

Impressions of California.

Editor "The Farmer's Advocate":

To a person who has come from Southwestern Ontario, one of the first things that strikes the attention in California, is that it is mountainous. It is almost impossible to get out of sight of mountains anywhere. And in many places, as in San Francisco and Los Angeles, they loom up all around and so close that they encroach on city property. Travelling on the railway, mountains are always in the background, except, of course, when close up to or among them.

That this should be expected might be judged from any advertising literature of the country, of which there is no lack. This or that "promising locality" is almost invariably termed a "valley." Thus there is the "San Bernardino Valley," the "San Joaquin Valley," (pronounced San Wau-keen) the "Imperial Valley," the "Sacramento Valley," etc., etc. And valleys imply mountains. But to us who are untutored in mountain phrases, the term "valley" may not convey the correct idea. We incline to think of it as a deep trough between two lines of hills or mountains. A California valley is rather the flat expanse at the bottom, which may vary in width from a mere strip to a great plain, such as the valley of San Joaquin, sixty miles wide.

The Easterner is struck with another feature of the lay of the country, there seems to be no rolling land. Lots of hills and inaccessible mountains; valleys also, of varying widths and lengths, but all so level they look like filled up lakes. And between those two extremes, nothing, as a rule, at least.

The Sierra Nevada Mountains, towards the east, and a parallel chain called the Coast Range, westerly though not quite at the coast, are the main mountain ridges of the State. Towards the north and at the southern end of the State also the mountains are jumbled up into isolated peaks or dislocated ranges. It is doubtful whether one-third the area of California is arable, but the valley lands, though limited, are usually of exceeding richness. We think of six or eight inches of dark surface soil as being all that need be looked for, there it often is of the same rich character for several feet down.

In going by train from Los Angeles to San Diego there were to be seen on the low table-land between the mountains and the sea wheat fields miles in length. In some places instead of wheat there were beans for miles. And again, over great areas sugar beets are the principal crop grown. These three, fall wheat, beans and sugar beets, with alfalfa added, seemed to be the main California farm crops. Now and again were to be seen piles of filled grain sacks eight or ten feet high, and, say, twenty by fifty feet ground dimensions, also larger piles of baled alfalfa, both flat-topped and coverless, ready to be hauled to nearest shipping point. No need for protection from rain, it never rains from May till September.

Inspiring as it was to see farming conducted on such a grand scale, there was one most noticeable lack. Farm houses and outbuildings, such as are common in Ontario, are not to be seen. Indeed, outside of the villages and towns there were scarcely any buildings at all. Miles without a house! Occasionally a cluster of two or three shacks together might be seen, but so squat and mean looking, as almost to accentuate the general lack of homes. The farms are large, and the farmers must be capitalists, and doubtless live in town. And owing to the style of farming and the use of machinery, the laborers are few. In the harvesting and threshing of wheat, for instance, combined machines are used, headers, which cut and thresh at the one operation, and require but four or five hands each. We saw one such machine at work, drawn by twenty-seven mules which cut a width of twenty feet. Another, driven by steam engine, cut a swath of

thirty feet. The latter would be able to cut and thresh at least seven acres per hour. With it all the old couplet kept recurring to the mind: "Ill fares the land to hastening ills a prey, Where wealth accumulates and men decay."

A great change in the occupancy of land and the kind of crops produced has, however, been going on in the last few years, and is going on still. Fruit growing is displacing the culture of wheat, and the thousand or ten-thousand-acre farms are being cut up into small lots for that purpose. It was our privilege to visit such a section at Acampo, a little town about one hundred miles due east of San Francisco. The soil and climate here have been found specially suitable for growing peaches, apricots, grapes, almond nuts and plums, and for a few miles around there is scarcely a plot left unplanted with one or other of these. About thirty acres is a fair-sized fruit ranch. Population, has, of course, increased greatly. Around Los Angeles and southward oranges, lemons, grapefruit, and walnuts are displacing the more ordinary farm

British Columbia he has come to the edge of things. To the west is not a great lake merely but the salt water of earth's widest sea, and beyond, not West but East, and from that East comes an opposing flood of immigration which is being strenuously held back. Canadian rivers increase in volume as they proceed. The streams of California in summer rush down from the mountain regions in strong flow, and then through the drain on the waters for irrigation purposes dwindle until they almost vanish. Crossing a great bridge at Los Angeles over a little stream in the wide gravel bed which one could step over, we asked the driver of the auto the name of the tiny stream, thinking that possibly it was too small to have a name. "Why!" said he, "that is the Los Angeles River!"

