

THE TOPOGRAPHY OF A GREAT REGION.

A RIDE FROM THE CALIFORNIA LINE TO THE COLUMBIA RIVER. THE IMMENSITY OF EASTERN OREGON.

In October last, imbued with a desire to see the country, I purchased an Indian pony and started from Lakeview, bound for the Dalles of the Columbia river, distant 320 miles, over a country of which very little reliable information has yet been published.

As a prelude to my narrative, I will proceed to locate my starting point for the benefit of readers who are not familiar with the modern details of Oregon geography. Lakeview, the county seat of Lake county, Oregon, is located in the northern end of Goose lake valley, fourteen miles north of the California line; about 35 miles north-west, from north-west corner of Nevada, and 125 miles east of the Cascade mountains by the present route of travel. Goose lake valley lies about one-third in Oregon, and two-thirds in California. It is about 60 miles long, 10 to 20 miles wide and has a population of 1,500, about 700 of which are in this State. The lake is 45 miles long, has a width of from 5 to 18 miles, is well stocked with the very finest of lake trout, and is the largest body of fresh water west of the Rocky mountains. A steamboat was launched on the lake during the past summer, which was hailed as an important event by the people of the valley. The lake is one of great beauty; the shores are quite regular, and are free from swamps or tule, except a small spot at the north and south ends. A fine pebbly beach almost encircles it unbroken, upon which the angry waves beat in fury, when stirred by the winds that prevail in the spring and fall. When the country is fully developed, this lake will possess great commercial value to that section, for the purposes of navigation. The altitude above the sea is over 4,000 feet, and malarial diseases are unknown. The climate is dry and the winters cold, but not extremely so, except during the hard winters which, as far as observation goes, visit it once in six or seven years. Snow sometimes falls to a depth of two or three feet, and remains on the ground during the winter months, though such rigors are not usual. In fact stock men who are best acquainted with the country, expect to winter their herds on the range without other feed, and the preparation of feed for stock, is

more a matter of precaution against surprise, than anything else. Hay frequently remains in the stack unused, until spoiled by change of seasons.

Until the last three years, farming has been greatly neglected; the principal occupation being stock raising, for which the country is particularly adapted. Recently, however, agriculture has received much attention, and it is found that all the cereals, and nearly all the vegetables grow astonishingly well. Potatoes, cabbage, turnips, onions, squashes, pumpkins, melons, tomatoes, and other garden stuff are raised in great abundance, the tender plants above named being, however, sometimes damaged by early or late frosts. Orchard farming has not yet been tested to any great extent, but sufficiently to prove that apples, pears, and various kinds of berries, can be produced without difficulty, and of very fine flavor and quality. Peaches it is believed can not be made a success here. Timothy yields immensely and of excellent quality. The dry climate adds much to the flavor of vegetable and quality of the grain. A natural sub-irrigation prevails in many places which renders surface or artificial irrigation unnecessary. In fact irrigation of grain is an exception rather than a rule. The yield of all farm produce for 1881, is far in excess of the demand, though that of 1880 fell short, in consequence of the length and severity of the preceding winter and early drouth of the following summer.

The lake, except about twenty miles on the south-west, is bordered by a fine margin of excellent farming lands, from one to eight miles in width, and is being rapidly settled and improved. The improvements are of an attractive and very substantial kind. The farms are principally carved out of sage and rabbit brush lands, the soil of which has been demonstrated to be very productive and easily reduced to cultivation.

There are a great number of streams and springs clear and sparkling, pure and health-giving, that water the valley plentifully. The atmosphere is rare, pure, and invigorating. The mountains to the north and west, rise gradually, almost to the region of perpetual snow, and are clothed with immense forests of pine, fir, cedar and tamarack. To the east, the mountains are more abrupt, rugged and sparsely supplied

with timber; pine, fir, and cedar growing only in the canyons and deep gorges, the rocky points bearing juniper and mountain mahogany. The whole mountain covered with excellent bunch grass. This valley is perhaps the largest one so thoroughly adapted to agriculture, to be found east of the Cascade range and south of the Columbia river. Here flouring and saw mills are kept busy supplying the wants of a rapidly increasing population, and much enthusiasm is indulged, in the prospect of a future great and prosperous community to be built up here, and only awaiting the approach and certainty of railroad communication, to connect this with the outside world, and develop its many resources. Routes have been surveyed by railroad companies, which are to connect this section with the Central Pacific, and with the Columbia river, and work is being pushed in this direction. What has here been said in regard to soil, climate, productions and future prospects of Goose lake valley, applies equally to Crooked creek, Chewaucan, Summer lake and Silver lake valleys, lying to the north and through which our route will take us on our contemplated journey.

Crossing a range of low hills covered with sage, bunch grass and clumps of juniper, a distance of 15 miles, brings us to Crooked creek valley, about 15 miles long and of irregular width, varying from a narrow canyon to expanses of valley, from one-half to three or four miles. This valley is a picturesque, well watered and fertile strip, bounded on the east by a bold, bluff, rocky and precipitous range of mountains heavily clothed with bunch grass, but meagerly supplied with timber, juniper prevailing. The west is bordered by mountains of less height, more gradual of ascent and bountifully supplied with forests of pine, fir and cedar. Streams trickle down the mountain sides from east, west and south, and a great number of families are already building homes, tilling the soil and tending their herds. To the north of the valley on the edge of "the desert," and sunk in a deep rocky basin 15 or 20 miles in length, by 5 or 6 in width, sparkles the unusually placid surface of lake Abert; clear, cold, but unfriendly to the taste, its waters holding various salts in solution. It has no outlet though it receives the waters of the Chewaucan river and Crooked creek.