

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headway. Tents were shivered and torn to shreds all along the wayside. I saw one party sitting at breakfast, with nothing but the four posts which had originally sustained their tent and a few fragments of canvas flapping from them as a protection against the wind. Nothing could withstand its terrific force. Cabins with bush tops were unroofed; frame shanties were rent asunder, and the boards flew about like feathers; the air was filled with grit and drift, striking the face as if the great guns, which are sometimes said to blow, were loaded with duck-shot. Nor did the wind confine itself to one channel. It ranged up hill and down hill, raking the enemy fore and aft. In one place two tents were torn up, as one might say, by the roots, and carried off bodily to the top of the mountain; in another, half a dozen might be seen traveling down hill, at the rate of forty miles an hour, toward the Flowery Diggings. What became of all the unfortunate wretches who were thus summarily deprived of their local habitations I never learned. Most likely they sought refuge in the coyote holes, which, in fact, appeared to be untenanted; for I don't think coyotes could live long in such a country.

A short distance beyond Gold Hill a trail strikes off to the right, which is said to cut off four or five miles of the distance to Carson City. That would be a considerable gain to a traveler making his escape from Virginia City, and whose every step was attended with extreme physical suffering, to say nothing of the mental disquietude occasioned by his proximity to that place. Besides, it avoided the "Devil's Gate," of which I had also an intense dread. What hordes of dark and inexorable imps might be lying in wait there, with pitchforks to impale a poor fellow upon, and kegs of blasting powder to blow him up; what accounts might have to be rendered of one's stewardship at head-quarters; what particular kind of passport, sanded over with brimstone and stamped with a cloven foot, might be demanded—it was not possible to conjecture. At all events, it was safer to incur no risk. The old adage of the "longest way round" did not occur to me.

I took the trail, and was soon out of sight of Gold City. The mountains were covered with snow, not very deep, but soft and slippery. In my weak state, with a racking rheumatism and the prostrating effects of the arsenic water, the labor of making headway against the fierce gusts of wind and keeping the trail was very severe. Every few hundred yards I had to lie down in the snow and await some relief from the paroxysms of pain. After an hour or two I reached a labyrinth of hills, in which the trail became lost by the melting of the snow. I still had some idea of the general direction, and kept on. My progress, however, was very slow, and at times so difficult that it required considerable effort of mind to avoid stopping altogether, and "taking the chances," as they say, in this agreeable region. Now all this may seem very absurd, as compared with the sufferings endured

by Colonel Frémont in the Rocky Mountains, and doubtless is, in some respects. As, for instance: I was not shut up in a gorge of the mountains, a thousand miles from the habitations of man; I was not in a state of starvation, though thin enough for a starved man in all conscience; I was not at all likely to remain in any one position, however isolated, without being "spotted" by some enterprising miner in search of indications. But then, on the other hand, I was thoroughly dredged with arsenic, plumbago, copperas, and corrosive sublimate, and had neither mule nor "burro"—not even a woolly horse to carry me. Does any body pretend to say that the renowned Arctic explorers ever encountered such a series of hardships as this? Four or five months of perpetual night, with the thermometer 80° below zero, may be uncomfortable; but then the adventurer in the Polar regions has the advantage of being the furthest possible distance from certain other regions—say, from Virginia City.

About noon I came to the conclusion, that however willing the spirit might be the flesh had done its best, and was now quite used up; so I stretched myself on the snow under a cedar bush, and resolved to await what assistance Providence might send me. I was not long there when a voice in the distance caught my ear. I rose and called. In a few minutes a mysterious figure emerged from the bushes at the mouth of a cañon a few hundred feet below. I beckoned to him to come up. The singular appearance and actions of the man attracted my attention.

His face was nearly black with dirt, and his hair was long and shaggy. On his head he wore a tattered cap, tied around the chin with a blue cotton handkerchief. A tremendous blue nose, a pair of green goggles, and boots extending up to his hips, completed the oddity of his appearance. At first he approached me rapidly; but at the distance of about fifty yards he halted, as if uncertain what to do. He then put down his pack, and began to search for something in the pockets of his coat—a knife, perhaps, or a pistol. Could it be possible this fellow was a robber, who had desecrated me from the opposite mountain, and was now bent upon murder? If so, it would be as well to bring the matter to an issue at once. I was unarmed—having even lost my penknife by reason of a rent in my pocket. There were desperate characters in this wilderness, who would think nothing of killing a man for his money; and although I had only about forty dollars left, that fact could not possibly be known to this marauder. His appearance, to be sure, was not formidable; but then one should not be too hasty in judging by appearances. For all I knew he might be the—Old Gentleman himself on a tour of inspection from Virginia City.

"Hallo, friend!" said I, assuming a conciliatory tone, "where are you bound?"

Upon this he approached a little closer. I soon perceived that he was a German Jew, who

had either lost his way or was prospecting for silver. As he drew near, he manifested some signs of trepidation—evidently being afraid I would rob him of his pack, in which there was probably some jewelry or old clothes. It is hardly necessary for me to say that I had no intention of robbing him. I had not come to that yet. There was no telling to what straits I might be reduced; but as long as I had a dollar in my pocket, I was determined to avoid highway robbery. Besides, it was beyond my strength at this particular crisis—a fact which the Jew seemed to recognize, for he now approached confidently. His first exclamation, on reaching the spot where I stood, was—

“Dank Gott! Ish dis de trail?”

“Where are you bound?”

“To Carson. I pe going to Carson, and I pe losht for six hours. Mein Gott!

It ish an awful country. You know the way?”

“Of course. You don’t suppose I’d be here if I didn’t know the way?”

“Dat is zo.”

“Come on, friend; I’m going in that direction. But don’t walk very fast—I’m sick.”

“Zo? Was is de matter?”

“Poisoned.”

“Mein Gott! mein Gott! Das is awful.”

“Very—it makes a fellow so weak.”

“Mein Gott! Did dey poison you for your money?” And here the Jew put his hands behind him to see if his pack was safe.

“Oh no, it was only the water—arsenic and copperas.”

“Zo!”

This explanation apparently relieved him of a very unpleasant train of thought, for he now became quite lively and talkative. As we trudged along, chatting sociably on various matters of common interest, it occurred to me from time to time that I had seen this man’s face before. The idea grew upon me. It was not a matter of particular importance, and yet I could not banish it. His voice, too, was familiar. Cer-



AN OLD FRIEND.

tainly there was something about him that possessed an uncommon interest.

“Friend,” said I, “it occurs to me I’ve seen you before.”

“Zo? I dink de same.”

