

**THE OIL REGIONS OF
PENNSYLVANIA. SHOWING
WHERE PETROLEUM IS FOUND;
HOW IT IS OBTAINED, AND AT
WHAT COST**

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The Oil Regions of Pennsylvania. Showing Where Petroleum Is Found; How It Is Obtained, and at What Cost by William Wright

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WILLIAM WRIGHT

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WITH

Hints for Whom it May Concern.

BY

WILLIAM WRIGHT.

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TO WHOM
IT MAY COME

Swed

P R E F A C E .

In the latter part of March, I left my home for the South-West, designing to pass through the heart of West-Virginia, Eastern Kentucky, Eastern Tennessee, and thence down the Tennessee valley—directly as a correspondent of the *New-York Times*; indirectly with a view of collecting materials for a volume on the Border States, their soils, minerals, climate, water-power, social condition, etc., for the guidance of those who might desire to migrate thither after the war.

On the way, I proposed to spend a few days in the oil regions of Venango county, Pennsylvania, and afterward visit those of West-Virginia, supposing that a week would probably suffice to do both all needed justice.

In accordance with this plan, I walked, jumped, or waded the valley of Oil Creek, from Titusville to Oil City, collecting what facts and observations I could during the three days consumed in the passage.

Arrived at the journey's end, I found a discordant, contradictory mass of facts and figures on my memorandum-book; and came to the conclusion that, whatever I knew the first day, I knew much less the second, and nothing at all the third. Further, that no person outside of Petrolia, and very few in it, were in a much more enviable condition of mind on the subject, if they would own up to the truth.

After deliberating afresh, I formed the resolution of visiting every producing well in that county; gathering from men, who were supposed to have no interest in misrepresenting, its actual yield; comparing the figures with those given by officials and neighbors, and out of the whole endeavoring to ascertain the truth, as nearly as might be. At the same time, to "bore,"

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and "ream," and "pump" every practical man for the results of his observations, if so be it were possible to arrive at *one* general law or conclusion respecting the oil regions.

The residue of March and nearly three weeks in April were faithfully devoted to this object. The distance traversed on foot was fully two hundred miles—how agreeable the trip, will be easily inferred from what follows.

An interest, having more than \$100,000,000 of *bona fide* capital invested in it, had until then never received more attention than could be given it in newspaper correspondence or a magazine article. The financial aspect of it had not even been *scratched*. Indeed, honest writers seemed to avoid reference to it, except in the most general terms, as if it were going beyond their depth. Of course, the Oily Gammons of the press, who had been hired as *claqueurs* at a theatre, applauded every thing. That was their vocation!

In the following pages I have described the processes of boring the wells, of repairing them after getting out of order, and of refining the oil. I have entered somewhat minutely into the physical formation of the country—a topic which had been almost overlooked, and on some points of which, I hope to have thrown out some valuable ideas for the first time. When adopting the views there presented, I had not perused the Geological Report of Prof. Rogers; and it is highly gratifying to find that in the main features of the argument advanced, I am fully borne out by that eminent name.

But it is to the statistical and financial discussions that I desire principally to direct attention. Those chapters will be read by large numbers who are eagerly in quest of the information therein contained. The facts and figures now given to the public for the first time, together with the modes of taking in over-smart, shrewd, keen, knowing Eastern people, will *tell*.

Petrolia needed a searching examination and a scathing exposure; it has got both. Yet let me not be misunderstood. Underneath a system of falsehood and fraud, that might almost be termed *magnificent*, there is a great

