

The West Shore,

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A CHAT WITH OUR SUBSCRIBERS.

Were we to re-print one-tenth of all the nice things said about our January edition by the press in different parts of the United States, or in the many letters received from our subscribers, it would certainly take up a full page of this paper. It would be very gratifying to us, but hardly interesting reading matter for our readers; as usual, we therefore yield to the pleasure of our patrons. As you can easily imagine, the January edition was an immense expense to us. We are, however, pleased with the investment, as our list has increased wonderfully within the past two weeks. It is for you to say, now, whether you desire as large a number again, and, if possible, more handsomely illustrated, free of any extra expense to yourself. If so, we will set our special artist to work at once, and issue a midsummer number in July next, which will surpass anything ever attempted in the United States. But our list must be doubled at once to warrant us in going to such an expense. Our plan, therefore, is that each of our subscribers induce a friend to send for THE WEST SHORE at once; don't put it off from day to day, but send for it right off. All postmasters are compelled to register letters, and those always come to hand safely, even if they contain coin. By this plan we can double our list without the aid of traveling agents, and give our readers the benefit of it by issuing for them another mammoth WEST SHORE.

OUR WINTER.—This is the 25th of February and the late fall, flowering shrubs are mingling their perfumes with the early-spring children of Flora. Crocus, Narcissus, Snowdrops, Poly-anthus, Rosemarie, Wall flowers and even the wild Dandelion, have donned their gay dresses; the meadow lark already carols joyously every morning; young lambs have put in an appearance. The thermometer climbs up to sixty degrees at noon, and does not go below forty-five at night. All combine to proclaim that spring has come, and winter has merely glanced at us with a very slight snow-storm, the white mantle, however, not remaining long enough to afford any of us a sleigh ride. The frost has not been severe enough to stop the growing of grass and grain for more than nine days during the entire winter; and flowers that Vick, the great florist, has catalogued as *half hardy annuals*, are still smiling at us from last year's growth. In fact, Mr. Vick would be somewhat puzzled which to name annuals and which perennials, for many of his *half hardy annuals*, are *perennials*, in this section, owing to the mildness of our winters.

The *Cultivator* has merged into *The Willamette Farmer*. This is as it should be. *The Farmer* is a good paper, in fact, one of the best agricultural papers in the United States, and deserves success.

In our description of Corvallis, last month, the types made us say it had but five hundred inhabitants, when it really has fifteen hundred.

WHAT IS OATMEAL?

BY JULIA C.

Twenty years ago, oatmeal was an article almost unknown to the American people. True, there was some of that article imported and used here. If it was prescribed by the physician as an excellent material for the gruel of some convalescent, he also informed them that it could be found at the drug-store, where it had probably lain for months after having been brought over the sea, if, indeed, it had not become tainted by the drugs that kept it company. It is easy now to see why the half-cooked gruel seemed a nauseous compound fit only for sick folks, and tasting like medicine.

In the country, people who heard of the virtues of oatmeal carried oats to the grist-mill and had them ground like corn, and then the housewife sifted the dark-looking product and made a mush of it, cooking and stirring it as she would a "hasty-pudding," but producing a pasty, slimy, unattractive dish so unlike the bright, golden Indian mush in appearance and taste, so bitter, so husky, so full of black specks, that the tastes of Scotch and Irish were ridiculed, and even sick men could not muster courage enough to continue so nauseous a diet any length of time.

These were the specimens by which we tried to judge of oatmeal. We never suspected that the imported was not in the best condition, nor that oats could not be ground so as to be made eatable without being previously kiln-dried and hulled, and that, therefore, they required mills or apparatus built for that special purpose, and that there were but three or four such mills in the United States.

There was, indeed, a very passable article of Canadian oatmeal imported when the Scotch and Irish demanded called for it, but Americans scarcely knew where to find it, and certainly did not know how to cook it when it was found.

We well remember how, in almost entire ignorance of all these facts, we, thirteen years ago, started out to hunt through the streets of New York for some place where we could find good Canadian oatmeal, and at last found it in the Irish quarter of the city (if any one knows which that is) in a store kept by a Canadian Scotchman. When obtained we knew not how to cook it, and the good Scotchman had so little faith in our ability to produce anything creditable, that he would only tell us that we were to "just make a parritch of it."