Some moments elapsed before I could fix upon the occasion or the place. All at once the truth flashed upon me. It was Strawberry Flat! I had slept with the man! This was the identical wretch who had robbed me of my stockings! In the excitement produced by the discovery and the recollection of my blistered feet, I verily believe, had I been armed with a broadsword or battle-axe, after the fashion of Brian de Bois Guilbert, I would have cloven him in twain.

“Ha! I remember; it was at Strawberry! You slept with me one night,” said I, in a tone of suppressed passion.

“Das is it! Das is it!” cried the Jew. “I shlept mit you at Sthrawberry!”

The effrontery of the villain was remarkable. Probably he would even acknowledge the theft.

“Friend,” said I, calmly and deliberately, “did you miss a pair of woollen stockings in the morning about the time you started?”

"Look here!" quoth the wretch, suddenly halting, "was dey yours?"

"They were!"

At this the abominable rascal doubled himself up as if in a convulsion, shook all over, and turned almost black in the face. It was his mode of laughing.

"Well, I daught dey was yours! I daught to myself, mein Gott! how dat fellow will shwear when he find his sthockings gone!"

And here the convulsions were so violent that he fairly rolled over in the snow, and kicked as if in the agonies of death. It was doubtless very funny to rob a man of his valuable property and cause him days of suffering from blistered feet; but I was unable to see any wit in it till the Jew regained his breath and said:

"Vel, vel! I must sthand dhreat for dat! I know'd you'd shwear when you missed 'em. Vel, vel! das is goot! Here's a flask of first-rate brandy—dhrink!"

I took a small pull—medicinally, of course. From that moment my forgiveness was complete. I harbored not a particle of resentment against the man, though I never again could have entertained implicit confidence in his integrity.

In due time we reached the banks of Carson River at a place called Dutch John's, distant about four miles from Carson City. I have an impression that John was an emigrant from Salt Lake. He had brought with him a woman to whom he was "sealed," and was the father of a thriving little family of "cotton-heads." Some of the stage-drivers who were in the habit of taking a "smile" at John's persuaded him that he was now among a moral and civilized people, and must get married. To be "sealed" to a woman was not enough. He must be spliced according to Church and State, otherwise he would wake up some fine morning and find himself hanging to a tree. John had heard that the Californians were terrible fellows, and had a mortal dread of Vigilance Committees. The stage-drivers were rather a clever set of fellows, and no way strict in morals; but then they might hang him for fun, and what would be fun to them would be death to him. There was some charm in living an immoral life, to be sure; yet it would not do to enjoy that disreputable course at the expense of a disjointed neck. On the whole, John took the advice of the stage-drivers, and got married. Next day he rode through the streets of Carson, boasting of the adroit manner in which he had escaped the vengeance of the Vigilance Committee. I am happy to add that he is now a respectable member of the community. Not that I recommend his whisky. I consider it infinitely worse than any ever manufactured out of tobacco-juice, Cayenne-pepper, and whale-oil at Port Townsend, Washington Territory, where the next worst whisky in the world is used as the common beverage of the inhabitants.

Leaving John's we came to the plain. Here the sand was heavy, and the walking very monotonous and tiresome. This part of Carson

Valley is a complete desert. Scarcely a blade of grass was to be seen. Shriveled sage-bushes scattered here and there over the sand were the only signs of vegetation. Even the rabbits and sage-hens had abandoned the country. All the open spaces resembled the precincts of a slaughter-house. Cattle lay dead in every direction, their skulls, horns, and carcasses giving an exceedingly desolate aspect to the scene. Near the river it was a perfect mass of corruption. Hundreds upon hundreds of rotting carcasses and bleached skeletons dotted the banks or lay in great mounds, where they had gathered for mutual warmth, and dropped down from sheer starvation. The smell filled the air for miles. Thousands of buzzards had gathered in from all parts to the great carnival of flesh—presenting a disgusting spectacle as they sat gorged and stupefied on the foul masses of carrion, they scarcely deigning to move as we passed. In the sloughs bordering on the river oxen, cows, and horses were buried up to the necks where they had striven to get to the water, but from excess of weakness had failed to get back to the solid earth. Some were dead, others were dying. Around the latter the buzzards were already hovering, scarcely awaiting the extinction of life before they plunged in their ravenous beaks and tore out the eyes from the sockets. On the dry plain many hundreds of cattle had fallen from absolute starvation. The winter had been terribly severe, and the prolonged snows had covered what little vegetation there was. Those of the settlers who had saved hay enough for their stock found it more profitable to sell it at \$300 a ton and let the stock die. Horses, oxen, and cows shared the same fate. Many lingered out the winter on the few stunted shrubs to be found on the foot-hills, and died just as the grass began to appear. It was a hard country for animals of all kinds. Those that were retained for the transportation of goods were little better than living skeletons, yet the amount of labor put upon them was extraordinary. In Virginia City it was almost impossible to procure a grain of barley for love or money. Enormous prices were offered for any kind of horse-feed, by men who had come over on good horses, and who wished to keep them alive. At the rate of five dollars a day it required but a short time for the best horse to "eat his head off." Hay was sold in little wisps of a few pounds at sixty cents a pound, barley at seventy-five cents, and but little to be had even at those extravagant rates. A friend of mine from San Francisco, who arrived on a favorite horse, could get nothing in the way of feed but bread, and he paid fifty cents a loaf for a few scanty loaves about the size of biscuits to keep the poor animal alive. It was truly pitiable to see fine horses starving to death. The severity of the weather and the want of shelter were terribly severe on animals of every kind. Good horses could scarcely be sold for a tenth part of their cost—though the distance across the mountain could be performed under ordinary circumstances in two days. But where all was rush and confu-

sion there was little time to devote to the calls of humanity. Men were crazy after claims. Every body had his fortune to make in a few months. The business of jockeying had not grown into full vogue, except among a few who were always willing to sell at very high prices and buy at very low—a remarkable fact connected with dealers in horse-flesh.

The walk across Carson Valley through the heavy sand had exhausted what little of my strength remained, and I was about to give up the ghost for the third time, when a wagoner from Salt Lake gave me a lift on his wagon and enabled me to reach the town. Here my excellent friend Van Winkle gave me another chance in his bunk, and in the course of a few days I was quite recruited.

The courteous reader who has followed me so far will doubtless be disappointed that I have given so little practical information about the mines. *Touching that I can only say, as Macaulay said of Sir Horace Walpole, the constitution of my mind is such that whatever is great appears to me little, and whatever is little seems great.* The serious pursuits of life I regard as a monstrous absurdity on the part of mankind—especially rooting in the ground for money. The Washoe mines are nothing more than squirrel-holes on a large scale—the difference being that squirrels burrow in the ground because they live there, and men because they want to live somewhere else. I deny and repudiate the idea that any man really has any necessity for money. He only thinks he does—which is a most unaccountable error.

