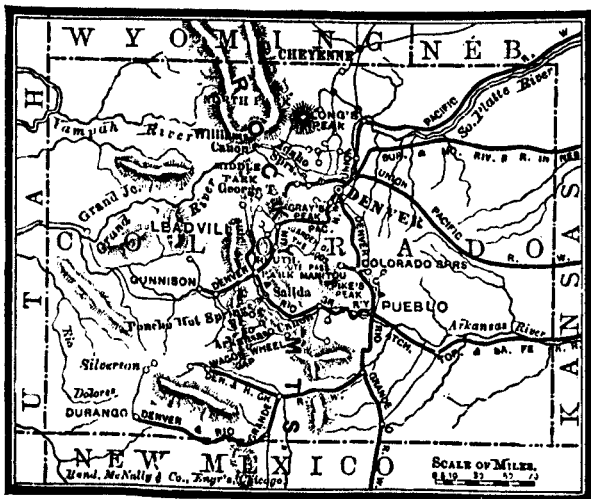


Rambling Sketches.

BY ERNEST INGERSOLL.

DENVER is the metropolis of the Rocky Mountains, and a stroll through these scores of solid blocks of salesrooms and factories exhibits at once the fact that it is as the commercial centre of the mountainous interior that this city thrives, and congratulates herself upon the promise of a continually prosperous future. She long ago safely passed that crisis which has

business which sagacious eyes had foreseen. The town had less than four thousand inhabitants in 1870. A year from that time her population was nearly fifteen thousand, and her tax valuation had increased from three to ten millions of dollars. It was a time of happy investment, of incessant building and improvement, and of grand speculation. Mines flourished, crops were abundant, cattle and sheep grazed in a hundred valleys hitherto tenanted by antelope alone, and everybody had plenty of money. Then came a shadow of storm in the East. The banks suddenly became cautious in loans; speculators declined to buy, and sold at a sacrifice. Merchants found that trade was dull, and ranchmen got less for their products. It was a "set-back" to Denver, and two years of stagnation followed. But she only dug the more



proved fatal to so many incipient Western cities. Most of her leading business men came here at the beginning, but their energies were hampered when every article had to be hauled six hundred miles across the plains by teams. It frequently used to happen that merchants would sell their goods completely out, put up their shutters, and go a-fishing for weeks before the new semi-yearly supplies arrived. In a few years the young city found itself removed from total isolation to a central position on various railways, east and west, and to its mill came the varied grist of a circle hundreds of miles in radius. Now blossomed the booming season of

money out of the ground to fill her depleted pockets, and survived the "hard times" with far less sacrifice of fortune and pride than did most of the Eastern cities. None of her banks went under, nor even certified a check, and most of her business houses weathered the storm. The unhealthy reign of speculation was effectually checked, and business was placed upon a compact and solid foundation. Then came 1875 and 1876, which were "grasshopper years," when no crops of consequence were raised throughout the State, and a large amount of money was sent east to pay for flour and grain. This was particularly a hard blow, but the