

SOLITARY PLACES MADE GLAD:

• BEING

OBSERVATIONS AND EXPERIENCES FOR THIRTY-
TWO YEARS IN NEBRASKA;

WITH

SKETCHES AND INCIDENTS TOUCHING THE DIS-
COVERY, EARLY SETTLEMENT, AND
DEVELOPMENT OF THE
STATE.

BY THE

REV. HENRY T. DAVIS,

OF THE NEBRASKA CONFERENCE.

The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them;
and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.

—ISAIAH XXXIV, 1.

*Sincerely Yours
H. T. Davis*

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CHAPTER III.

TOPOGRAPHY AND RESOURCES OF NEBRASKA.

POSITION—AREA—ELEVATION—CLIMATE—SOIL—RESOURCES—INTELLIGENCE OF THE PEOPLE.

GEOGRAPHICALLY, Nebraska is situated near the center of the United States. It lies midway between the two oceans, and between latitude 40° and 43° N. The extreme width of the State from north to south is about two hundred and ten miles, and its extreme length about four hundred and fifteen miles. It has an area of seventy-six thousand eight hundred and ninety-five square miles, or forty-nine millions two hundred and twelve thousand acres, almost every acre of which may be cultivated. It is almost twice as large as the State of Ohio. If England and Wales were placed on top of Nebraska, they would not carpet it by sixteen thousand eight hundred square miles. It has eight thousand four hundred and thirty-one square miles more than all the New England States combined. If the great State of New York were set down in the center of Nebraska, there would be twenty-nine thousand eight hundred and ninety-five square miles untouched. It has been said, "Nebraska

is an empire in itself." Its soil is fertile, its scenery beautiful, and its climate as healthful as its area is large and its scenery charming.

A Boston minister once went to Europe to rest and recuperate. While in London he was called on to make a speech. He rose before the assembly and said: "My home is on the third planet from the sun. The Western Hemisphere is the center of the planet; the United States is the center of the hemisphere; Massachusetts is the center of the United States; Boston is the center of Massachusetts; my Church is the center of Boston, and I am the center of my Church." I might not claim for Nebraska all that the Boston preacher claimed; and yet the rich soil, balmy atmosphere, undulating prairies, thrifty towns and cities, cultured, live men and women, make it one of the most desirable of places in which to live. The atmosphere is clear and pure. The average elevation is 2,312 feet above the sea. The almost constant motion of the air, the perfect natural drainage, and consequent freedom from all low, marshy lands, combine to give the State the purest, the most healthy and exhilarating atmosphere. It has been said, "The atmosphere of Nebraska is as clear and much purer than the far-famed skies of Italy and Greece."

The winds are very strong, and sometimes blow for three days in succession with such tre-

mendous force that the pedestrian must struggle hard to keep his feet. While tornadoes are rare, gentle zephyrs and winds are almost constant. A gentleman after visiting the State said to a friend: "The air of Nebraska is purer, and there is more of it, than in any other country I was ever in."

Samuel Aughey, late professor of natural sciences in the University of Nebraska, gives the temperature of the State as follows: "The mean temperature of the summer months in Eastern Nebraska is between 72° and 74°, or, more accurately, close to 73°, Fahrenheit. During the winter months it averages 20°; during the spring months 47.8°; during the autumn months 49½°."

The soil is a black, sandy loam, very rich, and producing grains, vegetables, and fruits in great abundance.

An estimate has been made by competent and thoroughly posted men, and the conclusion has been reached that the two Dakotas are capable of supporting a population of 50,000,000. Nebraska is more than half as large as these two States, and her soil equally as good, hence she is capable of supporting a population of 25,000,000 souls. And the time comes on apace when that number will be within her borders. The average annual growth of the population of Nebraska for the last nineteen years has been sixty-one thousand. During the

past few years, one hundred thousand people have come into the State annually.

Nebraska is one of the best corn-producing States in the Union. The rate of progress in Nebraska from 1880 to 1888, in the production of corn, was more rapid than in any of the adjoining States, as the following statistics show: "In 1880 Illinois produced 326,000,000 bushels of corn. (Round numbers are used in all these illustrations.) Iowa produced 275,000,000 the same year; Kansas, 105,000,000; Nebraska, 65,000,000. In 1888 Illinois harvested 278,000,000 bushels of corn; Iowa, 278,000,000 bushels; Kansas, 158,000,000; and Nebraska, 144,000,000. Here it will be seen that Illinois did not maintain her record. Iowa gained a very small percentage, Kansas improved her record by a little over fifty per cent, and Nebraska leaped forward at the rate of one hundred and twenty-one per cent. Here Nebraska soil meets and overmatches the giants in her rate of progress."