But then you may have some notion of going to Washoe yourself—just to try your luck. Good friend, let me advise you—don't go. Stay where you are. Devote the remainder of your life to your legitimate business, your wife, and your baby. Don't go to Washoe. If you have no money, or but little, you had better go to—any other place. It is no retreat for a poor man. The working of silver mines requires capital. A poor man can not make wages in Washoe. If you are rich and wish to speculate—a word in your ear.



HOLDING ON TO IT.

"The undersigned is prepared to sell at reasonable prices" (this I quote from one of my advertisements) "valuable claims in the following companies:

The Dead Broke,	The Fool Hardy,
The Rip Snorter,	The Ousel Owl,
The Love's Despair,	The Grab Game,
The Ragged End,	The Riff-Raff.

The titles to all these claims are perfect, and the purchaser of any claim will have no difficulty whatever in holding on to it."

I hope it will not be inferred from the desponding tone of my narrative that I deny the existence of silver in Washoe, for certainly nothing is farther from my intention. That there is silver in the Comstock Lead, and in great quantities, is a well-established fact. How many thousands of tons may be there, it is impossible for me to say, but there must be an immense quantity—beyond all calculation in fact, as the ore is scattered all around the mines in great heaps, and every heap is said to be worth a fortune if it would only bear transportation to San Francisco at an expense of \$600 per ton. The best of it is sorted out and packed off on mules every day or two, partly to get the silver out of it, and partly to show the speculators in San Francisco that the mines have not yet given out. The yield per ton is estimated at from \$1200 to \$2500. During the time of my visit to the mines but little work could be done on account of the number of speculators who were engaged in trying to sell out, few of them being disposed to engage in the slow operation of mining. Some said it was on account of the weather, but I suspect the weather had very little to do with it. The following is a rough estimate of the Companies who claim to hold in the Comstock vein:

Billy Choller.....	1820 feet
Hill and Norcross.....	250 "
Goold and Curry.....	300 "
Savage.....	800 "
Washoe.....	1200 "
Belcher and Best.....	223 "
Sides Ground.....	500 "
Murphy.....	100 "
Kinney.....	60 "
Central.....	100 "
California.....	250 "
Walsh and Bryan.....	50 "
Central (again).....	150 "
Ophir.....	200 "
Mexican.....	100 "
Continuation of Ophir.....	1200 "
Newman, Scott, and Co.....	300 "
Miller Co.....	3000 "
Bob Allen and others.....	900 "

Besides about forty miles of outside claims, said to be on a direct line with the Comstock, and to be richer if any thing than the original vein.

When I left, the prices asked for a share in any of the above companies ranged from \$200 to \$2000 per running foot, and it was alleged that the purchaser could follow his running foot through all its dips, spurs, and angles. Some of these companies numbered as high as two or



CROPPINGS.

three hundred. I know a gentleman who sold out all his assets and invested the proceeds, \$800, in 8 inches of the Central, and another who mortgaged his property to secure five feet in the Billy Choller. These gentlemen are, in all probability, at this moment worth a million of dollars each.

In short, the whole country looks black, blue, and white with silver, and where there is no silver there are croppings which indicate sulphurets or copperas.



HONEST MINER.

The Flowery Diggings were in full flower; and if they have since failed to realize the expectations that were then formed of them it must be because the Mammoth lead gave out, or Lady Bryant did not sustain her reputation.

To the honest miner I have a word to say. You are a free-born American citizen—that is, unless you were born in Ireland, which is so much the better, or in Germany, which is better still. You live by the sweat of your brow. You are God's noblest work—an honest man. The free exercise of the right of suffrage is guaranteed to you by the glorious Constitution of our common country. Upon your vote may depend the fate of millions of American freemen, nay, fate of Freedom itself, and the ultimate destiny of mankind. I do not appeal to you on the present occasion for any personal favor. Thank Fortune, I am beyond that. But in the name of common sense, in the name of our beloved State, in the name of the great Continental Congress, I do appeal to you if you have a claim in California **HOLD ON TO IT!** Don't go pirouetting about the country in search of better claims, abandoning ill that you are well acquainted with, and flying to others that you know nothing about. If you do, you may find it "a gloomy prospect."



"A GLOOMY PROSPECT."

I was now, so to say, permanently established at Carson City. In other words, it was questionable whether I should ever be able to get away without resorting to the intervention of friends, which was an alternative too revolting for human nature to bear. The only resource left was "The Agency." I had forgotten all about it hitherto, and now resolved to call at the Express office, and see what fortune might be in store for me. Surely the advertisement must have elicited various orders of a lucrative nature. Nor was I disappointed. A package of letters awaited me. Without violating any confidential obligations, I may say, in general terms, that the contents and my answers were pretty much as follows:

A.—Wishes to know what the prospect would be in Washoe for a young man of the medical profession. Has a small stock of drugs, and proposes to engage in the practice of medicine, and at the same time keep a drug store.

Answer.—Doctors are already a drug in Washoe. Brandy, Whisky, and Gin are the only medicines taken. Bring over a lot of good liquors, prescribe them at two bits a dose, and you will do well. Charge, \$10—please remit.

B.—Has about twenty head of fine American cows. Would like to sell them, and wishes a contract made in advance.

Answer.—Could find nobody who wanted to pay cash for cows. Money is scarce and cows are plenty. Have sold your cows, however, for the following valuable claims: 25 feet in the Root-Hog-or-Die; 40 feet in the Let-her-Rip; 50 feet in the Gone Case; and 100 feet in the You Bet. Charge, \$25, which please remit by Express.

C.—Would like to know if a school could be established in Washoe with any reasonable prospect of success. Has been engaged in the business for some years, and is qualified to teach the ordinary branches of a good English education, or, if desired, Greek and Latin.

Answer.—No time to waste in learning here, and no use for the English language, much less Greek or Latin. A pious missionary might find occupation. One accustomed to mining could develop what indications there are of a spiritual nature among the honest miners. No charge.

D.—Wishes to invest about \$1500 in some good claims. Has three or four friends who will go in with him. Is willing to honor a draft for that amount. Hopes I will strike something rich.

Answer.—Have bought a thousand feet for you in the very best silver-mines yet discovered. They are all in and about the Devil's Gate. Several of them are supposed to be in the Comstock Ledge. They are worth \$50,000 this moment; but if you can sell them in S. F. for an advance of \$2000 do so by all means, as the silver may give out. Charge, \$400 or nothing.

E.—Has been in bad health for some time, and thinks a trip across the mountains would do him good. Please give him some information about the road and manner of living. How about lodgings and fare? Is troubled with the bronchitis, and wishes to know how the climate would be likely to affect it.