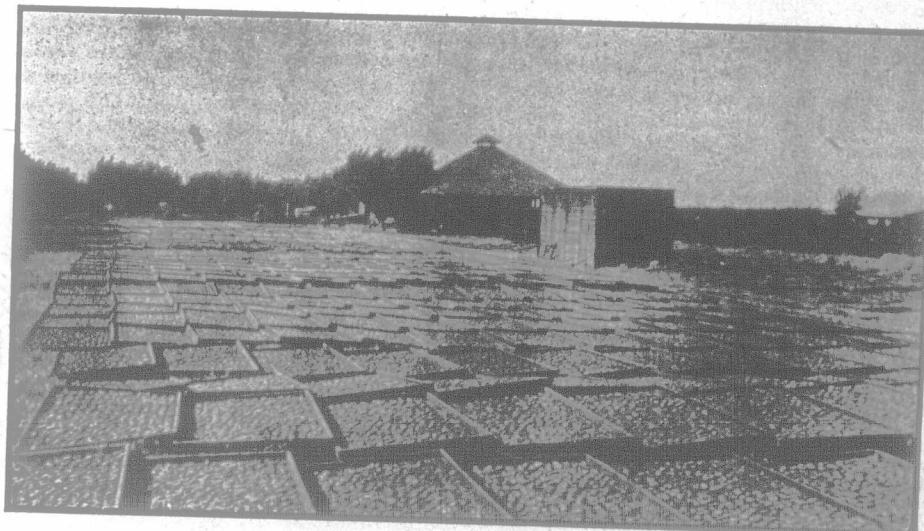
Sitting for a time in a car seat with a fine young man from the State of Mississippi, he told how his tour had led him up to Winnipeg, thence west to Vancouver, and on down. Said he: "You have a far prettier country up there than this. California is nothing but a reclaimed desert." The northern part of the State could not be included in that sweeping statement, as the rainfall is quite abundant there. But from the latitude of San Francisco southward to

Mexico the expression is scarcely too strong. It is true that there are great areas around Lodi and Acampo where fall wheat was once grown without irrigation. That crop is admirably adapted to such a mild, moist winter climate. It gets its growth before summer drought affects it. It is true also that peaches and grapes were for some years grown in that district. But not so now. Irrigation from bored wells is almost universal at present. It has been found to be profitable. But farther south practically nothing grows without added

water. Orange trees need a plentiful supply. In the latter part of the journey from Stockton to Los Angeles by the valley line the train runs for hours through a veritable desert. Nothing green was to be seen on the bare earth but sage brush and tree yucca, and these were gray rather than green. The dusty, gray clumps of sage and the skeleton-like forms of the yucca rather intensified than relieved the barrenness. Yet the land was level and said to be fertile as need be, only it lacked moisture. A house and lot in the residence district of Los Angeles, which the owner had abandoned for a year, was pointed out to us. Not a green blade of grass or of anything else was to be seen. It had reverted to its original desert state, while all around were green lawns, blooming flowers and palm trees.

It is entirely to the credit of Californians that they have transformed so much of barren waste into thrifty orchards and fruitful farms. The area under irrigation is constantly being extended. Water is being taken to greater distances, and conservation of the supply is receiving special attention. In many sections the underground supply of water reached by bored wells is amazing. A gasoline engine or electric motor attached to a rotary pump may be run all day, and day after day and no slackening of the flow. One that we saw running threw a stream that, where it poured out, nearly filled a seven-inch pipe, and there were many larger.

