

AMONG THE CHOCTAWS.

Crossing the hills southeast of Mandard, we journeyed to Garfield, now a lone ranch, the store and town having been moved to Bragge, a railroad station on the Iron Mountain. Elders Hooper, Jeppson and Jensen accompanied their Salt Lake visitor part of the way on his southern trip, the latter two to bring the team back from Smith's, where we expected to meet Brother S. G. Mabry from Briartown. Our kind friend Uncle Hendricks furnished us the little blue horses, and by courtesy of Mr. Anderson we obtained a wagon.

For some distance we traveled through bottom land and finally climbed a rough hill about one hundred feet high, all the time winding through the dense woods. On the hill we crossed an almost level plateau covered with the various kinds of hardwood native to the sunny south for at least eight miles—a wilderness, undisturbed by hill or prairie and hardly a human being. Vegetation grows everywhere, scarcely a spot of land, a rock or place where trees, grass and moss do not grow.

We have now crossed the plateau and are descending along the hillside and on the bottom land we cross Green Leaf, a stream which in high water season becomes a small river, now almost dry. On the bottom lands and near the streams grows the beautiful sycamore tree, distinguished by its white bark and its height, as this famous beauty reaches above ordinary trees of the country. On the lowland is found a great variety of underbrush and shrubbery. In the summer may be found the dewberry, blackberry, raspberry, mayberry and other wild fruits, grapes in abundance, and in the fall a variety of tree fruits, such as cherry, plum, persimmons, pecan, hickory and walnut and many kinds of acorns. Among these groves hogs get their living from the masts that fall from the trees, and on the roots of vegetation. Here and there is a small farm made by the Indians, by clearing away the underbrush and young timber, allowing the large trees to stand—notched around, those mammoth oaks remain as monuments of what had once been a forest.

We did not stop at Garfield. The changed condition shed an unwelcome influence over the place. Our old infidel friends, Messrs. Cookston and Madden, merchants, have moved away and Mrs. DeArman recently died, the only occupants now being a family of white renters.

A gradual ascent, climbing a hill, and again we are rolling across another timbered plateau. After several miles travel we commence to descend by way of a rocky gulch, and following a stream for some distance, we are at Linder's. About a mile and a half from the pretty, clear Illinois river, and just below a rugged bluff on the rocky bank of a stream, in an enclosure well shaded by native cedars and walnut trees and the creeping vines of honeysuckle and ivy as green as spring, is the cosy little home of our friends the Linder family.

Word was sent out, and soon after our arrival the renters on the farm assembled and we held an evening meeting. The Linder farms, like many

others on the bottom land, are separate by several miles from any others.

More like spring than the 28th of December, the sun rose in splendor. The air was warm, and as we again climbed the mountain, viewing the verdure of grass and trees, the cedars and moss, and listening to the singing of birds, warmed through by the balmy atmosphere, we almost forgot we were celebrating the holidays of 1893. Once again on this elevated plateau, we see far in the distance a continuation of just such rolling young mountains and valleys—a river, a small stream, a level tract of land, a valley with its rich fertile farms, an abrupt cliff, a low mountain, a plain. Descending from our elevated road we drink at the Sulphur Springs on the Webber's Falls and the Tablequah road, and are soon amid the immense forests of the Arkansas bottoms.

The Iron Mountain is a branch of the Missouri Pacific railroad, connecting Arkansas and Kansas. Following along the river they pass our friend Smith's, about three miles above Webber's Falls. Mr. Smith is a white Cherokee, who does not speak a word of English, while his good little dark-skinned Indian wife is well educated in the English language and attends to all the business. Owning over 200 acres of cultivated land, these Cherokee landlords have several families of white renters working for them.

Opening their house to the Elders, the people assemble and these kind Indians, like many others, assist in placing before the people the everlasting Gospel. It seems almost providential—the openings that are being made in this territory for white people who have not had opportunities elsewhere. It will be remembered that Arkansas has passed laws prohibiting the preaching of the Gospel in their land, and many Missourians and others, not otherwise instructed in the plan of salvation, listen to the Elders of Israel in the land of the Lamanites.

Brother S. G. Mabry met us at Smith's. We parted with our brethren and proceeded southward. The Arkansas river is fully a half mile wide when the water is up. We forded it near the falls—simply a ripple in the water. On the north side is Illinois station and on the south Webber Falls.

Uncle Seab's young mule team being good travelers, by the time the sun was bidding behind the western forest we greeted our friends at our Briartown Indian house.

Along the Arkansas river bottoms may be seen a specimen of the poor suffering ignorant humanity, mainly from that state, which for fear of her people becoming contaminated have prohibited the Mormon Elders from preaching in that country. In this extensive cotton and corn growing country may be seen some of the poorest and most miserable wretches on earth, dwelling as they do in poor tenement log huts. Whole families may be seen sick. Men, women and children work in the field, dragging a sack under their arm in the dead of winter. These poor half-clad human beings are picking cotton, at scarcely a living price. All through the country are these poor white renters. They travel from place to place, rent a farm, make a crop of corn,

load up and off again. Whole families are born on the road. Meeting a wagonload of these emigrants, as they may justly be called, we ask them where they came from and where they are going. "We-uns came from Arkansas, and we-uns gwyne to Texas," and so they go, poor exiles! While standing at Sulphur Springs, Chickasaw nation, on the road to and from these places, the writer's feelings were moved with compassion on seeing a poor widow with several children, all the way from a grown daughter to an infant, the wagon drawn by a pair of ponies heavily laden, driven by a small boy. The remainder of the family were dragging themselves through the mud—half clad, their sunken faces showing the signs of poverty and sickness.

Briartown is built on a sandy elevation on the Canadian river where it is the dividing line between the Cherokee and Choctaw nation. A mile and a half from the river and the same distance from the postoffice, where the business part of the town is, on a round hill among the orchard trees, is the home of Brother S. G. Mabry; a double log house with a shed room and porch on one side, nicely whitewashed and neat and clean—this is our southern Cherokee home. During our brief stay, including New Year's day, we held several meetings.

A mile and a half drive brings us through the bottom land to the north fork of the Canadian river, ferried across and passing through Whitefield, a Choctaw town, we are soon out on the open prairie. In our one horse buggy, kindly furnished by our Mabry Saints, we are rolled over a vast unoccupied country, now in the woods, crossing a hill, through a stream and over the bottom lands, next lost on the prairie. In this unsurveyed country people make roads to suit their convenience; and not knowing just where we are going, we often get lost. Finding our way again, we cross a sandy hillside and come to Enterprise, another small town. In this nation people locate in towns more than is the case in Cherokee country.

North of here is Younger Bend on the river, a place where the notorious Younger brothers held forth during the period of their depredations throughout the country. About twelve miles up the river is Standing Rock, a remarkable monument of ancient or early settlers' life in this country. In the middle of the river stands a rock fully eighty feet high with almost perpendicular sides; by aid of a glass peculiar and quaint inscriptions can be seen fifty feet above the water, seemingly painted on with some kind of cement paint. The river bed must have been washed much deeper since these inscriptions were placed here, presumably by Spaniards.

Leaving Enterprise we are directed across the prairie to our friends about a mile distant. Meeting two men well mounted on fine American horses, we inquired for Mr. Enoch Flack. Believing us to be insurance agents, deputy marshals or something beside Gospel message carriers, after a moment's hesitation one of these distinguished colored gentlemen answered: "I am that man, what do you want?" "We are Mormon Elders, and having heard of your courtesy to our