

A SUBSTANTIAL EL DORADO

WECHAWKEN'S COUNTERPART OF THE CITY OF GOLD.

IT CAN BE READILY REACHED BY VARIOUS AND SOME NOVEL CONVEYANCES — MANY MEANS OF ENTERTAINMENT—A GRAND SPECTACLE—WHAT THERE IS TO SEE.

According to the best poetical authority on the subject, "A knight rode over the hill one day on his way to El Dorado," and he found it necessary to keep on riding, because wherever he went, like the pot of gold at the rainbow's foot, El Dorado lay still beyond, just out of reach.

Nothing could point a clearer distinction between the poetical and the practical El Dorado than this matter of accessibility. You can get to the Weehawken El Dorado and set your feet upon its more or less golden streets, although in the journey thither there is a suggestion of the mirage-like character of the fabled land of gold, because it is further away than it looks, as you gaze upon its turrets with their banners fluttering against the western sky, from some high building here in town.

It seems as if you could almost shout across and order your dinner from the roof of the Metropolitan Opera House, for instance. But as a matter of fact, after you get to Forty-second Street you take a cross-town car to the ferry, and then have a ride across the river. Then you think you are there, but the land of gold has gone up into the sky meanwhile. You go out through the ferryhouse and find an elevator car a little larger than two Broadway horse cars waiting for you. Therein you are hoisted up 150 feet or so through a network of girders and guys, between whose steel lattices you look out, if you go in the afternoon, and see the ferryhouse and the river and the West Shore Railway, and the streets and the houses and the people dropping down far under your feet, and if you go at night you feel as if they had hitched the elevator to a star and you were having a ride through space.

You leave the elevator for a short train of cars drawn by a locomotive which seems to have solved the problem of pulling one's self up by the straps of one's boots, inasmuch as this locomotive has apparently got into one of the regular passenger cars and sat down to do its work of hauling the train.

In this conveyance you take another stage of the winding way to El Dorado, and you ride for a short distance along a spidery trestle which has been spun out between the top of the elevator structure and the brow of the big bluff at Weehawken.

When you leave the train it rattles off through a hole gouged out of the solid rock on its way to that country of strong-mouthed horses, fair Guttenberg-on-the-Hill.

And so, there you are. The gate of the golden country is open before you, and for the unconsidered trifle of two York shillings you may go in and possess the land and become a citizen thereof, and, like St. Paul, as you look about you become convinced that you are a citizen of no mean city, but of a right-down, regular Jersey garden of the gods.

Until you got there, you considered that the place was laid out on a big bluff and you wondered how far El Dorado itself partook of the nature of its situation. But when you have arrived you are soon agreeably satisfied on this point, for this is what you see, supposing, again, that you have gone over there by daylight:

Broad, smooth walks winding through lawns as trim as a parson's chin at a strawberry festival. Tall masts bearing great electric lanterns, glazed in many colors, while between them swing strings of flapping pennants and curling banners, and other curving lines of smaller electric lights.

Trees standing singly and in clumps and long avenues, with flowers everywhere bordering the walks, massed in beds and looking down from airy gardens contrived in the hollow fork of some crooked old oak. Here is a great circular bed stuffed full of old-fashioned carnation pinks, whose odor blows half across the big inclosure. There is a row of pink rose trees; there a great sheaf of late-blooming poppies, shaking their blazing velvet in the west wind. Long ribbons of mignonette are strewn over the grass, foliage plants snuggle down into proper stars and crescents, little spiky palms turn up in odd corners, and there are signs of future clambering vines.

A large fountain thirty feet high stands near the edge of the cliff, wrought with many strange animals and mythological ladies and gentlemen engaged in shampooing their bronze heads in the spray which falls down on them in a cloud into the big circular basin wherein are crowds of gold and silver fish, besides a few cross-breeds—bimetallists, if you please. Long arcades of little electric lamps are hung below with swinging glass prisms.

There are about thirty acres of land laid out thus garden-wise, with such concessions to the human and prosaic puella as are necessary in the shape of buildings wherein one can get all manner of food and drink. The main building contains the restaurant, which overflows upon the wide piazzas. Upstairs are the business offices, and the big house broods like a very fine-feathered Spanish hen upon a vast beer tunnel in the basement. There are too many tables to count in this big refectory.

