

train leaves the track of the Overland and turns to the right, leaving the station building between ours and the Overland track.

At LATHROP our train stops 30 minutes for supper, and then turns to the right, up the Great San Joaquin Valley. The general direction of our road, for the next 350 miles, is to the southeast.

SAN JOAQUIN (pronounced San Waw-Keen).—This valley embraces portions of nine counties, and is larger than many kingdoms of the old world, and *far richer*, extending to Visalia, county seat of Tulare county. The amount of grain and stock raised in this valley, and the hundreds of smaller ones tributary to it, is almost incredible, for a country so recently settled. The valley is about 200 miles in length, and averages about 30 miles in width; comprising near 6,000,000 acres of the richest agricultural lands in the State, besides near a million acres of tuiles and salt marsh lands, which, when reclaimed, prove to be the most fertile lands in the world.

Morano—is 5.5 miles from Lathrop, important only, as many other stations on this road are, as a shipping point for grain, with side-track and great storage warehouses.

Ripon—comes next, 4.7 miles further, near which the Stanislaus River is crossed, and three miles more comes

Salida—another small station, with accommodations for shipping and storing grain. From Salida it is 6.8 miles to

Modesto—the county seat of Stanislaus county. It was laid out in 1870, and now contains a population of over 1,500, while the county contains about 11,000. Agriculture is the chief occupation of the people.

Leaving Modesto, we cross the Toulumna River, and in 4.6 miles reach CERES, a small, unimportant side-track, 8.5 miles from TURLOCKS, another small station, 10.1 miles from CRESSEY, reached just after crossing the Merced River. Continuing on 6.7 miles, ATWATER is reached. At this station, as well as those we have passed are large buildings for storing grain, as grain-raising—wheat—is the only occupation of the settlers. From Atwater it is 7.5 miles to one of the most important places so far on the road,

Merced—the county seat of Merced county; population about 3,000; has many fine buildings, including a \$75,000 court house and a large first-class hotel, the El

Capitan, Col. Bross, proprietor. There are two weekly papers published in Merced, the *Argus* and the *Express*.

From Merced it is ten miles east, to the foot-hills and thirty to the western edge of the valley, at the base of the Contra Costa Range.

The county of Merced is the richest in the valley; it had 360,700 acres of land under cultivation in 1876, which yielded a little over 4,500,000 bushels of wheat, besides large quantities of barley, rye, corn, peas, beans, potatoes, hay, tobacco, cotton and many other kinds of crops. The county contains a population of 65,000, most of whom are tilling the soil. In this county was raised the finest cotton in the State. The value of these lands ranges from \$2.50 to \$10 per acre.

The game is plentiful in the river bottoms and along the foot-hills. Irrigating canals convey water over a great portion of the land. Some of these canals are quite extensive; one, the San Joaquin & King's River Canal is 100 miles long, 68 feet wide and six feet deep.

For several years the greater portion of the travel for Yo-Semite Valley and the big tree groves took stages at Merced, passing over the route, via Coulterville or Mariposa, but a new route (see map, page 201) has been laid out from Madera, 33 miles further south, which, it is claimed, makes the distance by stage much shorter, and over a better road. However, we shall give both routes in ANNEX No. 53, and tourists can decide which they will take. Should they go in on one and out on the other route, little of the scenery will be overlooked.

MARIPOSA—county seat of Mariposa county, is 45 miles east, reached by stage from Merced. This town contains about 1,000 inhabitants. Once it was noted for its rich placer mines, but now quartz mining is the principal occupation of the people. In Bear Valley are the mills and mines (or a portion of them) belonging to the "Las Mariposa Grant," or the Fremont estate, as it is usually called. The Benton mills are on the Merced River, about two miles from the town, reached by a good dug road, down a very steep mountain. In Mount Ophir and Princeton, mining towns near by, are large quartz mills, belonging to the estate and extensive mines.

Leaving Merced, it is 9.9 miles to

Plainsburg—a small station near the crossing of Mariposa River, beyond