

The Great Salt Desert.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the great West, is the vast Salt Desert, which lies nearly in the centre of the Continent. The frequent allusions to it in the Western News, induces us to give the following account of it, which we find in Bryant's journal of a tour through California.

We stood on the brow of a deep precipice, the descent from the ridge of hills immediately below and beyond which a narrow valley or depression in the surface of the plain, about five miles in width, displayed so perfectly the wavy and frothy appearance of highly agitated water, that Colonel Russell and myself, who were riding together some distance in advance both simultaneously exclaimed: "We must have taken a wrong course, and struck another arm or bay of the Great Salt Lake." With deep concern we were looking around surveying the face of the country to ascertain what remedy there might be for this formidable obstruction to our progress, when the remainder of our party came up. The difficulty was presented to them; but soon, upon a more calm and scrutinising inspection, we discovered that what represented so perfectly the "rushing waters" was moveless and made no sound! The illusion soon became manifest to us all, and a hearty laugh at those who were the first to be deceived was the consequence; denying to them the merit of being good pilots or pioneers, &c.

Descending the precipitous elevation upon which we stood, we entered upon the hard, smooth plain, we had just been surveying with so much doubt and interest, composed of bluish clay, incrustated, in wavy lines, with a white saline substance, the first representing the body of the water, and the last the crests and froth of the mimic waves and surge. Beyond this we crossed what appeared to have been the beds of several small lakes, the waters of which have evaporated, thickly incrustated with salt, and separated from each other by small mould-shaped elevations, of a white, sandy, or ashy earth, so imponderous that it has been driven by the action of the winds into these heaps, which are constantly changing their positions and their shapes. Our mules waded through these ashy undulations, sometimes sinking to their knees, at others to their bodies, creating a dust that rose above and hung over us like a dense fog.

From this point, on our right and left, diagonally in our front, at an apparent distance of thirty or forty miles, high isolated mountains rise abruptly from the surface of the plain. Those from our left were as white as the snowlike face of the desert, and may be of the same composition, but I am inclined to the belief that they are composed of white clay, or clay with sand intermingled.

The mirage a beautiful phenomenon I have frequently mentioned as exhibiting itself upon our journey, here displayed its wonderful illusions in a perfection and with a magnificence surpassing any presentation of the kind I had previously seen.

I observed that where these appearances were presented in their most varied forms, and with the most vivid distinctness, the surface of the plain was broken, either by chasms hollowed out from the action of the winds, or by undulations formed of the drifting sands.

About eleven o'clock we struck a white plain, uniformly level, and utterly destitute of vegetation or any sign that shrub or plant had ever existed above its snow-like surface. Pausing a few moments to rest our mules and moisten our mouths and throats from the scant supply of beverage in our powder keg, we entered upon this appalling field of sullen and hoary desolation. It was a scene so entirely new to us, so frightfully forbidding and unearthly in its aspects, that all of us, I believe, though impressed with its sublimity, felt a slight shudder of apprehension. Our mules seemed to sympathize with us in the pervading sentiment, and moved forward with reluctance, several of them stubbornly setting their faces for a countermarch.

For fifteen miles the surface of this plain is so compact, that the feet of our animals, as we hurried them along over it, left but little if any compression for the guidance of the future traveller. It is covered with a hard crust of saline and alkaline substances

combined, from one-fourth to one-half of an inch in thickness, beneath which is a stratum of damp whitish sand and clay intermingled. Small fragments of white shelly rock, of an inch and a half in thickness, which appear as if they once composed a crust, but had been broken by the action of the atmosphere or the pressure of water rising from beneath, are strewn over the entire plain and imbedded in the salt and sand.

As we proceeded, the plain gradually became softer, and our mules sometimes sunk to their knees in the stiff composition of salt, sand and clay. The travelling at length became so difficult and fatiguing to our animals that several of the party dismounted, (myself among the number), and we consequently slackened our hitherto brisk pace into a walk. About two o'clock A. M., we discovered through the smoky vapor the dim outlines of the mountains in front of us, at the foot of which was to terminate our day's march, if we were so fortunate as to reach it. But still we were a long and weary distance from it, and from the "grass and water" which we expected there to find. A cloud rose from the south soon afterwards, accompanied by several distant peals of thunder a furious wind, rushing across the plain and filling the whole atmosphere around us with the fine particles of salt, and drifting it in heaps like the newly fallen snow. Our eyes become nearly blinded and our throats choked with the saline matter, and the very air we breathed tasted of salt.

