

THROUGH CENTRAL OREGON ON HORSEBACK.

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The great tide of emigration at the present time sets northeastward. Land hunters turn their faces toward the loamy hills of the Spokane and Palouse.

Hence the traveller who has followed the crowd up the river to the Dalles and then turns south finds at once that he has diverged from the main current.

The Dalles is a whirlpool in this great flood of emigration, and it brings to the surface a motley throng of traders, land-hunters, cow-boys, speculators, saloon-keepers, Indians, Chinamen and cayuse ponies.

An eddy of this whirlpool lands us, together with a Cayuse and the accoutrements necessary for best riding the same, upon the "bluff" with faces turned toward the blazing July sun.

What we see in the five hundred miles of travel which follows is a most singular combination of the beautiful, weird, fantastic and altogether unexpected.

Central Oregon extends something over two hundred miles from north to south, but lies mainly within the two counties of Wasco and Lake. It is enclosed within the abrupt and sharply-defined Cascade Range on the west and the straggling, many-spurred Blue Range on the east.

The northern two-thirds of this region contains the basins of the Des Shutes and John Day rivers. The Des Shutes is much the larger of the two, since it is fed by the perpetual snows of Mt. Jefferson, the Three Sisters, and Diamond Peak, besides numerous lesser heights which have not received a name.

The general elevation of Central Oregon is about twelve hundred feet above the sea.

The rivers have cut their way almost down to sea-level. Hence there are many tremendous canyons. Throughout the entire region, it is evident that there has been wild sputtering and bubbling among the rocks.

The volcanic fury of some past time is shown by the basaltic cliffs which have split the soil asunder, as well as by the remains of great lava-flows and volcanic ashes here and there.

In fact the entire northwest coast has been the scene of volcanic convulsions which must have made the whole earth

teeter, but in this region the method of its formation is more plainly manifest than anywhere else.

The scars of the earth are not hidden here by a deep loam as in the Spokane, nor by the foliage of dense forests as in the Willamette.

The old battle-ground of the elemental forces of nature has been left unswept.

As we proceed on our journey southward we find that this is a country of magnificent distances. The account Mark Twain gives of a place in Oregon which had only one disadvantage, which was, that it was five hundred miles from any settlement, seems rather more probable to us as we gallop across the vast plains of Wasco county.

We find, however, that for some distance south of the Dalles, the rolling prairie, formerly thought to be almost a desert, is being rapidly occupied, and in many places fine farms have already emerged from the solitudes of bunch grass. Nevertheless the soil has not the depth nor strength of that of the Umatilla or Walla Walla or Spokane countries, and aside from some advantages of location and perhaps of climate, this region is not so desirable for emigrants as those. Sand and rocks very frequently appear, and when we reach the Tigh, twenty-five miles south of The Dalles, we see the first good specimen of the singular formation called the rim-rock.

This formation is common throughout the valley of the Des Shutes. We are crossing what seems a boundless plain, when suddenly, we find ourselves upon the edge of a precipice two or three hundred feet deep. This precipice is the rim-rock. Right opposite it, perhaps a quarter of a mile distant, is its exact counterpart. Beyond this second rim-rock, the great plain continues of exactly the same elevation as on the side of the canyon by which we came. The plain is, in short, cut in two by a canyon in the form of an enormous ditch, a quarter of a mile wide and several hundred feet deep. It is evident that the streams ages ago ran on the surface of these great plains. Year by year, century by century, and age by age, they have cut through the solid rock, and their banks have by crumbling been separated farther and farther, until now they are enclosed by rocky walls which in many cases cannot be scaled for miles.

The portion of Wasco county toward the south, interesting to the farmer, is passed at Cottage Grove, forty miles from The Dalles, and from there on the narrow valleys, most of which are already occupied, furnish about all the land that seems likely to permit of profitable farming. The stock-man, however, will find abundant evidence of profit in his business by the immense herds of sheep and cattle as well as horses which are found along the John Day and its tributaries. On the bunch-grass plains of Antelope, eighty miles from The Dalles, we find a band of cow-boys "rounding up." To "round up," a dozen or more stock-raisers with their help, each provided with horses, combine together at a stated time in the summer and scour the range for several days until they are sure that the cattle are all in. They then proceed to brand the youthful bovines, which are, of course, as wild as deer, and sometimes almost kill themselves in their vain struggles to escape.

Once in awhile a vicious cow makes a descent upon the branders, and the zeal with which they make for the high corral-fence is very instructive. So much for the stock business, which is so extensive that the last Spring's drive from the middle John Day alone was over twenty thousand head, whilst the entire season's drive netted \$1,400,000 to the Upper country. I was informed by a stock-man on Willow Creek—so called because there are no willows or other trees within fifty miles—that his investments in cattle yielded forty per cent. per annum.

The John Day valley is a paradise to the geologist. There is a section of country in that valley of perhaps fifty by twenty miles in extent in which the leaves of Nature's book are completely covered with the inscriptions written by the fingers of glaciers and volcanoes, and are crowded with illustrations of the plant and animal life of remote time. When we reach the high Antelope hill on the Canyon City stage road, we look down upon a region which was once the home of the Rhinoceros, the Oreadon, the Hipparion, and many other animals now extinct or found only in other continents than this.

From that hill, we survey a wilderness of rocky hills of all sizes, shapes, and structures. Many are almost perfect cones and pyramids, varying from