Nebraska soil is well adapted to wheat-growing. The striking superiority of Nebraska soil and climate is shown in the subjoined table comparing the wheat-crops of 1880 and 1888 in Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, and Nebraska. Nebraska was the only one of these cereal-producing States that made progress on the record of 1880. Here is the exhibit of that fact, taken from the tenth

census and report of the Washington Bureau of Agriculture for 1888:

STATES.	1880. Bushels.	1888. Bushels.	Per cent of Gain or Loss.
Illinois.....	51,000,000	34,000,000	Loss, 33½
Iowa.....	31,000,000	24,000,000	Loss, 22½
Kansas.....	17,325,000	16,000,000	Loss, 7½
Nebraska.....	13,850,000	14,500,000	Gain, 4½

In a similar way it can be shown that Nebraska is in the front rank of the world's most progressive States in the production of oats, hay, potatoes, and other farm grains and vegetables. Being one of the best corn and hay producing States in the Union, she is also one of the best stock-producing States. At her age, Nebraska has had no superior as a stock-growing State. Then, the dairy resources of Nebraska are unsurpassed.

Look at the following figures of the "Nebraska Dairymen's Association" for 1889:

Nebraska has 300,000 milch-cows, valued at, \$7,200,000
 Nebraska's butter product in 1888, 45,000,000 lbs.
 Product of Nebraska creameries in 1888, . 4,000,000 "
 Value of Nebraska dairy products in 1888, \$10,500,000

"In no state in the Union can milk, butter, and cheese be produced at less cost per pound than in Nebraska."

At the American Dairy Show, at Chicago, in

1889, Nebraska took the first and second premium on creamery butter, first on granulated, and the diploma for the best and largest collection on exhibition.

As a fruit-growing State, Nebraska is abreast with other States. The flavor of her fruits is unsurpassed. Nebraska carried off the first premium on fruit at the meeting of the American Pomological Society, Richmond, Virginia, in 1870; again, at Boston, in 1873. At Chicago, in 1876, and at the Exposition in New Orleans, in 1884, she presented the largest collection of fruits, and would, without doubt, have taken the premium; but none was offered.

In popular intelligence Nebraska is at the front. By the census of 1880 Nebraska had the lowest percentage of illiteracy of any State in the Union, and Wyoming Territory alone had a better record in all the United States. A few years ago one of our most intelligent ministers had an appointment in a sparsely settled neighborhood on the prairies northwest of Omaha. The meeting was in a private house, and it was made of sod. The congregation consisted of about twelve persons. The minister was very much discouraged when he looked upon his audience. The men looked rough and hard. They were sunburnt and shabbily dressed, and, from their general appearance, he felt that he had an illiterate

congregation before him, and greatly feared his sermon would not be at all appreciated. He preached, and the most profound attention prevailed throughout the entire discourse. At the close of the service, all remained to greet the preacher, and he learned that seven out of the twelve who had listened to him were graduates from Eastern universities. According to the number, this was one of the most, if not *the* most, intelligent congregations he had ever preached to in his life. The wonderful possibilities of the rich soil and charming climate of Nebraska brought into the Territory the most intelligent class of settlers at the very commencement. From the organization of the Territory, in 1854, to the present time, not only in the cities and villages, but in the rural districts, all over our broad prairies, in sod-houses and dug-outs, might be found the most highly educated men and women. To the push and energy of these cultured, live men and women are we indebted, to an extent at least, for the wonderful development and rapid growth of the State.

The soil of Nebraska is peculiar. It retains its moisture with wonderful tenacity, so that long periods of dry weather do not materially affect the crops. On the other hand, the heaviest rains retard the farmer but little in his work. In a few hours after the heaviest rain-storms the farmer

may be seen in the field with his plow, cultivating his crops with as much ease as if no rain had fallen. This peculiarity of the soil guarantees to the faithful husbandman a good crop every year. A failure in crops is rarely ever known in Nebraska.

