

MADISON DEMOCRAT.

City Department.

TUESDAY, JUNE 24, 1879.

WISCONSIN SCENERY.

A Madisonian Seeks a Short vacation in the Grand and Picturesque Region of Devil's Lake and the Dells. His Observations reduced to Writing.

KILBOURN CITY, June 20, 1879.

Daily Democrat: A word or two from this quiet corner of the state may or may not be acceptable to the numerous readers of the DEMOCRAT. At all events I am determined to occupy a few dull moments with a few dull remarks on what I have seen since I left Madison. I left home the other day in pursuit of a change. I did not expect to find anything anywhere to match the beauties of our own unrivaled Madison. And yet alas! to me every lovely scene within its handsome precincts, from the further shore of Lake Monona to the peaceful summit of Forest Hill, is pregnant with melancholly memories of the loved and the lost. Absence from these gloomy associations perchance might break the charm of the fearful monotony of the one pervading thought. But alas! how futile are the attempts to escape from one's self. We can leave the living behind us, but the dead follow us wherever we go. But of this I did not intend to speak and will drop the subject right now and here.

I left Madison on the 18th inst., at 4 P. M. by the Northwestern northern bound train. A little before six o'clock we stood on the platform upon the shores of Devil's Lake, while the train moved onward with a plunge and vanished from our sight.

Escorted by a "pearl" of a man, we were soon beneath the hospitable roof of the Cliff House. After an excellent supper, took a ride around Devil's Lake in the neat little steamer, took an

early bed and early rise in the morning, then a substantial breakfast well cooked, paid a moderate bill and then rode across the country over a somewhat rough and muddy highway to this place, where we arrived as the dinner bell was ringing out its welcome notes at the "Finch House."

A ride of eighteen miles, in the old fashioned way, over hill and through dale, ploughing through deep furrows of sand, tossed, joggled and shaken by ruts and corduroy bridges, had given us all voracious appetites, and we partook of the dinner which mine host Finch spread before us, with a relish almost wolfish. And here I am now at the beginning of my letter. I had scarcely finished my dinner, picked my teeth with a "grey goose quill," and inserted a fragrant Havana between my smacking lips, before Captain Bell made his smiling appearance and "wanted to know you know," just how many desired seats on his splendid steamer for a trip up the Wisconsin river, and through the now immortal Dells. "Twenty," said I, "How much?" "Twenty-five cents each," said the bland Captain Bell. I paid him the "siller" instantar, and all four of us were now on board of the beautiful little Belle Queen, seventy-five feet long, but which is so mysteriously constructed that she can glide safely over waters not two feet deep. At precisely two o'clock the whistle sounded, and up the broad river we steamed. Broad at first, but gradually the stream began to haul in its sides, until the channel became so narrow that we began to wonder how on earth the boat was going to squeeze through between the rocks. But Captain Bell knows his business, and so skillful is he that he can whirl his seventy-five feet boat around in a space that is but fifty-two feet wide. "Onward and upward right on," he steamed, and such scenery as burst upon our startled vision! As we advanced, the river grew narrower and the rocks higher. Such immensity of rock, rocks of all sizes and all shapes, rocks that rise in great masses layer upon layer to a perpen-