This restaurant building stands close to the edge of the bluff, and as you sit on the piazza you have the whole panorama of the city, finer even than you get it on the folding guide books to New-York, spread out before your eyes. From Claremont—almost from the Tappan Zee—clear down to the Narrows you see it in one sweeping glance. The river itself can lay claim to its title of the American Rhine at this point, inasmuch as it is apt to be of a fine pale coffee color along the shore, on account of the mud churned up by the high marine civilization of the port; but when the day is fair, the middle of the river is as bright and sparkling as you please, and the ferryboats and the tugs and the white wings of the airy brick-sloops, and the big tunnels of the ocean liners go shifting past, and since you have time to look at the panorama, you find it quite as interesting as poking billiard balls around or trying to keep four wheels on your wagon on upper Seventh Avenue.

Further along the cliff there is a hoary castle built just upon the horrid edge of the crag. It is built with turrets and bastions and loopholes and all such warlike things, but it has nothing more terrible as garrison than another lot of waiters who will bring Rhine wine to you as you sit on a balcony and guess how far you would fall before you lighted, should you go over the rail.

Down at the foot of this hill is the interesting patch of ground to which Mr. Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton, Esq., were rowed over from New-York in the cool of the early morning many years ago, and shot at one another in their rivalry for the smiles of Mme. Jumel, which incident is corroborative testimony to that of old Tony Weller, whose distrust of "widgers" was profound. All this land belonged to the King estate, and they have got the stone now, up near the old family mansion, whereon the wounded Hamilton sat down to think over the marked cards in the queer game of life before pitching up his hand and going out into history. The name "A. Burr" is cut upon one side of the stone and on the other are the initials "A. H.," while the initials of the seconds are cut below.

This amphitheatre is so much like the Coliseum at Rome that they have to hire Italian ballet girls to carry out the harmony of the scheme. It is built of the same mediæval masonry as the Rhine wine castle, and will hold 6,000 or 8,000 persons.

There you may see, if you stay until evening, the spectacle described by a modest man of the name of J. M. McDonough, who has become so much attached to El Dorado that he lives there, as "a spectacle of wonderful beauty arranged by the master hand of Signor Augusto Frauciani, which includes sublime pictures of Egyptian life, the pomp of ancient royalty and their magnificent ceremonial rites." This pleasing show is called "Cleopatra; or, Egypt Through Centuries," a title which certainly casts reflections upon the age of that remarkable woman. In the course of the show, on a stage 300 feet long, the priests of Osiris attempt to sacrifice to their god a young lady in white and gold who is betrothed to a gentleman in green, scarlet, and silver, much to the latter's disgust. A scene of general confusion and limelight follows, during which about 500 virgins appear with bouquets, escorted by a company of white-robed umpeters. The virgins dance the sacred waltz of the Nile to Spanish music with lots of castanets in it, while the trumpets bray around just as they do in "Aida." In another act a number of colored men herald themselves as pilgrims returning from Mecca, whereupon 500 more young ladies come out and dance for joy. The general hilarity is disturbed by the storming of Alexandria by British troops, who fire on bombs and skyrockets and raise a commotion generally among the monuments of the Pharaohs. All this dancing and calamity costs you but 25 cents to look at, which is a good investment for the like of some of the virgins have never been seen in New-York before and probably will not be seen again.

The part of Cleopatra is played by Fräulein Fregon Moltke, introduced to distinguished visitors as a niece of the late Prussian General of that name. She is a fine-looking lady, who speaks English with an accent and about whose dress-room wait many Johnnies, disguised as staboys and property men, for a sight of her.

They give a circus performance in this amphitheatre every afternoon, except Sunday, in which a large family of acrobats crawl around each other like a lot of cats; races are run by ladies, gentlemen, and monkeys, and a usual programme of a circus is carried out. On Sundays they have sacred concerts which are not widely different from the daily concerts given in the big music pavilion. Prof. Nahaneko conducts his orchestra through a cathedram programme, including the works of Wagner, Brahms, Mozart, and Molloy, with strict ritualism. He has just billed "Mlle. Felicia Hoska, from the Metropolitan Opera House;" Miss Rosa Linde, a contralto, and "Mlle. Pauline, from the Grand Opera, Paris," which it would appear that Weehawken is to be "in it" with the finest capitals.