

IN A GRUESOME COUNTRY.

W. D. Barton, who for some time past has been at the head of an exploring expedition through Death valley, along the Amargosa river to Ash Meadows, the Charleston mountains and other almost unknown localities in the wildest parts of Inyo county, Cal., and Lincoln county, Nevada, over to the Utah line, gives an interesting account of his travels in that section of country.

Mr. Barton's expedition was composed of six persons, all frontiersmen and prospectors of many years experience. They went for a party of capitalists to this city, says the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and indirectly for Professor Blake and others, who are now building a railroad from the noted Vanderbilt gold mines to Pioche. Mr. Barton tells a strange and remarkably interesting story of the curious resources of this far-away region.

Dead men marked their pathway. He says they discovered the dried-up bodies of no less than five men, who long since expired from thirst. There was nothing of them to identify them, for like most men under the circumstances they had stripped themselves of their clothes in their delirium. The few scattered clothes they found contained no clue as to the identity of the dead.

The country they passed through was full of strange mineral deposits, which, when the road is built, will be productive of great wealth. Twenty-six miles of the road from the Needles to Vanderbilt has already been built, and a contract has been let for building eighty miles farther toward Pioche. About 160 men are at work on the extension now. The entire distance to build is 150 miles. The route is via Vegas ranch, the Parahuagat valley, Cherry Creek valley and White river. Mr. Barton estimates that the road can be built for \$10,000 a mile.

One of the strangest things Mr. Barton and his party saw and examined was a mountain of kaolin at the mouth of the Amargosa river, in Inyo county, Cal. This is the material of which the finest chinaware is made. It is a remarkably fine clay and very white. The mountain looked like a great chalk cone and was about half a mile in circumference.

"But there were many other things along the line of our route," said Mr. Barton, "that challenged our attention and elicited our surprise. It is a country full of wonders and you never get through being surprised at what is being constantly revealed.

"Up the Amargosa from the Kaolin mountain we came across great nitrate of soda deposits. So far as I have learned they are the only extensive ones in the United States. I located 160 acres of nitrate while I was there that was as white as a snowbank. I sent specimens to New York for analysis, and have since received the returns. They show that the beds run from 52 to 65 per cent of pure nitrate of soda. The crust of the nitrate is from four to eighteen inches deep. However, when the crust is taken off in any place it fills up again, the same as before, and in a marvelously short time. So for all practical

purposes it may be said its depth is unknown.

"Twenty-five miles north of the nitrate beds, and on up the Amargosa river, we came upon salt mines so strange that I do not believe there are any like them anywhere. Hamilton Disston, the saw manufacturer of Philadelphia, you may know, owns a mountain of salt on the Colorado river. But it is red salt, that is, it is mixed with other mineral matter, so as to color it.

"This salt that I found, however, looks like the frozen waves of the ocean, and I never heard of it in such fantastic shapes. It is almost white, and quite so in many places, but obnoxious to ultramarine blue. The white in it looks like ocean surf. In the blazing sun it affects the eyes, and in a general way it takes the form of a crater, and there is a rift or gorge in it, in one place 180 feet deep.

"All along the Amargosa river are innumerable minerals. There were the salts of soda, borax, arsenic, gypsum, kaolin, nitrate of soda, and the finest quality of talc. In the deepest part of Death valley we found a rock that looked for all the world like an umbrella. It rose from a big flat rock, had a stem six feet high, while on top was a curious overhanging cupola.

"On top of the mountains between Death valley and the Amargosa is a mine of topaz. It is not the smoky topaz, but clear, and there is lots of it. One of our men collected a fruit can full of it. He afterwards sold one choice piece for \$14 and another for \$7. These were in the rough state.

"In what is known as the Ash meadows in Lincoln county, Nev., we saw some strange sights. These meadows cover about 200,000 acres. It is a curious soda and mineral salt region, and on it good grass grows through the white beds. Scrub ash trees grow also all about. These are the only kind of trees that do grow there.

"Now, in this queer valley are some queer holes they call horse holes. They reach to underground rivers and horses coming along over the plateau sometimes fall into them. That is the reason for the name. I saw in one unusually deep and wide hole, at a depth of some fifty feet, in the water, something that looked exactly like a tree. It might have been a tree or some fantastic mineral formation. It was green in color, even to the branches.

"There is another strange thing about this valley. Cattle grazing over the surface do well for a time, but if they are there too long the white mineral deposit of the surface injures their feet, giving them a sort of rheumatism or paralysis of the lower parts. As a result I have seen, I suppose, as many as fifteen or twenty cattle grazing about on their knees, which were worn through to the bone. These cattle never could be got out, of course, but, strange to say, I have seen some of them in pretty good condition. The Indians usually kill them and eat them.

"Beyond Ash Meadows, in the Charleston mountains, fifteen miles to the north, we found a mountain of alum. It was as white and pure alum as ever you saw in a drug store. Put to the mouth it had the same

taste. I also tried it in fire, and it spluttered and bilsters were raised on it. Water affects alum, that is, melts or dissolves it, but fortunately there is rarely any rain there. However, I saw one place where it had been struck by a waterspout and was worn into a deep gorge.

"In the torrid Death valley, where the thermometer rose to 146 degrees, I witnessed one black night a fierce electrical storm. Two rows of electricity, one from the north and the other from the south, seemed to meet, and there was the most fearful lightning, coupled with thunder, that could be conceived. It was louder than all the artillery of battle, and the valley was so light that you could pick up a pin anywhere.

"Except in Lincoln county, Nevada, where for some distance is a large area of fine agricultural land, the country is gruesome and awful in character. It is hot, rocky and cut up with defiles and queer dry river beds. I am not speaking now of Death valley proper, which is as level as a floor. There are almost no wild animals, but there are two or three kinds of rattlesnakes, the sidewinder and some Gila monsters.

"There are some big turtles, or land terrapins, on the desert, and they are about the only animal there that can stand off the little coyotes. When the terrapins see the coyotes they simply draw their heads and feet into the shell and close up, and I have seen the coyotes standing around and watching for them to come out.

"The Amargosa river is usually dry, and in some places it is eight miles wide. I have gone into camp at night along the Amargosa and in a few hours awakened and found the water just waist deep owing to a sudden cloudburst. The cloudbursts are usually accompanied by a great roaring."

Mr. Barton expects to leave again in a few days for the same country. This time he will go by way of Reno and will take but one companion with him. This trip will end in the remote part of Lincoln county, Nevada, close to the Utah line, where he says the fine agricultural lands are, and which he says is a good place for settle because plenty of water can be had by digging but ten or twelve feet.

SULLIVAN WANTS IT.

The present City Council have wrestled with a good many franchises during their terms of office. But the biggest problem which they have had to deal with yet in the way of granting privilege to corporations or private individuals will be one which is now being prepared for presentation and consideration.

The applicant in this instance is J. W. Sullivan, the well known railroad and canal contractor, who is very anxious to secure control of the entire volume of sewage which will flow through the gravity outlet sewer when completed. He is anxious to have his claims investigated at once in order that the city need not purchase land for a sewer farm and factories. It will mean, he says, a saving of thousands of dollars to taxpayers.

Mr. Sullivan does not intend—at least he has not signified such intention—to purchase the sewage outright.