

## CHAPTER I

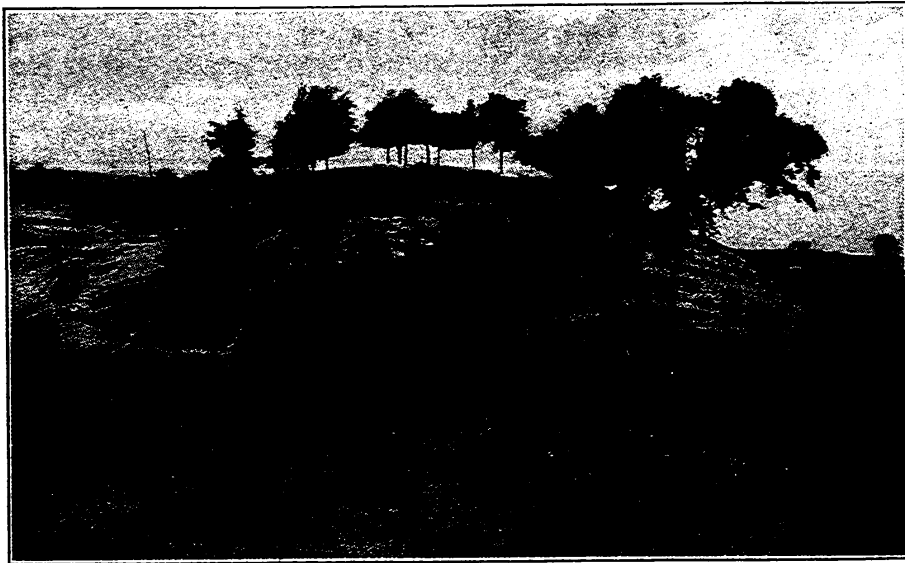
### THE WORKS OF NATURE

#### GENERAL PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION—SALT CREEK VALLEY—THE BLACK FORK OF SYMMES—FLORA AND FAUNA OF THE VALLEYS.

The history of Jackson County divides naturally into well defined periods. First, there was the period of Indian occupancy terminated in 1795 by the surrender of its territory to the National Government by the treaty of Greeneville negotiated by Gen. Anthony Wayne. Then came the period of Squatter Sovereignty from 1795 to 1803, when the Ohio government took possession of the Scioto Salt Works. The third period continued from 1803 to 1826, when the salt works were abandoned and the school lands were sold. The salt boilers reigned then, and shaped the organization of the new county and the laying out of the county seat town of Jackson. They lacked in administrative capacity, and the county has suffered to this day on account of their shortcoming. Then came a period of ten years from 1826 to 1836 when the county had its new birth. The townships were divided into sub-districts, schoolhouses were erected, Sunday schools and churches were organized, and community life began. Toward the close of this period, the Welsh immigration began, which revolutionized the county in another generation. Then came the period of industrial awakening from 1836 to 1853. The first iron furnace was built in 1836. The exporting of coal for the use of the smiths of Chillicothe and surrounding towns was undertaken which brought the people into contact with the outside world. W. Williams Mather, the state geologist, came to live in the county in 1838. A second furnace was built on Little Raccoon in 1848, which exported its product down the stream in flood time, and then the first railroad entered the county near Samsonville late in 1852. The next period, from 1853 to 1873, is equally well defined. It was the period of the iron industry, with the war as an intermission which, on account of the great demand created for iron, was a boon to the industry rather than a detriment. The coal period began in 1873, and much industrial expansion followed until 1907. By that year the most valuable coal deposits had been exhausted, and the county began to feel the first effects of the rural exodus which had robbed the rural districts of the young, the brainiest and the brawn-iest and the bonniest. A period of picking up loose ends has set in. Many are turning to the study of orchards, and scientific farming methods are gradually changing the outward aspect of the county. The



BUZZARDS ROCKS NEAR JACKSON



SAND ROCKS, JACKSON COUNTY

people of the towns are adapting themselves to the conditions produced by the inevitable competition of the great industrial centers, and new hopes are dawning.

#### GENERAL PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Jackson County is an upland country, lying at the head of the waters. When the great lake was formed by the Cincinnati dam at the close of the glacial period, and its waters rolled over all Southern Ohio, the high ground of Jackson County was an island. Some of the primitive men of that period may have survived upon this island when their fellows perished elsewhere, for food was plentiful on account of the wild animals which had sought high levels to escape drowning. The survival of some rude mounds on the highest levels lends color to this theory. The highest points in the county reach an elevation of about 1,070 feet, and a large area of ridge and hill land lies above 850 feet. The lowest areas are narrow valleys where the various streams flow out of the county. The loftiest hills are in Washington and Jackson townships, with a few points in Liberty reaching 1,000 feet. The greatest area of lowland is the old pre-glacial valley which enters the county near Centerville on the southeastern boundary and runs diagonally toward the center of the county at Jackson. Then it sweeps to the southwest and passes out of the county near Beaver. Parts of this valley bear different names. Flatwoods in Madison, the Hickory Flats of Jefferson and Franklin, and the Glades of Scioto.

