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THE SPARKLING WATAUGA

BY RUD WUNTZ.

I spent so much time the other day blowing my own horn, throwing off on the intelligent compositor and sailing into the phrase-makers that I had no space left to say much about the Linville country or its environment. However, that's all right. Shep, Dugger has immortalized both in his peerless book, known far and wide, and called "The Balsam Groves of the Grand Father Mountain." I have no apologies to make, however, for when a man gets a chance to argue his own case, to silence the other side, and to decide all the disputed points in his own favor and doesn't do it, he is more—or less—of a man that I am now or ever wish to be. However, some more, even Shep Dugger couldn't say all that ought to be said about this matchless scenery, and so I plead with the unintelligent editors and proprietors of this Journal of civilization to have my say too. I have had it hinted to me that if I would only do what I set out to do and really talk about the scenery and the country in-

stead of myself my diatribes would be more welcome. However—guess I better not ride that horse to death before I get started.

Standing in Linville gap one feels exactly as if one were astride the roof-tree of the world. Of course we all know just how that feels, having ridden it so often. I said that is the way "one" feels, though which or what one, I am too discreet to say. I am simply trying to be grammatical. The grammarians, you know, insist that "one" should be used as a sort of impersonal or double personal pronoun, applying to neither or to either sex and both genders and every mood and tense of mind or man, in the universe. One thing I know about "one" and that one is Me. I felt that way when I stood in that gap. I felt high up. And I was high up, too. No denying that fact. Just think of being in a gap of the Blue Ridge 4100 feet above the "blistered billows of the tropic seas." I hate like the very mischief to put them "blistered billows" in quotation marks; but I know if I

don't I'll be found out, sure—and exposed. That's what hurts—not being "ketch'd," but being "told on." However, now that I think of it, I am going to take the "blistered billows" right out of their quotation marks again. For the true quotation is "blistered ripples." So "blistered billows" belongs to me, and, being alliterative, is a vast improvement on blistered ripples.

Well, being in Linville gap is "sorter" like being at the North or South pole—you cannot go in any direction from there without going somewhere else. It is really an improvement on the North pole, at least; for Commander Peary said he couldn't get any further north than where he was when he got there, but you can get much further north from Linville gap if you really wish to. And, too, the North pole is on a level with the Atlantic, the Pacific, the Indian and all the other oceans in the world, for Peary let down his lead there and lost it. But Linville gap is over 4000 feet above the Atlantic, and I don't know how many feet above the Pacific ocean, which distance I don't believe has ever been "measured." I venture the startling scientific prediction that when the South pole is finally reached it will be discovered that it has one vast and far reaching advantage over the North pole, and that is that it will be possible for even Commander Peary to go a little further north of it if he should try hard enough. Mark the prediction, and remember the author when the time comes.

Well, again, to return to the summit of the next above foregoing and immediately preceding paragraph, as the lawyers say when they do not wish to give the other fellow a single chance to squabble over an immaterial point, I never have been able to see why the United States mint at Charlotte or Philadelphia does not coin that "sorter" into one good, solid and substantial word and make it current as a genuine legal tender in the open markets of literature, if Congressman Gooder realized its orphaned and counterfeit condition I know he would have it stamped as a coin of the realm or of the republic, at least.

But—to get away from "Well," and "However,"—standing in Linville gap you really are in medias res. Of course, if I thought those Latin words really meant anything so commonplace as "in the middle of things" I would not have made use of them in this chaste and refined and sublimated discourse on subliminal subjects. But, being there—in Linville gap—it is easy to go down hill in almost any direction except that of the great Grand Father mountain which still carries on a lonely existence several miles away from the Grand Mother mountain, from which his seems to have obtained a divorce some years before our courts of justice were established in North Carolina. The Linville river rises in this gap and flows east of the Blue Ridge, while Boone's Fork of the Watauga river rises only a few feet further west and

immediately starts out on its journey to the Mississippi and the Gulf of Mexico without bag or baggage of any description whatever. This fork is named after Jesse Boone, a brother of the immortal Daniel, because he used to live on its banks—or one of them—I forgot which.

