

## FREDONYER'S PASS.

SACRAMENTO CITY, April 5, 1855.

DEAR SIR:—The North Fork of Feather river does not, as is generally supposed, take its rise in the Sierra Nevada, but in a range of mountains properly denominated the Sacramento Mountains, commencing near Pitt river, in latitude 41 degrees north, and thence bearing in a south by east course, and parallel with the Sacramento river; extends about one hundred miles, where it terminates at the Table Mountain, near Ophir. The summit of this ridge in some thirty-five or forty miles distant from the Sacramento river. The western slope furnishes water for the several little streams known as Rapid, Cow, Clover, Battle, Antelope, Pine, Dry, Dear, Chico and Butte creeks, all flowing into the Sacramento. The flank of the mountain is broken into literal ridges, ranging west, at nearly right angles with the main ridge, and corresponding with the several above mentioned creeks, whose gurgling waters rush impetuous through the deep and rocky avenues that bind them. The tops of the ridges are rocky and barren, sparingly studded with dwarf oak and manzanita bushes, excepting in the higher altitudes, where pine and cedar flourish. This region, commonly called the Rocky Desert, presents a dreary and uninviting appearance to the traveler who never will forget the power of the sun's direct and reflected rays, while passing over them in midsummer.

The eastern flanks of these mountains furnish a corresponding number of creeks flowing eastward into the basin of the North Fork, and their several conjunctions, in combination with a few small streams issuing from the Iron Hills, form the principal constituents of that river.—The character of the east side of these mountains is very different from that of the western. The declivity of its sides is more precipitous, and are densely covered with forests of pine and the different varieties of evergreens. The temperature of the atmosphere is many degrees colder in the same season and at equal altitudes with the west side.

The more elevated peaks in many places on the east side and north of the west branch of the North Fork, is covered with snow during the whole year; advancing westward, it increases in quantity until the mountains abruptly terminate at Lassen's Butte. This is the fountain head from whence innumerable little streams descend, bounding wildly over the craggy precipices, roaring and rushing down through deep ravines, till they reach the romantic valleys below, where they meander and play amidst the wild bowers of grapevine and willow, intermingled together, and form the North Fork of Feather river.

The Iron Hills embrace a tract of country, lying between the North Fork of Feather river on the west, and the Pitt river mountains on the east, and extends from the East Branch of the North Fork on the south to the northward as far as Pitt river.

This district constitutes a series of hills and valleys, with but little variation in their height, and heavily timbered.

The soil is of a red argillaceous composition, mixed with disintegrated quartz, and strongly impregnated with oxide of iron. In various places intervening the hills, are extensive flats of alluvium, coated with grass and clover, and in many places an abundance of wild strawberries. Also, embosomed among them are several small lakes. The East Branch of the North Fork derives most of its water from these hills, and is the only stream of importance which flows into that Fork from the east side.

The Lassen trail which passes over these hills, commences at his ranch near the mouth of Deer Creek in the Sacramento Valley, thence following eastward on the summit of one of the lateral ridges a distance of 35 miles, to a depression at the top of the Sacramento Mountains, thence down the eastern declivity of these mountains twenty-five miles to the North Fork, crossing that stream at the Big Meadows about twenty miles above the mouth of the East Branch; it then continues in a northerly direction, by a very crooked route, over the Iron Hills, crossing near the head of Canoe creek, (a small tributary of Pitt river,) and bearing slightly east, descends to the Pitt river bottom, a distance of ninety miles; thence crossing Pitt river valley, and by the base of Camp Hill, (which is an isolated mount standing near the middle of the valley on the south side of Pitt river,) and up the margin of that river to the eastern side of the valley, a distance of thirty miles, and at the Nine-mile Gap in the Pitt river Mountains.

Having thus complied with your request relative to the North Fork, I will now call your attention to a section of country explored by me last year, and heretofore unknown to the civilized world:

I left St. Joseph, Missouri, in the fall of 1849, and followed the regular emigrant trail to Fort Laramie. Approaching winter compelled me to remain at that post until the ensuing spring, when I again resumed my journey with a small party of emigrants, and crossing the Rocky Mountains at the South Pass, continued to follow the regular trail to the west bend of the Humboldt river. At this point the road forks; taking the right-hand fork, known as the Lassen trail, we left that river, crossing a sage desert at nearly a due west course, to a low range of mountains about twelve miles distant; passing through a division in the ridge, we bore slightly northward, crossing a narrow valley to another low ridge, over which we passed by a gradual ascent through a depression therein, and thence descended into Mud Lake Valley, crossing an extensive desert, and between the Upper and

Lower Mud Lakes to the boiling spring, which is situated near the southern extremity of the Black Rock Mountain, about fifty-five or sixty miles west from the Humboldt river, and in latitude 40 degrees 40 minutes north.

