

HOOD RIVER VALLEY, WASCO COUNTY, OREGON.

BY DR. W. L. ADAMS.

Away up in the mountains, seventy miles from Portland, and midway between the Cascades of the Columbia and The Dalles, lies Hood River Valley. Where the Cascade mountains end on the east side, the valley begins and terminates only a few miles eastward, at the base of a lofty range of grass covered and pine covered hills. It is called a valley, hence the disappointment many feel on seeing it for the first time; for instead of a low alluvial bottom, ready for the plow, and almost on a level with the Columbia, and the river that carries the melting snows of Mt. Hood through it, they find a stretch of table land, forming a plateau from six to seven hundred feet above high water mark. You look down from its northern line of bluffs, along which runs the State road, and at the foot of which will soon run the railroad, and see the Columbia, ruffled by almost constant sea breezes in summer, and plowed by steamers, barges and skiffs, with here and there an Indian canoe or swimming antler, almost the year around. Hood River also lies far below the table land on whose bank stands here and there a settler's cabin. You can ride on horseback or even drive a wagon on the bluffs in sight of the river for miles, and see far below you, the maddened waters, dashing against huge boulders, foaming and roaring as the icy torrent hastens to mingle itself with the peaceful Columbia. This seems to be the native home of the speckled and silver trout; always fat, and from twelve to twenty-seven inches long. I have stood on its banks in Summer and felt "a pleasure in the pathless woods," and "society where none intrudes," as I listened to the roar of its waters before me and heard behind me the surging of balmy zephyrs turned to music by the leaf chords of a thousand pines, freighting the atmosphere with a balsamic odor that carries life to failing lungs and gives the chronic a new lease of life. The valley proper stretches along the Columbia for nearly seven miles and runs back in a V shape twelve or fifteen miles, terminating near the base of Mt. Hood. Perhaps not a tenth of it is prairie as it is dotted here and there with clusters of pines, or ornamented

with beautiful groves of oak, looking like ancient orchards. Fir and white pine suitable for lumber are found in abundance from six to twelve miles back from the Columbia. Little of the primeval forest has been disturbed, as lumbermen, who so often visit it, invariably return declaring that Hood River is so rapid, rough and tortuous that no log could be driven down it. Many have talked of building a flume some twelve miles long to raft manufactured lumber to the steamboat landing. But the expense is too heavy for any man who has yet longed to attack the remote forest. Much of the oak timber is cut into cordwood by the settlers, hauled from three to six miles, and sent to The Dalles on barges, where it usually sells for from five to eight dollars a cord. Two saw mills are working up timber handy to settlements, and supplying the neighbors at prices ranging from ten to fifteen dollars a thousand feet. One of them is cutting railroad ties and delivering them on the banks of the Columbia, six miles distant, for ten dollars a thousand feet. One can drive a wagon for miles through the oak and pine groves with almost no underbrush to obstruct the way. This is true only of a part of the valley lying several miles back from the Columbia. There are probably forty or fifty families with three school houses located in the valley, much of which is unsettled. The soil is a light friable clay, sandy, mellow kind to work, and apparently thin. It is unlike any other soil I ever saw—especially that of Virginia. John Randolph in replying to a member of Congress, who had twitted him with lacking an education, replied: "The gentleman from Massachusetts reminds me of some of the lands in Virginia, poor by nature and cultivation has made them worse." Cultivation here seems to improve the lands. Crops seem to be poorest the first two years, and grow better by deep plowing and thorough cultivation for many years. My lands which seemed to be worn out under the treatment of my predecessor now yield thirty bushels of corn and from thirty to forty bushels of wheat to the acre, while new land returns only about half that amount. The soil though light and sandy rests on a rocky bed and does not wash. The bed-rock in many places lies near the surface, and the melting snows of the mountains

seems to come trickling down its upper surface in ten thousand little rivulets which are drawn up by deep plowing to nourish vegetation even in the hottest parts of Summer. The presence of the underground rivulets is attested by a thousand little springs that burst from the banks of creeks and keep them flush all Summer. The whole valley seems to rest on a bed of gold. The dirt from every creek I have tried, yields particles of fine gold to every pan of dirt, though not in paying quantities. The young man who went to California with his "washbowl on his knees," sought diggings back on the old farm, singing as he went:

"I expect by the course of water
To find some gold in every tater."

Just so here, we find more gold in "taters," at a cent a pound, than in dirt at a mill to every pan. What avails it here, that, as in India, "many an ancient river pours down its golden sand, where every prospect pleases and only man is vile," while we have to raise potatoes without the benefit of clergy, except now and then a missionary comes up from Portland to fish for trout and throws out a hook on Sunday for souls with about the same success as he who "bobs for whale" in Hood River.

Two excellent Sunday Schools are in full blast with cultured and exceedingly exemplary superintendents, which saves this valley from the fate of ancient Sodom. The lack of church privileges seems to be "an evil under the sun." A Methodist preacher, full of missionary zeal, characteristic of the persuasion, after a series of unsuccessful efforts left in disgust. But I hear he partly promised to return some day and preach from the text, "Let God be true, and every man (and woman in Hood River) a liar."

The climate here is *sui generis*—nothing exactly like it in North America. It has less rain than the Willamette valley, and more than the Dalles and the stretch of country between it and the Blue Mountains. A fair average sample of the difference generally, was seen in a rain which lasted for hours and soaked the ground thoroughly when I was in Portland in the Summer of 1878. In Hood River the rain barely wet through a man's shirt, while at the Dalles they only had