Answer.—Hire a mule at Placerville, and if you are not too far gone the trip may benefit your bronchial tubes. The road is five feet deep by 130 miles long, and is composed chiefly of mountains, snow, and mud. Lodgings—from one to two hundred lodgers in each room, and from two to four bedfellows in each bed. Will not be troubled long with the bronchitis. The water will probably make an end of you in about two weeks. Charge—nothing.

F.—Is a lawyer by profession, and desires to establish a business in some new country. Thinks there will be some litigation at Washoe in connection with the mines. Wishes to be informed

on that point, and would be obliged for any general information.

Answer.—About every tenth man in Washoe is a lawyer. There will doubtless be abundance of litigation there before long. Would advise you to go to some other new country, say Pike's Peak, for instance. Respecting things generally, Miller and Rodgers are going up and whisky down. Charge, 50 cents. Please remit.

G.—Thinks of taking his family over to Washoe. How are the accommodations for women and children? And can servants be had?

Answer.—Keep on thinking about that or something else, but don't attempt to carry your thoughts into effect. If you do, your wife must wear the—excuse me—she must wear male apparel. For accommodations, yourself and family might possibly be able to hire one bunk two feet by six; and you might seduce a Digger Indian to remain in your domestic employ by giving him \$2 in cash and a gallon of whisky per day. Charge—nothing.

H.—Has a house and lot worth about \$10,000. Would like to trade it for some good mining claims. Can not sell the property for cash on account of a difficulty about the title; but this you need not mention, as it can probably be adjusted for a reasonable consideration.

Answer.—Have traded your house and lot for 100 feet in the Pine Nut, 50 do. in the Ousel Owl, 50 do. in the Salmon Tail, 25 in the Roaring Jack, and 25 in the Amador. These are all good claims, and it will make no difference about the title to your house and lot, as each claim in the above-mentioned companies has also several titles to it. Charge, \$500. Please remit.

I.—Is in the stove business, and understands that cast-iron stoves bring a high price in Washoe. Has some notion of sending over a consignment. Please state expenses and prospect of success.

Answer.—Stoves are very valuable in Washoe, especially cooking-stoves. It costs from 25 to 50 cents per pound to get them over on mule-back, at which prices they can be sold for claims, but not for money. If you have any very young stoves that can be planted, as the Schildbergers planted the salt, a good crop of them can be sold. Charge—nothing.

J.—Is inventor of a process for extracting silver out of the crude ore, without smelting. The machinery is simple, and would easily bear transportation. Could the patent-right be sold in Washoe?

Answer.—Nothing is more needed here than just such an invention as yours. Bring it over by all means. If you can extract silver out of the general average of the ore found here, either by smelting or otherwise, you will do a splendid business. Charge, \$50. Please remit.

K.—Understands that lumber is \$300 a thousand in Virginia City. Can be delivered at the wharf in San Francisco from the Mendocino Mills for about \$20 a thousand. Would it be practicable to get any quantity of it over, so as to make the speculation profitable?

Answer.—You are correctly informed as to the value of lumber in Washoe. A balloon might be constructed to carry over a small lot; but in case you found that mode of transportation too expensive, I know of no other way than to remove a portion of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in the rear of Placerville, or run a tunnel through underneath. It is possible that the price of labor might be an obstacle to the success of either of these plans, in which event, if you can contract to put one board on the back of each man leaving San Francisco he may be able to earn his board, and you may be able to get your lumber over cheap. Charge, \$25. Please remit.

I have thus given an average specimen of the letters that came pouring in upon me by every mail. It kept me busy, as may well be supposed,

to attend to the numerous requests made by my correspondents; but the trouble was, no money came. There was a great deal, to be sure, for future collection, and as long as that was due it could not be lost by any injudicious speculation. It was some consolation, therefore, to reflect upon the large amount of capital that had accrued in the various operations of the Agency.

At this crisis, when fortune had fairly begun to smile, the weather changed again, and for days it stormed and snowed incessantly, covering up the whole valley, and blocking up every trail. A relapse of rheumatism and my poison-malady now seized me with renewed virulence. I had scarcely any rest by night or day, and soon saw that to remain would be a sure way of securing a claim to at least six feet of ground in the vicinity of Carson. The extraordinary number of



MOUNT OPHIEL.



THE FLOWERY DIGGINGS.

persons who had invested in silver mines, and who were anxious to sell out in San Francisco, suggested the idea of changing my Agency to that locality. I therefore notified the public that there was a rare opportunity of selling out their claims to the best advantage; and it was not long before I was freighted down with "indications," powers of attorney, deeds, and bills of sale.

As soon as the weather permitted I set forth on my journey homeward, taking the stage to Genoa, in the hope of finding a horse or mule there upon which to cross the mountains. It was doubtful whether the trail was yet open; but a thaw had set in, and the prospect was that it would be practicable to get over in a few days. The stage from Genoa to Woodford's had been

discontinued, in consequence of the expense of feeding the horses. All the saddle trains had left before the late snow, and there was not an animal of any kind to be had except by purchase—an alternation for which I was not prepared.

In this unfortunate state of affairs there was nothing left but to try it again on foot. It was with great difficulty that I could walk at all, much less carry my blankets and the additional weight of a heavy bundle of "croppings." The prospect of remaining at Genoa, however, was too gloomy to be thought of. So I sold my blankets for a night's lodging and set out the next morning for Woodford's. By dint of labor and perseverance I accomplished about eight miles that day. It was dark night when I reached a small farm-house on the road-side. Here



RETURN FROM WASHOE.

a worthy couple lived, who gave me comfortable lodgings, and cooked up such a luxurious repast of broiled chicken, toast, and tea, that I determined, if practicable, to remain a day or two, in order to regain my strength for the trip across the mountain.

The kindness and hospitality of these excellent people had the desired effect. In two days I was ready to proceed. Fortunately an ox-wagon was going to Woodford's for lumber, and I contracted with the driver, a good-humored negro, to give me a lift there for the sum of fifty cents.

I had the pleasure of meeting several San Francisco friends on the road, and gave them agreeable tidings of the mines. The trail had just been opened. A perfect torrent of adventurers came pouring over, forming an almost unbroken line all the way from Placerville. By this time the spring was well advanced and the excitement was at its height. The news from below was, that the whole State would soon be

depopulated. Every body was coming—women, children and all. Of course I wished them luck, but it was a marvel to me what they would do when they reached Washoe. Already there were eight or ten thousand people there, and not one in fifty had any thing to do or could get employment for board and lodging. Companies were leaving every day for More's Lake and Walker's River, and the probability was that there would be considerable distress if not absolute suffering. But it was useless to talk. Every adventurer must have a look at the diggings for himself. There must be luck in store for him if for nobody else. For my part I had taken a look and was satisfied.

