

A black and white line drawing depicting a large crowd of men, likely soldiers or laborers, walking in a line. They are wearing various types of hats and carrying backpacks. In the foreground, a man with a beard and a hat is looking back over his shoulder. The drawing is done in a sketchy, expressive style.



THEIR CAMP FIRES LIGHT UP
THE REDWOOD FORESTS

WITH the coming of spring, California's great tramping labor army gets ready for its summer campaign. Thirty or forty thousand men, mobilized in San Francisco, march north, east and south, spreading themselves out like a fan, to supply the labor required to pick the crop on thousands of orchards and vineyards throughout the state.

There is more than enough work waiting for every man in this big army. California boasts of about 30,000,000 of fruit trees and grape-vines in full bearing. There are over 300,000 acres in vineyards alone, and the hop

fields cover tens of thousands of acres. In an average year over 700,000 tons of fruit are shipped out of the state, over 90,000 tons of wine, beer and brandy, and over 100,000 tons of vegetables. No wonder an army of laborers is required to pick this vast crop for the markets of the entire world. Indeed, enough men can never be obtained, and lucious, golden fruit has to be fed to the pigs all over the state by the hundred and the thousand tons. There is no other spectacle like it upon earth.

The labor army, collected and enrolled by the labor agents south of Market street, San Francisco, during the fall, numbers at the outset perhaps 40,000 men; but there are reserves to be drawn upon as the picking season advances. Their methods of formation movement closely resemble those of organized troops. They are divided into four main divisions as they spread out from San Francisco—the northern, the Sacramento valley, the San Joaquin valley and the southern.

These divisions are again divided roughly into squads, companies and even bodies as large as battalions, each moving together to its own objective point. Then there are the irregulars, as there are with all armies—the guerrillas, the irresponsible bands moving about without base, free-lancing for loot and the love of adventure. In a small, dingy office on Adventure

to street sits a little, grubby man, who, were the labor army composed of armed fighting men, would hold the rank of brigadier-general. There are several of his kind, and between them they manipulate the summer campaigns in their offices as real military leaders do. In the outer office are his aide-de-camps, tough-looking fellows, who lead the companies and battalions. He calls in one, and gives his orders something like this:

"You'll take the 300 dagos down to San Jose tonight, Murphy, up at Healdsburg, wants 250 by Thursday evening, so be moving. Here's your tickets."

"I'll send im. He's queered himself in San Jose, so he can't go there. You'll do."

The aide withdraws, with a growl, to the chief's bidding. In the outer office are several hundred husky, swarthy men, with blanket rolls and tin plates and pots dangling about their persons. The runner says something to them in a foreign language, and they follow him down the street in a long column, towards the depot. Few of the passers-by on the street notice them, and then only with the words: "Hello! Cherries are getting ripe down in Santa Clara!"

These men are the advance corps of the summer armies of fruit pickers. By the hundreds, every day, they march down the narrow streets of old San Francisco, where they have been wintering since November, all in one direction, to the ferries and the Fourth street and Townsend street railroad depot.

The lower decks of the ferries, the largest ferries in America, are crowded with them. It takes many thousands of men to harvest the biggest cherry crop in the world. Cherries ripen first, so the cherry brigade is the first on foot. Thus they stream on every day, to occupy the numerous cherry districts for the next month—the Santa Clara Valley, San Lorenzo, Haywards, San Leandro and a hundred other districts.

At the depot at those places the men are met by the local ranchmen and farmers, a single one of whom sometimes marches off as many as 500 men.

The irregulars are as early in the field as the men of the regular army of fruit pickers. They are sent by nobody; they have enough of the previous summer's earnings left to equip themselves for free-lancing campaign. San Franciscans see them moving along the streets from the south of Market street district, where the cheap lodging houses are, toward the ferries, in groups of from two to five, but often alone.

They are easily distinguished from ordinary workmen, or even from the regulars. They wear straw or slouch hats, brand new brown or blue overalls and jumper, carry new, clean blankets, bright, new tin pots and pans, and their faces are clean shaven and glowing with the prospect of the coming season's adventures. No tramps are they, but men able to pay their way men who have lived through the winter on \$7 a week, spending their time in public libraries and reading rooms.

These irregulars scatter over all the country. In the depot, if you get near a group, you may hear some such conversation as this:

"Tell ye what, Bill, I don't go much on Fresno—it gets too blamed hot! Think I'll take the five twenty train

"Why, I thought you was comin' with us."

