

are easily wintered and fattened, finding a ready market in the mining districts and westward to Sacramento and San Francisco.

No. 31 ANNEX. Nevada Falls—In order to form a proper idea of the superb picture, No. 13, of the large series, it will be necessary to premise that the Yo-Semite Valley is an immense gorge, in the western slope of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, about seven miles in length, from east to west, and from one-eighth of a mile to two miles in width, from north to south. The walls surrounding this mighty chasm are nearly perpendicular, and from 2,000 to 6,000 feet high. The various streams that find their way into the valley flow over this tremendous wall on entering. At the eastern end of the valley proper, it divides into two canyons, projecting still eastward, but diverging as they mount the Sierras. It is through the south one of these canyons, that the main branch of the Mercede River flows, and on entering the valley, it makes two leaps. The lower one, or Vernal Fall, of 450 feet in height, 100 feet wide, and from three to four feet deep, where it leaps the square-edged barrier. Continuing up the canyon for a mile, above the Vernal Fall, amid the wildest scenery imaginable, and we reach the Great Nevada Fall, the subject of our picture. The canyon narrows, in a wedge-like form, to quite a point, and just at the right of this vortex is the fall. It is 900 feet high, 75 feet wide at the brink, and 130 feet below. Regarded as to its height, volume, purity of water, and general surroundings, it is one of the grandest objects in the world. The spectator facing the east will observe on his left the "Cap of Liberty" lifting its rounded summit of smooth and weather-polished granite, 2,000 above the Fall, 5,000 feet above the valley below, or 9,000 feet above the sea. To paint in words, in the space allowed us, the beauties of the fall, the bolder scenery, the foliage, mosses and ferns, always moist from the spray, and brilliant green in summer, the roar and rush of the fast-flowing river, the majestic grandeur of the rocky framework, which towers above and around it, is simply an impossibility; we shall not try, but refer the reader's imagination and judgment with these statistics to the beautiful picture, which has been accurately engraved from a faithful photograph. (See ANNEX No. 10.)

No. 32 ANNEX. Pioneer Mail Enterprises—CROSSING THE SIERRAS ON SNOW-SKATES—The rapid settlement of the fertile valleys lying at the eastern base of the High Sierras of California, created a want for mail facilities in advance of regular methods. It is well known, that previous to the winter of 1854, the fearless settlers of this isolated inland world were shut out from communion with the great throbbing heart of civilization on the outside for three or four months of every year, by that almost inaccessible and snow-clad range. Those whose temerity let events bid defiance to this battle-ground of the storms, and sought to scale its snowy ramparts, too frequently became snow-blind, or foot-frozen; or, still more frequently, lay down to that sleep which knows no waking—their only mantle the fast-falling snow.

In this emergency, one brave heart, at least, was found to dare the perilous task of carrying the United States Mail to those enterprising pioneers. It was Mr. John A. Thompson, a Norwegian. Early education and habit had made him an adept in the use of the snow skate. Without hesitation, he made a contract with T. J. Matteson, of Murphy's Camp, Calaveras county, to continue postal service in winter, as well as in sum-

mer, over the route, via the Calaveras grove of big trees (the only grove then known, to Carson City, for \$200 per month, without regard to the depth of snow.

Our illustration introduces our hero in *propria persona*. It will be seen at a glance that the *snow-skate* is totally unlike the Indian, or Canadian *snow-shoe*—the latter being adapted, mainly, to a light, loose snow, and level country; and the former to compact masses, and mountainous districts. The "shoe," moreover, is of slow and laborious use; whereas the "skate" is of exceedingly rapid and exhilarating adaptability—especially on down grades, when its speed is frequently equal to the ordinary locomotive. The motion is a slide—not a step. The pole in the mail carrier's hand acts as a brake on down grades, and as a propeller up hill.

In Sierra county, California, where snow often falls to the depth of ten or twelve feet, the snow-skate is a great favorite, becoming a source of pleasant recreation, on moon-lit evenings—visits of from ten to fifteen miles being made after tea, and returning the same evening. Here, too, snow-skating forms one of the most popular of pastimes—racing. A belt, studded and set with silver, becomes the prize of the successful racer. Sometimes young ladies will challenge gentlemen to a race for a pocket handkerchief, or a pair of gloves—which, of course, is always accepted. The accidents which sometimes occur throw no damper on the sport.

On the second trip of Mr. Thompson, when nearly on the summit of the Sierra, he sought the protection of a friendly cabin for the night; when, upon entering it, he saw the almost lifeless form of a man with his feet frozen, and without any other covering than the clothes he wore. His boots were frozen fast to his feet. He had been lying in this deplorable condition, alone, for twelve days, with nothing to save life except raw flour. Although death would soon have lifted from him his burden of suffering, he continued hopeful to the last, that a kind Providence would send the daring mail carrier, as an angel of mercy, to deliver him. Tears started to his eyes when he told of the joy of the snow-bound and helpless, as he heard the muffled, though welcome, sound of snow-skates. As soon as all necessary assistance could be rendered, and the man made as comfortable as possible, Mr. Thompson, without resting his weary limbs, started out upon the snowy waste in search of relief. He did not search in vain. The simple recital of his story was enough to thrill his listeners, and to enlist all the volunteers necessary to bring the sufferer into safety. All desirable supplies, and a light sled upon which to haul him, were soon provided; and, although heavy snow-storms impeded their way, they soon became his deliverers.

No. 33 ANNEX. The Donner Party—(Illustration page 105). Around this beautiful sheet of water—nestled so closely in the embrace of these mighty mountains, smiling and joyous in its matchless beauty, as though no dark sorrow had ever occurred on its shores, or its clear waters reflected back the wan and haggard face of starvation—is clustered the saddest of memories—a memory perpetuated by the name of the lake.

In the fall of '46, a party of emigrants, mostly from Illinois, arrived at Truckee River, worn and wasted from their long and arduous journey. Among that party was a Mr. Donner, who, with his family, were seeking the rich bottom lands of the California rivers, the fame of which had reached them in their Eastern home. At that time a few hardy pioneers had settled near Sut-