Westward is McCauley's gap—I used to know a mighty pretty girl by that name—McCauley, not gap—but she went off and got married and that settled all her beauty for me. After passing through McCauley gap you come to Banner's Elk, one of the most romantic valleys in the world, surrounded as it is by the highest and the bluest mountains in the state, among them being the Beech, the Sugar and Hanging Rock. Rev. Dr. R. P. Campbell of this city has a summer home there, and it is the resort of many other visitors during the heated term. The Southern Presbyterian church supports a fine school whose influence is felt for miles and miles around. There is one good hotel devoted to the entertainment of summer visitors and another which cares for commercial travelers and the traveling public generally. Maple syrup, made from the sugar maples which cover the mountain known as Sugar mountain, and lukewarm cakes, are eaten here all the summer through, and they are delicious. There are two of the largest and best stocked stores here of any place I know of; whereas 35 years ago one big store house half filled with goods more than sufficed for the wants of all the people living there then.

In the Sugar mountain old people still point out the spot which tradition designates as the camping place of a man who hid out there during the Revolutionary war to escape serving against the British. He was a Tory. His name even is still remembered there, though I have forgotten it. Here, near the old Lewis' flour mill, is what geologists call a pudding stone of rock. It is a conglomerate composed of a multitude of rounded, whitish flint-like rocks, the size of one's fist, embedded in a chocolate colored material now almost as hard as the stones it contains. They are just as common as stones are in branches and creeks, worn smooth by the water. It is a solid mass of some twenty or thirty feet in width, as I recall it, and of unknown thickness. Some of it was sent to the Philadelphia centennial as a curiosity.

Crossing Boone's mountain you come to Kaley's Fork, on the lovely Watauga river; so called because Bishop lives saw in the valley the resemblance to a cross where two creeks, flowing from opposite directions, enter the Watauga river at right angles. It was here, years before the civil war that he established a sort of brotherhood or theological seminary—it being a disputed matter as to which he was seeking to establish here. It was abandoned during the war; but the Episcopalians have since restored it to far more than its former glory and usefulness, two magnificent buildings crowning the slope of a hillside and overlooking the lovely valley.

This is probably the most beautiful valley in the mountains of North Carolina. It was here in these broad bottom lands that President Baird, who built the first house in Asheville, settled, and left a large and influential family.

Eight or ten miles from Valle Crucis, according to the road you travel, is Boone, the highest court house town east of the Rocky Mountains, being 3232 feet above the sea. Two good hotels are here, and the Appalachian school, consisting of several large and attractive buildings, where many hundreds of young people are educated during the regular terms, and where teachers are trained during the summer. It is supported by the state and does excellent service to this section. In a field near one of the dormitories, in a fence corner, Squire Bryan, a kinsman of William Jennings Bryan and one of whose relatives was married by Daniel Boone, will point out to you the foundations of the chimney of the cabin Boone used to occupy when here on hunting trips from Holman's Ford.

Here, too, is the Watauga Democrat, whose circulation goes into almost every home in that part of the state, and a lovely little girl who used to pet a lovely horse and make me wish I had four legs myself. Her name is Selma and she can set type with the best.

Watauga is one of the richest counties in the mountains. It raises the best apples and cattle to be found out of Haywood. It is distinctively a grass country. The homes are the best in the state. The people are the best educated and most advanced of any I know anywhere. They are hospitable and well informed. They think they need a railroad, but I know better. By the time a railroad goes through there, with its tramps and its deadbeats, Watauga will lose

half its charm for me and many others who know when they are well off.

Four miles from Boone is Three Forks Baptist church, the oldest in this section. It celebrates its centenary many years ago. Three churches have been built there, each larger than the former, and each well filled with devout worshippers every Sunday. Its singing class was the best I heard while I was on that trip, and I think took the prize that fall. Four miles further east is Cook's gap, formerly called Boone's gap, and through which Daniel passed on his way from Holman's ford to Cumberland gap many years ago. The old Indian trail he followed is still distinct and does not look unlike an old cart road. A few miles south of this place I took dinner with an old gentleman and his wife. They live alone now, after the death of their fine young son who, a few short years ago, achieved distinction in the University of North Carolina both as a student and as a baseball player. He contracted typhoid fever on one of his trips with his ball team and came home only to die. The old father and I caught a mess of fine trout from a small creek flowing through his meadow, in a few moments. He said the creek had no name. His name was John Story, and I told him to call the creek Story's Run, but he did not see the point.