"So I was, but I've changed my mind. I'll have the north for mine. I'll hit a good job on some cow ranch till grape plekin', then I'll finish up the season at Hardsburg in the hop yards."

"Well, so long, old chap! We're off for the jack-rabbit country, where wine's cheap. We're going over into Maderia, an' if we don't like it, there's Tulare right below us. See ye at Jack's."

Going up into the country the roads are full of these wandering summer laborers. At night they sleep under the stars, for it never rains in that season, and their campfires light up the pine and redwood forests. They buy their meals in the small towns or at the farm houses. The ranchers and farmers are looking for them, and they

eldom wait long for a job in any part of the country, unless they decide to take a good long tramp through the foot hills before settling down seriously for the summer.

By June and the beginning of July the irregulars have scattered and found their jobs. Then comes the bar-

vesting of apples, peaches, prunes, apricots, nectarines, pears and other fruits. Men are now in demand. Telegraphic orders come from all parts of the country to the San Francisco offices, and then begins the real invasion. One column pours up into the northern districts. Everywhere on the dusty roads you meet wagon loads of men, or companies of them on the march, heading towards the vast stretches of fruit orchards in the foot hills. Under the fruit trees men are busy in groups, pulling boxes, carrying ladders and bas-

Another army goes up the Sacramento Valley, where pears, peaches, plums and apples are big and in plenty. The Sacramento river sternwheel boats are crowded with them and their blanket rolls.

Another tremendous crowd, the daily rains down into the San Joaquin valley, the alkali, the lack of water where the vast orchards are artificial, irrigated, where the sun is blazing hot and the work is hard, but the pay good!

Along through the Santa Clara Valley, up into the Coast Range foot hills, swarms of men and companies, towards the rising slopes, the canyons and the countless canyons—wherever, in fact, there are hidden orchards of olives, pears, apricots and other fruits which need to be picked before they rot, and for eastern and European markets. The picking season is over, but the thousands of cherry pickers have melted into the big, main army.

Then, if the season is a good one, calls come to San Francisco for more men, but they cannot be answered. Every lodging house is empty, save for a few habitual loafers. In the papers appear advertisements, in big type, for men, but they are not to be had. Wages rise until they can be

no higher.

At this time you may travel through the fruit regions and see thousands of acres of orchards where the pigs run wild, devouring such luscious fruit as the average easterner never tasted. There are no men to pick and box the Pears and peaches, such as are exhibited in country fairs, mellow and drop to the porkers beneath. There are fifty thousand fruit pickers scattered over the country, but they are not enough.

Then comes the swift harvest

just as the fruit season wanes, but that does not take up many men, for machinery and header wagons do most of the work. Last of all come grapes and hop picking. Up on the vine-covered hills are the white tents of the pickers, laid out with military precision.

The work begins at dawn and ends at sunset. Wagons rattle up and down the avenues, collecting the boxes that the pickers have filled and carried out to the roadway. Every nation and race is represented among the workers. There are Italians, Greeks, Frenchmen and Turks, to whom the work is not new, and there are Kanakas, Norwegians and Finns who are just beginning. In the yards the pickers work across the fields like destroying locusts, a black line, sweeping the green before it and leaving the brown.

These festivals are usually picnics, because each section has

turesque, because each nationality gives its stamp to them. The Indian dances, the Germans sing, and the Italians play stringed instruments. Sometimes they end up with wild

Next day the roads to the railroad stations are lined with the returning workers, dusty and unshaven, but with their pockets full of gold and silver. It is the beginning of the retreat, but that retreat is glorious. The men march in groups, in order that they may sing together. This happens almost simultaneously all over the country. The irregulars, too, appear from all directions, from little mountain farms and dairies, and join the main


In San Francisco the first few appear from the near-by ranches; the ferries begin to carry the dusty soldiers of labor across the bay. U Market street they come by hundreds every day and every hour for weeks all making towards their old quarters the cheap lodging houses. Apparently they are swallowed up, for they dis-

They merely shave and put on suits of store clothes. Next day you can only recognize them by their bronzed faces. In a month even this sign is gone, and the tramping army of laborers has been swallowed up by the big city. But the men are all there resting on their summer's earnings, reading, enjoying cheap seats in the theaters, attending lectures and taking walks along the crowded thoroughfares where they can see their fellow-men in the higher walks of life.

There are men who have done this for a score of seasons, and who will do it another score of seasons. But California is the only country where it can be done.

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