#### SALT CREEK VALLEY

Salt Creek occupies the valley in portions of Franklin and in Lick, and Buckeye Creek in Liberty. Connected with it are a number of small prairies which doubtless were once connecting valleys, but deposits of clay during the glacial period cut them off, which converted them into ponds. In the course of ages they were filled by sediment and became prairies. Two or three of these ponds survived until the whites settled in the country and drained them. It is evident that the pre-glacial river which flowed in this valley was a stream of some magnitude, perhaps 100 yards wide, judging from the deposit of quicksand now lying in the lowest level eroded in the mother rock, from which the City of Jackson secures its water supply. Its headwaters in the present Valley of the Ohio were cut off during the glacial period. Its flow was cut off at the southwest at the same time, and the Salt Lick Lake, of which the Indians had a tradition, was formed thereby. At the close of the glacial period the flood water from this lake cut the Salt Creek gorge northwest of Jackson, which drained the lake. This gorge and its branches form one of the most romantic districts in Ohio, and it was here that J. W. Powell learned his first lessons about erosion, which proved of such value to him in after life, when he took up the study of the Canyon of the Colorado, which won him an international reputation.

Charles Whittlesey, appointed topographer of the Geological Survey of Ohio in 1837, spent several weeks in Jackson County and wrote the following description of this gorge: "Between Strong's mill and Jackson village, sand rock bluffs with mural fronts rise alternately on each bank from the edge of the water. The remainder of its course presents a topography similar to the middle fork; the knobs, however, are less elevated above its bed, showing cliffs of sandstone occasionally near the top. At the bridge, two miles southwest of Richmond, high water mark appears to be fifteen feet from low water mark, and at a bridge near the mouth of Middle Fork the inhabitants put the highest flood at twenty feet. The width of the South Fork at Jackson is 35 links, at the bridge spoken of 60. Middle Fork is 54 links wide where it branches, and 90 at its mouth. The knobs in the northern and eastern part of the county produce pine timber on their northern and western slopes, from the peak two-thirds of the way down. The other portions are covered with handsome oaks."

Davis Mackley, who was editor of the Standard until his death in 1887, loved to visit this gorge, and he wrote thus in November, 1862: "I remarked that the scenery along these cliffs of sandstone could not be surpassed. A perpendicular wall would rise to a distance of two or three hundred feet. On the top of this was scrubby oak, the leaves of which were of every shade of color, from orange to crimson and scarlet. Mixed with these were laurels, pines and cedars, clothed in dark green, and poplars of a bright saffron color. Under these great stone ledges the water had scooped out caves, where were pools of water filled with fishes."

#### THE BLACK FORK OF SYMMES

There are geological and climatic conditions which produce the most brilliant autumnal tints in the world at the headwaters of the various streams in this county. The leaves of the oaks cling to the trees all winter long in the extensive furnace clearings of the Hanging Rock district, hence the name Red Brush which attached to the region until the clearings were cut up into farms. The pioneers found it difficult to enter the country because the hill streams were too narrow for boating and the valleys were so narrow and crooked and deep and produced such a dense and luxurious growth as to make passage impossible. Davis Mackley has described one of them in his notes:

"The Black Fork of Symmes is an ugly stream, but the sandstone along the creek makes some curious, if not fine, scenery. This has been the most crooked stream that I ever saw. It winds its way among the hills of sandstone running toward every point of the compass. In some places it runs due south for half a mile, then turns around a sharp point of sandstone and runs north about the same distance, making a narrow ridge of that length, and if the point be cut through it would not be more than two hundred yards across. The creek has been impinging upon the sandstone for ages, and in every year straightening its course. Formerly the beaver would run a dam across from one point to the other and thus raise the water so that it would cover a great extent of the low

ground. Then the water would break over the point with a tremendous current and cut down the channel until a new course would be formed, leaving a portion of the point away out in the bottom looking like a great mound and covered with such trees and shrubs as grow upon the upland. Where the water pitched over the rock and struck below it cut a great excavation which would become an extensive pond."

