

FOR HOME SEEKERS.

"Go West, young man," was Horace Greeley's cure for the over-population of the East. Less than fifty years elapsed since his famous advice was given, and now in Utah we have reached the same plethora of humanity, at least in the urban centres. We can go no further west to advantage. The advice must now be, "Spread out, young man." Instead of the 20 x 30 feet of yard in front of the house you rent with its inevitable sign "Keep off the grass," move out and squat down on Uncle Sam's domain, where the half dozen kindergarten copies of yourself and wife, may have 160 acres of sage brush in which to play hide and seek. Let them witness and take part in the wonderful transformation of the desert. It is an object lesson that will give breadth and depth of character to them. It will make men and women of them, beneath the clothes they may happen to wear.

The *Contributor* did a splendid thing for its young readers in this direction. In the 1894 volume will be found a symposium written by all the presidents of the Stakes of Zion, setting forth the opportunities for acquiring homes and farms within their respective ecclesiastical jurisdictions. Surely here is variety of choice enough to suit the most fastidious. But I am not certain that the young people who most need the information are aware of the publication of this symposium, and I am afraid that another class—the clerking, teaching and day-laboring fraternity, steeped as they generally are in the contentment of small salaries, and easy rents compensated by the pleasures of city life—were not then sufficiently aroused to the future of the families they are rearing to count this symposium anything else than dry and prosy reading meant for the homeless and destitute. But many of this class have had a healthful awakening since then. At least, so it seems by the number of questions which directly or indirectly reach me and others who ventured abroad in quest of land.

We were attracted to the extensive country west of Blackfoot, Idaho, where we are now engaged building canals and clearing sage-brush, some of us by proxy, others in grim, dusty, pioneer reality. But before I proceed with this description, which is designed to be a general reply to numerous enquiries which he befores me, let me urge the home-seeker to read carefully the letters by Stake presidents which make up the *Contributor* symposium. Some other part may suit you better. At any rate you will be more fully prepared to judge of the merits of this.

"The Snake river valley," said an old settler of Blackfoot, "is six hundred miles long and in places two hundred miles wide."

We looked at the old man but there was not the faintest suspicion that he felt himself dealing with innocents abroad.

"The river," he continued, "rises in the Rocky mountains in the north-western part of Wyoming and flows in a south-westerly direction, making a vast horseshoe bend which comes very near to the Utah line, then moves northward and forms part of the Columbia. The valley lies on both sides of this magnificent stream in varying widths

from 10 to 200 miles. Skirting, as it does, the Rocky Mountains on the east of the state, prominent tributaries flow into it every few miles until it reaches about the latitude of western Utah. As these streams furnish abundant water for the slopes and southeast of the river they have hitherto attracted all the settlers, but now the western slopes, the land within the horseshoe, is rapidly being opened up."

It was this land we had come out to see. Leaving the hotel in a cart, which we deemed the most suitable conveyance over an unbroken sage-brush valley, Prof. Brimball and I started for an indefinite tour of inspection west of the river. We soon reached the bridge and Prof. B. remarked: "This is quite an irrigating stream." It was an iron bridge built by private parties many years ago, but is now owned by the state. It consists of fine spans each about 100 feet, and the water would, perhaps average 10 feet in depth during low water; in high water twenty or thirty feet. There is no other river like it in the inter-mountain region. Bear river would only serve as an insignificant tributary. It carries as much water as all the streams of Utah put together. It is about as large as the Ohio or the Missouri, as I remember those streams.

"Yes," I replied, "it is a very liberal irrigation stream. If every foot in the valley could be brought under cultivation there would still be water enough left in the river to swim a horse. I have been wondering how the river would look after our sixty-foot canal should be filled. Now I see that it would make no more apparent difference than if a span of thirty miles should drink their fill out of it."

On the south side a large flat-boat was being built and fitted for placer mining. The sandbars are rich in gold, and pay dirt can be found, so we were told in many parts of the valley. As we are not directly in quest of the yellow metal, I mention this only by way of showing the future possibilities of the region. Another point, that of the probability of a line of river steamers suggests itself. To this I would say that the depth and swiftness of the current offer no obstacles, but the fact that the river is truly named may, for, as one man puts it, it would break a snake's back to follow its windings.

What, then, does the valley look like when you are in the middle of it? On the east and south the horizon is mountainous. On the north and west it is flat as the desert itself, save for a butte here and there which rises like an unexploded lava cone out of the dead level of the valley. A few weeks ago I was engaged locating the corner stakes of my land. The sun was clearing the horizon, and his farewell capers were just a little bit amusing. There were his honest old red face and squinting eyes, now winking, now grinning at me through the branches of the tall sages. Then he would roll round and round and smile with that half-kindly, half-mischievous expression which seemed to say:

"You've struck it, young man, struck it rich. It makes me smile to see you there; for during these thousands of years I've said good-night to nothing but groundhogs, rabbits, and an occasional deer, in that desert forest. But I know what that glistening chain means. Soon I shall take

farewell peeps at green fields and orchards and gardens and homes. But I'll make it hot for you till then. Don't get discouraged though. Ta ta, the sagebrush is still between us."

As we ride over, now this quarter now that, we dis over here and there mounds which barely rise higher than the general level. Upon closer examination these prove to be heaps of black, porous rock. Immediately we begin to speculate as to their origin, and in imagination recreate a scene which old S. must have glowed upon before Adam's day. Somewhere near those tall buttes, sixty miles to the northwest, there must have been a volcanic crater, big enough to swallow a thousand cones like Vesuvius. Picture a flood of lava, white-hot and sulphurous, two hundred miles wide, moving eastward and southward, its burning crest advancing a hundred feet high, perhaps. In an hour it reaches the river, then what thunders of artillery, what displays of vapor filled the air! Night comes on and from the glowing plains, what reflections must have been thrown upon the white banks of clouds! But the river conquers. Thousands of years ago it had its arch-enemy beneath its feet. Now it has buried him under forty feet of river drift and silt.

Such is the character of the land. Only a small part of this magnificent valley is, or ever can be made, arable. A strip of alluvial soil varying in width from three to fifteen—perhaps twenty—miles skirting the river on the west and north, represents the land with which this letter concerns itself. The upper half of this strip can be watered only by a canal which would have to be blasted for miles through the lava ledges. The lower half is covered by the People's canal, which is now being pushed to rapid completion.

Perhaps the item of most interest next will be this same canal, and I therefore proceed to discuss it.

Quite a number of ditches have been taken out from time to time to water farms adjacent to the river. Under ordinary seasons these furnish an abundance of water to irrigate the small farms dependent upon them. But, as always happens with small openings to the river bank, they are subject to disturbances by both high and low water; high water bringing floods and sand bars, low water drying up the stream. This season some of the farms are suffering from the latter cause. The feasibility of tapping the river on an immense scale, has been known to the people of Idaho for a long time; but the impression seemed fixed that this could be done only by capitalists.

A number of Utah farmers, familiar with the marvels that can be accomplished by co-operation, came and took a look at the situation, and decided that muscle could quite take the place of money, and they began the mammoth project, getting their friends interested until the nucleus of a prosperous settlement is now made. I call it the nucleus of a prosperous community, for it can hardly be called more at present. In point of wealth the majority of the settlers are delightfully pioneer-like, living in log cabins and cultivating their imaginations when not engaged digging canal or clearing sagebrush.

What then were the conditions