The ox-team traveled very slowly, so that there was a good opportunity of seeing people pass both ways. The difference in the expression of the incoming and the outgoing was very remarkable; being about the difference between a man with fifty dollars in his pocket and one



OUTGOING AND INCOMING.

who wished to borrow that amount. There was that canny air of confidence about the former which betokens the possession of some knowledge touching the philosopher's stone not shared by mankind generally. About the latter there was a mingled expression of sadness and sarcasm as if they were rather inclined to the opinion that some people had not yet seen the elephant.

As my ox-carriage crept along uneasily over the rocky road, I was hailed from behind, "Hello dare! Shop!" It was my friend the Jew again! I had lost sight of him in Carson, and now by some fatality he was destined to be my companion again.

"Mein Gott! I'm tired valking. Can't you give me a lift?" The driver was willing provided I had no objection. Now I had freely forgiven this man for the robbery of my stockings. I was not uncharitable enough to refuse help to a tired wayfarer; yet I had a serious objection to his company under existing circumstances. His boots were nearly worn out, and mine had but recently been purchased in Carson. If this fellow could embezzle my stockings and afterward unblushingly confess the act, what security could I have on the journey for the safety of my boots? I knew if he once started in with me he would never relinquish his claim to my company until we reached Placerville; for the fellow was rather of a sociable turn, and liked to talk. It seemed best, therefore, under all circumstances, to have a distinct understanding at once. The treaty was soon negotiated. On my part it was stipulated that Israel should ride to Woodford's on the ox-wagon, provided he paid his own fare; that we should cross the mountain together for mutual protection, provided he would deposit in my hands his watch or a \$10 gold piece, as security for the safety of my boots; and, finally, that he would bind himself by the most solemn obligations of honor not to steal both the security and the boots. To all of which the Jew assented with one of those internal convulsions which betokened great satisfaction in the arrangement. The watch was

covered with pewter, as I discovered when he handed it to me; but I had no doubt it was worth eight or ten dollars. Besides, the treaty made no mention of the quality of the watch. It might possibly be an excellent time-piece, and at all events seemed to be worth a pair of boots.

Toward evening we arrived at Woodford's. Between two and three hundred travelers from the other side of the mountain had already gotten in, and it was represented that there was a line of pedestrians all the way over to Strawberry. The rush for supper was tremendous. Not even the famous Heenan and Sayers contest could compare with it, for here every body went in—or at least tried to get in. At the sixth round I succeeded in securing a favorable position, and when the battle commenced was fortunate enough to be crushed into a seat.

In the way of sleeping there was a general spread-out up stairs. By assuming a confidential tone with the proprietor I contrived to get a mattress and a pair of blankets. The Jew slept alongside on his pack, with a covering of loose coats. Nature's balmy restorer quickly put an end to all the troubles of the day, notwithstanding the incessant noise kept up throughout the night.

In the morning I awoke much refreshed. It was about seven o'clock and time to start. I turned to arouse my friend Israel, but to my surprise found that he had already taken his departure. A horrible suspicion seized me. Had he also taken— Yes! of course! my boots were gone too! And the security? The watch? I looked under my pillow. Miserable wretch! he had also taken the watch. I might have known it! I was a fool for trusting him. When I picked up the old pair of boots bequeathed to me as a token of remembrance by this depraved man—when I held them up to the light and examined them critically—when I reflected upon the journey before me, it was enough to bring tears to the sternest human eye.

No matter! I would catch the dastardly wretch on the trail. If ever I laid hands upon him again, so help me— But what is the use of swearing. No man ever caught another in this world with such a pair of boots on his feet—and here I examined them again—never! One might as well attempt to walk in a pair of condemned fire-buckets.

There was no help for it but to await some chance of getting over on horseback. Fortunately, a saddle-train which had passed down to Genoa during the previous day returned a little after daylight. For the sum of \$30, cash in advance, I secured an unoccupied horse—the poorest animal perhaps ever ridden by mortal man. There is no good reason that I am aware of why people engaged in the horse-business should



THE JEW'S BOOTS.

always select for my use the refuse of their stock; but such has invariably been their practice. I have never yet been favored with a horse that was not lame, halt, or blind, or otherwise physically afflicted.

I had not ridden more than a mile from Woodford's before I discovered that the miserable hack upon which I was mounted traveled diagonally—like a lugger beating against a head-wind. His fore feet were well enough—they traveled on the trail; but his hind feet were continually undertaking to luff up a little to windward. When it is borne in mind that the trail was over a bank of snow from eight to ten feet deep, and not more than a foot wide, the inconvenience of that mode of locomotion will at once be perceived. Every few hundred yards the hind feet got off the trail, and went down with a sudden lurch that kept me in constant apprehension of being buried alive in the snow. Another serious difficulty was, that my horse, owing perhaps to the defect in his hind legs, had no capacity for short turns; so that whenever the trail suddenly diverged from its direct course he invariably brought up against a rock, stump, or bank of snow.

I appealed to the captain or commander of the train to give me a better animal, but he assured me positively this was the very best in the whole lot; and that I would find him peculiarly adapted to mountain travel, where it was often an advantage for an animal to hold on to an upper trail with his fore feet while his hind ones were searching for another down below. In short, on this account solely he had named him "Guyascutas."

As there seemed to be no way of impressing the captain with a different opinion of the merits of Guyascutas, I was obliged to make the best of a bad bargain, and jog on as fast as spurs, blows, and entreaties could effect that result.

In reference to the Jew, whom I expected to overtake, and for whom I kept a sharp look-out, it may be as well to state at once that I never again put eyes on him. Whether he secreted himself behind some tree or rock till the saddle-train passed, or, overcome by remorse for the dastardly act he had committed, cast himself headlong over some precipice, I have never been able to ascertain. He is a miserable wretch at best. In view of the future I would not for all the wealth of the Rothschilds stand in his—Well, yes, for that much money I might stand in his boots, provided no others were to be had; but I should regret extremely to be guilty of such an act toward any fellow-traveler as he had committed.

It was four o'clock when we got under way from the Lake House. A mule-driver from the other side of the divide had cautioned us against starting. There had been several snow-slides during the day, and it was only a few hours since the trail had been cut through. A large train of mules heavily laden must now be on the way down the grade, and fifteen other trains had left Strawberry since noon.

Those who have passed over the "Grade" can best appreciate our position. Two of our horses had already died of starvation and hard usage. There was no barley or feed of any kind to be had at the Lake House. The snow was rapidly melting, and avalanches might be expected at any moment. Only a day or two ago one of these fearful slides had occurred, sweeping all before it. Two mules and a horse were carried over the precipice and dashed to atoms, and the driver had barely escaped with his life.

