

### Relics of the Gold Era of "'49."

A correspondent of the Bulletin writes an interesting account of a town of the Forest Hill divide in Placer county, in which he says: There are many parts of California worthy of the poet's pen and the artist's brush—worthy a trip across the continent, to see which, from the excess of imposing scenery scattered so liberally on every hand, must remain content with the cheap pencil of the newspaper correspondent, and the hasty, perhaps impatient glance of the commercial traveler.

One of the finest rides in any land would be a tour of the Forest Hill divide, starting at Auburn, embracing the whole middle portion of the ridge between the north and middle forks of the American river, and ending at Colfax station on the Central Pacific railroad, The first three miles of the journey is down the grade of the river, which we cross on a Howe truss, just above the junction of the two forks. The Georgetown road has a fine wire bridge a few hundred yards below. To the '49er and his friends and children, who have listened to his winter evening tales of life in the mines and early days in California, and to the student who has learned of it from Bret Harte or the argonaut, the American is a classic stream. The gold lay in heaps, which waited in undisturbed security for the particular parties for which they were destined. No one hears of the ground that proved barren; of the hard life and poor fare; of fevers and accidents; of homesick boys who would give all their prospective wealth to see their mother's face. Distance softens the hard outlines, and after these many years memory covers them with beautiful tints and graceful shades, like a purple sunset on the rocky Sierra. The pictures of busy camps, of changing fortunes, of fuss and bustle, and in striking contrast to the solitudes which prevail to-day.

### The American River of To-day.

A handful of Chinamen turn the river and shake their rockers where the banks were once crowded with cabins. An occasional bar is worked by whites in a dry year. A new experiment is tried once in a while, but these only serve to emphasize the desolation. Huge piles of rocks and boulders, banks cut deep into hills, ravines cut out as far as there was pay, show the enormous amount of labor spent in working out the gold. The product, instead of coming from here, is now gathered among the clouds where the pioneer only saw huge mountain tops and cumbrous forests. He thought even if gold existed there no water could ever be made to reach it. Now we know that the deposits found in river beds and the thin surface diggings were only crumbs which fell from the hoards hid for ages by some of nature's mysterious storekeepers, to be fought for and obtained by future generations only after an outlay of its weight in labor and treasure. From the bridge the vast wall of the canyon rises before us like an alp. The grade winds around the points, which run out like the teeth of a comb.

The rise is very rapid and the river soon appears far below, and its fretful murmur is lost in the distance. The mountain up which we climb seems to be of no possible use. It can never be cultivated. It has no timber except a scattering growth of small scrub oak, and that cannot be got to any market. It may have mines somewhere in its rocky depths, but the indications do not show it.

An old wagon trail on a steep and rocky point, which a driver nowadays would declare impracticable, is where in early days all the travel crossed between Hangtown and Illinoistown. The pilgrim who came overland by the Donner Lake road crossed here or went around by Auburn and Sacramento to reach the rich diggings.

The track makes straight down by Murderers' Bar, and with scarce a curve mounts up the Georgetown divide to Cave valley, with the apparent determination to be swerved by no danger or to be detained by no labor in the fierce rush for the promised land. Fit emblem—that old, unused, washed-out road of the brave and gallant men who climbed up and down. Fit reminder of the bowed and wrinkled heads whose years of usefulness have past.

On the road to Forest Hill are several valuable ranches, the products of which are sold among the mines and mills above. Grizzly, Butcher and United States ranches are old and familiar landmarks, and we choose among them for lunch.

Volcanoville and the mines of the California Water company scar the brink of the great canyon. Forest Hill, Michigan Bluff, Yankee Jims, Sarahville, now Bath, and Todd's Valley are mining towns of some importance, but not the camps they used to be. Large companies work as a whole what was once owned in small lots, and the utmost economy in both numbers and wages is practiced, to the detriment of communities depending upon such localities. The outlet to all these claims is the Middle Fork canyon, whose great depths afford ample fall to work them to advantage. The water is led in flumes and ditches from reservoirs far up among the snowy summits.

Seeking a place to spend the night we turn at a sign-board "Sunny South, two miles," and find our road very up and very down. Abandoning our vehicle we lead our beast into the town and escape the dangers of the descent as well as a hard pull out. Sunny South is a cluster of 20 houses built at the mouth of the Hidden Treasure tunnel. The mine is worked by drifting. Some beautiful specimens of pictured rock were given us. The company employs 50 men and works them at a handsome profit. Wood and timbers are cut on top of the mountain and hauled to within 1,400 feet of the tunnel, where they are thrown into a chute, down which they fly like cannon balls. The teams are thus saved the hardest part of the road. The town is clinging for dear life to the south slope of the divide. It is not so favorably located for anything as for the inspection of the foundations of one house from the roof of the next.

Descending and. Ascending-.

In a conspicuous place by the side of the road stands a guide board bearing the laconic legend "Damascus—down damn big hill one mile." Partaking of the spirit of the hardy miner, who makes a joke of sore feet and shaky knees, we again left our team and the scramble began. Skipping, shuffling and tumbling, we twisted down the zigzag trail in three minutes and came up in three hours. Damascus nestles near the head of Humbug canyon and lies on the north side of the ridge about opposite Sunny South. It is dependent on the Golden Gate mine, which is on- the same lead with Hidden Treasure, but much older. It is divided into shares owned by the miners. Each man is obliged to work his own share or put a man in his place. If he sells his claim the company pays the purchaser \$1.50 per day out of the proceeds, the balance going to pay the seller. The President, Secretary and Superintendent work their daily shift. Our road lies past the Canal Company's reservoir, which is in the center of a fine body of sugar pine, several miles in extent. On the head of Shirrtail canyon and branches, a saw mill is at work cutting it into lumber. We get an occasional glimpse through the trees of the almost bottomless canyon on our right, which we must cross before long. We gaze into its depths like a small man trying to fathom the mind of a great one.

Iowa Hill.

Iowa Hill has seen better days. It is shabby genteel. It is perched on the edge of a high bank that has been washed out, in plain sight of the Central Pacific, below Gold Run. The mines are of gravel, and have a good depth. The prospects were very good this spring. The mines were nicely opened, and preparations had been made for a big run, but the water failed suddenly, and the yield did not pay expenses. Too much rain and not enough snow was the trouble.

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