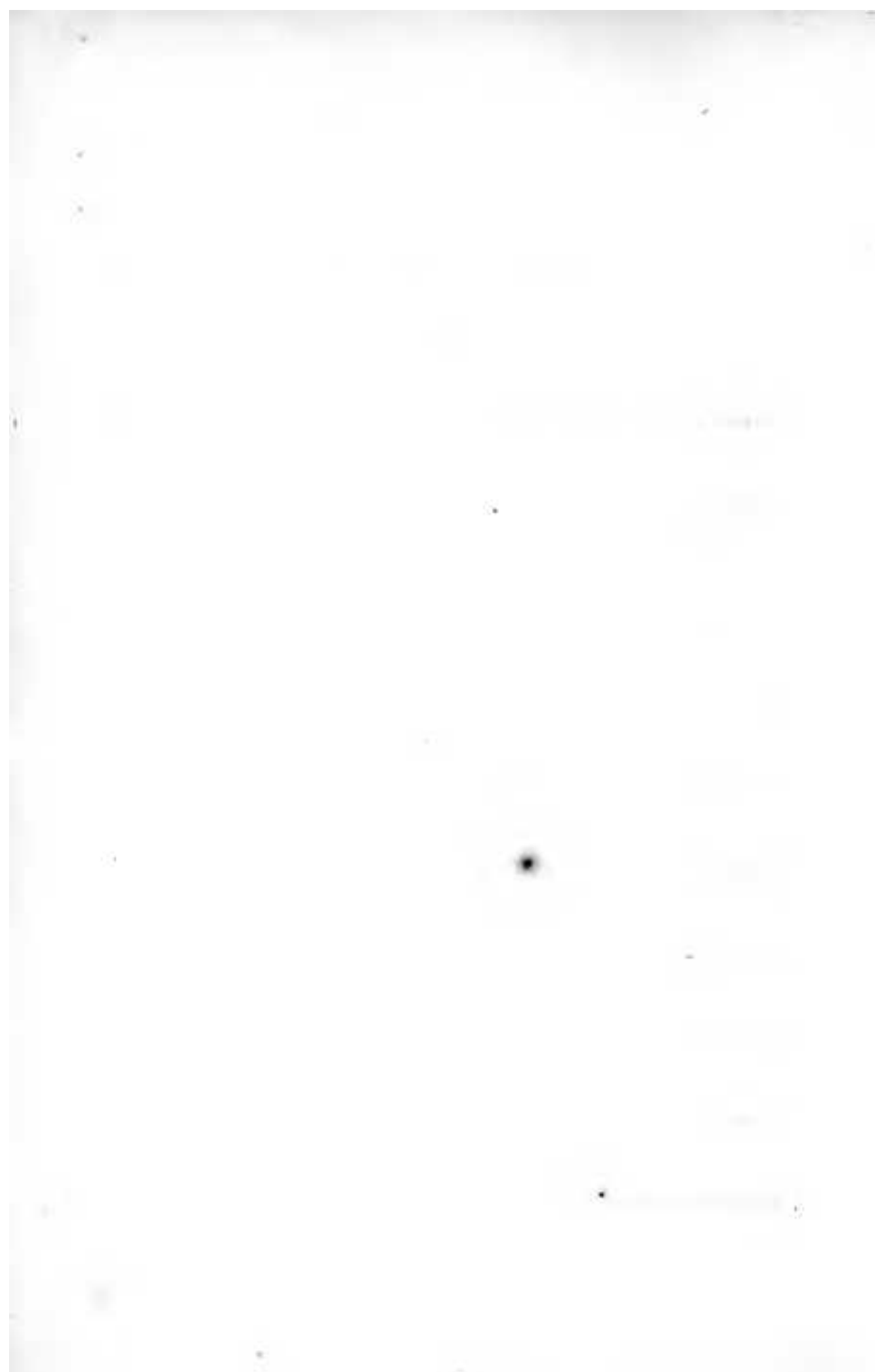
basis of fact, which needs to be presented in its true light; needs to be protected from the misrepresentations of its own pretended friends, who would have ruined it long since if it had not possessed genuine worth of a high order. It is to censure what is worth censuring; to strip off and expose what is false and deceptive; to denounce the cruelty, the lying, the roguery, the abject selfishness of many, that I have for the time being turned aside from my original object to prepare these sheets for the press. I have aimed to state the truth without calumny or prejudice; to express it clearly and forcibly; to be as thorough as it was possible within moderate limits. How well or how ill these objects have been accomplished, the reader will judge for himself.

It is with a feeling of gratitude that I acknowledge the courtesy, in imparting information, of Messrs W. H. L. Smith, of Corry; A. Morrell and Robert B. Gamble, of Titusville; Edward Fox, of Petroleum Centre; Wm. Boniface, of Rouseville; T. S. Truair and C. B. Bliss, of Oil City; Thomas R. Hennon, of Tideoute; Col. McClure, then of Plumer; George S. Siggins, of Howe; and many others, whose names I do not now recall.

Since this volume went to press, reports have been received to the effect that the United States well on Pithole Creek has increased its flow to nine hundred or a thousand barrels per day; other wells in that locality are also said to have improved. On the other hand, certain wells, as the Jersey, on Oil Creek, have fallen off or dried up altogether. No doubt, however, the summer product of petroleum in Venango county is considerably larger than that of March and April. By referring to the last chapter but one, it will be seen that a margin of about two thousand barrels per day has been allowed for this increase.

W. W.

PATERSON, N. J., May, 1865.



CONTENTS.



CHAPTER I.	
PHYSICAL FEATURES AND GEOLOGY OF THE COUNTRY,	9
CHAPTER II.	
APPEARANCE OF THE COUNTRY—THE CLIMATE—CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PEOPLE,	33
CHAPTER III.	
LOCATING AND SINKING THE WELLS,	61
CHAPTER IV.	
"STRUCK OIL"—THE LAW OF LAWLESSNESS,	79
CHAPTER V.	
OBSTACLES IN THE WAY—THE MEANS USED TO OVERCOME THEM,	97
CHAPTER VI.	
STATISTICS OF PRODUCTION,	112
CHAPTER VII.	
OIL REFINING AND REFINERIES,	194
CHAPTER VIII.	
HOW STRANGERS ARE TAKEN IN,	206
CHAPTER IX.	
UGHT I TO INVEST IN PETROLEUM, AND HOW	228
CHAPTER X.	
PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS,	260