From this point, the trail bears in a north by east direction, up the Boiling Spring Valley to Meadow creek, (a small branch emptying into Upper Mud Lake at the north extremity of the Black Rock range,) thence making a short deflection to the west, passing over a dividing ridge into Canyon Valley, on the north side of which it enters the mouth of the High Rock Canyon. This is a deep fissure, passing through a table ridge to the north, and varies in width from twenty-five to fifty yards, with perpendicular walls several hundred feet high, composed principally of a dark basaltic formation. A little stream issues from its mouth, flowing into Canyon Lake, which lies on the opposite side of the valley, and at the northern base of a ridge of mountains, which commencing at this point, and ranging in a SSW course, forms the western boundary of Boiling Spring Valley, Lower Mud and Pyramid Lakes. The mouth of High Rock Canyon is about forty miles distant from the Boiling Spring, and from that point my observations may be said to commence.

Being weary of proceeding so far to the northward, part of the company and myself determined to take a direct west course as possible, and force a passage over the Sierra Nevada at any point, rather than make the great circuit by Lassen's Pass. For this purpose we pursued our journey up the Canyon Valley, near a SW direction, over a sterile but interesting district, covered with innumerable little pieces of obsidian of different colors; about midway in the valley we passed through a volcanic causeway, varying from one to two hundred feet in width, and over a mile in length, with perpendicular walls fifteen feet high. The valley on the north and western sides is lined by a ridge of basaltic cliffs, increasing in height and grandeur until they reach the head of the valley at Ladder Canyon, and sixteen miles distant from the mouth of High Rock Canyon.

To the south of Ladder Canyon lies Mount Observation, rising to an elevation of nearly three thousand feet above the planes of the interior basin, of a conical shape, the summit and flanks entirely destitute of vegetation.

We ascended to the top of this mount for the purpose of observing the physical character of the country, and determine what course it would be most proper to pursue.

The surrounding country, when viewed from this point, presented a barren and rocky surface, divided into a multitude of low ridges, ranging from north to south, where they slope off into a valley of indefinite extent. These ridges are formed principally of basaltic rock, which are broken into deep and yawning chasms.

The surface above their brinks spread out into inclined planes, covered in many places with fragments of lava, so compactly imbedded as to form a solid pavement. In other places they rise up to inaccessible pinnacles, evidently elevated in a state of fusion. In fact, so plainly are the effects of volcanic action exhibited throughout these localities, that it forcibly impresses the mind with the idea that the doors of the infernal regions have here been but recently closed. A gloomy silence seems to brood over the whole district, which presents a scene of desolation and ruin scarcely ever equalled.

Directing the view beyond this burnt region, to the west, the Sierra Nevada is seen, ranging north and south, with its snow capped summit rising in majestic grandeur as far as the eye can see.

Lassen's Pass, in the northwest, and the great pass, in a west southwest direction, are distinctly seen; likewise, a deep depression lying between these two passes, nearly due west from this point.

Perceiving the impracticability of passing directly west, we descended the mount, and pursued our journey down another little valley lying south of Canyon Lake Valley, to the distance of twelve miles, when, to our surprise, we found ourselves at a great opening that lies through the mountains which bound the Boiling Spring Valley on the west, nearly opposite the Boiling Spring and immediately at the northern end of Lower Mud Lake. This passage presents one of the grandest ruptures of Nature, one side of the cliff rising to the giddy height of a thousand feet, with nearly a perpendicular declivity, while the other inclines off in gradual retiring strata to double that distance. Through the bottom of the passage (which is on a level with the adjoining plain) a small stream finds vent, and discharges itself into Mud Lake.

From this pass our course lay nearly west through an extensive valley, bounded by a succession of ridges sloping down into it, from the northern and southern sides, causing a variation in its width from ten to twenty miles. The stream above mentioned takes its rise on the eastern flanks of the Sierra Nevada, and winds its way through the middle of this valley, its margin in many places coated with a luxuriant growth of grass, and showed signs of periodical floodings.

In passing up the bottom we crossed the channels of several little creeks, descending from between the ridges, some of which were dry, and others having water in. The intervening spaces between these channels are generally barren, or coated with wild sage brushes. The adjoining ridges are destitute of timber, and the general appearance of the country is sterile and parched with heat.