dicular height of one hundred feet or more, projecting rocks that hang butting over the awful crag, and looked as if they must almost instantly loosen their frail hold upon the *terra firma*, and come crushing down upon us, to seek a securer bed in the bottom of the flowing river. The incessant action of the water has given to the these rocks all sorts of shapes, and the invention of tourists has been taxed to give them suitable names. In many instances however, the artistic skill of the chiseling flood has wrought out forms that suggest the name. In one place about half way up the rugged steep, from the foundation of a projecting ledge, towers a lofty pile, which has been christened Chimney Rock, and the shape it bears sufficiently indicates the propriety of the name. And then we have the "Navy Yard," a succession of immense rocks, each one of which bears a most striking resemblance to a ship's keel. The captain informed me that this name was suggested by a former Madison lady. Then we have the "Devil's Elbow," a projection of smooth rock which does bear considerable resemblance to that joint of the human frame. But as I never formed the acquaintance of his Satanic Majesty, I am unable to bear testimony concerning its similarity in form to his elbow. "Steamboat Rock" is an immense pile, separated from the shore by a narrow channel of water, thus creating an island in shape very much like a huge steamer. As we struck a bend in the river and entered its narrowest point and the captain with a bold sweep brought his obedient boat around so as to avoid contact with the rugged wall of perpendicular rock that hemmed us in on both sides. He remarked, "the water is 80 feet deep here, and I have known it to be 40 feet higher than it is now."

"If it possible," said I looking up to the bulking cliffs that hung frowningly over our heads; "I don't see how you could navigate your boat through in such a flood." "Nor can we," remarked the

captain, "For the dells are then in their august mood, and will not suffer a boat to live in the boiling surge."

"Is the river so very rapid then?" I asked.

"It is pretty rapid," continued the sociable captain, "but it is not so much that, as the fact that when such a huge volume of water strikes this narrow channel it becomes maddened from confinement, and in its effort to escape, forms an eddy and tries to swallow up everything that ventures upon its frowning surface."

And now we enter upon a wide expanse of water more like a small lake than a river. Near the centre of this expanse I saw two men wading around a small raft, laboring to lift it from the sand-bar in which it had got stuck. "The water here is scarcely two feet deep," said the captain.

"How then," answered I in some alarm, "can your boat get through?"

"Easily enough," was the reassuring answer, "for this craft although 75 feet long draws scarcely 18 inches of water."

And with that remark the captain's firm hand gave the wheel another quick turn and the boat true to its instincts gave a sudden lurch and headed for the shore when I noticed a landing place. As we stood upon the sandy beach I discovered an opening or gully pointing inland into which Captain Bell plunged, requesting us to follow. There was a well trodden pathway and we obeyed, through brush, through briar, over bridge and around obstructing boulders. A walk of about forty rods brought us face to face with a frowning pile of high towering rocks that rose up, away up into the blue sky, and here I supposed our further progress was stayed, but suddenly the stalwart form of the captain disappeared into a dark hole that opened through the rocks. Into this "mouth of hell" I followed, where our guide informed us that we had entered the "Witches' Gulch."

"Prodigious," was my first exclamation as I looked around and up at the awful grandeur of the scene. But it will never do to attempt a description of the "Witches' Gulch" when I am so near the end.

A. B. B.

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SUNDAY, JULY 6, 1879.

About the Romantic Dells and Vicinity.

KILBOURN, June 21, 1879.

Onward through the dark gulch I followed my guide; onward into the increasing gloom; onward between black walls of high-reaching rock, the projecting summits of which sometimes came so near together as to leave but a narrow streak of gray light glimmering down upon us; onward, discovering new objects of interest, new sources of wonder at each step. All through this gulch there flows a tiny stream of pure water, which, of course, adds much to the romantic interest of the witching scene. About half way up, we pause before an open basin in the rock, into which pours a bright stream of pure, cold water. Some thirsty Moses had smitten the rock and the generous water had gushed forth, and it has been "gushing" ever since. We refreshed ourselves with a draught of the sparkling beverage and pushed on our devious march. A little farther on and the music of falling water greets our ears with a most enchanting sound, and soon after our eyes are rewarded with the romantic sight of the leaping little cascade tumbling down a steep declivity of rocks at a distance of some fifteen or twenty feet. Indeed there are two of these tiny waterfalls, gilding the round pathway with their bright and foaming sprays. Up these ascents we must climb by a rather narrow stairway, and then, by a still rugged and slim path, we pursued our way until finally, after a walk of about a quarter of a mile, we suddenly issued forth from this Platonian abode into the broad light of open day. This was the end of our half subterranean journey, and here, in the centre of a flat piece of ground, stood a "hotel," "restaurant," "summer resort," or whatever name you might give

