

flowing away to north and south as far as the eye could reach; hazing and vanishing in the distance, distinct as a new map along the foot-hills at my feet—the sunny sky arching over all.

Descending the eastern slopes of the coast range, through beds of gilia and lupines, and around many a hillock and bush-crowned headland. I at length waded out into the midst of the glorious field of gold. All the ground was covered, not with grass and green leaves, but with radiant corollas, about ankle-deep next the foot-hills, knee-deep or more five or six miles out. Here *opsis*, *corethrogyne*, *grindelia*, etc., growing in close social congregations of various shades of yellow, blending finely with the purples of *clarkia*, *orthocarpus*, and *monotheca*, whose delicate petals were drinking the vital sunbeams without giving back any sparkling glow.

Because so long a period of extreme drought succeeds the rainy season, most of the vegetation is composed of annuals which spring up simultaneously and bloom together at about the same height above the ground, the general surface being but slightly ruffled by the taller *phacelias*, *pentstemons*, and groups of *Salvia cardiaca*, the king of the mints.

Sauntering in any direction, hundreds of these happy sun-plants brushed against my feet at every step, and closed over them as if I were wading in liquid gold. The air was sweet with fragrance, the larks sung their blessed songs, rising on the wing as I advanced, then sinking out of sight in the polleny fog, while myriads of wild bees stirred the lower air with their monotonous hum—monotonous, yet forever fresh and sweet as every-day sunshine. Hares and *spermophiles* showed themselves in considerable numbers, and small bands of antelope were almost constantly in sight, gazing curiously from some slight elevation, and then bounding swiftly with unrivalled grace of motion. Yet I could discover no crushed flowers to mark their track, nor, indeed, any destructive action of any wild foot or tooth whatever.

The great yellow days circled by uncounted, while I drifted toward the north, observing the countless forms of life thronging about me—lying down almost anywhere on the approach of night. And what glorious botanical beds I had! Oftentimes on awakening I would find several new species leaning over me and looking me full in the face, so that my studies would begin before rising.

About the first of May I turned eastward, crossing the San Joaquin between the foothills of the Tuolumne and Merced, by the time I had reached the Sierra foot-hills, most of the vegetation had gone to seed and become as dry as hay.

All the seasons of the great plain are warm or temperate, and the bee-flowers are never wholly wanting; but the grand spring time—the annual resurrection—is governed by the rains, which usually set in about the middle of December or the beginning of January. Then the seeds, that for six months have lain on the ground dry and fresh as if they had been gathered into urns, at once unfold their treasured life. The general brown and purple of the ground, and the dead vegetation of the preceding year, give place to the green of mosses and liverworts and myriads of young leaves. Then one species after another comes into flower, gradually overspreading the green with yellow and purple, which lasts until May.

The rainy season is by no means a gloomy, foggy period of constant

cloudiness of rain. Nowhere else in North America, perhaps in the world, are the months of December, January, February and March so full of bland, plant-budding sunshine. Referring to my notes of the winter and spring of 1878-9, every day of which I spent out-of-doors, on that section of the plain lying between the Tuolumne and Merced rivers, I find that the first rain of the season fell on the 15th of December. January had only six rainy days—that is, days on which rains fell; February, three, March five, April, three, and May three, completing the so-called rainy season, which was about an average one. The ordinary rain storm of this region is seldom very cold or violent. The winds, which in settled weather come from the north-east, veer round into the opposite direction, the sky fills gradually and evenly with one general cloud, from which the rain falls steadily, often for several days in succession, at a temperature of about 45 or 50 degrees.

More than 75 per cent. of all the rain of this season came from the south-east. One magnificent storm from the north-west fell on the 21st of March. A massive, round-browed cloud came swelling and thundering over the flowery plain in most imposing majesty, its mossy front burning white and purple in the full blaze of the sun, while warm rain poured from its ample fountains like a cataract, beating down flowers and bees, and flooding the dry water-courses as suddenly as those of Nevada are flooded by cloud-bursts. But in less than half an hour not a trace of the heavy mountain-like cloud-structure was left in the sky, and the bees were on the wing as if nothing more gratefully refreshing could have been sent them.

By the end of January four plants were in flower, and five or six mosses had already adjusted their hoods and were in the prime of life, but the flowers were not sufficiently numerous to affect greatly the general green of the young leaves. Violets made their appearance on the first week of February, and toward the end of this month the warmer portions of the plain were already golden with myriads of flowers of rayed composite.

This was the full spring time. New species bloomed every day. The sunshine grew warmer and richer. The air became more tuneful from day to day with humming wings, and sweeter with the fragrance of the opening flowers. Ants were getting ready for their summer work, rubbing their benumbed limbs, and sunning themselves on the husk piles before their doors, and spiders were busy mending their old webs or weaving new ones.

In March, vegetation was more than doubled in depth and splendor; *claytonia*, *calandrinia*, a large white *gilia*, and two *nemophilas* were in bloom, together with a host of yellow composites, tall enough to bend in the wind and show wavering ripples of shade.

In April, plant-life as a whole reached its greatest height, and the plain over all its varied surface was mantled with a close furred plush of purple and golden corollas. By the end of this month most of the species had ripened their seeds, but undecayed still seemed to be a bloom from the numerous corolla-like involucres and whorls of chaffy scales of the composite. In May, the bees found only a few deep-set lilaceous plants and *erigonums* in flower.

