

THE CHOICE OF A HOME BY SETTLERS  
IN OREGON OR WASHINGTON OR  
IDAHO.

BY REV. G. H. ATKINSON, D. D.

HOMES ON THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST.

This is a region of homes, owned, with few exceptions, by their occupants. Government land is so cheap, and homesteads, pre-emptions, timber culture claims can be taken and held on terms so easy, that every family, however poor, can have a home. This proffer by the U. S. Government, in this entire Pacific Northwest—formally known as Oregon—for the past thirty years, has led to the steady growth of settlements made of home farms, small and large, and home-like villages and cities. Probably this growth would have been more rapid, had not the acquisition of California and the discovery there of rich placer gold fields, and the sudden rush of our people thither, turned the public mind to the hope of making quick fortunes, and going back to their eastern or western homes to live. But the benefits of this exodus to the mines of California, and to the later found mines of Oregon, Idaho, Washington, British Columbia and Alaska, have been to advertise the whole Pacific coast to the world and draw hither emigrants from all nations; open new fields of business enterprise; to cause steamship and railroad lines to be established; and to induce the investment of home and foreign capital; to create three large Pacific states and six territories, with their senators, representatives and delegates in congress; and finally to settle the question with business men of all classes, farmers, mechanics, merchants, artisans, physicians, lawyers, ministers, journalists, educators, publicists, and political economists, that our whole domain between the Rocky mountains and the Pacific ocean is to be the chosen and permanent home of a very large and rapidly increasing population. Placer mining by the many with shovel and rocker and sluicer, have given way to quartz mining by the few capitalists in deep shafts and cavernous chambers with rock blasting, crushing machines and separators. The great Spanish grant ranches of California, held by a few rich men and leased or worked by hired laborers and machinery, while furnishing large amounts of grain for export in good years, yet exclude the

mass of farmers from ownership of the soil, and compel them to find or make homes elsewhere on government or rail road lands. Our Pacific Northwest now welcomes these exiles from California. Our fields have been tested for their cereals, grasses, vegetables and fruits, and found productive.

*The writer has witnessed thirty-two harvests in Oregon, without the failure of a crop.* Our climate has been proved favorable for growth and for health.

Our forests bear the test of value for timber and lumber of almost every needed variety, and of unlimited extent. The coal fields of British Columbia, Washington Territory and Oregon and Alaska prove to be numerous, and excellent for domestic and steamship uses. Idaho and Montana will probably be found equally rich in coal and of older formation and superior qualities.

Our salmon fisheries on the Columbia and other rivers; our herring and halibut fisheries in Puget Sound, De Fuca Straits, and along the coast; our cod and halibut fisheries along the coasts of Alaska, extending to those of the Okotsk, and joining the mackerel fisheries of the Japan seas and straits, surpass in extent and rival in value the fisheries of the rivers and bays of the western coast of Europe; the channels and sounds and friths of Great Britain; the straits and fiords of Denmark and Norway, the Baltic and the North sea, with those of Labrador and Newfoundland added. Japan has a population of 35,000,000 whose almost entire animal food for a thousand years has been the fish of her own surrounding seas.

The Pacific ocean, whose warmer waters lave the shores of Asia and America, favors the life and furnishes the tropic food for untold varieties and numberless schools of fish. This is their great pasture ground. Thither they immigrate, like the birds, from bays and rivers for winter, and return in spring for their spawning nests and the nurseries of their young. They await the increase of population on our coast for a market.

A few of our iron mines and limestone beds have been opened and worked with success. Our flax fields have yielded seed for oil, of such amount and good quality, and lint for looms or

such fineness and strength of fibre as to command high prices, the one in San Francisco, and the other in Dundee and Belfast.

Our home manufactures of wooden and iron and woolen fabrics, have only begun. Our water power and fuel power have been merely tested. The slow development of these resources during the past thirty years, has been a preliminary work. These results are the signal banners of what vast products await human industry and enterprise. The present annual exports of several hundred thousand tons of harvest products, foretold tenfold the amounts that will be borne to all the marts of the world under the white wings of a thousand merchant ships.

THE CHANGES.

At first the immigrant aimed to make his home on the choicest spot he could find of government land, prairie and timber, with springs or brooks at hand. Next he hurried to the mines for gold to buy a home. Next he became a trader or a speculator to obtain a competence for himself and family. Latterly he has become a stock-raiser, or has sown his broad fields in wheat, and has won success. Farmers in all directions sought first the treeless, flat or rolling prairies of the Willamette valley as the only fit place for farms. Stock was gradually driven to the high prairies east of the Cascade mountains for pasture. Herders and shepherds, and widely separated ranchmen, occupied that region. Merchants and transportation companies supplied the few goods and bore off the few exports of the interior.

The trade of the valley doubled and quadrupled by means of railroads and improved river navigation. It was found ten years ago that the cereals could be raised at a profit in the upper Columbia basin. Four years ago the plough slowly crept up the slopes of the high eastern prairies. Two years ago it reached and turned up the rich soils on the hill tops. Those lands called too dry and desert-like, have yielded twenty-five to fifty bushels of wheat per acre. In mid-summer the wheat was green and luxuriant from the invisible vapors absorbed by the ploughed and spongy soil, while the bunch grass on unploughed land two feet distant was drying up. The choice farms a few years ago were along the