The autumns are remarkably lovely. They are usually long, mild, and dry. The "Indian summers" are delightful, even beyond description. To understand and rightly appreciate them, one must be present and enjoy them. I have lived in Ohio, Indiana, California, and Nebraska, and have traveled quite extensively through other States, and it seems to me that Nebraska combines more natural advantages than any other one State of which I have any knowledge.

CHAPTER IV.

CALIFORNIA GOLD EXCITEMENT IN 1848-50.

GOLD DISCOVERED—ANXIOUS TO GO—"OUTFIT" OBTAINED—FAREWELL TO FRIENDS—TRIP FROM SOUTH BEND TO OLD FORT KEARNEY—PERILOUS PASSAGE OVER THE "BIG MUDDY"—FIRST NIGHT IN NEBRASKA—TERRIBLE STORM—BEAUTIFUL SCENE.

IN the year 1848 rich gold-mines were discovered in California. During that year, and in 1849, the most intense excitement on the subject prevailed throughout all the States. Flushed with the glowing reports from the mines that came by every mail, and with high expectations of becoming independently rich in a few months, tens of thousands rushed to the land of gold. The gold-fever, like a tidal wave, rolled from ocean to ocean. Many went "over the Plains," crossing the Missouri River, passing up the Great Platte Valley, thence over the Rocky and Sierra Nevada Mountains. To make this trip, from three to four months were required. Others went by water, doubling Cape Horn, a voyage requiring five or six months; while many others went by way of the isthmus, crossing from Aspinwall to Panama, and from there on the Pacific to San Francisco.

In South Bend, Indiana, my home, the "California fever" raged fearfully, carrying hundreds of the people to the Pacific Coast. Several companies were organized, and set out for the far distant West. Just before bidding their friends farewell, as their teams stood hitched to their wagons in the street, the Hon. Schuyler Colfax was called on for a speech. He was in the second story of a large store-building on Washington Street. He stepped forward to an open window, and looking down into a sea of upturned faces, spoke to the emigrants. He assured them that they would have the sympathy and prayers of the friends they left behind, and that during their absence the citizens of South Bend would never allow any of their families to suffer want. His few felicitous remarks touched the hearts of all. The faces of the emigrants, and the hundreds who crowded the streets to witness their departure, were bathed in tears. The scene was a most touching one. I shall never forget it. I shall never forget how I envied the young men that were among the emigrants, and how ardently I longed to be one of their number. The desire already kindled in my young heart for the new El Dorado, was fanned to a flame, and burned with a white heat. I said to myself, "I will go some day." During all that year the excitement continued, becoming, if anything, more intense. The mail from the

Pacific Coast came only once a month. When it arrived, hundreds gathered in and around the post-office, eager to learn the latest news from the mines. Nearly all the letters from friends were read aloud to the citizens. When a letter was received, after glancing over it himself, the person receiving it was called on to read it aloud for the benefit of all present. He would climb upon a chair or a dry-goods box, and read, while the hundreds around him stood in breathless silence, bending forward, eager to catch every word that fell from his lips. I have seen a large crowd standing in front of the post-office in the midst of a drenching rain, and while one held an umbrella over the person reading the letter, the crowd listened, seemingly unconscious of the terrible storm that was raging. And I do not suppose there was one in the vast crowd more oblivious to the storm, more anxious to hear, and more intensely interested than myself. We talked of California by day, and dreamed of it by night. Visions of the far-famed gold-regions often rose before us. In the spring of 1850 the long-wished-for time came. Judge E. Egbert, a brother-in-law, offered an "outfit" to my brother Albert and myself, with the understanding that we were to give him one-third of all the profits arising from any business we might engage in while in California.

I was then seventeen years old. With buoyant spirits, bright hopes, and visions of immense treasures of wealth before us, we bade adieu to a weeping mother, brothers and sisters, and friends, and started for the far West. Little did we know, or even dream, of the privations, sufferings, and disappointments that awaited us in the future. And well is it that a kind Providence keeps all these things hid from us! Well is it that the future, so far as these things are concerned, is all unknown. Little did we know of the dangers that would beset us on every hand, of the many imminent perils to which we should be exposed. Even now, when I think of the many narrow, hair-breadth escapes of life, I feel a peculiar chilly sensation creeping over me. I often ask: "How was it we escaped?" The answer comes in an instant: "God's guardian angel watched over us."