it. It was a rude structure of unplanned boards, plastered with written notices of what kind of refreshments you might obtain within. "Hot Coffee and Tea *made to order*," was the most conspicuous among the "signs" of this rude inn. Whether one could obtain bed as well as board, I did not inquire, as I had no inclination to test the hospitality of this summer resort. Of course, there was the everlasting ten-pin alley as well as the dancing hall. Not being either hungry or thirsty, I did not "order" any coffee or tea "made," nor try a glass of the "Cold Lemonade." I bought, however, a very poor cigar, in order to exhibit my desire to encourage the enterprise that could erect even this rude structure in such a place. When I come again I trust the proprietor of the cabin may be able to have a building in which I can take "mine ease in mine inn." It would be a capital place for a first-class summer resort hotel.

Once more in the dark passage of the Witches' Gulch on my way back to the boat. As I have plenty of time I resolve not to hurry, but to proceed at leisure; and now I come to the more deliberate conclusion that the "Witches' Gulch" is an original, a unique, a wonderful and a big thing. It is one of those things which humorous nature built when in her most eccentric mood.

I examined the rocks more carefully this time; sometimes these mighty stone giants formed a lofty arch over my head, with just enough of an opening when they attempted to meet, to enable me to catch a glimpse of the blue sky, then again they stood a perpendicular wall on either side of me, rising up a hundred feet high, and so close together that I could touch the moss-covered sides with either hand, as I moved along the narrow pathway. And now after descending two ladders, I stand once more at the foot of the rocky ledges down which trickles the tiny cascades. Here the action of the water or some other unknown power has chiseled out a long apartment of some fifteen feet in diameter, and of double that in length, while overhead

the arching rocks almost meet in the centre, forming a lofty reef to the gilded apartment. Here we all pause to wonder and admire. Although the stream which forms the cascade is not at this point more than a foot broad, its fall upon the hard rock below creates such a thundering roar in the vaulted room, that we had to lift our voices to their mightiest pitch in order to carry on intelligible conversation. But loud as it was we would not part with such a musical roar, "such sweet thunder," for even the softened tone with which gentle love breathes its passionate tale into the willing ear of the fond maiden, even to hear the grateful whispering of her blushing answer.

There is something almost entrancing in the deep melody of these falling waters, as they dash down the stepping rocks. For some little time I stood in silence enjoying the grateful scene, and listening to the muffled roar of the waters. All at once my meditations were broken in upon by another and less melodious sound. It was a human voice, harsh and broken, that "piped and whistled in his sound." I looked around and there stood an old gentleman, bare-headed and bald-headed, with eyes reverentially raised, and if he were about to address himself to his devotions. "Here I take off my hat," screamed he, "to the majesty of nature." He was a little man, and a most animated specimen of enthusiastic garrulity. "Did you ever see the like?" exclaimed he, putting his mouth close to my ear. "I give it up," was my answer. "See there!" exclaimed he pointing to the cascade. "*What'er fall!*" said I with a vile attempt at a pun. "What," screamed he, "and in this awful presence are you not afraid these unsettled rocks will tumble down upon you?" "What a comfortable tomb this would be for a hot day!" responded I. "Dreadful" muttered he, and then with a question, "What is this place called?" asked the old gentleman. "The Phantom Chamber," said I. But I dwell too long and will

hurry back to the boat that waits for us. In one of my trips to the romantic region of the Dells, I met and formed the acquaintance of Mr. Bennet, the photographic artist of Kilbourn. He is not only a first class artist, but I found him to be also a true gentleman. He pointed out to me many objects of interest. I remarked to him that it must have been rather dull in Kilbourn before the scenery of the Dells began to bring summer visitor. "A little so perhaps," answered he, quietly, "and yet our people had their amusements even then." "You see," he continued with a smile, "we always had the river, and it was a source of considerable amusement to watch the big rafts floating down the stream, and when they plunged madly over the dam, and a raftsmen or two was drowned, our enjoyment reached its highest point."

