

HIDDEN DISTRICTS.

Out-of-the-Way Places in San Francisco.

NOE AND EUREKA VALLEYS.

"Far From the Madding Crowd" on Short Notice—A Visit to the Old Mission.

To a large majority of the citizens of San Francisco "the Mission" means a very long stretch of country traversed by four very long car lines—those running along Valencia, Mission, Howard and Folsom streets. Beyond the country to be seen from the car windows of those lines there are two distinct and very attractive districts belonging to "the Mission," as the Mission belongs to San Francisco, but as distinct from the car-line country as Mission street is from Pacific heights.

These two districts are Eureka and Noe valleys, and it is worth any one's time to make a visit to them. If only to experience the sensation of being entirely shut off from San Francisco and living "far from the madding crowd," while, in fact, being within five or ten minutes' walk from a cable line which will take you in a jiffy past "all the principal theaters and hotels, and to the ferries and the park," according to the statement on the side of the cars.

One can get into Eureka valley by walking west on Seventeenth or Eighteenth streets from any of the four Mission cars, but it is most convenient to reach it by the Market-street extension cars. It is like getting off at a country station in the foothills in San Mateo or Santa Clara county. If one begins questioning an old inhabitant he will relate with an air of considerable pride that Eureka valley is really the original Mission. It got its State-motto name in the days of homestead furor, and the old settlers don't like it a bit, either. "The Mission" to them means just that little valley where the "Mission Dolores" was founded in 1776, and not the great broad valley west of them. What there is left of the old Dolores mission buildings belongs to this district and is near the mouth of the little valley. They tell you out there that the Franciscan who founded the California missions selected sites for their buildings with infallible judgment as to water, climate and soil, and that in these three Eureka valley excels. To be sure, the residents of Noe valley, the adjoining district, and of Comersfordville, the district beyond that, and Bernal heights and the Potrero and every other district in the city claim the same advantage as to climate for their locality. Yet it is not with quite the same simple confidence that is observed in him of the Eureka valley, when he says, "We are in the warm belt here and entirely out of the fog belt."

The thoroughfare for the two valleys, in fact for the entire country west of Valencia street, is Castro street. On the corners of that and Eighteenth and Seventeenth streets are the centers of Eureka valley, and on either of them only the distant portions of the city can be seen. One has no sense of being in the same city to which those distant spires and lofty cupolas belong. But while contemplating this feature of the valley some native is sure to interrupt with a suggestion as to the necessity of a cable road over Castro street.

That is a subject they are all anxious about, and point to the fact that Castro street has recently been "cut through" as proof positive that it is soon to be ornamented with a cable car. The hill dividing Eureka from Noe valley is half a dozen blocks in extent and is scarred only by the Castro-street cut from Twentieth to Twenty-fourth streets. There is scarcely a house upon it, and on Sunday when a CHRONICLE reporter made a voyage of discovery the Eureka side was dotted with children gathering blue flags and other wild flowers. The half-dozen blocks are owned by C. P. Huntington, a Boston lady and one or two others, and are to-day, excepting the one cut referred to, exactly as the old Mission fathers found them over 100 years ago, yet a vigorous yell from the top of the hill would stop a cable car en route down town.

Walking south through the cut at the top of the hill Noe valley, much more extensive than Eureka, comes in sight. All of Noe valley is out of sight of any car line; is as secluded and separated from the city as if twenty miles down the Southern Pacific road that skirts along its southern boundary. Noe valley is, in fact, a large town by itself, with business streets, schools, churches, meeting halls and local interests of varied kinds. Standing on the corner of Liberty and Castro streets, the reporter noticed a road winding west and south around the foot of the hill over which he had just come, and that the road seemed to be much traveled, although it led to nothing in sight, except the green hills above the old ocean road.

"Are there any houses over there where that road leads?" the reporter asked of a passer-by.

"Certainly; lots of them," was the reply.

The reporter followed the road and came to a well-built-up street running north and south in the extreme northwestern corner of the valley. A large old adobe house with scattering outbuildings, such as one expects to see on a prosperous farm, but not in a city, is a conspicuous feature of the locality. It is the old Pioche House, and is now occupied by Mr. Lick, a nephew of the dead philanthropist, and is the headquarters of the Lick & Such dairy. To the east of the lot surrounding the adobe house is Douglas street, formerly the western boundary line of San Francisco, now miles inside the city limits. The dairy firm own a thousand cows, hundreds of which are kept on the large tract of land owned in the vicinity. Further to the west is the old Ocean House road, as it winds down the hill to its Seventeenth-street connection through Eureka valley.

To the southwest of the center of the valley is a fence inclosing 160 acres of land, formerly belonging to the Pioche estate, but recently bought by Charles Crocker.

"Mr. Crocker is going to make a park of it," a native asserted, "and run a cable line over Castro street to carry people to it when it is a park."

Castro street is the first and last word spoken by any resident of either valley, if the future of the locality is the topic of conversation. The street now runs from the Southern Pacific Railroad north to Kidley street. It falls by half a block to be an extension of Divisadero street; but that much-talked-of cable laughs, so to speak, at half blocks, and will run from the Crocker park of the future north to Kidley street, half a block west of Kidley, thence north on Divisadero street several miles, more or less, to Greenwich Park; through that park north to the head of Pacific Heights, on, on, north to the bay, which will be reached near Bay View or a little east of the eastern line of the Presidio.

"It's the longest, the widest, the straightest and the best line in the city," enthusiastically exclaimed a Noe valley resident, who plainly saw in the future his beloved Castro street a lively rival, where it passes through Noe valley, to the importance of Market and Kearny streets combined.

Noe valley can be reached by leaving any of the Mission line of cars at Twenty-fourth street and walking west. A hill is crossed two or three blocks west of Valencia street, and then the valley proper, distinct, hidden, characteristic, picturesque and ambitious, is seen.