## FLORA AND FAUNA OF THE VALLEYS

This description, although homely phrased, is a fairly correct picture of the eroded valleys which have given this county so much picturesque scenery. The plateau between the Ohio, Scioto and Hockhocking has been furrowed and gullied by many small streams. Little Raccoon and Symmes drain Milton, Bloomfield and Madison townships on the east; Salt Creek drains the central and northwestern townships; while Pine Creek, Buck Lick and Brushy Fork drain the southern and western townships. The scenery along Buck Lick is much like that on Salt Creek, and Little Raccoon runs between high forested ridges. The narrowness and crookedness of these little valleys furnished the conditions that suited the beaver, and they multiplied and built many dams in the county, which established slack water ponds much like the millponds of the whites. In fact, a number of mill sites were selected with reference to the ancient beaver dams. The beaver ponds were fringed with borders of blue flags, which in season vied with the blue of the sky. Many vines flung themselves all over the low growth in the valleys and on the foothills, such as clematis and the various grapes, trumpet vines, which made a tangle-wood in which the wild game found refuge until late in the '40s, and which delayed the early and rapid settlement of the county. In addition to the trees already named, there were giant chestnuts on the hills and larger plain trees in the valleys, with occasional elms of the same magnitude on the prairies. The flats grew hickory. Black walnut and beeches abounded on clay banks. The undergrowth of hazels, plums, crabapples, hawthorns, pawpaws, persimmons, sassafras, together with the grapes, including the large fox grape, and various wild berries, service, dew, black, raspberries supplied wild men and beasts with food, and even the white pioneers never wanted with such a profusion of provisions in the woods. The abundance of food and the existence of the salt licks attracted all the game in the forest, buffalo, bear, elk, deer and the smaller animals, and there were wild turkeys, grouse, quail, pigeons, geese, ducks and great flocks of minor birds. The turkeys were easily caught in pens built of small logs or rails and covered with the same. There was entrance left through a trench on one side large enough to admit a turkey. Grain was scattered in the woods and along the trench into the pen. The foolish birds would enter the pen one after another, and once inside it never occurred to them to stoop and escape through the trench by which they had entered, but with heads erect they sought escape above, and were readily caught. Pigeons were very plentiful when the whites entered the county, and there were several roosts near the salt licks. The largest,

which covered more than four acres of forest, was near Buffalo Skull, two miles north of Jackson, and in season it furnished a large supply of food for the pioneers. The birds were so numerous and roosted low enough for men and boys to knock them down with sticks, enabling them to fill their bags in a few minutes. This roost was used by the pigeons as late as 1845. The buffalo and elk disappeared soon after the coming of white men, but bears were numerous in the woods until the '30s, and deer until the '70s. Some of the smaller wildings have multiplied since the disappearance of panthers and wildcats. Skunks, opossums, rabbits and the smaller fur-bearers seem to thrive under the conditions introduced by civilization. Many species of birds not found in other sections thrive here because of the abundance of food and the shelter presented by thickets in the deep glens and gorges. More than sixty-five species of birds have been found here in winter, and in spring and autumn many migrants make transient visits, attracted by the beacon lights of the furnaces. This has resulted in several additions to the list of summer residents, the most notable of which is the southern mockingbird. They first nested in this county about 1895, and the sweet songsters now appear annually in each township, arriving with the robins. The turkey buzzard nested in great numbers in early days, and there are buzzard rooks in many neighborhoods. Farmers look askance at this bird now, for it is believed that it spreads hog cholera and other animal diseases. Several epidemics in the county could originate in no other way. A boy caught a buzzard in Liberty Township several years ago while it was gorging on a dead horse, and he hung a poultry bell on the bird's neck. This belled buzzard was seen for many years as far north as Fayette County, which suggests that such birds could have brought cholera here. Ravens were seen in the county as late as 1872, and eagles still visit it every winter. A large bald eagle was killed by A. S. Sherington near Camba in 1912. Rattlesnakes have disappeared, except near Big Rock, a short distance from the Pike County line, but copperheads are numerous in all woodland tracks on Salt and Pike creeks. Blacksnakes multiply since forest fires have ceased, and many farmers protect them because they rid the land of many pests, including all other snakes. Refuse from the mines has destroyed nearly all the large fishes, but a few are still caught after floods. The topography of the county accounts for the survival of many wild flowers, which have vanished from other parts of the state. Trailing arbutus grows luxuriantly above the level of the conglomerate on the slopes of the various gorges, while columbine, lady's slippers and twenty or more flowers possessing a distinct fragrance, with hundreds of others commending themselves to the eye by their colors or forms, may be found in the glens or on the hills. More than 140 flowers have been listed in April, while asters, goldenrods, gentians, violets and witch hazel bloom until late in November. The last named is often found when snow is falling.

There is one tract of rhododendron on a north hillside on a branch of Salt Creek, and three azaleas are common in Liberty, Jackson and Washington townships. Ginseng and other commercial roots grow in the woods, and the "sang digger" will survive here for another generation.

Three or four persons have established ginseng gardens. Many foreign flowers were introduced into the county by the emigrant wagons which traveled the route from Gallipolis to Chillicothe, and the teamsters who hauled supplies from the Ohio River to the various furnaces before the railroad came and in later years, the Baltimore & Ohio which runs through the northern part of the county brings in new plant seed annually fresh from over the sea.