



Not one of the great territories soon to be admitted into our sisterhood of states, comes with larger show of present prosperity and promise of future greatness than does Montana. With fertile valleys stretching hundreds of miles along her river courses, with her mountains as an inexhaustible store-house of gold, silver, copper, coal, marble, granite and timber, with vast expanses of grassy hills and mountain slopes for cattle, she offers homes and a livelihood for a million of people.

A part of the great Louisiana purchase made in 1803, portions of Montana have at different times been embraced in the organized territories of Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Dakota. The first white man known to have visited this region was Chevalier de la Verendrye, governor of Quebec, who, at the head of an exploring party, arrived at "the gateway of the mountains" on the first day of January, 1743, and there erected a monument of stones, under which he deposited a leaden plate emblazoned with the French coat of arms. This monument has never been found. Sixty-two years later the great overland expedition of Lewis and Clarke traversed the territory and recorded its chief characteristics. For the next fifty years Montana was known only to the hunters, trappers and missionaries, who traversed it in all directions, and the only settlements were the trading posts of fur companies, a few missionary establishments, and the habitations of a number of mountain men who had married Indian women and settled in this vast wilderness. A great change came suddenly. Gold was discovered in 1862, and for the next three years thousands of miners poured in from the west, south and east, prospected it from end to end, and so developed it that congress by the act of May 26, 1864, created the territory of Montana, whose name and fame have made their way around the world.

GEOGRAPHY.

Its greatest length from east to west is 540 miles, its width 275 miles, and its superficial area 145,776 square miles, of which at least one-third is mountainous. It extends from the 104° to the 116° of longitude west from Greenwich, and for the most part lies between 45° and 49° of north latitude, its southern boundary being midway between the equator and the long-sought north pole. The great watershed between the Atlantic and the Pacific, the main divide of the Rocky mountains, traverses the western end, having about one-fourth of the territory on its western slope, and three-fourths on the eastern. Smaller ranges, lateral spurs, and detached groups of mountains give it that diversity of rocky ridges, great plateaus and lovely valleys that forms its chief beauty in the artist's eye. The western portion is exceedingly mountainous, though abounding in beautiful valleys along the many streams, while to the eastward the country breaks into long rolling prairies, and north of the Missouri subsides into vast plains, once the home of countless thousands of buffalo

but now covered with great herds of cattle grazing upon the nutritious bunch and buffalo grasses. Here and in the valleys and mountains, where the rich grasses grow in luxuriance, great bands of buffalo, deer and elk still exist, and their hides form a staple article of export to the eastern market.

The great water-courses are Clarke's fork of the Columbia, and the Missouri and its chief tributaries the Milk and Yellowstone. The three last named head amid the summit peaks of the Rocky mountains and flow in a general easterly course through the whole length of the territory. The headwaters of Clarke's fork are within a few miles of those of the Missouri, but the stream pours down the western slope and across the territory to the northwest, uniting with the mighty Columbia near the international line between Washington and British Columbia. It drains 40,000 square miles of Montana, while the Missouri and its tributaries, Milk, Yellowstone, Teton, Marias, Judith, Musselshell, Jefferson, Madison, Gallatin, Big Horn and Powder, carry with them the waters from more than twice that area. Altogether these are navigated by steamboats a distance of 1,500 miles within the limits of the territory, and the Missouri, which now is, and always will be, one of her greatest commercial highways, is plowed by steamers a distance of 4,000 miles, from the interior of Montana to the Gulf of Mexico. Along these great water-courses lie beautiful and fertile valleys, unsurpassed in the agricultural advantages they have to offer to settlers. Hot or warm springs are found in every valley, while the number of lakes is legion. The largest of these are Flathead lake, 30x10 miles, lying in Missoula county, and Red Rock lake in Madison county, twenty-five miles long and 6,500 feet above the sea, distant but five miles from the renowned Henry's lake, in Idaho, from which it is separated by a narrow ridge of the mountains. The great falls of the Missouri, thirty miles above Fort Benton, have a perpendicular plunge of ninety feet, and for grandeur and beauty rank among nature's greatest wonders.