June, July, August and September was the season of rest and sleep—the winter of dry heat, followed in October by a second outburst of bloom at the very driest time of the year. Then, after the sunken mass of leaves and stalks of the dead vegetation crinkled

and turn to dust beneath the foot, as if it had been baked in an oven, *Hemizonia virgata*, a slender unobtrusive little plant, from six inches to three feet high, suddenly makes its appearance in patches miles in extent, like a resurrection of the bloom of April. I have counted upward of three thousand flowers, $\frac{1}{2}$ of an inch in diameter, on a single plant. Both leaves and stems are so slender as to be nearly invisible amid so showy a multitude of flowers. The ray and disk flowers are both yellow, the stamens purple, the texture of the rays being rich and velvety, like the petals of garden pansies. The prevailing winds turn all the heads round to the south-east, so that in facing north-westward, we have the flowers looking us in the face. In our estimation, this little plant, the last born of the brilliant host of composites that glorify the plain, is the most interesting of all. It remains in flower until November, uniting with two or three species of wiry *erigonums*, which continue the floral chain around December to the spring flowers of January. Thus, although the main bloom and honey season is only about three months long, the floral circle, however thin around some of the hot, rainless months, is never completely broken.

How long the various species of wild bees have lived in this honey-garden nobody knows; probably ever since the main body of the present flora gained possession of the land, toward the close of the glacial period. The first brown honey bees brought to California are said to have arrived in San Francisco in March, 1853. A bee-keeper by the name of Shelton purchased a lot, consisting of 12 colonies, from some one at Aspinwall, who had brought them from New York. All the hives contained bees, when landed at San Francisco, but they finely dwindled to one colony, which was taken to San Jose. The little emigrants flourished and multiplied in the bountiful pastures of the Santa Clara valley, sending off swarms the first season.

PHACELIÆ.

A DEEP CREEK.

The Philadelphia Times tells the following pretty good one on a General not unknown to fame, as follows: "We were riding along the road one chilly day in November," said Gen. James Craig, talking about court business and legal talent, "when we struck a small stream that appeared to be about 30 yards wide. Hello," said Judge Norton, of Missouri, "this is a new stream to me. How shall we cross it?" Taking advantage of his ignorance, I pretended to survey the situation, and after emerging from the thicket I solemnly inquired: "Judge, can you swim?" "Like a fish," he replied, while his eyes twinkled in the expectation of displaying his ability in that direction. "I can't," said I, "so suppose you strip off and swim across, testing the depth as you go, and give me the advantage of your experience." "All right," he said, dismounting from his horse. Then he removed all his clothes, tied them together, placed them safely between his teeth, and started cautiously into the creek. I choked my handkerchief into my mouth to keep from laughing, while the judge gravely waded across through exactly four inches of water; but you would have died to see his look of unutterable disgust when he reached the opposite bank. His feet were blue with mud, but his ankles were scarcely touched by the water. It was three straight days before he spoke to me again."

The editor of the *Commercial* does fairly well for an amateur, but if he wants the real thing he will have to get points from an Arizona paper which understands the whole business of refined and gentlemanly black-guardism. "There is not a shyster lawyer in New York," says the paper about somebody who has excited its ire, "who would not feel degraded by being associated in any case with this articulated skeleton of a fossil monkey, this ill-fitting, accidental combination of flesh and rawhide, this indistinct photograph of a boiled owl, this perambulating, squeaky-voiced bone-yard, loaded under the nightmare consciousness of physical and mental impotence, this abortional attempt at a travesty of man, this connecting link between a cabbage and a codfish, the double-barreled, lying, imbecile paragon!" This, now, is something like, and we have no doubt that the *Commercial* editor, after a little more practice, will do just as well.—*Buffalo Express*.

The new reporter was sent to the school exhibition. His report read pretty well; but there were a few things in it which did not meet the approval of the local editor—such, for instance, as these: "The essays of the graduating were good, whoever wrote them;" "The floral offerings were excessive, and, from the number received by Miss Simplegush, we judge her father owns a first-class greenhouse;" "the young lady who read the valedictory to the teachers has in her the making of a fine actress. She simulated sorrow so accurately that the writer might have been misled, had he not subsequently heard the young lady speak of this same 'dear teacher' as a hateful old thing."

DEALING WITH A LIAR.—The only way to deal with a liar is to beat him at his own game. What started this item was reading about an American who had been to Europe and who was telling a friend, who knew he was a liar, about his trip across the Atlantic, and how on the 25th of this month, "they encountered a swarm of locusts, and the locusts carried away every stitch of canvas off the ship." The listener looked thoughtful a moment, and then said, hesitatingly, "Yes," I guess we met the same swarm of locusts the next day, the 26th." The first liar went around a corner and kicked himself.

The Hon. A. H. Stephens was once making an eloquent speech in Georgia, when among his listeners appeared Mr. Gentry, of Tennessee. Delighted with the speech, but moved with pity for the lean, sawlow, half-starved appearance of the little invalid speaker, the sturdy Tennesseean exclaimed: "Let's catch him, and carry him up to the mountains, and feed him and save for his country and humanity."

A blind man was singing on the street and a gentleman passing threw him a shilling, which he immediately picked up. The gentleman, in surprise, said: "I thought you were blind?" The man looked at the board that was around his neck, and said: "Well I'm blowed if they haven't put the wrong ticket on me this morning; I'm deaf and dumb."

Toddlekins is a very small man indeed, but says he never minded it at all until his three boys grew up to be tall, strapping young fellows, and his wife began to cut down their clothes and fix them over for him. And then he said he did get mad.

The last Norfolk boat brought over 3,000 watermelons. We shall expect to hear of the doubling of our population in consequence.—*Boston Transcript*.