

ACROSS THE CONTINENT. IMPRESSIONS OF A JOURNEY BY A CITIZEN OF ST. JOHN.

Mr. W. S. Fisher Describes His Trip—Some of the Wonderful Sights Long to Be Remembered—California and Its Attractions For Men Who Live in the East.

CORONADO BEACH, SAN DIEGO, Cal. April 19.—As I sit on the verandah, with the broad stretch of the Pacific before me, and hear the dash of the waves as they beat on the sandy shore, my thoughts are turned to our own rock-bound coast on the other side of this great continent, and it occurred to me that some of your readers might be interested in reading the impressions of a New Brunswicker, of this corner of the world.

To start right, let us begin at home where the journey was commenced less than two weeks ago, when the speedy and comfortable service of the C. P. R. carried me safely through the woods of Maine to Montreal, thence to Toronto—the Queen City of the West—where a stay of a day or two on business was made, thence a night's run to Chicago, and another to Kansas City, with a stay of a few hours at each place by way of breaking the journey. At Kansas City the through trains over the Santa Fe are made up, when the overland journey really begins, as from this point to California, no stops (excepting for meals) are made. And a very luxuriously appointed train it was, too, and I must pay my tribute now to the efficiency of the service throughout the trip. The dining stations on this road are so arranged as to be reached at convenient hours for meals, and very good they uniformly are and at moderate charge. But for those who do not care to take a full meal, a lunch counter is provided at each place.

A pleasanter party than those who completely filled the two Pullman cars, it has never been my privilege to travel with, and throughout the three days we were thrown together, mirth and jollity prevailed, and when the last night on board we felt the journey was drawing to a close, each to go his or her own way, genuine regret was felt on all sides. The pleasure derived through the pleasant companionship was the saving clause of the trip, for a more desolate strip of country it would be hard to imagine than that crossed in passing through the States of Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona. Great things are expected from Arizona in the future, as it is said to be one of the richest mineral regions in the world, also that it is capable of agricultural development, as it is claimed that all that is needed to bring this about is a system of irrigation, and a scheme is about to be brought before Congress, whereby the Colorado river will be diverted and used for this purpose. In the meantime, however, it seems to be given over largely to the Mexicans and Indians, with the exception of the occasional station towns en route, which are peopled by luckless whites, whose lot no one need envy, as the attractions that life has to offer in this treeless region, it is difficult for the passer-through to see. One thing, however, must be admitted in this connection, and that is the fact that the climate seems very healthy, if one can judge by the looks of the people. This is especially the case through all the higher altitudes; in crossing these, the air was very invigorating, and no doubt was the important element in maintaining the flow of animal spirits and the good appetites that prevailed.

In many places we were visited by the Mexicans and Indians with their wares for sale, including Jasper stones, petrified wood, &c. At "The Needles" just on the border line between Arizona and California, we were swarmed with them and pressed to buy a much larger variety of articles than had yet been offered. The Indians here make a specialty of clay work, some of which, though crude, is interesting. The Mexican cow-boy, mounted on his broncho was frequently seen, and very picturesque he looked with his broad-brimmed sombrero. From time to time small herds of very poor cattle are seen, deriving a bare existence from the scanty herbage.

From a scenic point of view, this road is greatly deficient, the most notable exception perhaps being the Ratonon Pass in the Rockies, approaching which the grade is very heavy, and the two great engines puff and blow, dragging the heavy train slowly up the steep grades. Near the summit, and quite close to the entrance of a tunnel recently constructed, is the adobe home of the Old Man of the mountains, who formerly exacted toll from all travelers, and whose occupation since the advent of the railroad has gone and never to be recovered. He still lives, however, on the remains of his former greatness, and doubtless thinks that things have sadly degenerated in recent years and sighs for the times that have gone, when he, like a mighty Caesar was king and all paid tribute to him; so it is with many a man in a higher sphere of life who has his day, but as the wheel of life remorselessly turns round, he is relegated to the rear, and new men and new conditions rise and for a time hold sway. What is the moral? is it that we should make the most of our opportunities? I leave the answer with each individual and pass on.

Another feature of interest was the occasional native Indian or Mexican village, consisting entirely of one-story adobe houses or huts. In some cases, some effort at adornment was observed, but as a rule, they were very crude and rough, and in some cases even without windows. This adobe material is a square piece of mud-colored clay, dried in the sun, and it is said to be very durable and to stand for a long time in this climate. In fact, many of the old homes and missions that have stood for generations in this country are built of this material.