The Indian Archipelago.—Coal, Tin and Gutta Percha.

The tin mines in the Archipelago are of the kind called washings, and Mr Logan the Editor of the Journal of the Indian Archipelago, speaks of no less than 60 mines, producing 3000 tons of fine grain tin yearly. The tin fields to which they belong stretch over a vast district of the peninsula, extending from the seventh degree of north to the third degree of south latitude. The mines are wrought principally by Chinese colonists, who are reported to manage them with considerable skill, producing metal of a finer quality than that of Europe.

The annual product of British tin is about 5000 tons—the annual product of all Europe beside is only about 230 tons,—a great difference indeed. Great Britain is the tin sheet shop of the world and she is therefore throwing out her grappling irons for tin in India and the above news shows that she is not unsuccessful.

The Island of Borneo has lately been taken possession of by them under Mr. Brooke. This island is a splendid empire, full of all vegetable wealth, apparently, from rice and spices down to gutta percha, and a mineral treasury, from gold and diamonds up to iron and coal. Great fields of bituminous coal have recently been discovered. In Borneo coal has been traced along one river for 20 miles into the interior. It is of an excellent quality, well adapted for steam navigation—a particular point in wise British policy.

Gutta percha is now become a great article of export from the Archipelago. During the first 6 months of last year, no less than 27,000 tons was exported to England. In collecting this gum the tree which yields it, is destroyed and yet the produce of one huge tree only yields a product valued at a dollar and a half. The tree exists in abundance over an area of 500 thousand square miles. There need therefore be little apprehension of its speedy destruction, and by the time this takes place, some other substitute may be discovered,—nature's laboratory has had but a limited exploration.

Use of Tobacco.

Prout, in his Treatise on Disease, says "There is an article much used in various ways though not as an aliment, the deliterious effects of which on the assimilating organs require to be briefly noticed: namely, tobacco. Although confessedly one of the most virulent poisons in nature, yet such is the fascinating influence of this noxious weed, that mankind resort to it in every mode that can be devised to insure its stupifying and pernicious agency. Tobacco disorders the assimilating functions in general, but particularly, as I be-

lieve, the assimilation of the saccharine principle. I have never, indeed been able to trace the development of oxalic acid to the use of tobacco, but that some analagous and equally poisonous principle (probably of an acid nature) is generated in certain individuals by its abuse, is evident from their cachetic looks and from the darkish and often greenish yellow tint of the blood. The severe and dyspeptic symptoms sometimes produced by inveterate snuff-takers are well known; and I have more than once seen such cases terminate fatally with malignant diseases of the stomach and liver. Great smokers, also, especially those who employ short pipes and segars are said to be liable to cancerous affections of the lips. But it happens with tobacco as with deliterious articles of diet, the strong and healthy suffer comparatively little, while the weak predisposed to diseases, fall victims to its poisonous operations. Surely, if the dictates of reason were allowed to prevail an article so injurious to the health and so offensive in all its forms and mode of employment would speedily be banished from common use."

The Axe and the Saw.

Early one spring morning, when the sun had scarcely melted the hoar frost from the brown face of the wrinkled earth, an old axe happened to fall in with a saw. There was a 'cutting air' abroad, that threatened the newly shaven chin with *chaps!*

'Ah! my old blade!' said the Axe, 'how goes it with you? I came purposely to see how you do.'

'I really feel much obliged to you,' said the Saw, 'but am sorry to say that my *teeth* are very bad. My master has sent for the doctor, who, 'twixt you and me and the post, is no better than 'an old file.'" I was in the workshop last night, where,—

'Where, no doubt, you—*saw* a great deal,' facetiously interrupted the Axe.

The Saw showed his teeth in a sort of grin betwixt melancholy and mirth, and resumed—

'Why' I may say so with some truth; and I consider it no more than a duty. I owe Mr. Carpenter, to do as much as I can, in spite of my teeth for he is liberal,—in a point of *board*'

'And, do you never grow rusty?' asked the Axe

'Not with *over* work,' replied the Saw; 'and, indeed, I have always found that constant employment best preserves our polish, which, after all, is only artificial.'

'You are quite a philosopher.'

'Not exactly so; for I sometimes do grow exceedingly *hot*, and lose my *temper*.'

'And what says your master?'

'Why he generally desists awhile and I soon grow cool again, and then I cut away like a razor through a piece of mottled soap!'

'You are a happy fellow,' said the Axe.