This same difficulty all we American people had to meet, and the cook-books offered us no help whatever. For myself, I have never yet seen a Scotch cook-book. Their native cookery seems to be in a condition similar to that of the early literature of some nations, for a long time existing only in the minds, or, in this case, at the finger ends of the people, and never committed to paper. True, they had their celebrated bannock bakers, women who had a reputation in all the country side in this line, but that did us Yankees very little good; we get our intelligence largely from books and papers.

Besides this, when we made inquiries of these people we were invariably met with the assurance that we could not expect to make anything very good of such oatmeal as we could get in this country. But the difference was not defined either in cause or effect.

Then we set diligently about the study of oatmeal. Some we found was dark. This was too much kiln-dried, which destroyed the rich, delicate, nutty flavor, and made it bitter. Some was too light, not dried enough; this was more bitter and disagreeable than the other. Then some of it was gray with dust, and full of black specks and bits of broken weed-stalks. This had been imperfectly cleaned in the smut-mill. Occasionally we could find a specimen which was nutty and sweet enough to be eaten raw, but this was not uniform. The products of the same mill at different times were very unequal. The brand could not be depended upon. The trouble was said to be in the oats.

Gradually all this was changed. Our millers have found that United States oats are quite as good as those grown in any other country, and the late Centennial Exhibition has demonstrated the fact that the Oregon oats is far ahead of any in the world. The diff-

culty lies in the manufacturing. They have traveled far and wide to examine the best mills and all the best processes; these they have introduced into their own factories, and now, as a large dealer lately remarked (himself a foreigner), we manufacture a better article in America than any that is imported, though the fashion of calling it by the foreign name has not yet died out. One of our manufacturers has ten large kilns so perfectly worked that little or no variation in color or quality can be detected in different lots, and they are always of the best. And it is gratifying to Oregonians to know that here again Oregon comes to the front with the best manufactured oatmeal. The highest premium at the late Centennial Exhibition having been awarded to McLeran Bros. of this city.

The result of all this care is that oatmeal is becoming a very common dish among our people. They are beginning to learn that it is agreeable, wholesome and nutritious, and though there are many who, remembering their first impressions received from the use of a bad article, persist in calling it bitter, and wondering how people can like it; and there are many more who find by trial that they can procure an article that is not bitter, and which most people like as soon as they taste it. Now, instead of oatmeal being sold in only out-of-the-way places, it can be found in some shape in almost every grocery, and the best class of grocers keep a good and desirable article.

I find, too, that much more of it would be used if cooks were but familiar with a variety of methods of preparing it for the table. Simply boiling it in water to make mush is the only process with which they are acquainted, and that they do not perform very artistically. These different methods, and the different grades of oatmeal which are required for different dishes, will claim our attention in another paper.

Our Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, Missouri and Minnesota exchanges claim that their grasshopper crop will be immense the coming season. California is having one of her periodical spells of drought. Colorado has a dose of chinch-bugs once more, and nearly all of the other States have been experiencing either a very hard winter or are cursed with disease, whilst here in the Northwestern corner of the United States we are enjoying peace and plenty, and are ready and anxious to have those from less favored spots come and settle down amongst us on the most favored and fertile country on the face of the globe, and enjoy its blessings with us.

Mr. N. A. HIRSTEL, formerly of the firm of Wasserman & Co., has become a partner of the firm of Chas. Hirstel & Co., and is now in San Francisco, where he is purchasing the largest stock of Notions and Stationery ever brought to this city. Immediately on his return, the firm will move into more commodious quarters. Although their establishment at present is one of the largest in Portland, it is not roomy enough to accommodate their constantly growing trade. Charles and his brother will make a good team, and their many friends and customers in this city, as well as in the interior, may look for novelties in the Stationery and Notion line on the arrival of the next steamer.

WM. B. WILSHIRE, Esq., late with Hall's Safe and Lock Company, and now of the firm of Raymond & Wilshire, agents for Macneale & Urban's Safes, is now in this city. These Safes have the Patent Inside Bolt Work and Hinged Cap, without which no Safe is complete; and they are said to be the best now in use, being both fire and burglar proof. The firm also represents the Buffalo Scale Co.'s Scales, which need but to be seen to be fully appreciated.

WM. BECK & SON, established here since 1850, and located now at the corner of Alder and Front streets, have the largest and best assortment of Toys in this city. They are also experienced Gunsmiths, and deal largely in Guns, Rifles, Revolvers, and sporting implements of all kinds.



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