There is truth, as well as poetry, in Shakespeare's words:

"There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will."

Thomson, too, utters a great truth when he says:

"There is a Power
Unseen, that rules the illimitable world,
That guides its motions, from the brightest star
To the least dust of this sin-tainted mold."

I verily believe that that "unseen Power" which guides the motion of all worlds, all systems, and all atoms, guided and guarded us.

The patriotic Roman cried out: "If I had a thousand lives, I would give them all for my country."

With greater emphasis, and greater love for God than the Roman had for his country, I have often said: "If I had a thousand lives, they should all be given to God."

We were just four weeks going from South Bend, Indiana, to Saint Joseph, Missouri. The roads through Illinois and Missouri were very bad. We had never seen anything like them. There was snow and rain and mud. We had black, sticky mud in Illinois, and yellow, sticky clay in Missouri. In that early day there were but few bridges, and but very little work had been done on the roads. It is hard for any one now, in these days of improved roads and easy travel, to imagine the difficulties that were in the way of travel at that time. Illinois was full of sloughs. These have since been bridged, and no longer impede the traveler. We would cross several of these daily, and often our horses would go down to their sides in mud. We came to one of these one day; it looked ominous; we hesitated about attempting to cross. A team was just

in front of us, and the driver said to the man on the other side:

"Is the bottom good?"

"Yes," was the reply. So he cracked his whip and started in. His horses began to flounder and soon went down to their sides in mud, and the whole wagon was buried except the box. The driver cried out in a rage to the man on the other side:

"I thought you said the bottom was good here?"

"It is," said the man, coolly, "but you are not half-way down to it." It was a common remark among the emigrants that the bottoms had dropped out of all the roads in Illinois.

Twenty miles east of St. Joseph, Mo., we stopped four weeks to rest our horses, lay in provisions, and prepare for the long journey over the plains. At that time St. Joseph was the extreme western border of civilization, and the outfitting point for emigrants starting for California. Beyond this, all was a wide, desolate waste. There were no white settlements west of this. The whole territory belonged to the Indians. St. Joseph was a small, unsightly, filthy town, of a few hundred inhabitants, and in looks the people compared very favorably with the dingy houses, filthy streets, and general repulsiveness of the place. Here we saw

what we had never seen before. Many of the men we met wore about them leather belts, in which were large bowie-knives and revolvers. These they carried openly, and no attempt whatever was made to conceal their deadly weapons. Robberies were of almost daily occurrence, and it was unsafe for a man to walk the streets alone at night. We felt peculiar. We realized, for the first time, that we were in a "strange land," among thieves and robbers and cut-throats, and that life was none too safe. The impression made upon one, unaccustomed to such scenes, was very strong. I sometimes felt my heart creeping up into my throat, and a certain unpleasant choking sensation. But this little, unsightly, unattractive village has grown to be one of the beautiful, flourishing, and inviting cities of the West.

From this place we passed up the east side of the Missouri River into Iowa, to a point just opposite old Fort Kearney. Old Fort Kearney stood right where Nebraska City now stands.

boat, and a span of horses and a loaded wagon went down and were lost. The ferryman said, while there was danger, still he thought he could land us safely on the other side. We were restless, anxious to proceed on our journey, and unwilling to wait for the water to fall. We said, "We will risk it," and drove our team on board; and, with bated breath and trembling limbs, held the horses and watched the oarsmen with the most intense anxiety. When the dangerous current was passed and the pilot cried out, "Safe," the heavy strain was gone; relief came, and we breathed easy. A few moments afterwards the boat struck the shore, and on the 2d day of May, 1850, our feet pressed Nebraska soil for the first time. We pitched our tent on the western slope of "Kearney Hill;" and as it was raining and the ground wet, we cut hazel-brush, on which we placed our blankets and made a comfortable bed. That night the rain fell in torrents, and the thunder-peals were deafening. Lightning-flash vied

CHAPTER V.

ACROSS THE PLAINS.