The last night of our journey was a restless one, and all hands were up at an early hour in the morning, looking out eagerly to see it at last we had left behind the dreary desert and had reached the land of promise. Rapidly our train sped along the down-grade of the Sierras, now and again our eyes were gladdened by a green spot, and our ears by the sweet song of the birds; then again a stretch of the Mojave desert, which stretches its arms well towards the sea. Rapidly, however, the scene changed, and by seven o'clock we drew up at San Bernardino, at the base of the hills, and then we felt rewarded indeed, as here begins in earnest, the land of eternal sunshine—the land of the orange and the lemon—where winter is turned into summer and summer is summer still! What a paradise it seemed as we rushed by vast groves of oranges, lemons, apricots and many other semi-tropical fruits, with a soft breeze blowing and wafting the perfumes of many flowers to our grateful senses. Of all the delightful perfumes, I think that the orange blossom is the most exquisite. And now the land is full of it, as the orange trees are blossoming for the next season. As a rule, this fruit is now pretty well harvested, but one yet sees an occasional orchard where the golden fruit has not been picked, and the effect is hard to describe. Imagine thousands of orange trees in regular rows, on perfectly cultivated soil, the trees in their full growth, averaging from fifteen to twenty feet in height, covered with heavy green foliage, and the golden fruit glinting amongst the green! It is a wonderful sight and one to be long remembered and dwelt upon. I wish all of our citizens could have an opportunity and be able to drink in the beauties of this Wonderland.

My destination being Pasadena, I parted with some of my companions at this point, where I spent some days exploring the country in the vicinity of that charming town, which I think has been rightly named "The Crown of the Valley." The meaning of the word Pasadena, I understand, is "Gate of Eden," a very apt name for this lovely spot. It is situated in the midst of the celebrated San Gabriel Valley, and because of its situation, has been selected by a large number of refined and wealthy Eastern people as their permanent home, and for this reason it has grown very rapidly; it is said to have more millionaires than any town of similar size in the United States. In this land of millionaires, this is saying a good deal, and I am sure no one can doubt the statement who drives along the miles of beautiful streets bordered with handsome homes, with grounds cultivated up to the highest possible point. In going through, one wonders can this be the result of a dozen years? Is it possible to create all this beauty in so short a time? It so what a climate! 'Tis no wonder the rich are tempted to leave the more rigorous climate of the east and come to this Elysium. The celebrated Raymond Hotel occupies the best location the valley affords, and the view from it in all directions is superb. This hotel is open only during the winter season, as the Summer travel to this section as yet is light, although the residents here claim that the Summer climate is as perfect as the winter, and that the weather is not nearly as hot as in the East, being nearly an equal temperature all the year round. There is one surprising thing about the climate, and it is that no matter how warm the day, summer or winter, the nights are invariably cool. The coolest part of the day or night, seems to be before and after sun-down; when, if driving, an overcoat is necessary.

While a great deal of land in Los Angeles and adjoining counties has been brought to a high state of cultivation, there are yet large tracts of land still in its virgin state, and when unimproved, it is very little more attractive than the desert through which we passed. Irrigation has been the cause of this wealth of fruit and flower development, and from the higher points one can see reservoirs supplied from the mountains, and from which pipes and ditches are running in all directions. The need of this is easily understood when it is realized that for perhaps eight months no rain whatever falls, and during the remaining four months, which is called the rainy season, the average yearly rainfall is but sixteen inches. This season has been a specially dry one, the total rainfall not exceeding eight inches, and the wet season now practically over. The country on all sides shows the need of rain very much, and crops are bound to suffer in consequence; and irrigation, which usually does not begin until late in May has already commenced.

One of the most interesting trips to be had, is from Pasadena to Mount Lowe, the highest peak of which rises about six thousand feet above sea level. It is reached first by the electric car line, which carries you up over the foot hills to Rubio Canon, from whence a cable car ascends the mountain side at an angle of sixty-two and a half feet to the hundred. At the summit is a neat hotel, with a much larger one under way. Here also are mules, with competent guides for those who may desire to explore the mountain passes higher up. A ride over the mountains on one of these sur-footed little animals is very interesting, as I know from experience. The atmosphere is clear and delightful, and very little if any cooler than in the valley. The bird's-eye view to be obtained from the mountains, gives one a better idea of the country than can be obtained in any other way. Much more could be said of the fruit farms and the many charming drives and excursions

