

THE PROGRESSIVE FARMER

and The Cotton Plant.

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ACROSS THE CONTINENT.

IX.—Through the Rocky Mountains and Up Pike's Peak.

Next week I shall have something to say about Utah, Salt Lake City, and the Mormons; this week I shall give some random notes of my trip homeward.

On this return trip the Rocky Mountains naturally impressed me more than anything else. They have an individuality all their own; wild, savage, defiant, they will carry through the ages the subtle suggestion of the old untamed life of the Indian, the buffalo, and the pioneer. The land on either hand will become as populous as is the East to-day, and civilization, tame and formal, will press itself to their very base; but the Rockies themselves will never be civilized. Primitive, naked, chaotic, they typify forever the old Wild West; and they are as different from the green, trim, gently sloping ranges of New York and New England as a Boston schoolmarm is from a Colorado cowboy.

With the refinement and sweetness of the White Mountains and Adirondocks they have nothing to do—these rugged, brawny, sky-piercing giants of the West. Our wildest Alleghanies with their wooded slopes would be tenderfeet out in Colorado. Nature was mad, drunk, rioting, "red in tooth and claw with ravine" when she piled these fierce, gaunt peaks, and tore open the earth's rocky bosom with canyons and furrows gigantic.

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The Rocky Mountains are well named. Of our eastern ranges you remember the beauty of the hurrying streams, the green woods, the cultivated valleys. Of the Sierras you remember the stately forests of fir and cedar, Lebanon-like. But of the Rockies you remember the rocks.

In every shape and form the rocks are here. In the Canyon of the Grand River they are piled in sheer colossal walls a half mile above your head—and you begin to realize what an insignificant atom you are. Here it is—layer after layer, stratum after stratum, like a petrified lumber pile, brownish red; and you imprisoned down at the bottom, a doll-man in the hands of giants. In other places the rocks are not in layers at all, but boulders piled on boulders, Pelion on Ossa, Gog on Magog, a riot of elemental confusion and disorder. In yet other places you see no more of these rocks as big as houses, but a wilderness of smaller stones, just an old-fashioned rock pile

as big as a township or two. Here again is molten rock, a sea of lava belched out by some volcano ages and ages ago.

The dullest imagination cannot fail to be stirred by this carnival in stone. The rocks take on fantastic shapes. Giants and Titans look down on you from the summits; grotesque mammoths and monsters are carved on the mountain side; here is a ship ready to launch; and a thousand feet above you is a walled city with massive towers and battlements, its grim castles dimly seen within.

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We saw no forests in the Rockies, except along the banks of the snow-fed rivers, if I remember correctly, until we came to Colorado Springs—none in the Canyon of the Grand, or about Royal Gorge or Tennessee Pass. Where the rocks failed for a time, they gave way to great clod mountains, barren and galled, much like those we had seen in the desert. It was a July day, but on the peaks beside us a snow-storm was raging, and the first section of our train, coming out of a tunnel, found itself in a cloud of fast-falling flakes. Away off on either hand were blue peaks, snow-clad, and I shall always regret that it was too cloudy for us to see the Mount of the Holy Cross.

* * *

"Pike's Peak or bust" was the motto of many a pioneer in the old days, and we made it our motto, too. And we didn't bust. Ten o'clock on this July morning found the writer, thickly-clad as an Esquimaux, snow-balling his fellow travelers from Indiana and North Carolina—and incidentally getting snow-balled in return. The night before the thermometer had gone below zero, and the summer wind on the tower this July morning numbed my fingers and bit and blanched my face so shrewdly that I did not stay long to watch the scenery through the telescope.

Seeing Pike's Peak from Colorado Springs, I was rather disappointed in it—forests at the base, but beyond this a naked, gullied, snow-streaked and wind-swept desolation of rocks. I had expected another Shasta, its last 4,000 feet wrapped deep in perpetual white. But the disappointment vanishes as you ascend the Peak or see the wonders from its summit.

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About the mountain itself two things are especially impressive—the grim, picturesque, almost human struggle of the trees for existence at the timber line, and the acres of yellow volcanic rocks beyond, unrelieved by a single speck of green. Rocks I had grown accustomed to, however, while I had never before seen this struggle for the mastery between Bareas and the forest gods. Beyond 11,578 feet it is too cold for even the hardest shrub to live, and here the timber line ends almost abruptly. Like an army, the tree growth seems to be storming some enemy up the mountain slope, and the foremost ones, those that have left the main line and dashed ahead, seem to have a kinship with human heroes—ragged, scarred, gnarled, deep-rooted and unshakable. All about the timber line the battle rages fiercely, and only the hardest survive its near approach, them-

selves beaten down and half blasted by the storm king, their gashed, half-dying fellows about them. I know hardly anything else in nature so poetic.

When I began this letter I intended to discuss irrigation and a number of other topics which I now see I must leave over for another letter. But Utah will be the subject next week, anyhow.

C. H. P.

THOUGHTS FOR FARMERS.

Subsoiling.

If the writer could persuade one-fifth of the readers of The Progressive Farmer to begin subsoiling their clay lands in a systematic way he would be greatly gratified. We have just inspected a six-horse farm, some of which has been subsoiled during the last three years. There had been no rain on the farm for five weeks. On the land that had been plowed with two-horse plows, disc plow and subsoiler, the cotton was larger and greener than on similar land not subsoiled. The year after land was subsoiled there was little difference in the crops, but it is telling this dry weather. There was an eight-acre lot planted in cotton. The land was a light sandy soil, rather loose. It was thin, but made fine cotton for poor land. It was prepared with one horse. The seed were planted and enough cotton came up for five stands. About the 10th of May it began to die, and now there is only half a stand. Many farmers suffered the same way. They said it was the sandy land that caused the trouble. We congratulated that eight-acre lot. After scraping three or four inches of loose light dirt, with plenty of humus in it, the hard pan was struck, and it was certainly hard. The tenant was informed what caused his cotton to die. He said: "I noticed that when it rained the water stood on top of the ground and did not go down." This winter that field will have two or three inches of the hard pan broken and next spring the cotton will not die.

Rotation of Crops.

The danger is that 10 cent cotton will drive farmers away from their purpose to improve their farms. There is no possible chance of improving lands planting hoed crops year after year. The soil needs humus or vegetable matter, and it can be supplied in proper quantities only by sowing small grain. In the Piedmont section of the Carolina the three-year system of rotation is the best one. Take the two-horse farm as an example. There should be about sixty acres of arable land. Plant one-third of that in corn, with peas between the hills, or sown broadcast at laying-by time. Follow with wheat or oats and then sow peas after the small grain is harvested. The third year it will be ready for cotton, and then begin with corn again the fourth year. By this system of rotation, and deepening the soil gradually until it is ten inches deep, the land will yield twice as much as under the poverty-producing system of planting all cotton. If this Cotton Growers' Association can bring our farmers round to rotation of crops, deep preparation and raising all necessary supplies on the farm, the wealth of the farmers will be largely increased.

CHAS. PETTY.

Spartanburg, S. C.

The love we have to God is realized in our love to men. It cannot abide alone. They who have thought to gain it by retirement and meditation have found it only a will-o'-the-wisp, save as it has issued in the love that seeks men and tries to do them good.—Herman Packard De Forest.