OLD FORT KEARNEY—NEBRASKA CITY—PLATTE RIVER—INDIANS—NEW FORT KEARNEY—WOLVES—MIDNIGHT ALARM—CHIMNEY ROCK—COURT-HOUSE ROCK—BUFFALOES—SWEET WATER—SUMMIT OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS—GREEN RIVER—BEAR RIVER—HUMBOLDT—DESERT—CARSON RIVER—SUMMIT OF THE SIERRA NEVADAS—JOURNEY ENDED.

KEARNEY HILL, where we spent our first night in Nebraska, is now a part of Nebraska City. Table Creek winds along the foot of Kearney Hill. Just across this creek, and a few hundred yards to the northwest, stood Old Fort Kearney. On the 5th day of May we left the Old Fort. We were then beyond the bounds of civilization. There were no white persons residing in all the Territory of Nebraska, save a few traders and United States troops, garrisoned at different points for the defense of the emigrants. The garrison here consisted of a block-house, made of logs, with port-holes for cannon and muskets, and two rows of barracks in the shape of an angle. In 1848 this military post was abandoned by the Government, and the troops

moved to New Fort Kearney, on the Platte River, about two hundred miles west. In 1850, when we first saw the fort, the Government property was in the care of H. P. Downs. Eleven years later, when presiding elder of Nebraska City District, we became well acquainted with Mr. Downs and his family. They were then active members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Nebraska City. When the war broke out in 1861, Colonel Hiram P. Downs assisted in raising the "Nebraska Regiment," and in August of that year he was promoted to the rank of brigadier-general.

When Nebraska City was founded and platted in 1854, the old block-house stood on Main Street, near the center of the city. Here it remained until 1886, when it was removed. Many of the old citizens strongly protested against the removal of this "old landmark." If I could have had my voice and my way in the matter, it never would have been removed, if it did stand in the center of a beautiful city of fifteen thousand inhabitants. We first saw it in 1850. We next saw it in 1860; and in 1861 we moved to Nebraska City, and for seven years, almost daily, looked upon the old garrison. And for many years afterwards, whenever we visited the city, we expected to see the "block-house"—the people's old defender. It was like looking into the face of an old familiar friend. We were sorry, and

wished, kill and scalp every one of us, or take us prisoners, and put us to death by inches, with the most inhuman tortures, as they had done to many others; and we well knew that torture was their favorite amusement. And as they were on the war-path, and needed munitions of war, we knew that our provisions and teams and weapons and ammunition were a temptation to them to put us out of the way. I confess, I felt a peculiar weakness about the knees, and a strange, trembling sensation all over. However, after giving them a few articles of food, they left, passing on to the south, and we went our way rejoicing, feeling wonderfully relieved, and breathing with ease again.

Two days after this we reached New Fort Kearney, which we found situated on a lovely spot in the valley of the Great Platte. Here we found a number of United States troops quartered. The commander of the post ordered every emigrant to pass into one of the offices, where a clerk registered each name, his former residence, and destination.

From here we traveled up the Platte for days and days, with the same monotonous scenes before us, the same turbid stream, the same low range of bluffs in the distance, the same wide valley, with but here and there a lone tree or shrub to greet the eye.

The emigration was so large that year, that the grass was eaten off close to the ground, by the cattle and horses, for a great distance on both sides of the road, and we frequently had to go from one to five miles to obtain grass for our horses.

One afternoon, about three o'clock, we camped on the bank of the Platte River, where we could get plenty of wood and water. There was no grass, however, so brother Albert and myself took the horses back to the bluffs, some five miles away, into a deep canyon, where we found an abundance of good grass. Here we watched the horses, until it began to grow dark, when we caught them, and were about to get on and ride back to camp. While in the act of bridling them, a strange and startling sound broke, all at once, upon our ears. It came from every direction. It was the cry of a thousand hungry wolves that broke the stillness of the evening air. In an instant, and simultaneously, they seemed to leap from their hiding-places in the caves and crags and glens, and came rushing down towards us with a hideous howl that thrilled us through and through, making our hair stand on end. The noise seemed to make the very hills shake and tremble around us. My brother succeeded in getting on his horse first, and looking back and seeing me still on the ground, he cried out:

"Henry, get on quick, or you will be overtaken." I tried again and again to mount, but was so excited and frightened I failed every time. It seemed to me I never could get on my horse. After repeated trials, I at length succeeded, and we rode down the canyon as fast as horse-flesh could carry us. When we got out of the hills, and reached the open valley, it was so dark we could not even see the horses' heads before us. Egyptian darkness could not have been more dense. We looked for the camp-fire, which we expected to see; but in vain, not a single ray of light, nor a single object, could be seen in any direction. The thought then flashed upon our minds that we might not be able to find our way back to camp again, and that we should be overtaken, and fall a prey to the hungry and ferocious wolves. We rode on for some time under the deepest suspense, goading our horses forward as fast as possible, and straining our eyes to catch a glimpse of light from the camp-fire. At length we saw away in the distance a flickering light; it seemed the most perfectly beautiful of anything we had ever seen; it came to us in that dark and dangerous hour as an inspiration. We were encouraged, and urged on our horses, and were soon seated by our own camp-fire, partaking of a hearty supper, which had been prepared for us; after which we lay down to dream over our new adventure.

When we reached the forks of the Platte River, our route was then up the South Fork of this stream. One night, about dusk, after traveling hard all day, we reached a point where the high bluffs came within a few rods of the river, at the mouth of a deep ravine. Here, at the mouth of this ravine, with high, abrupt, and rocky bluffs upon either side, we pitched our tents and stopped for the night. It was a gloomy, dismal-looking place. On our right was the river; on our left the deep ravine; in front and in our rear rose, almost perpendicular, the frowning bluffs. It was just the right place to be overtaken and cut to pieces by Indians. We prepared supper, put out our guards, and retired to our tents to rest. Foot-sore and weary, we soon fell into a deep sleep. About midnight we were aroused from our sweet slumbers and dreams of home and loved ones by the guards, who rushed to the tents, and in a low voice said: "Indians! Indians! Get up, and get your guns, quick, quick! We hear them crossing the river on their ponies. They will be here in five minutes." Startled, frightened, and trembling like an aspen-leaf, we tried to find our arms; but every thing seemed out of place. Guns, powder, balls, caps, everything was gone. The Indians, as we supposed, were just upon us, and we were without anything with which to defend ourselves. It was

a time of intense excitement. In a few moments, however, we recovered our presence of mind, found our guns and ammunition, and with everything ready, we went out to meet the foe. We could distinctly hear them slowly crossing the river. Splash! splash! splash! we heard their feet in the water. The river was near a mile wide, and it took some time for them to cross. Nearer and nearer they came. At length they reached the shore, rose upon the bank, when, lo and behold! we saw, not Indians, but a large herd of buffaloes. We laughed heartily at our scare, returned to our tents, and slept soundly till morning. The next day we crossed the South Platte where Julesburg now stands.

It may not be amiss here to give a bit of history touching the founding of this city. Julesburg derives its name from a tragic and blood-curdling incident, such as abound in the early history of Nebraska and Kansas, as well as other Western States and Territories. Julesburg derives its name from a Frenchman named Jules Beni. In 1855 Jules Beni kept a ranch at this point. At that time the mail was carried overland from the States to California, and this was one of the stations where horses for the company were kept. A noted desperado, by the name of Alf Slade, was superintendent of the stage company, and Jules Beni had charge of the stock.

Slade was said to be the most cruel and desperate character that ever frequented the frontier, and woe betide the man who ever had an altercation with him. He could kill a man in cold blood, and with as much composure as he would sit down and take his meal. One day he got into a quarrel with Jules, and told him he would cut off his ears and wear them as a charm on his watch-chain. Slade started across the yard for his arms, and Jules, knowing the desperate character of the man he had to deal with, shot and wounded him, and then, fearing vengeance from Slade's associates, he fled to a deep canyon in the vicinity. Here he remained concealed until he prevailed on one of his associates to take charge of his cattle. He then left the frontier and went to Saint Louis. In 1860 he returned to Cottonwood Springs. Shortly afterwards, with a company of men, he started westward for his cattle, which were then near Fort Laramie. He had only got a short distance on his way back, when he was overtaken by Slade, with a number of his men. "Slade immediately shot Jules and wounded him, then cut off the poor Frenchman's ears, and finally put him to death by slow and cruel tortures of the knife. After drying the ears of poor Jules, the monster attached them to his watch-chain, where he wore them as a fulfillment of his terrible threat, and as a warning to all who dared oppose him." Some

years afterwards Slade came to a violent death. "His cold-blooded murders and desperate deeds became too terrible to be borne, even by men whose lives had long become inured to scenes of bloodshed, and he was hanged, as he deserved to be, by a vigilance committee."* Whenever we think of Julesburg, we think of the terrible tragedy connected with its early history.

