

THEN AND NOW;

OR,

Thirty-Six Years in the Rockies.

Personal Reminiscences of Some of the First Pioneers
of the State of Montana.

INDIANS AND INDIAN WARS.

The Past and Present of the Rocky Mountain Country.
1864-1900.

BY
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TRAVELING "THEN" AND TRAVELING "NOW."

Some one said that to many persons, especially those in the East, the country west of Chicago is still a hazy geographical proposition, and that the Twin Cities, St. Paul and Minneapolis—those posts at the gateway of an empire—seem to be on the confines of civilization, and to those less informed, the words Minnesota, Washington, Oregon and Montana, which represent new and powerful states, may mean some new patent medicine or the names of noted race horses. In fact it does seem but yesterday that west of the Mississippi was but a dimly-known region when all traveling was done by stage and on horseback; even the first locomotive that entered the state of Minnesota is now in the possession of the Great Northern Railway Company. But "now" there are within the limits of the states of Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Idaho, Oregon and Washington over 17,000 miles of railway.

As I now write the name "Great Northern" I cannot but think of the powerful agency this transcontinental road has been to bring about the "then and now" in the Rocky mountain regions, and, for that matter, from the Great Lakes to Puget Sound, its eastern terminus being Duluth, on Lake Superior, and St. Paul and Minneapolis, on the Mississippi river, and extending westward to Everett, on the Pacific coast, a distance of 1,782 miles. It crosses the main range of the Rocky mountains without a tunnel at an elevation of 5,202 feet above sea level, with a grade on the easterly slope of 1 per cent and on the westerly slope of 8 per cent. A few miles west of the main divide and but three miles from the Great

Northern track, lies the famous Lake McDonald, almost concealed by remarkably high and steep mountains and thick forests. It is difficult to one that loves nature's beauty and the wild sublimity of the mountains as I do, to pass such a vast region as this without making a passing note of it. Lake McDonald is a picture of marvelous beauty, a superb stretch of water eighteen miles long. Professor John H. Edwards, in the *New York Observer*, describes this beautiful lake and the regions surrounding it, as follows. He says:

"In the very heart of the Rockies in the Northern part of Montana, surrounded by mountain peaks in bewildering varieties of form, lies beautiful Lake McDonald. Not quite so large as Yellowstone Lake, it surpasses that loftiest of American mountain lakes of approximate size in grandeur of scenery. Nineteen peaks shoot skyward along its emerald shores or within easy eyeshot. Snow and glacier ice rest upon some of their summits and shoulders throughout the year. The editor of *Forest and Stream* says of it: 'There is every scenic beauty here of an Alpine lake, with a far greater choice of game and fish.' If Dr. Van Dyke, of New York, would cast his taking fly in these near-by waters, and then cast his irresistible literary book amid the endless beauties of nature in this favored region, his double catch would furnish forth a two-fold feast of choicest quality.

"It would be a hopeless task for any less gifted pen to attempt a description of the noble scenery hid away in this mountain wilderness. The profound blue of the stainless sky, the manifold green of the dense forests that environ the lake and march up the steep flank of the mountain to the vertical height of half a mile above its perfect mirror, that reflects every fine needle and also photographs on its steely plate another half mile of rock and snow towering above the forest line, and then are the rich sunset hues thrown upon peak and glacier

—all these seen twice in reality and by reflection. The rare coloring lavished on heights and depths is worth a long journey to see.

“Fish and game abound for experts with rod and gun who will follow them to their haunts. The cold water of streams that are born of melting snow and ice of the upper ranges produce trout of solid sweetness and finest grain. Twelve



BEAUTIFUL LAKE McDONALD

miles of bridle path take on to Avalanche basin, a deep recess shut in between a horseshoe sweep of granite cliffs that rise 2,500 feet above the turquoise lakelet in its center, while all around the mountains lift their proud heads to the height of two miles, more or less, above sea level. Half a score of white streamlets leap over the edge of the curving precipice and drop a clear 1,000 feet upon the shelving detritus below, over which

they slide and jump in broken lines of foam down into the deep, green waters of the lake. One is reminded of Jean Paul's imagery of a mirror upheld by snowy ribbons, when he was writing of a German lakelet among the hills.

"These lakes and rivulets are all fed by the melting glacier above. This neighborhood furnishes the best opportunity to study living and dying glaciers to be found within our national boundaries, Alaska excepted. John Muir, the king of western naturalists, whose name is born by the finest of Alaska glaciers, has written in ardent appreciation of the region we are describing. Thirty-three hundred feet above Lake McDonald, 6,500 above sea level, is Glacier camp, seven miles from Hotel Glacier, at the head of the lake. From this fine camping place an hour's climb leads to Sperry glacier, named after the indefatigable explorer and popular lecturer, Professor Lyman B. Sperry, of Oberlin. He has spent eight summer vacations here and knows the places round about better, probably, than any other person. The serrated edge of this interesting ice formation measures in width over two miles, and from its upper edge to the end of the longest finger is a stretch of five miles of blue ice. At one time this ice sheet extended a mile further down and plunged over the abrupt precipice that walls the Avalanche basin. Its deserted track furnishes to-day an open page whereon the process of glacial erosion and deposit may be studied even more plainly and instructively than in the days of its greatest extent. Nearly every glacial phenomenon described in the books, it is said, may be found illustrated in this unique body of ice."

