

DIVERGENT OPINIONS OF THE GOLDEN WEST.*

The faults, the foibles, and the petty failings of the American people form the main theme of Mr. Arthur J. Johnson's "California: An Englishman's Impressions of the Golden State." The author's special *bête noire* is the "native son" of the Golden West, whose portrait is drawn in strong colors and with sharp contrasts. But the perspective of our would-be literary cubist is sadly amiss. His fault-finding eye is evidently much too close to a few annoying individuals to make it possible for him to sketch in true proportions the real Californian, native born or adopted. Neither do his experiences of Western life, as portrayed in his work, lend any weight of authority to his jeremiads. It is not, however, merely the people whom he met who seem to him to deserve execration, but the land as well. Its fruits have no flavor, its flowers no odor, its birds (if there be any) no song. It

* CALIFORNIA. An Englishman's Impressions of the Golden State. By Arthur T. Johnson. With illustrations by E. Nora Meek. New York: Duffield & Co.

UNDER THE SKY IN CALIFORNIA. By Charles Francis Saunders. Illustrated from photographs mainly by C. F. and E. H. Saunders. New York: McBride, Nast & Co.

too cold and too hot, too sunny and too foggy; it is either too windy or there is not wind enough to blow away the mosquitoes. There is no game, and "game hogs" abound. So runs the record of "one of the happiest years I have ever spent"!

Doubtless all of these and the author's many other doleful observations may be abundantly verified in numerous specific instances by anyone attuned to the disagreeable elements of life, and keenly sensitive to the raw and crude ways of the frontier in a land of strong contrasts. But the picture is incomplete, and the colors are all from the wrong end of the spectrum. Of the real Californians who are subduing the desert, who brought water through mountain ranges and across the sands to Los Angeles, who rebuilt San Francisco after earthquake and fire, and who are slowly but surely throttling the vicious elements in their midst and banishing the saloon and road-house (whose infrequency our peripatetic writer so bemoans), Mr. Johnson knows nothing. His evaluation of nature is more generous, but equally erratic and insignificant. Little wonder that he opens his description of Mt. Shasta, the Fujiyama of California, with a fulsome discussion of the spittoons of the thirteen saloons of Sisson! Such a book as this serves no useful purpose, except possibly as a counter-irritant to the freely distributed, generally more trustworthy, though more optimistic and, it may be, fulsome, printed matter of exploitation.

An introduction to out-of-door California, written by one who, evidently in search of health, has found pleasure, comfort, and enjoyment in the mountains and deserts, and who has followed with zest the dusty roads and winding trails, is Mr. C. F. Saunders's "Under the Sky in California." The book professes

"to give nothing more than a hint of the joy and interest that attend travel by unbeaten ways in California, of leisurely residence in the tourist belt. The State is still so young among American commonwealths, and her wide territories are still so little settled, that the lineaments of that virgin landscape which so delighted the pioneers, are yet far from obliterated. One may still camp on Frémont's trail in surroundings practically unchanged from those which the great Pathfinder himself described sixty-odd years ago; may stumble over perhaps the selfsame stones that Pio Pico's horses kicked on the Spanish highroads that lead across the passes down to the desert and Old Mexico; may tread in the very footsteps of the Mission Fathers from San Diego to San Francisco Bay; may look out from some peak of the Sierra's crest upon forests as yet unscarred by the lumberman and upon sage brush plains where the red Indian still dwells and sets up his thatched wickiup.

"It is this nearness to the fresh morning of romance that gives a special zest to life under the sky in California, while one's physical frame is ever grateful for the ease with which one may come from such ventures into the wild, back to the comforts of a civilized life, there to talk it all over with one's friends, to rest and repair and — to go again."

It is not the California of the tourist who follows the beaten trail from one hotel to the next that is here revealed, but rather that discovered by two nature lovers of limited physical strength but with an aptitude for exploring and courage to try the unknown in desert and mountain wilderness. Its scenes are laid mainly in Southern California, but they might be enacted with equal pleasure in the central valleys and the foothills and forests of the Sierras and Coast Ranges to the north; for the same favorable climatic factors, with some differences as to temperatures and seasons, prevail throughout the length of California.

One section of Mr. Saunders's book is devoted to the desert when it blooms in the spring, another to camping in the Yosemite and a unique account of the "candle lighting" among the Diegan Indians at Mesa Grande on All Souls' Night. Whatever advantages in speed, avoidance of your own dust, and indescribable sense of superiority may attend the tourist who sees California from the automobile, there still remain some otherwise unattainable pleasures attached to the more plebeian carriage or camping wagon. The wayside trees and flowers, one's fellow-wayfarers afoot and astride, and the more leisurely appreciation of the local color reward the leisurely travellers. Spring days in a carriage between Los Angeles and San Diego, with visits to the Missions at Capistrano and San Luis Rey, and to the home of Ramona, seem more attractive than fleeting visions from the speeding motor.

Many practical suggestions for travellers who desire with comfort and safety to see something of California's wilder side will be found in this book, as well as readable accounts of ways and means of camp cooking, of bungalow life, and of making a living in the land of sunshine. The volume will be a helpful one to many inquirers, and a guide and inspiration for a wider appreciation and enjoyment of nature in California.

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