From where Julesburg now stands, we crossed over to the North Platte. Shortly after reaching the valley of this stream, we came in sight of Chimney Rock. The atmosphere is so pure and clear that objects seem much nearer than they really are, and on this account we were often greatly deceived in the distance between us and certain objects in full view. Chimney Rock seemed at first sight not more than ten miles away, when in reality it was more than fifty miles away. When we first came in sight of it, we were traveling almost due west, and this lone column seemed to rise up out of the prairie away to the southwest. We traveled a whole day before we came directly opposite to it, and then traveled nearly two days before it faded entirely from our view. Chimney Rock is a pillar, resting on a solid rock foundation, and rising to so great a height in the air, that it may be seen for nearly a

*History of Nebraska (Western Historical Company), p. 533.

hundred miles away. It reminds one of Cleopatra's needle and the obelisks of Egypt. For ages around it the wild storms have swept; for generations it has looked upon the buffalo ranging with delight over the grassy prairies. Within its view many a bloody Indian battle has doubtless been fought, and many an Indian town has arisen, flourished, and passed away. It has watched the centuries come and go, and many wonderful scenes have transpired under its gaze, and still it stands in all its solitary loneliness.

Shortly after Chimney Rock faded from sight, Court-house Rock rose in view. Court-house Rock was about the same distance as Chimney Rock from the road, although it seemed very much nearer. It is several acres square, rising to an immense height, and looking very much like a massive court-house, standing alone on the dreary prairie, hence the name. The stone of both Chimney and Court-house Rock is soft, and they are rapidly yielding to the gnawing tooth of time.

The valley of the Platte, in the spring and early part of the summer, was the grazing ground for the buffaloes. The grass came earlier in this valley than on the bluffs and uplands, hence immense droves of buffalo congregated along this stream. It is hard for any one now to imagine the vast numbers that gathered along this great valley. We have seen the valley literally black

with them for miles and miles in almost every direction. I am perfectly safe in saying I have seen in one herd many millions. And this scene was repeated day after day as we traveled up this river. A buffalo stampede was a most terrible and dangerous thing. A frightened drove of these wild animals running at full speed swept everything before them; and woe betide the horses and cattle of the emigrants that happened to be in their path; they were swallowed up in the herd, carried away, and perhaps never seen or heard from again. Many emigrants lost their teams in this way. The noise of a drove of buffaloes on a stampede was like the continuous roll of distant thunder. The only safety for a train of emigrants, on the approach of a drove of buffaloes coming at full speed, was to drive the wagons into a circle, make a strong corral, putting all the cattle and horses on the inside. The buffaloes, however, much more rapidly than the Indians, are becoming extinct. When we crossed the plains, forty years ago, it was not known how many buffaloes there were. There were many, many millions. The Great Platte Valley was alive with them, and the bluffs and prairies, north and south, for hundreds of miles, were covered with these shaggy cattle of the Plains.

Twenty years ago, according to the authority of the Smithsonian Institute of Washington,

there were only eight millions of buffaloes roaming over the plains and mountains of the Far West. To-day there are but a few hundred. There never has been such an extermination of any large quadruped; it could not have been more successful if especially planned. Had the buffalo been a wild animal, doing immense damage to person and property, he could not have been hunted down and uselessly and wantonly slaughtered with more avidity. Only eighty-five head of wild buffaloes now remain; three hundred and four are alive in captivity, and about two hundred are under the protection of the Government in Yellowstone Park. It is said that there are about five hundred and fifty head in the British possessions, north of Montana. There is a remote possibility that the stock may be perpetuated, and a small number kept alive in the Yellowstone Park and different zoological gardens. But the wild buffalo has lost his place, and has become a rarity in the animal kingdom. The work of extermination has been carried on principally for the hides. Regular buffalo-killing parties were organized, and the animals hunted down and shot. Their hides would be taken off, and sold at the nearest post-trader's for seventy-five cents or a dollar. The war of extermination was waged vigorously and most effectively, and it was thought for a long time that it was impossible ever to ex-

tinguish the stock. It has only been a few years since the danger of the species becoming extinct forced itself upon those who are interested in natural history, and since then there has been a scramble to obtain specimens for zoological parks and menageries. The Government has also recognized the importance of perpetuating the species, and it has secured a number and placed them in the Yellowstone Park for safe keeping and the perpetuation of the stock. It is deplorable that the Government did not take steps long ago to stop the wholesale slaughter of these noble animals.