The Lewis and Clarke expedition crossed the Rocky mountains ninety-four years ago, and only a few miles further south from where the Great Northern now crosses. Those glaciers, and beautiful Lake McDonald, were not known then, and, for



IN THE ROCKIES ON THE GREAT NORTHERN RY.

and considerable grading was done at different times, but the financial crash which preceded, and the war, delayed the progress and it was not until 1862 that any track was laid, and that was only ten miles; it was from St. Paul to St. Anthony, and was all the trackage of the first division of what is "now" the Great Northern railway; also the first railway ever built in the state of Minnesota. All the material and rolling stock was brought by steamboat on the Mississippi. Minnesota was at the time but a sparsely settled and remote section of the Union.

I shall not attempt to detail the gradual upbuilding of this great transcontinental railway to its present system—its growth from a "then" ten-mile railroad to its "now" grand proportions of 4,786 miles. Its existence as a strong commercial force in the Northwest dates from 1879, when it passed into the control of the St. Paul, Minneapolis & Manitoba Railway Company, organized by J. J. Hill.

In 1880 the trackage of this company was a little in excess of 600 miles, with gross earnings under \$2,000,000, while according to its last annual report, its gross earnings amounted to \$25,017,903.66. The building of new track, from the time Mr. Hill acquired control in 1876, to 1894, averaged about a mile every working day for the entire period, and the average in gross earnings amounts to an increase of over \$1,000,000 a year. Since 1894 extensions have been confined to branch lines and improvements to the betterment of the entire system. Aside from the original grant to the company within the state of Minnesota, the Great Northern system has extended itself into eight states and to British Columbia.

Thirty-five years ago the only method of traveling to and from the Pacific coast was on horseback or in a wagon, with many obstacles on the way—crossing streams, climbing high mountains and cutting the way through thick forests. Now railway cars, drawn by the iron horse, which climbs mountains and

leaps over rivers and ravines with an untiring speed, go all the way to the Pacific ocean; and during all the journey the traveler enjoys the comforts, almost, of his own fireside. The solitude that was then

"In pathless woods where rolls the Oregon,
And hears no sound save its own dashing,"

is now broken by the sound of the woodchopper's ax, the reaper, the steam whistle, and the rattle of thousands of wheels. The railway is there now and has made a path of its own in which towns and cities of many thousands of inhabitants have sprung up, where a few years ago was a wilderness. And the valleys and plains of the arid region that were once covered with the brown native grasses, are now interspersed with fields of grain and meadows that are green, and evidence of the white man's civilization.

Before the railway it was a journey of as many months as it is now days to reach the Pacific coast. The following bit of history of the northwest corner of our country, and of that historical horseback ride of Marcus Whitman in 1842 from Oregon to Washington, D. C., and which was worth three stars to our flag, is from the Omaha World-Herald of August 4, 1899, and is as follows:

"The ride of Marcus Whitman was over snow-capped mountains and along dark ravines, traveled only by savage men. It was a plunge through icy rivers and across trackless prairies, a ride of four thousand miles across a continent in the dead of winter to save a mighty territory to the Union.

"Compared with this, what was the feat of Paul Revere, who rode eighteen miles on a calm night in April to arouse a handful of sleeping patriots and thereby save the powder at Concord.

"Whitman's ride saved three stars to the American flag. It was made in 1842.

"The foresight and the heroism of one man and his gallant ride had saved three great stars to the Union."