It was considered perilous to stop on any part of the Grade. The trail was not over a foot wide, being heavily banked up on each side by the accumulated snow. Passing a pack train was very much like running a muck. The Spanish mules are so well aware of their privileges when laden, that they push on in defiance of all obstacles, often oversetting the unwary traveler by main force. I was struck with a barrel of whisky in one of the narrow passes some time previously and knocked nearly senseless, so that I had good cause to remember their prowess.

It was put to the vote whether we should make the attempt or remain, and finally, after much discussion, referred to our captain. He was evidently determined to go on at all hazards, having a stronger interest in the lives of his horses than any of the party.

At the word of command we mounted and put spurs to our jaded animals.

"Now, boys," said the captain, "keep together! Your lives depend upon it! Watch out for the pack trains, and when you see them coming hang on to a wide place! Don't come in contact with the pack-mules or you'll go over the Grade certain."

There was no need of caution. Every nerve was strained to make the summit as soon as possible. It should be mentioned that the "Grade" is the Placerville state road, cut in the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevadas, and winding upward around each rib of the mountain for a distance of two miles. It was now washed away in many places by the melting of the snow, and some of the bridges across the ravines were in a very bad condition. From the first main elevation there is still another rise of two or three miles to the top of the divide, but this part is open and the ascent is comparatively easy. In meeting the pack trains the only hope of safety is to make for a point where the road widens. These places of security occur only three or four times in the entire ascent of the Grade. To be caught between them on a stubborn or unruly horse is almost certain destruction at this season of the year.

The only alternative is to dismount with all speed, wheel your horse round, and if possible get back to some place of security.

In about half an hour we made a point of rocks where the trail was bare. Our captain gave the order to dismount, and proceeded a short distance ahead to reconnoitre. The whole space occupied by our twelve horses and riders was not



SNOW SLIDE.

over six or eight feet wide by about thirty in length. Should any of the animals become stampeded they were bound to go over. The tracks of several which had recently been pushed over the precipice by the pack trains were still visible. Our captain returned presently with news that a train was in sight. Soon we heard the tinkling of the bell attached to the leader, and then the clattering of the hoofs as the mules descended with their heavy burdens. One by one they passed. Whisky, gin, and brandy again! Barrels, half-barrels, and kegs! The vaqueros made the cliffs resound with their Carambas and Carajas, their Doña Marias and Santa Sofias!—a language apparently well understood by the mules. This was a train of forty mules, all laden with liquors for the thirsty miners. The vaqueros reported another train within half a mile of twenty-five mules, and others on the Grade.

After another train had passed, our captain gave the word to mount and “cut for our lives!” Scarcely five seconds elapsed before we were all off, dashing helter-skelter up the trail. The horses plunged and stumbled over the rocks, slush, and mud in a manner truly pitiable for them and dangerous for us. In some places the mules had cut through for hundreds of yards, and the trail was perfectly honey-combed. But there was no time for humanity. Dashing the spurs into the bleeding sides of our animals, we pushed on as if all the evil powers of Virginia City were after us.

“Go it, boys!” our captain shouted; “neck or nothing! I see the train! Two hundred yards more and we’re all safe!—Caraja! Here’s another train right on us!”

It was a palpable truth! The pack-mules came lumbering down around a point not fifty yards from us.

"Dismount all! Wheel! and cut back for your lives!" This was the order. In a moment we were all plunging rantically in the snow. Some of the horses were stampeded, and one man had gotten his riata around his leg. The mules had also commenced a stampede, when, by dint of shouting, plunging, and struggling, we got clear of them, and went tearing down the trail to our old station. The train soon passed us. Whisky again, of course. "How many trains more, Señor?"—to the vaquero. "Carambo! muchos! muchos!"—and on he went laughing. This was hard. We could not stand here much longer, for the tremendous bank of snow above us began to show indications of breaking away. Two trains more passed in rapid succession, and then our captain rode ahead again to reconnoitre. It was growing dusk. The prospect was any thing but cheering. At a given signal we mounted once more. Now commenced a terrible race. Heads, necks, legs, or horse-flesh were as nothing in the desperate struggle to reach the next point. This time we were in luck. The haven was attained just soon enough to avoid a train of forty mules. From the vaquero we learned that another was still on the Grade. We might be able to pass it, however, half a mile further on. At the word of command we again mounted, and put spurs to our jaded animals. It was not long before we

heard the tinkling of a bell. Now for it! halt! The mules were on us before we could turn; and here commenced a scene which baffles all description. Some of us were overturned, horses and all, in the banks of snow. Others sprang from their horses and let them struggle on their own account. All had to break a way out of the trail. The mules were stampeded, and kicked, brayed, and rolled by turns. The vaqueros were in a perfect frenzy of rage and



THE GRADE.

terror combined—shrieking Maladetto! Carambo! and Caraja! till it seemed as if the reverberation must break loose the snow from above and send an avalanche down on top of us all. Bridles got foul of stray legs and jerked the owners on their backs; riatas were twisted and wound around horses, mules, and whisky-barrels; packs went rolling hither and thither; men and animals kicked for their bare lives; heads, legs, and bodies were covered up in the snow-drifts; and nobody knew what every body else was doing, or what he was doing himself. In short, the scene was altogether very lively, and would have been amusing had it not been intensified by the imminent risk of slipping over the precipice. It was at least a thousand feet down into Lake Valley, and a man might just as well be kicked on the head by twelve frantic horses and twenty-five vicious mules as undertake a trip down there by the short cut.

All troubles must end. Ours ended when the animals gave out for want of breath. Upon picking up our scattered regiment, with all arms and equipments used in the *melee*, we found the result as follows: Dead, none; wounded by kicks, scratches, sprains, and bruises, six: mortally frightened, the whole party, inclusive of our captain; lost a keg of whisky, which some say went down to Lake Valley; but I have my suspicions where that keg went, and how it was secreted.

From this point over the summit we met several more pack trains, and had an occasional tumble in the snow. Nothing more serious occurred. It was quite dark as we commenced our descent. The road here was a running stream of mud, obstructed by slippery rocks, ruts, stumps, and dead animals. It was a marvel to me how we ever reached the bottom without broken bones. My horse stumbled about every hundred yards, but never fell more than three-quarters down. Somehow people rarely get killed in this country, unless shot by revolvers or bad whisky.