I laughed at this kind of amusement and said, rather ironically, that "there must be a heap of fun in seeing raftsmen drown." "Yes," continued he, with a moderation, "and I remember that our liveliest day was when six of them were drowned at once—that indeed, was an uncommon good day, but Kilbourn, added he with a sigh, "is getting quite above such amusements now." All this was said with a gravity that was above description. I must close this account of my visit to this place, although I have omitted many, very many interesting scenes. On my return to the hotel, I found Mr. Bowman waiting for me with his carriage to give me a ride. Of course everybody in Madison remembers this gentleman, as he has been several times the able representative of this district in the assembly. I had a very agreeable ride with him in and around Kilbourn city. Hospitality seems to be one of the most conspicuous virtues of the good people here, and certainly in that respect Mr. Bowman represents them as well as he does when they send him to the assembly, and that is as high a compliment as I could pay him. And here I should end this letter, but how can I until I assure you that I have

seen "Stand Rock." "Stand Rock" stands about five miles from the city, and I took the land route to see it, and thereby hangs a tale." The road was detestible, rutty, sandy, rough and sometimes abruptly trackless. Besides we took the wrong road and got lost. There were three of us besides our guide and all of us got lost. Including the horses there were six of us, and even the beasts seemed to be utterly confounded. They took the wrong road, and landed us in an immense huckleberry patch, absolutely pathless, but covered with a thick undergrowth of ——— brush that thumped against the bottom of our carriage. We alighted and slid down a steep declivity and then climbed a high eminence and still "Stand Rock" would just reveal itself to our longing vision. "Too low down," said our pilot, and so we descended and ascended to our carriage again. And then we took the back track, down one hill up another, until we struck a roundling road, and this we followed up and down, this way and that, over hill and through vale, across deep ravines and rocksandyridges around trees and through thick underbrush, until even this miserable road ran out entirely, and we found ourselves without a path, but still the great object of our search was nowhere visible. The prospect was not the most cheerful in the world, because the sun had already set, and the deepening shadows of evening began to gather around us. Our demoralized guide wore an extremely puzzled expression upon his dark face. A young lady with us made the woods echo with her peals of merry laughter in which the young gentleman freely joined, and I said with wailing pathos "Where, O tell me where is Stand Rock?"

Back again through the same devious pathway, until we struck another road, which we followed to the foot of a steen hill, which our laboring steeds mounted, and when we reached the summit— "Eureka! eureka, I have found it," exclaimed the delighted man, "I have found it!" And there indeed stood

"Stand Rock," upon whose broad bald pate lingered faintly the last glimmering rays of parting day. It was a sight indeed to behold that immense pile of rock. It was in the shape of an inverted cone, its towering head crowned with a broad diadem of smooth stone. It looked very lonesome standing there by itself in the gathering gloom of approaching night. I thought of it with sympathetic interest when I remembered that it had waited and watched there in silent grandeur with storms of unnumbered centuries beat down upon its unsheltered head. Poor old "Stand Rock," it seems to me that you must be tired standing there so long on your one paralyzed leg. We left it with a feeling of profound regret standing there in its lonely grandeur, left it alone in its towering glory, waiting for the dark mantled night to cover it from view and waiting for the beams of bright morning to flash upon the diadem that crowns it the king of rocks, and still waiting for others to come to wonder and admire. And my conclusion is that all who have not seen the Dells of the Wisconsin ought to take the first vacation and visit them and "Stand Rock." And here I will add that the people of Kilbourn are the most kind hearted and hospitable people in the world, and what is more they have never yet learned the art of swindling. They act as if they wanted to see you again.

A. B. BRADY.