CLIMATE.

Professor Gannett, of the Hayden survey, places the mean altitude of Montana at 3,000 feet above sea level. He estimates Nevada and New Mexico at 5,600, Wyoming 6,000, and Colorado 7,000, thus giving it an average elevation of 2,260 feet less than the general average of those other mountain states and territories. By Professor Agassiz's estimate of 300 feet of altitude to one degree of latitude, it will be seen that the advantage in mildness of climate must be with Montana to the extent of seven degrees of latitude. The isothermal line of 50° passes north through this territory into British Columbia, the deflection from a westerly course being caused by the genial influences of the warm Japan current flowing down our western coast. Warm westerly winds are far more prevalent in winter than are the cold northern blizzards that sweep the plains to the east. Owing to this climatic condition vast bands of cattle, sheep and horses live and thrive on the grass ranges of Montana through the severest winters, having no food but that which nature has provided. Snow rarely covers the valleys, never to a great depth, but in the mountains quantities of snow accumulate during the winter, furnishing a constant supply of pure water for the numerous streams that fertilize the lower lands. The aver-

age winter temperature is extremely moderate, excessively cold days occurring but infrequently, while the summer weather is pleasant, with the nights never sultry, but rendered comfortable by cool breezes from the mountains. The clearness of the atmosphere is remarkable, rendering objects visible at a great distance. Severe storms are unknown, save among mountain peaks, which shelter the valleys and protect them from the withering blasts that are shattered against their rocky walls.

RESOURCES.

The resources of Montana are varied and valuable. Millions of acres of fine agricultural land are awaiting development. The soil is friable and wonderfully productive. Owing to the light rainfall, irrigation is generally necessary, the abundance of never-failing streams rendering this means of vivifying the soil easy and certain. It is the universal experience of the world that an irrigated crop never fails, as is too often the case where water from the clouds alone is depended upon. Little ditches branching out in all directions from the great water-courses, will, in a few years, convert Montana's valleys into one continuous stretch of never-fading verdure. The surveyor general reports that the lands embraced within the Northern Pacific grant have been found to be 20,700,000 acres in the territory. An equal amount of government land adjoins it, and of this vast area but 5,170,000 acres have yet been surveyed. The cash sales of the Helena land office for 1882 were 93,787 acres, which, with 160,023 acres filed upon, made a total of 253,810 acres. Allowing the same amount of business for the other two districts, we have a grand total of 750,000 acres taken in 1882. This is but a small fraction of even the 20,700,000 acres within the railroad limits, without referring to the vast area on either side. The acres of improved land reported in 1882 were 516,101, valued for taxation purposes at \$4,476,118; town lots and improvements, \$4,163,618; horses, 67,802, value, \$3,197,020; sheep, 362,776, value, \$1,018,124; cattle, 287,210, value, \$4,699,812; swine, 7,101, value, \$45,249. The total assessed valuation of the territory was \$33,212,319, an increase upon the previous year of \$9,170,512, or about 38 per cent. The estimated increase for the current year is 50 per cent., owing to the great amount of railroad building and the enormous immigration. The average rate of tax for 1882 was \$1.75 on \$100. The territory has \$14,000 cash surplus in the treasury. No reliable report of the production of cereals and hay can be given, owing to the fact that they mature and find a market between the annual assessments. The peculiar adaptability of Montana for the raising of cattle and sheep on an extensive scale has previously been noted. A great increase in the already large number of animals grazing on the vast ranges is certain, because of the high price of beef cattle and the known advantages this region offers to those desirous of embarking in that profitable business.

Timber sufficient for household and farming purposes is found along the streams of the eastern and northern portions, while in the northwest stand great bodies of timber forests, penetrated by the Northern Pacific, from which lumber can be sent to the prairie lands to the eastward.

Mining has always been and probably will continue to be the leading industry. The value of the gold, silver, copper and lead output for 1882