The crowds were thicker than ever at Strawberry. From all accounts the excitement had only just commenced. Five thousand were represented to be on the road from the various diggings throughout California. I had bargained for a bed, and was enjoying the idea of a good supper—the savory odor of which came through the cracks of the bar-room door—when our captain announced that he could get no feed for his animals, and we must ride on to “Dick’s,” fourteen miles more. This was pretty tough on a sick man. The ride since morning had been quite hard enough to try the strength and temper of a well man; but add fourteen miles to that, of a dark night and raining into the bargain, and the sum total is not agreeable. It was useless to remonstrate. The captain was inflexible. He could not see his horses starve. One was just giving his last kick, and three more were about to “go in.” I might stay if I pleased, suggested the captain, but the horses must go on. As I had paid thirty dollars for

the ride, and had barely enough left to get to San Francisco, there was no alternative but to mount. By this time three of the party were so ill as to be scarcely able to sit in their saddles.

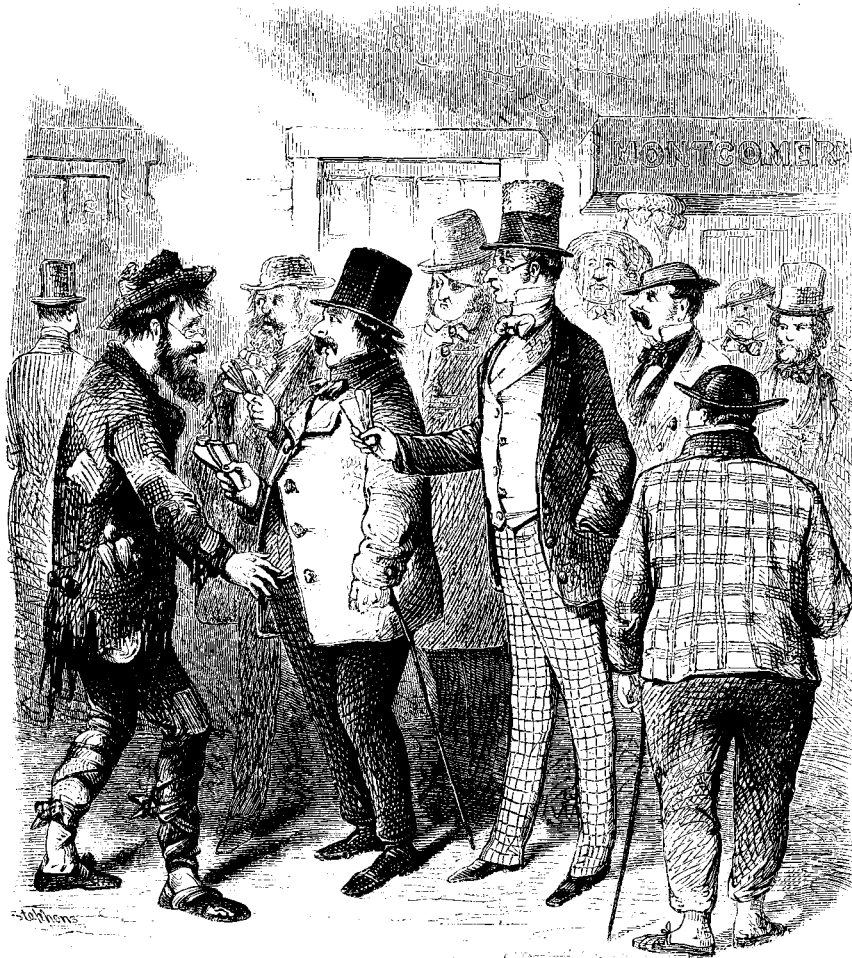
It is wonderful how much one can endure when there is nobody at hand to care a pin whether he lives or dies. I rather incline to the opinion that many people in this world die from the kindness and sympathy of friends, who, if thrown upon their own resources, would weather it out.

I have an impressive recollection of the fourteen miles from Strawberry to “Dick’s.” My horse, *Gyascutas*, broke down about half-way. The rest of the party pushed on. About the same time the old tortures of rheumatism and neuralgia assailed me in full force. It was pitch dark. There was no stopping-place nearer than “Dick’s.” The weather was cold, and a drenching rain had now penetrated my clothes to the skin.

A distinct recollection of my feelings a month ago, as I tramped along over this road with my pack on my back, afforded me ample material for philosophical reflection. Was it now somebody else—some decrepit old foggy who had lost his all, and had nothing more to expect in this world? Or could it possibly be the glowing enthusiast, just freed from the trammels of office, and inspired by visions of mountain life, liberty, and wealth? If it was the same—and there could hardly be any mistake about it, unless some mysterious translation of the spirit into some other body had taken place at Virginia City—the visions of mountain life, liberty, and unbounded riches were certainly of a very different character.

In addition to the peculiarity in the hind-quarters of *Guyascutas*, which caused him always to take two trails at the same time, I had now reason to suspect that he was entirely blind of one eye, and afflicted with a cataract on the other. Every hundred yards or so he walked off the road, and brought up in some deep cavity or against a pile of rocks. The mud in many places was up to his haunches, and if there was a comparatively dry spot any where in existence, he was sure to avoid it. I think he disliked me on account of the spurring I gave him on the Grade, and wanted to get rid of me in some way; or perhaps he considered his own course of life beyond further endurance.

The result of all the stumbling, and running into deep pits, banks of rock, and mud-holes, was that I had to get down and walk the remainder of the way. If a conviction had not taken possession of my mind that the captain would compel me to pay for the horse, in the event of failure to produce him, I would cheerfully have left him to his fate, and proceeded alone; but under the circumstances I thought it best to lead him. At last the welcome lights hove in sight. It was not long before I was snugly housed at Dick’s, where a good cup of tea brought life and hope back again. This, I



RETURN TO SAN FRANCISCO.

may safely say, was my hardest day's experience of travel in any country.

Next day poor Guyascutas was so far gone on his long journey that I had to leave him at a stable on the road-side, and proceed on foot. By night I was within six miles of Placerville. Here I overtook a fellow-traveler, and bargained with him for his horse. From Placerville, by stage to Sacramento, the journey is devoid of interest. I arrived at San Francisco in due time, a little the worse for the wear, but still equal to any new emergency that might arise.

The citizens of San Francisco were on the *qui vive* for news from Washoe. Almost every man with a dollar to spare, and many who had nothing to spare, had invested, to a greater or less extent, in claims—from thousands of feet down to a few inches. Conflicting accounts had recently come down. The public mind was in a state of feverish excitement. Was

Washoe a humbug, or was it not? Was there silver there, or was it all sham? What was the Ophir worth at this time? How about the Billy Choller and the Miller? These were but a few of the questions asked me on Montgomery Street. It required an hour to walk fifty yards, so great was the pressure for news. Could I tell any thing about the Winnemuck, or the Pine-Nut, or the Rogers? Did I happen to know what the Wake-up-Jake was worth in Washoe? What about the Lady Bryant—was it true that it had gone down? Whereabouts was the Jim Crack located, and what was Dead Broke worth? In short, I looked over more deeds, and answered more questions of a varied and indefinite nature, in the brief space of three days, than had ever been put to and answered by any one man before.