'How differently am I situated! My master is a chopping boy, with a thick block, which is tantamount to saying he is a fat fool. He is very sharp with me sometimes; and when he finds I am inclined to be blunt, he grinds me most cruelly.'

'Alas!' cried the Saw; 'it's the way of the world, my friend; for I have invariably remarked, that the rich always grind the poor for the sake of the *'chips*.'

'Bravo!' exclaimed the Axe.

'You see I've not lived in the world all this time without getting a notch or two,' said the Saw.

'Nor I either,' replied the Axe; 'although, in obtaining the said notches, I have not only lost my courage but a portion of my metal, too!'

'Well, I never saw!' exclaimed my friend; 'how you talk! I am sure your teeth do not give you any trouble, at any rate.'

'I ax your pardon, old boy,' remonstrated the Axe; 'for, although I do not complain of my teeth exactly, my *chops* give me a pretty considerable deal of trouble, I can tell you.'

The Saw grinned approval of the Axe's wit. 'Peace!' exclaimed the Axe. 'Here comes Mr. Carpenter; so 'don't show your teeth till you can bite,'—I believe that is the maxim of a relation of yours?'

'Not a relation,' said the other: 'though they are the words of a *wise old saw*.'

Clarified honey applied on a linen rag is said to cure the pain of a burn as if by magic.

Velocity of Light.

Light travels with the amazing velocity of 192,000 miles in a second of time. It may be interesting to know how philosophers have been able to determine, with such certainty, that light really travels with this amazing velocity; for the fact is known as certainly as any phenomenon in nature. The method adopted was the following:—The eclipses of the satellites or moons of the planet Jupiter had been carefully observed for some time, and a rule was obtained, which foretold the instants, in all future time, when the satellites would glide into the shadow of the planet, and disappear, or again to emerge into view. Now it was found that these appearances took place sixteen minutes and a half sooner when Jupiter was near the earth, or on the same side of the sun with the earth, than when it was on the otherside; that is to say, more distant from the earth by one diameter of the earth's orbit, or path in the heavens which it takes in revolving round the sun, and at all intermediate stations, the difference diminished from the sixteen minutes and a half, in exact proportion to the less distance from the earth. This proves, then, that light takes sixteen minutes and a half to travel across the earth's orbit, and eight minutes and a quarter for half that distance, or to come to us from the sun. This being its amazing velocity, it may, for all useful purposes on the earth, be regarded as passing between bodies instantaneously; and it is for this reason that we perceive the flash from a gun at a distance, for a preceptible time, before we hear the report, and why we may count several seconds between the appearance of a flash of lightning, and hearing the thunder which follows.

Bean Soup.

Put two quarts of dried white beans into soak the night before you make the soup, which should be put on as early in the day as possible. Take five pounds of the lean of fresh beef—the coarse pieces will do. Cut them up, and put them into your soup pot with bones belonging to them, (which should be broken to pieces,) and a pound of bacon cut very small. If you have the remains of a piece of beef that has been roasted the day before, and so much underdone that the juices remain in it, you may put into the pot, and its bones along with it. Season the meat with pepper and salt, and pour on it six quarts of water. As soon as it boils, take off the scum, and put in the beans, having first drained them and a head of celery, cut small, or a tablespoonful of pounded celery seed. Boil it slowly till the meat is done to shreds, and the beans all dissolved. Then strain it through a sieve into the tureen, and put into it small squares of toasted bread, with the crust cut off. Some prefer it with the beans boiled soft but not quite dissolved. In this case, do not strain it; but take out the meat and bones with a fork.

Fable.

The sword of the warrior was taken down to brighten; it had not been long out of use. The rust was soon rubbed off, but there were spots that would not go, they were of blood. It was on the table near the secretary. The pen took advantage of the first breath of air to to move a little further off.

'Thou art right,' said the sword, 'I am a bad neighbor.'

'I fear thee not,' said the pen, 'I am more powerful than thou art; but I love not thy society.'

'I exterminate,' said the sword. 'And I perpetuate,' answered the pen, 'where were thy victories if I recorded them not?—Even where thou thyself shalt be one day—in oblivion.'

Moustaches.

After all that has been said against the moustache we would not condemn a man as a confirmed villain because he wears a long black or red whisk between his nose and mouth. It's a sorry sight, we know, but we would rather pity the wearer or give him a passing kick, than go so far as to advise a refusal to him of a trifling loan to buy a glass of beer. They are very useful to sop up gravy or butter at the dinner table.

Camphor dissolved in brandy and eaten on a piece of loaf sugar is good for a sore throat.