through this lovely region, but I feel it necessary to be brief, so must pass on and take in some of the other points of interest in Southern California. The next point of interest that I visited was Los Angeles, or the City of the Angels, the metropolis of Southern California, a growing, thriving city of over seventy thousand. The growth of this city has been remarkable. Ten years ago it is said the population was not ten thousand, and for such a new city, it has a wonderfully solid and handsome appearance, and all the advantages of a wealthy and modern business centre. Finely paved streets, a perfect system of electric and cable cars, stately homes and most elaborate buildings. The stores are hard to excel, and the art of how to display goods is here seen to perfection. As an indication of the advance being made, I have at my side while I write, a Los Angeles paper, which states that permits for five hundred new buildings have been granted since the first of January. Building here is not confined to any one season of the year, but proceeds at all seasons alike. What would we not give if we had a tenth part of this advance in our city by the sea! I called upon several former St. John people, now settled in Los Angeles, including Mr. R. G. Lunt, now in the real estate business; George P. Taylor, tailor; Robert Magee, hatter; also Dr. P. R. Moore, formerly of Sackville, all of whom appeared to be doing well and expressed themselves as well satisfied with life in this section and consider the climate, all that can be desired. While on the question of climate, there is no doubt that the advantages it has to offer those who cannot stand the more rigorous climate of the East is drawing a large population of this class, a majority of whom need to work for their living, thus creating an over-plus of labor in nearly all lines and professions, as the population of the country has increased more rapidly than the demands of business or the actual development warrants, hence, if this reasoning is correct, business and the professions, if not already, will soon be overcrowded, and the natural inference is, that the man whose health does not demand a change, is as well, or better off at home, especially if he holds any responsible position, or sees ahead a fair prospect.

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The next point of interest that I decided to visit was San Diego, the most southern American town on the Coast. It is one hundred and thirty-five miles south of Los Angeles, and means five hours by rail through for the most part, unattractive country. On this trip, one sees very markedly the result of the drought, as the hill-sides, which should at this season be a vivid green, are perfectly brown, and void of any vegetation. As we leave Los Angeles going south, we gradually leave the fruit groves, and strike for a short distance an extensive grazing section. The most interesting scenery on this trip is that portion which skirts the ocean, where the surf washes on the beach only a few feet from the train for a distance of perhaps thirty miles or more. On a warm day, or at any time, this is very refreshing, and just now an agreeable change from the burnt hill-sides.

The old City of San Diego is on the coast, fourteen miles from the Mexican boundary, and here an American garrison is stationed. The City itself is dull and uninteresting, but the neighborhood has many features of historic and scenic value. The main attraction is Coronado Beach, a neck of land connected by terry with San Diego, and on the shore of which is situated the Hotel Del Coronado, said to be the largest in the world. It is certainly most perfect in its equipment, and the person who cannot take solid comfort there had better remain at home. The building covers four and a half acres of ground, with an inner court overlooking with foliage and one acre in extent.

dream away a few idle days! How balmy the air, how delicious the feeling that pervades one's whole being! It is something to be felt, not expressed.

To amuse and interest the guests, the management contrive to keep the ball rolling, and each week a programme is drawn up and placarded, so that all may see the trips and excursions that have been arranged for, and take part in them as they may feel disposed. Now it is a fishing party again a rabbit hunt, and then a trip to the caves, or over the border to Mexico, with a hop in the Ball-room in the evening to wind up with; and so the sons and the daughters of the millionaires and the owners of them too, while away the hours of the days. They like to be looked at too, and enjoyed, these dainty women and pastime men, and they are an interesting under-study, and when taken with all their surroundings, and a peep at their pleasures by those who come to linger for a moment and fly again, opens up new lines of thought.

'Tis truly said that one half the world does not know how the other half lives, and well 'tis so. Enough of this, however, as my stay in this most charming of resorts has come to an end, and I must pack my grip and depart.

My next stop will be Pasadena, while there to attend the Pageant of Roses, then for San Francisco, and a day or two at the Golden Gate, when Ho! for British Columbia and my native land once more!

W. S. FISHER.

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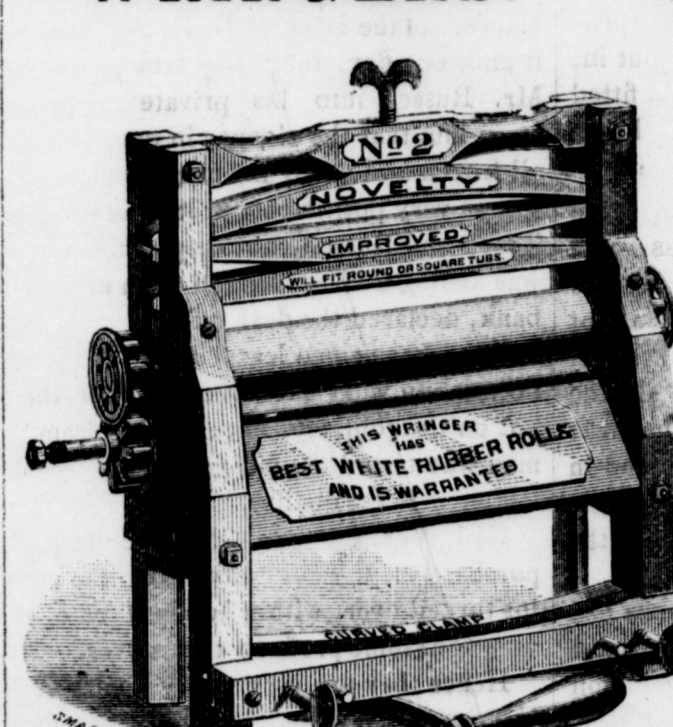
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