The editor of the *Bulletin*, who had made a flying visit to Washoe, and in whose company I

had traveled down from Placerville, commenced about this time a series of articles, in which he told some startling truths. Base metal had been found in the Comstock; to what extent it prevailed nobody could tell. If the Comstock should prove to be worthless, what hope was there for the "outside claims?"

The news spread like wild-fire. A panic seized upon the multitudes whose funds were invested in Washoe. Men hurried about the streets in search of purchasers of Washoe stock; but purchasers were nowhere to be found. Every body wanted to sell. The Comstock suddenly fell from one thousand down to five dollars per foot, and no sales at that. Miller went down fifty per cent.; and the Great Outside could scarcely be given away at any price! Alas! had it come to this? The gigantic Washoe speculation "gone in," and none so poor to do it reverence!

Softly! A word in your ear, reader! They are only "bucking it down" for purposes of speculation. The keen men who know a thing or two are buying up secretly. The silver is there, and it must come out. All this cry about base metal is "a dodge" to frighten the timid. If you have claims, hold on to them; they will be up again presently.

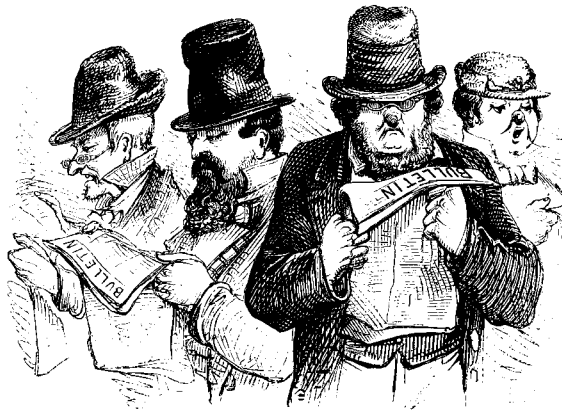
For my part, I thought it best to leave San Francisco before my correspondents—for whom, it will be remembered, I had executed some business in Washoe—retracted their good opinion of my sagacity. There was no chance at this crisis to sell the various claims with which I had been commissioned at Carson City. Capitalists were short of funds. The money market was laboring under a depression. The liver of the body politic was in a state of collapse. I went to the principal bankers, but failed to accomplish any thing. They even refused to lend money on unquestionable security.

In view of all the circumstances, I determined to visit Europe. If the moneyed men of the Old World could only be satisfied of the ex-

tent, variety, and magnificence of the investments to be made in the New, they would not hesitate to open negotiations with an agent direct from Washoe.

FRANKFORT-ON-THE-MAIN, *January, 1861.*

You will perceive from my address, most esteemed reader, that I am now established at one of the best points for pecuniary transactions on the Continent of Europe. I have seen many of the wealthy burghers of Frankfort, and am pleased to say that they manifest a very friendly disposition. As yet they do not quite understand the nature of the proposed securities; but I have great confidence in their sagacity. My negotiations with the Rothschilds have been of the most amicable character. They have gone so far as to express the opinion that Washoe must be a remarkable country; and yesterday, when I proposed to sell them fifty feet in the Gone Case, and forty in the Roaring Grizzly, for the sum of one hundred thousand florins, they smiled so politely, and withal looked so completely puzzled, that I considered it best not to force an immediate answer. You are aware, of course, that in important negotiations of this kind it is judicious to let the opposite party sleep a night or two over your proposition. That the Rothschilds are at present a little wary of any investment in Washoe is quite natural. The nomenclature is new to them. They have never before heard of Roaring Grizzly and Gone Case silver mines. But if that should prove to be their only objection, I have no doubt they will ultimately purchase to the extent of several millions. If they do, I shall be happy to negotiate sales for a reasonable commission, to be paid strictly in advance. My publishers will, I am confident, forward any letter to my address. The postage must be pre-paid. The rates, which are somewhat high, can be ascertained by inquiry at the post-offices in San Francisco, New Orleans, Saint Louis, Boston, and New York.



READING EXTRA BULLETIN.

TO RED RIVER AND BEYOND.

[Third Paper.]

ONE Tuesday morning we began our journey from Pembina to the Selkirk settlement.

Joe Rolette, our host, with his two little boys whom he was taking to the Catholic school at the settlement after the summer vacation; Mr. Bottineau, a French half-breed, whose excellent farm between St. Joseph and Pembina I have mentioned in another place; Joseph, and myself were of the party. Joe Rolette rode in a miniature Red River cart with his youngest boy—a miniature of himself—behind a diminutive mule rejoicing in the title of Thomas Jefferson, and with a genuine patriotism responding by an accelerated gait to the exclamation of his abbreviated Christian name—"Tom!" Tom was a mule in miniature, saving only his ears, and held together in his little and tight fitting skin all the virtues and none of the vices of the race of which he was the minimum. The cart which he drew was loaded with

all the blankets of the party, the cooking utensils, pemmican, bread, and other provisions, and the passengers mentioned; but he drew it along at a lively trot from sunrise to sunset, forty-four miles a day, with the vigor and continuity of the balance-wheel of a chronometer, and tired out even the first-rate horses which the rest of us rode.

A few words will describe the appearance of the country between Pembina and Fort Garry. In all external aspects, to one who travels by the river road, it is the same from Fort Abercrombie to within a few miles of Lake Winnipeg. The direction of the road is very nearly north. It is the continuous chord to which the river, in its winding course, supplies a hundred greater or lesser arcs. The banks of the river are thickly wooded with elm, oak, and poplar, and this wall of trees is at the traveler's right throughout the journey, always bounding the eastern horizon. This general prospect is varied



JEAN BAPTISTE WILKIE.

President of the Councilors of St. Joseph, in Sioux warrior's dress.—See *Magazine*, October, 1866.

by lines of timber stretching away to the west, and marking the course of the tributaries of Red River.

About the middle of the forenoon, near one of these tributary streams, we came in view of a shanty, inhabited by an old Scotchman and his wife—she the first white woman in the Selkirk settlement. We were treated to bowls of fresh milk, with the cream standing thick upon it, and making a man blush to remember that he came from a city where stump-tailed abominations and watery-blue dilutions had long since led him to forget the appearance of the genuine lacteal fluid.

The shanty was not neat nor well furnished. The bed, which stood in one corner, was small and narrow, the walls had never been white-washed, nor the mud floor boarded over, though the cooking-stove and table, which also occupied this their only apartment, left little of the floor to be seen or trodden upon.