After two days journeying up the valley, we reached the east base of the Sierra Nevada at the Great Pass, and encamped by a small branch

which descends from a little vale lying north. Having no suspicion of Indians being about, we turned our horses loose, as usual, to graze all night. In the morning three of them were missing. I immediately started with one of the men, and went about two hundred yards from camp and commenced trailing a circle. We had not gone far when we saw the tracks of our horses, and also several moccasin tracks, crossing the line of our circuit. Now satisfied the horses were stolen, we pursued rapidly up the little valley to the north, following their tracks for several miles and to the summit of the dividing ridge at the head of the valley.

From this point we had an extensive view to the northward, and as nothing could be seen of either horses or Indians, we deemed it useless to pursue them any further. But we were amply remunerated for our trouble in ascending the ridge, by viewing the diversified and interesting scenery lying northward along the eastern base of the Sierra Nevada. In front lay a spacious flat, coated with a white alkaline incrustation, with here and there clusters of white sage and greasewood bushes.

Immediately beyond this flat lies a beautiful lake, about fifteen miles in length by six in breadth, which is confined in a narrow valley between the base of the mountain and the basaltic ridges heretofore spoken of.

On the west side of the lake rises the gigantic Sierra Nevada, with its broad flank broken by successive ridges of granite protruding through a superimposed strata of trappean rocks.

The surface of the shelves in many places intervening, the several protrusions have a gradual slope and are covered with an alluvial deposit of sufficient thickness to support a vigorous growth of timber.

The summit and upper portions of the flank are covered with a heavy body of snow, the melting of which gives source to a little creek, that dashes over the steep declivities till it reaches the valley at the base of the mountain, where it empties into the southern end of Holloway Lake, so called, in honor of the gentleman that was with me.

On the east side of the valley is a dark basaltic ridge, the top of a tabular form, with rugged and precipitous sides. The brink forming a perpendicular wall, from fifty to one hundred feet high, which we named the Palisade rocks. Having noted the features of that district, and rested our lives, we then returned to our camp, and immediately proceeded to ascend the Great Pass, which is very similar to the South Pass in the Rocky Mountains, but not as broad, the ascent to the culminating point is very gradual, the grade not exceeding a hundred feet to the mile at the steepest places, while the average height would probably not be over seventy. The distance through this, the main ridge of the Sierra Nevada, is about thirteen miles, and entirely free from any obstruction in passing either way. But the sides of the mountains lying north and south of the pass, rise gradual and to an immense height, presenting a formidable barrier the whole length of the passage; there is no timber on the eastern slope, and but very little through the passage, except high up on the flank of the mountain, where it becomes very abundant, especially on the western declivities.

After crossing the pass, we encamped near the margin of a little creek, that issues from a ridge of mountains lying north of a valley that here opened to view, and extended westward; the ridge is a spur of the Sierra Nevada, and bearing in a westerly course till they come in contact with the Pitt river range, and forms the dividing ridge which separate the waters that flow north into Pitt river mountains, from those that flow south into a valley lying between the Great Pass and the southern continuation of the Pitt river range.

On the following day, when in the act of crossing this valley, our progress was suddenly interrupted by a large party of Indians, who showed unmistakable signs of hostility. We immediately returned to our camp, and proceeded up the margin of the creek before alluded to, and by good maneuvering succeeded in avoiding a conflict until we had ascended the ridge, and taken a position on the top of the precipice where we made all the demonstrations for battle that our feeble circumstances would admit of. Fortunately, they did not charge upon us, otherwise we would have been easily captured, as we were in a helpless condition, being nearly exhausted with fatigue and privation, and having only one gun in the company. But seeing us thus fortified, the Indians withdrew, returning to the valley, and we fearing to resume our former course, continued to proceed northward over the ridge from the summit of which we had a fine view of the surrounding country; overlooking the Pitt river mountains to the west, as far as Shasta Butte, and the Sacramento Range, the summits of which were covered with snow.

The Pitt river mountains are a low ridge of igneous origin, presenting a black and rugged appearance, having no snow on their summits in midsummer. They lie about midway between the Sierra Nevada and the Sacramento range, and range northward at an angle of forty degrees west. The district lying south appeared of a triangular shape, bounded on the north by the transverse ridge on which we stood, east by the Sierra Nevada, and west by the Pitt river range, the two last named, approximating nearly together as they advance southward, with their flanks covered with a dense forest of pine and cedar, and the valley lying between coated with a luxuriant growth of grass and clover. Inclosed within this district are several small lakes, one lying south of the Great Pass, near the base of the Sierra Nevada, the other lying

westward of the pass, near the eastern base of the Pitt river range.