That afternoon, late, I limped into Blowing Rock, a flourishing village more than a mile in length, and extending along the main road from the top of the Blue Ridge. When I first visited this place, 37 years ago, a Mr. Morris and a Mr. Estes were the only residents. Now there are four or five fine hotels, many magnificent residences, and a country estate rivaling Baltimore in magnificence—that of the 'ones. From Blowing Rock go out two roads that are world-famous—the result, largely, of the splendid faith of one small scrap of a man by the name of S. H. Kelsey. He had no money and little physical strength. He was a stranger in a strange land. Yet his faith literally overcame mountains. For he built roads and towns where no roads and no towns had been before, and he called the attention of the world to a section of country that is unsurpassed in the world for the magnificence of its scenery and the healthfulness of its atmosphere.

Of course he did not do it all. He had helpers and friends. But he was the pioneer. He had built Highlands in Macon county, and then with Mr. Raveland, the father of our townsmen, S. P. Raveland, esp. he went to Watauga, and in co-operation with a Mr. McFae of the eastern part of the state founded Linville City, dammed back Linville lake, built the turnpike from Blowing Rock to Boone and from Blowing Rock around the base of Grandfather mountain to Linville City. He also did much to have a road built from Elk Park by Valle Crucis. Watauga has more and better roads than Mecklenburg, when the character of the country is considered.

But it is in the Yonahlossee road that Kelsey will live longest. It is almost level and runs along the top of the Blue Ridge for miles until it comes to the foot of the Grandfather, when it literally digs a foothold and keeps along just as though it were not performing wonders. It passes near Kelsey postoffice, named in honor of the builder of this splendid highway.

Linville City is a mile or two from Pinola or Saganaw, a lumber village at the end of a narrow gauge railroad running up from Elk Park. It has a fine hotel, school, churches and

many nice private residences. On its lake-boats and rafts float and from its waters anglers draw many fine rainbow trout. The Grandfather mountain towers over it, while around it every direction other mountains rise, range upon range until they fade away in the misty distance. The altitude of Linville City is 3820—higher than Highlands.

Montezuma is a "one little town in a gap of the Blue Ridge. It used to be called Bull Ridge, or some such name. Near the head of this stream are two large stone masses, one of which is 85 feet high, called the chimneys. They project above the side of the mountain in a most striking manner, and I was surprised to find that they had never been photographed. They are the largest single stones in North Carolina, not even excepting the High Rocks on the right bank of the Little Tennessee river below Turbott. It was in this section and under the hanging rock above Shull's Mills that many federal prisoners who had escaped from Salisbury hid and found friends in several union sympathizers among the natives. Kiek, too, passed along here when he went on his rail from Elizabethton, Tenn., to Morganton and released the inmates of a conscript camp six miles east of that town in 1864. A little battle was fought on his return at a place called the Windmill. The name of the battle, Col. Watahull Avery, a brother of Judge A. C. Avery of Morganton, was killed here in attempting to capture this bold cavalryman on his return from his daring raid into the very heart of the Southern Confederacy. A few miles south is Devil's Hat—a curious rock formation on Ginger Lake mountain.

But let us return to Linville gap. Instead of going west this time let us go down Boone's Fork. We shall soon come to Esocoe, near which Jesse Boone used to live and where a soldier of the war of 1812 and another of the Mexican war are buried.

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Mob Lynches Negro Brakeman. Manchester, Ga., Oct. 20.—Jerry Lovelace, a negro brakeman, charged with assaulting yardmaster W. F. Korman on Tuesday night, was taken from Marshall Collier here yesterday by a mob of about 30 men and lynched. The mob first secured Collier, taking his keys and money from him, after which they went to the jail for the negro.

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