We followed the North Platte until we reached Fort Laramie. Here we found a number of United States troops stationed. From this point we crossed over the "Black Hills," and, after several days' travel over a very rough and rugged road, struck the Sweet Water. This we found to be a most beautiful stream, and its waters as delightful as its name indicates. The Sweet Water winds its way down a most beautiful valley, which we found covered with heavy, tender, and most nutritious grass. This thrifty and tender grass our horses ate with a relish, which did us good to behold. Soon after reaching this stream we came to Independence Rock, which stands near the bank of the river, overlooking the whole surrounding country. Independence Rock is a great

boulder, if my memory serves me right, covering thirteen acres, and over one hundred feet high. At one place, on the west side, this rock could, with some difficulty, be scaled. The ascent was quite steep, yet by dint of effort a man could climb to the top. We clambered up to the summit of this wonderful boulder, and gazed with delight upon the romantic scenery which spread in every direction before us. After remaining for a short time, having taken in the magnificent view, we saw a large snake crawling up out of one of the crevices of the rock; in a little while another one made his appearance. As we had no desire whatever to see any more, never having had any peculiar love for the serpentine race, we made our descent much quicker than we had made our ascent, and left the snakes in full possession.

Just beyond this and in full view was Devil's Gap. This is an opening about thirty feet wide, through a mountain of solid rock. Through this opening the Sweet Water rushes at the rate of some fifty miles an hour. The walls on both sides are perpendicular, and two hundred feet high. This opening looks very much like a work of art, as though it had been made by human hands to form a channel for the beautiful river. This marvelous channel was cut through this mountain of solid rock not by human but divine hands. In this gap, on one side of the stream,

near the surface of the water, is a shelf of rock, and over this mountain, near the precipice, was a precipitous foot-path. Up this path, and over this rough mountain, many emigrants traveled on foot. We preferred to go with our teams some distance to the south-east, where there was a good wagon-road, rather than to attempt to scale the dangerous mountain on foot. The year previous a man passed up this path to the summit, and, looking down into the stream two hundred feet below him, became dizzy and fell into the awful chasm, his body striking the rocky shelf below. His friends could not possibly recover his body, for the waters rush through the narrow and rocky channel like the dashing waters of a raging cataract. I did not see them; but others who did, said the skull and bones of the poor man were distinctly visible from the top of the precipice.

Up this stream we traveled until we reached the summit of the Rocky Mountains; but so gradual was the ascent that we were not aware we were on the summit until we saw a small rivulet flowing to the west. We reached this point Saturday afternoon, July 3, 1850. Here, in this bleak and desolate place, some twelve thousand feet above the level of the sea, we camped and remained over Sabbath, celebrating the Fourth of July, at an altitude far above any on which we had ever been before. The wind blew

a stiff gale; the weather was cold, and it snowed at intervals during the whole day. We found some very good bunch-grass for our horses, and to keep ourselves warm, and while away the time, we cut sage-brush, and kept a good fire going by the side of a great rock, which served as a shelter from the fierce wind. To the right and left of us, as far as the eye could extend, rose mountain-peak above mountain-peak in solitary grandeur, crowned with eternal snow. The scene, though sublime, was at the same time a dreary and desolate one. While one enjoys such scenes for a little while, they soon become monotonous, and one longs for a more genial clime and more pleasant objects on which to gaze. From the summit of these everlasting hills we began to descend slowly to the west. We soon reached Green River, a deep and rapid stream, but not very wide. There was neither bridge nor ferry, and the water was too deep to ford; so we made a ferry-boat of a wagon-box, took our wagons to pieces, ferried them over one after another with our plunder, and swam with our horses across the river. Then we put together our wagons, reloaded our traps, and after a hard day's work in getting across, started again on our way rejoicing.

The next river of importance was Bear River. From here our journey was uneventful until we reached the Humboldt River. And of all the