The great Pass, as viewed from our high position, presented a grand and sublime aspect. The summits on either side were elevated many thousand feet, and crowned with snow, which, as they dazzled in the sunbeams, formed a beautiful contrast with the deep shade that overspread the green forest of the surrounding localities.

In surveying its various parts the mind becomes overwhelmed with awe in contemplating the infinite power of God, as displayed in the stupendous magnitude of this passage, where nature, in her terrific convulsions, has cleaved the mountains asunder, making the high places low, and the crooked straight, whereby his people may pass through in safety. Leaving this beautiful district we journeyed northward, descending rapidly over a rough and thickly wooded country, observing as we passed, a little lake, lying high up, on the west flank of the Sierra Nevada, and close by the middle gap. Its altitude being so high, we named it Snow-Water Lake. Thence bearing slightly west we soon reached the valley of the South Fork of Pitt river, which ranges nearly north and south, varying in its width from one to two miles, bounded on the west side by a ridge of precipitous bluffs, which commence at the head of the valley, running northward to the Castle Bluff Point, near the great bend of the river.

The South Fork takes its rise in the dividing ridge near the great pass, thence running north along the western base of the Sierra Nevada to Castle Bluff Point, thence west through the Big Bend Meadows, thence north again to its junction with the North Fork of that river.

Leaving the river at the Big Bend we ascended a table ridge to the west, passing over a barren plain to the Nine Mile Gap in the Pitt river mountains, which is about fifty miles west of the Sierra Nevada. The Pitt river passes through this gap; likewise Lassen's trail, which we then followed to the Pitt river Meadows, where we met Capt. Lyons, with a company of dragoons, reconnoitering the country. As we were in a destitute condition, the captain kindly furnished us with provisions sufficient for our consumption until we could reach Lassen's Ranch, in the Sacramento Valley, where we arrived on the 9th of July, 1850.

From the above narrative you will perceive that we were diverted from our proper course after leaving the great Pass by the difficulties which we encountered with the Indians. These circumstances deprived us of an opportunity to explore the mountain regions to the westward and lying between the great Pass and the Sacramento mountains, and south of the dividing ridge that lies between the Feather and Pitt rivers. But the appearance of the country, as viewed by us from the summit of the divide, has left no doubt in my mind but that a direct and practical route could be found over the southern spurs of the Pitt river range and the Iron Hills to the Sacramento Valley, either by Capt. Lyons' route by the northern base of Lassen's Butte, or by the Middle Fork of Feather river. If this should prove to be the case, we may, at some future day, have the pleasure of seeing a great national railroad passing the Sierra Nevada at the above Pass, and join, with an iron band, the interests of the Pacific coast with that of the Mississippi Valley; But these sanguinary hopes may be considered as premature and uncertain of fulfillment, except Congress should take a co-operative action in the premises relative to her intermediate territories.

The location and character of the great Pass, I have described to many persons who intend prospecting the Pitt river country this summer, from whom, I hope, you will receive additional testimony to the truthfulness of these statements.

With much respect, I remain yours, &c.

A. FREDONYER.

MAHLON MILLERSON, Civil Engineer.

TELEGRAPH WIRES CUT TO PREVENT DROUTH.—DEPLORABLE DISPLAY OF IGNORANCE.—For the second time this season many miles of the telegraphic wires in Franklin and Lauderdale counties, in this State, have been torn down by some persons unknown, who it is said believe the telegraph is responsible for and the cause of the dry weather which has prevailed for the past twelve months. Tell it not in Gath! publish it not in the streets of Askelon that such ignorance and such superstition exists in Alabama, in the wealthy counties of Franklin and Lauderdale, in the immediate vicinity of Tusculumbia and Florence, under the shadow of the two Lagrange colleges! and where three newspapers are published. Oh, where is the schoolmaster, that he is not at work among the people? Missionaries for such heathens are needed.—[Huntsville (Ala.) Advocate.]

AN ENORMOUS ROOM.—The largest room in the world under a single roof, and unbroken by pillars or other obstructions, is at St. Petersburg, Russia, and is 650 feet in length, and 150 feet in breadth. By daylight it is used for military displays, and a battalion can conveniently manoeuvre in it. In the evening it is often converted into a vast ball room, when it is warmed by sixteen prodigious stoves, and 20,000 wax tapers are required to light it properly. The roof of this structure is a single arch of iron, the bars alone on which it rests weighing 12,339 pounds.

To prevent sneezing, press the finger on the upper lip just below the nose. To stop a fit of coughing, close the nostrils with the thumb and finger when the breath is let out, but leave them free when the breath is drawn in.