

THE MEDITERRANEAN OF THE WEST

Puget Sound, Washington Territory, perhaps the least known in the east of all our important water surfaces, is the one for which its acquaintances claim the largest future fame. It covers an area of 2,000 square miles, with a breadth rarely exceeding ten miles, and has a coast line of 1,500 miles. Its shores are bold and its waters deep, and it is free from shoals and reefs. The large number of vessels which frequent the Sound are bothered to find good anchorage, scarcely less than a hundred fathoms of water appearing anywhere. So deep are the clear waters of this Mediterranean of the west, says a recent visitor, that a commodore of the U. S. navy once innocently almost ruined the chances of one of the Puget Sound towns for being the final terminus of the Northern Pacific railroad, by taking his ship up to the town. On sounding the water for anchorage ground, he failed to find as little as thirty fathoms anywhere, excepting one place, and that so near the bank that there was danger of the ship going ashore when swinging with the tide. He had to depart and anchor at the one other place where there is a large natural bay, affording excellent advantages of the kind he was seeking.

The pure waters of this great sound swarm with fish. There are eighty-five varieties, it is said. The salmon is the prince of fish here. The catch of salmon sometimes amounts to 40,000,000 pounds a year. A species of cod is also very abundant. It is dried and salted in large quantities.

The principal industry of the Sound is lumbering. The timber comprises ash, dogwood, alder, white oak, maple, cottonwood, spruce, hemlock and laurel among other varieties; but these are limited in quantities. The greater part of the timber is yellow fir and cedar. This vast fir forest is thought to be the finest tract of valuable timber land on the face of the earth. It covers an area of 32,000 square miles, according to the rough estimates that are current in the territory. It is accessible from every point on the Sound, and from the ocean coast for a vast distance. The proprietors of the logging camps fell their first trees so close to the shore that they could be made to fall directly into the water if so desired. The yellow fir is from 50 to 300 feet high, the trunks being

from 5 to 12 feet in diameter at man's height from the ground. The first lumbermen cut only the five and six feet trees. The saw-mills could not handle logs which were larger than that. Even yet there is no saw-mill on Puget Sound which can saw a log which is more than eight feet in diameter. The consequence has been that at first, for many years, the ax men men left the small trees and the very large ones; and a piece of timber land which has been cut over once, presents the singular phenomenon of a collection of small and of gigantic trees with none of medium size among them. Since the enlargement of the mills, some camps are sending their men over the ground in time to fell the big timber. The firs are cut off about five or six feet from the ground. The butts are generally unsound.

It requires from half an hour to an hour to fell a good sized tree. A large number of fir tree trunks are unsound. The principal defect is what is called a "shake." It is a small crack inside the tree, formed by the swaying of the tall tree in the wind. When such a crack forms it soon becomes filled with the turpentine-like balsam which is characteristic of the fir. The wood-chopper at work on a big tree is frequently astonished by driving his ax through one of these fissures and seeing several gallons of turpentine suddenly run out. If the tree, when felled, is found to be defective, it is left where it lies. If sound, it is cut up into logs from 30 to 120 feet in length and hauled out of the woods. Sticks 150 feet long have been hauled out.

The United States is exceedingly jealous of this vast tract of valuable timber land. It permits the timber to fall only into the hands of those who wish to do a legitimate business in logging. The regulations are quite strict both as to keeping the lands out of the hands of speculators, and as to the waste of timber. To buy a square section of timber land it costs \$1,500. The logger employs about six men and a team of eight oxen. He builds a rough camp and boards the men. His running expenses are about \$35 a day, and he is able to get out of the woods about 30,000 feet a day. The rafts of logs are towed off to the neighboring saw-mill at a cost of \$1.50 per thousand feet and he sells them there at the rate of \$6 per thousand feet.

The yellow fir is known in the east as Oregon pine or Puget Sound pine. It is a wood of great value, owing to its toughness and strength. The first cargoes of it were sent to San Francisco about twenty-five years ago. The length and beauty of the timber attracted the attention of Admiral Farragut, who caused tests of it to be made at the Mare Island navy yard. Still other tests were made at the navy yard in 1870 by constructor Much, for the purpose of discovering the sizes of scantling required for building the United States screw-steamer *Manzanita* with Pacific coast woods instead of white oak. Tests have also been made recently in the oak. It is proved that yellow fir is fully the equal of eastern white oak in tenacity, strength and toughness. There is no doubt left upon the point, and yellow fir is now the universal building wood on the Pacific coast.

Mr. Paul Schultze, manager of the Bureau of Immigration, has issued a circular calling on farmers, producers and millers, to assist in securing a selection of specimens of grain in the sheaf and in the berry, native and cultivated grasses, and of all sorts of fruits and vegetables. These may be delivered to any agent of the Oregon Railway and Navigation Co., the Northern Pacific R. R. Co., or the Oregon and California R. R. Co. They will be sent free of charge to the sender if addressed to "Bureau of Immigration, Portland, Oregon." All specimens will be promptly acknowledged on receipt. They should be marked with the name of the sender, the yield per acre, when sown and when harvested, with such other particulars as will enable the "Bureau" to answer all questions concerning them. It is hoped our friends will actively engage in the work of furnishing the specimens requested. Nothing has a more convincing force upon the new comer or those seeking homes among us, than the sight of specimens of our varied products.

THE PROSPECT.—Should the European powers become thoroughly and actually interested in the never-to-be-settled "Eastern Question," now reopened, the increased European demand for American wheat and corn would be very great, and it is refreshing to know that the demand can be supplied by the United States from its surplus.