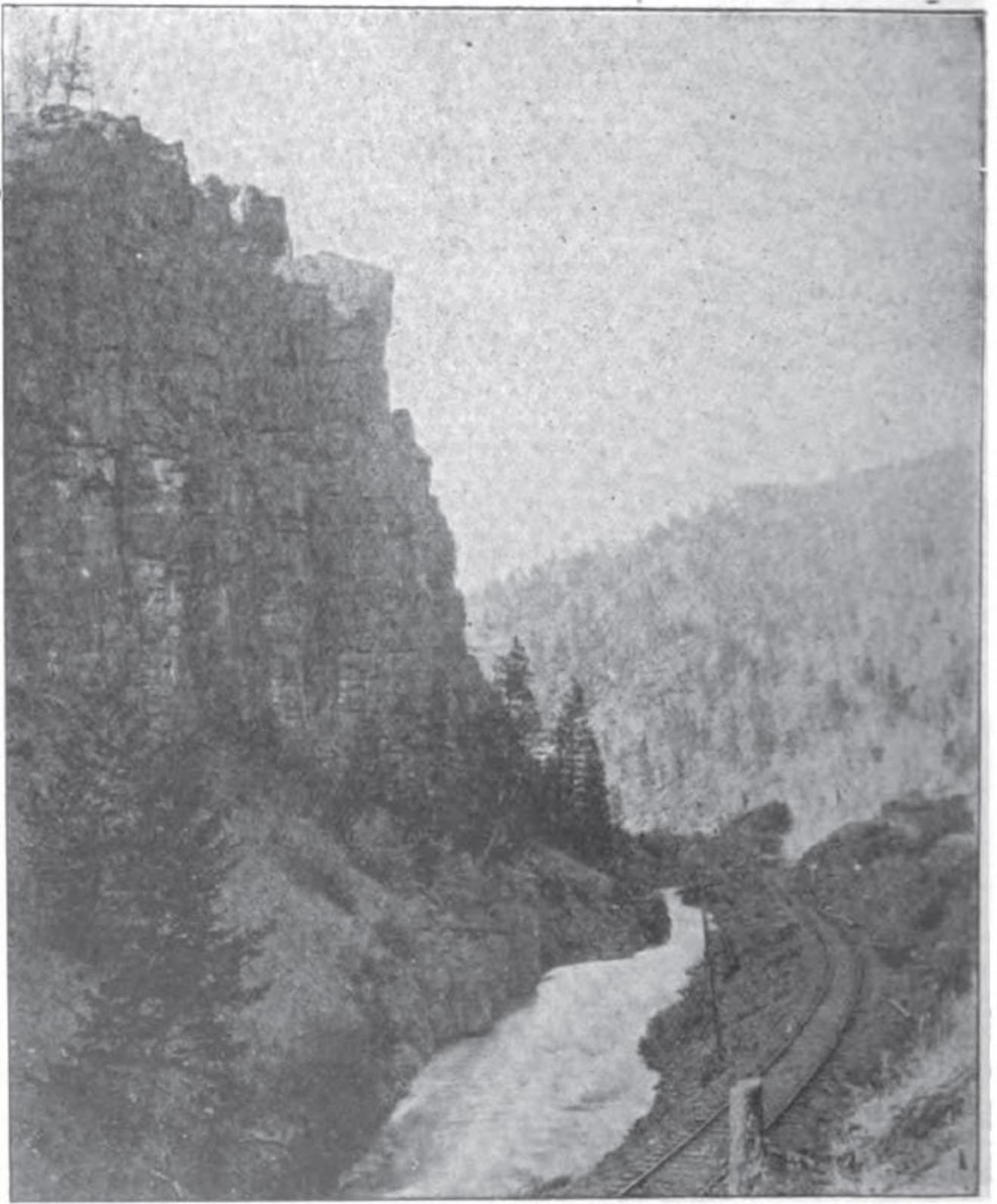
Compare those perils and horseback rides of Whitman "then" to what Vice President Stevenson says of his ride from the Pacific coast to Washington, D. C., "now."

He said: "The passenger service on the Great Northern railway is equal to the best in the land, not to speak of the buffet car, which, in itself, is one of the greatest conveniences to tourists in making long journeys I ever enjoyed. So elaborate and complete are the accommodations that a man hardly realizes that he is traveling. It is a comfortable thing to find a library of books and tables spread with magazines, daily papers and writing materials, easy chairs and bath rooms, a barber shop and smoking room. It really seems as though a man had left his home and gone to his club, to step aboard this car."

Think of the perils, hardships and delays the traveler encountered "then" and the comforts and accommodations he is having "now." "Then" for protection against hostile Indians he had to equip himself with gun and ammunition, "now" for comfort and pleasure he equips himself with Havana cigars, daily newspapers and magazines. And he sings:

Riding o'er the mountains in a buffet car,
Writing loving letters, not a shake or jar;
Leaping over rivers, flying down the vale;
"O bless me, ain't it pleasant riding on a rail."

I know of no other section in the United States where there have been greater changes made since "then" and "now" in the way of traveling and otherwise, and in the same length of time, than in Northern Montana. A few years ago this part of the Union was but a region in the wilderness. Then the only mode of traveling or transporting goods was with vehicles drawn by horses or mules, and, not infrequently, by the slow and tedious



GATE OF THE MOUNTAINS, MISSOURI RIVER, ON THE MONTANA CENTRAL RY.

ox or on the backs of animals. Now there are in Northern Montana over seven hundred miles of railroads in operation. The Great Falls and Canada extends from the north and south, a distance of over one hundred and fifty miles. The Great Northern system has its Montana Central, with its Sand Coulee and Neihart branches, besides the two lines that lead to both sides of the falls of the Missouri; and the Great Northern itself extends for over three hundred and fifty miles through the center of this northern Eden.

Some one may ask why I should name this remarkable section Eden. Well, I will answer by asking a few questions myself. Why was it that tens of thousands of buffaloes used to roam here from time immemorial until they were killed off by white people? And why was it that from fifteen to twenty thousand Indians lived here "then," and without doing a lick of work or receiving a single ration from the government? And why is it that there are "now" over two hundred thousand cattle roaming on the same land and feeding on the same kind of grasses as the buffalo did then and without care or shelter, except that provided by nature?

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