

## CORRESPONDENCE.

*Written for this Paper.*

## CRAGS AND PEAKS OF SOUTHERN COLORADO.

## SALT LAKE CITY,

June 22, 1895.

Many of the readers of the News have traveled with me hunting the picturesque in natural scenery in different parts of the West, and as my last trip is over comparatively new ground, a few details concerning the most interesting points seen on the Rio Grande Southern and Silverton railroads may add a fraction of information of value to some people.

At Grand Junction we take the D. & R. G. narrow gauge railroad, the original overland that passed over Marshall Pass, but now abandoned as such for the wide gauge that follows down the canyon of Grand river, and at Montrose we leave it. From Grand Junction we follow the Gunnison river, and from Montrose the Uncompahgre Ridgeway, the terminus of the R. G. S. is soon reached. Ouray, a beautiful mountain town, is eleven miles away, and is the terminal point of the D. & R. G. in this section. It boasts a population of 3,000. Its elevation is 7,040 feet and it is a city fringed with the peaks of the Uncompahgre range, whose highest is 14,419 feet.

When one looks upon the vast bodies of water composing the Gunnison and Grand rivers, a volume in itself greater than all the rivers of Utah, and to know that most of it is running to waste and that tens of thousands of acres on the north side of Grand river could be brought under cultivation and will be before many years, the nucleus of an immense population is but started, in and around Grand Junction. Already the fruits that came from Utah to Colorado are driven out of the market—you may look in vain for boxes from Zion now. I could not see one. Grand Junction ships tons of ripe and luscious fruit equal in quality to the Utah product, annually; and where years ago nothing but long dreary stretches of baked clay lands plentifully covered with alkali was seen, now that the magic touch of the irrigator has been applied miles and miles of lucern and orchards line the track, causing the face of nature to gleam with the joyous tints of green, the result of irrigation and civilized labor.

The elevation of Grand Junction is 4,583 feet and the region referred to is still lower. There is considerable talk of an immense canal being constructed, to bring under cultivation the lands through which the Rio Grande Western runs east of Grand Junction.

Leaving Ridgeway, we commence to climb the mountains alongside of Leopard creek. To the east of the track the immense snow banks high above timber line are everywhere seen; most of the ridges are 2,000 feet higher than our high peak, Mount Nebo, which is nine feet short of 12,000 feet; hence the snow deposits are heavier and the general effect greater and more majestic than our Wasatch range. The rivers are larger and more precipitous, and

the timber more plentiful. In fact the country looks a good deal like the foothills of the Sierras in California.

As I looked upon the great snow deposits they seemed to have a reddish color and on inquiry I learned that it was the red sand from Utah brought by the great winds that sweep across the country in the spring.

We are climbing towards the Dallas divide, our engine puffing like a geyser. Some of the bridges over which we pass are very high and have the look of a spider's web in the distance; but our track is good, the rails are very heavy, and our rate of speed a safe one, for we have left the flyers behind us. We have to travel slowly, as to see the country. Here and there we see patches of land settled upon and used chiefly for stock raising. There is plenty of grass in the hills and all the timber of small size needed. I do not see the wealth of floral attractions we admire so much at home. The long spiked flowers of the bayonet cactus are seen on the dry ridges and here and there a kind of iris that looks very pretty in the swamps.

Once over the Dallas divide, down we go towards the San Miguel river. Not agents in insight, wiggling around promontories, rocky ridges and crabs into deep timbered chasms and out again into the open, every tour revealing new combinations of beauty, until we reach the San Miguel, along whose banks we begin to climb again and keep ascending until we reach Vance Junction. From this point a branch road runs to Telluride.

The roadway up the mountain side to that town is blasted out of the soft rocks, and at a distance looks like a risky piece of railroading, but is just as safe as a road on the plain and much more attractive. By the side of the track a foaming torrent is seen, one of the worst looking and maddest holes of water I ever looked upon. Immense boulders enshrouded with the foaming waters with a setting of large pines as a frame to the composition of nature's pictures, made me wish that some of our artists could be there, whose palettes and pencils could reproduce the wealth of color seen all around. Some of the peaks are crimson, and other shades where the snow has melted off, and many of them are covered with low grade ores of different tints, high above the timber line.

Telluride is a pretty mining town located in a basin with an alpine look seldom seen elsewhere except in Switzerland. Immense waterfalls and snowy peaks of wondrous beauty are everywhere seen. The town is 8,758 feet above the sea and the population about 2,500. Mining is the source of energy to keep up the town. The champions of free silver are numerous here. As everything but grass and timber has to come from other localities, the railroad does the hauling of supplies, although the peddlers' wagons from Delta and Moab find their way here, and a market. O. J. Warner, of Moab, Utah, told me he took some of his large apples there to sell and could not dispose of them. The buyers told him that they wanted apples that looked like apples, and not

like pumpkins; so when you take a load there, remember what to do.

Leaving Vance—which by the way is only a station of small population, with very cold nights—June 17th at 6 a.m., 22 degrees, ten degrees of frost—not a good place for raising tomatoes—we climb the San Miguel, skirting a wide, open valley of all shades of green, beautiful to look upon, peaks and crags everywhere. No place seems too high to climb, no obstacle too great when once the will of man starts to build a railroad in Colorado—grades of 4 and 4½ per cent.

Ophir loop is the next place of interest, and the grandest in Colorado, pictorially. Such combination of rocks, peaks, waterfalls, abrupt cliffs, railroad miracles, crawling under a cliff here and then passing above the track 800 feet higher, enough to make one nervous if so inclined. But we pass it all safely; there is no safer track anywhere and no better built road.

Near by is an immense electric plant that generates, using water as the motor, 3,000 horse power. This is conducted over the mountains to Telluride, lights that town, runs several mills and also illuminates the homes of settlers away as far as Trout Lake. The town of Ophir above the loop also enjoys this conservation of energy that makes the falling waters give us back the sunlight that lifted the snows to the peaks.

In Utah we are getting ready for a like result, but the Coloradans are ahead of us. Our streams are wasting their power; but we are getting them harnessed and will make them do our bidding soon. It is a shame we are not abreast of an obscure mining locality. We have the power to light every home, and warm it too, and run our cars and our machines, in the streams around us, and the sooner the result is accomplished the better for our reputation as a live, progressive community.

The road from Ophir loop leads up to Trout Lake, 9,800 feet above the sea, filled with trout that are too well educated to nibble at any kind of bait. The lake is most beautifully located—most of it surrounded by cliffs covered with eternal snows. Mr. Wagoner controls its waters and herds the trout. If there were many visiting the locality, a hotel should be built there, but should the tourist visit the place, his stay must be short. The most noticeable specimen of humanity I ever encountered I found there.

Lizard Head Pass, nearly 11,000 feet, is the next climb, and then on down to Rico, a town of 2,000 inhabitants, not very picturesque. A sort of anti-loom feeling pervades it; plenty of empty stores and empty pockets, a sort of waiting for something to turn up feeling pervades the town.

We are now on the banks of the Dolores river, and as night sets in we see very little of the country. We stop at Mancos, where there are some Mormons settled. The general look of the country is beautiful; the settlers seem to be doing pretty well. Bishop Halse has charge of the Mormon people; he is a fine man of good presence and intelligent bearing. Mrs. Hyde keeps a restaurant in Mancos; the older settlers will remember her. The Mormon people are well respected here.

The proposition was entertained to