The climate of San Francisco was a great surprise. We expected great heat at the end of July, and there was none. There never is. Some



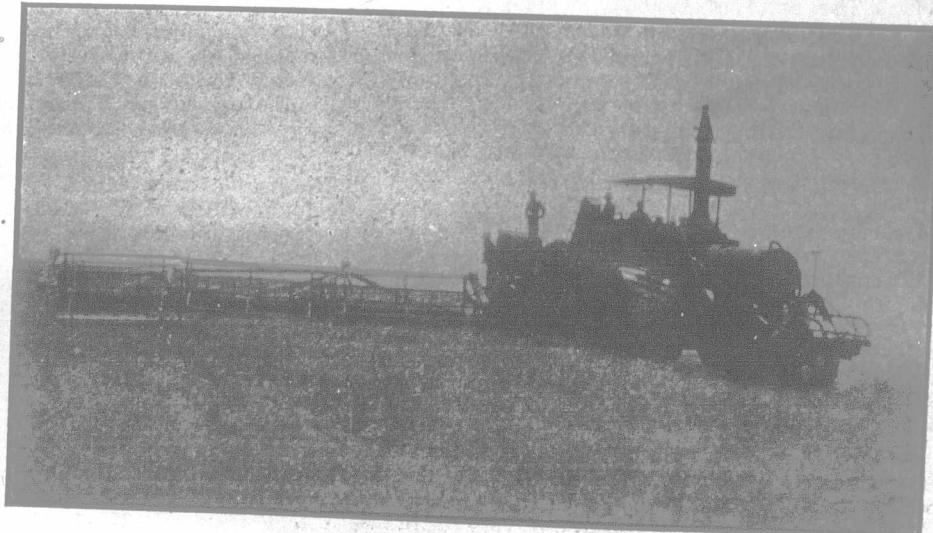
Drying Peaches in California.

crops. Deltas of rivers and other low-lying lands are being devoted to potatoes, onions and other garden truck. The gardeners in such districts are nearly all Chinese or Japs.

A land of wonders is California. At least that is how it strikes a Canadian from Ontario. Contrasts seem more in evidence than similarities. Here, the broad country between the lakes is generally level or gently rolling, the greatest heights being in hundreds of feet only. There, the Sierras, so called because their rugged peaks resemble the teeth of a saw, run for 500 miles, and rose, snow-lined, to heights up to 14,000 feet. With us the spread of temperature between the extremes of winter and summer may reach 130 degrees. There, 80 degrees is the limit, and in many sections it is much less. Here, it rains in summer, while in winter the glittering snow covering makes even the darkness light. In California the sun shines without intermission the whole summer long. Winter is the rainy and dull season, and in many places fogs prevail. Ontario apples are of the highest quality, in the Golden State they are scarce and dear, but oranges, figs and olives swell and ripen in the sunny warmth. When the land-hungry emigrants from Europe flowed as far west as Upper Canada, they each gladly settled in its deep woods and hewed out a home and a farm. But there always was a farther West. And westward the tide flowed, first to the prairie states, and then to the great wheat plains of our own West. And yet there was a West beyond. But when a pioneer has reached the shore of California or of



A Palm Bordered California Highway and Orchard.



A Big Steam Header and Thresher at Work.

THE FARM.

About the Seed Grain?

Months may elapse before seedling swing, it is not too early to think of the supply of seed grain. On many a farm, last summer, before they were frequently there are many light crops to unfavorable harvest weather, grain commenced to grow in the weight or sprouted grain is not the heavy yields. Now, while there is grain in the bins, is the proper time cleaning the seed. The first is put through the fanning mill to get plenty of wind, to remove the many of the sprouted kernels. Using the number of kernels that screen and are worthless for seed. Reason why the grain should be cleaned is plenty to choose from. For it is wise to use screens that are small seed, as tests have proven, oats especially, do not produce as large kernels. If, on the other hand, prepared for seed, it is found that time to look around for suitable seed that can be secured is none too soon. Seed, free from impurities, is the best to sow.

The small seeds grown on the home site up to the mark, the following in grading the seed and removing. For clover, a screen with a mesh of 24 wires to the square inch is good deal of rib grass or buckweed seeds. A mesh 20 by 20 square inch is quite suitable for seedling alsike.

Winter Application.

"The Farmer's Advocate":
We read the article from Glenora, N. D., regarding spreading manure on fields during winter that is the proper time to do so. I have not rushed with farm work. I have the last five years, and with good results. tile-drained farm. Conditions here, would make a difference in

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J. E. D.

correspondent, Jas. Sterling, writes from the Province by the sea. On December 29, and again on January 1, he has experienced the April weather which prevailed in Ontario, and yet he reported.