

Lookout, W.T., Feb. 1, 1871

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(B-R561-ee)

Friend Marsh.---Some of the readers of the Journal may be interested in the changes and progress of affairs in the far west, so I will try to keep them posted.

We are now having mild spring weather, with no snow, except what is on the Rockies, but we have had snow in abundance. The 23rd of December the San Francisco express was detained here fifteen hours by being thrown from the track by a drift.

I am now situated at Lookout Station, thirty-four miles northwest of Laramie City. The Black Hills are to the east of me, and the Rocky Mountains to the West, each fifteen miles distant. Lookout is the first high point on the Union Pacific Railroad west of Sherman, it being 7,163 feet above sea level.

A change has just been made in the divisions of the road, by taking off that portion of the Lodge Pole division that runs over the Black Hills, and putting it on to the Laramie division. The road now from Cheyenne to Ogden is called the western division, and this is divided into two sub-divisions, viz: Laramie, and Utah; all under the supervision of L. Fillmore, our old Sup't. The western division is 513 miles in length, which I think is as much railroad as any division Superintendent in the United States has charge of, that one division being as long as five Southern Centrals. All of the mountainous portion of the U.P. is on this division.

February 1st arrangements were completed by which American emigrants are now carried from New York to San Francisco on express trains. This passage takes the place of the old slow and uncomfortable transit by freight trains. The fast freight time--New York to San Francisco--is 17 days. The express train time is 164 hours, or seven days, nearly, thus saving ten days time to the second class passengers. Second class fare, New York City to San Francisco, is only \$100, and first class \$136, currency.

Arrangements are now completed by the Union and Central Pacific lines, by which through tickets are sold in all the principal cities of the world, via "The Great American Overland Route," in connection with new steamer lines established between Australia, New Zealand and China, and San Francisco, and all European ports, via the Atlantic Steamers. You can now buy tickets between Melbourne, Hong Kong, Jeddo and all Asiatic ports, and Hamburg, Liverpool and London, via Omaha and San Francisco.

But to return to the Laramie division. The headquarters of this division are at Laramie City, one of the liveliest towns on the road, and at present I think it is the most prosperous between Omaha and Ogden. Here in the middle, nearly, of the vast Laramie plains, where two and half years ago not a house--no, not a chip or shingle--was to be found, now stands one of the thriving "cities of the plains." The town is laid out at right angles with Railroad. A stream of clear cold water runs through the principal streets; the water is brought from a spring at the foot of the Black Hills six miles distant. The company shops located here, are built of stone. There is a round-house containing twenty stalls. The machine shop 75 by 125 feet, is used for general repairing. Among the other buildings put up here by the company is one of more interest than all the rest--the Hospital--a large airy building, devoted exclusively to the use of the company. Here any one who has become sick, or is injured while in the employ of the company, is taken care of, and treated in the best manner. The best of medical attendance is given to all. If there was more of such institutions on the plains, many a "poor devil," who has "pegged out," just for want of care, would now be alive.

There is one Banking firm in Laramie. They have erected and are now occupying a substantial stone building. There are five churches in town all good buildings. Five churches is more than a town of 500 to 1000 inhabitants generally has, but there is a broad field to work in, and here is the roughest material to make good Christians of, that can be found on this continent. There is one school, with a good attendance; three firms, wholesale dealers in groceries, provisions, &c., each employing a capital of about

\$15,000. The Laramie city brewery is a great institution, and is patronized largely by the citizens, not because they like the beer but merely to patronize home industry.

Keno club rooms and saloons are more than numerous. On entering one of these saloons where they "sling" whiskey at "two bits" a "sling" you will be accosted by some "Bull-whacker" with--"come stranger, let's h'st in a little pisen." Or if you are with an acquaintance, it is, "suppose we shed a tear," and if you drink you will find that "shedding a tear," is a very appropriate thing to name it. If you drink with a miner, it is etiquette to say, "Here's hoping your dirt will pan out gay." (36)

There was a time in Laramie City, when if a man shot another and left him laying in the street, he would be promptly arrested for obstructing the side-walk, and this was a common occurrence, until the citizens, on arising one morning, found twelve of the "shoot-ists" with "hemp neckties" on, hanging from telegraph poles, the victims of an impromptu vigilance committee. The "vigs," by continuing this "hemp neck-tie" process, soon cleared Laramie of her share of the roughs and desperadoes following the Union Pacific. Since then the streets are rarely "obstructed."

The Laramie Sentinel is a spicy little sheet, one-fourth the size of the Journal, but published daily. The Laramie Plains are called by old plainers, the best grass country in the world. This belt of land is about 60 miles long by 20 wide, and is really one of the best stock raising sections in the territories. These plains are considered by old and experienced herders and stock raisers fully equal to the great plains of Texas where cattle raise themselves, and form the greater portion of the population. The plains include all that portion of the country lying between the western base of the Black Hills, and the easter base of the Snowy Range of the Rocky Mountains. They are similar to the great north, south and middle forks of Colorado. They are at an average elevation of 6,500 feet, although higher where the city stands. They are well watered by the several streams large and small that flow across them. These streams rise in the Snowy Range on the southern boundary of the plains. This range here rises from 10,000 to 17,000 feet above sea level, and is always covered with snow. Thus at all times pure water is flowing across this table land. The grass grows from 9 to 12 inches high, and is very nutritious, being green near the roots summer and winter. Frosts come early but the grass is cured by the sun so that the frost does not hurt it. Snow falls but a few inches, so cattle can easily get at good hay, cured standing, all through the winter months.

Where is there a better place for any man (or woman either, for this a women's rights territory,) who desires to "move out west." This is not far west, I know but it is far enough.

I merely state these facts, to let any of the readers of the Journal who desire to move "out west," know that here is a good place for any man with a capital, large or small, to enter into a sure and well-paying business. It is estimated and proved, that on the "plains," sheep increase 100 per cent, and cattle 80 per cent, annually. The expense of raising stock here is just what it will cost to employ herders, no more. These are the true figures and you can estimate for yourselves how well it will "pan out."

Yours, you bet,

Ed. E. Robinson