

the oddest "terminus" conceivable, consisting of about a score of wooden booths stuck down at random, with rows of freight waggons mixed up among them, and a miscellaneous population of a thoroughly Western kind. In a fortnight afterwards the railway was to be opened some fifty miles farther north, and the whole town and its inhabitants would then move to the new terminus. Some weeks afterwards, indeed, we returned by rail over the same track, and the only traces of our mushroom town were the tin biscuit-boxes, preserved-meat cans, and other *débris* scattered about on the desert and too heavy for the wind to disperse.

With this cessation of the railway all comfort in travelling utterly disappeared. A "stage," loaded inside and outside with packages, but supposed to be capable of carrying eight passengers besides, was now to be our mode of conveyance over the bare, burning, treeless, and roadless desert. The recollection of those two days and nights stands out as a kind of nightmare. I gladly omit further reference to them. There should have been a third day and night, but by what proved a fortunate accident we escaped this prolongation of the horror. Reaching Virginia City (!), a collection of miserable wooden houses, many of them deserted—for the gold of the valley is exhausted, though many Chinese are there working over the old refuse heaps—we learnt that we were too late for the stage to Boseman. Meeting, however, a resident from Boseman as anxious to be there as ourselves, we secured a carriage and were soon again in motion. By one of the rapid meteorological changes not infrequent at such altitudes, the weather, which had before been warm, and sometimes even hot, now became for a day or two disagreeably chilly. As we crossed a ridge into the valley of the Madison River, snow fell, and the mountain crests had had their first whitening for the