

## THE GREAT NORTHWEST.

## I.

By glancing at a map of North America the reader will observe that there are numerous systems of mountain ranges, extending longitudinally through it, and parallel with either the Atlantic or Pacific coast. A little reflection must assure every philosophical mind that neither chance nor accident could have produced these phenomena—so grand in symmetry, so mathematical in proportion. The fitness and adaptation everywhere visible naturally suggest the thought that nothing short of Infinite Wisdom could have been the Master Workman. The bare contemplation of the picture, which no mortal can imitate or counterfeit, thrills the soul with awe and wondrous sublimity. Even the Chinaman, toiling upon the grades of the Northern Pacific, may experience, in a diluted form, these soul-subduing emotions; but he can no more read the record of the Infinite, sculptured in the rocks, than he can translate the cuneiform inscriptions found amid the ruins of Babylon.

To rescue man from savageism the light of science has dawned upon him, even in the far away occident, and he is now beginning to interpret these sublime hieroglyphics which Nature has inscribed upon every mountain, written in every vale, and imbedded in every river. Superstition may cavil; bigotry may scoff; persecution may threaten; the ghosts of the rack, the dungeon and the burning stake may shake their gory locks, but the day has passed when science can be throttled for uttering truths that seem at variance with the teachings of a dark age.

The mountain ranges of North America are the monuments and great exclamation points of the history of the formation of our continent. Where the Atlantic now tosses its restless billows there was once a continent—perhaps the "Atlantis" of Plato. Where North America, like a young giant, stretches in the sublimity of disturbed repose, there was once a mighty ocean. On the ancient continent—the sunken Atlantis—there were systems of mountains; from them rivers flowed into this ancient ocean, carrying down sand, soil and other debris. Nature was then laying the foundation of our continent. How sublime the conception! How grand the enterprise! How insignificant the proudest achievements of man must ever appear in contrast! Even the pyramids, and the great Chinese wall, and Babylon, "the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of Chaldee's excellency," dwindle into nothingness when compared with the building of a continent!

What are now ranges of mountains were once "banks" at the bottom of the ocean, similar to the Banks of Newfoundland, where the codfish come to feed. Age on age rolled by, and slowly these banks (rudimentary ranges of mountains) rose above the surface of the waters. Then the banks were metamorphosed into a system of islands, as the caterpillar is changed into a butterfly. The upheaval continuing, another metamorphosis, the islands grew into mountains and our continent was born—*born out of the water*, just like animate life, gestated in the water, is afterwards born from it. What though millions

of years were necessary for the gestation of our continent? Nature had an eternity of time in which to work, and there was no occasion for her to hurry.

The first-born was that portion of North America lying east of the Rocky Mountains, while the Pacific slope was still being developed at the bottom of the ocean. How natural, then, that the upheaval of the Atlantic coast should be in a line parallel with the Allegheny range of mountains. Age on age elapsed, and great Nature was still in labor. At last, while the earth shook with the convulsions of parturition, the Rocky Mountains were born out of the troubled waters, wheeling into line and forming the eastern boundary of the heaving Pacific. As yet the Sierra Nevada and Cascade systems were but "banks," the abode of fishes. In process of time these ranges were born, and the Coast Range system rose to the dignity of "banks." These, at last, appeared above the waters, the youngest born from the vasty deep.

Reasoning by analogy, may we not conclude that, away in the Pacific Ocean, there is another "bank," either forming or in process of formation? Off Salmon River (so near the shore that the Indians venture out in their canoes) can be caught a kind of golden fish, even larger than the cod of Newfoundland. On the beach north of Nestucca Bay, Tillamook County, I have found dead codfish. Surely the "bank" cannot be many miles away. Let the enterprising fisherman explore for it, and, when found, I see no reason why it should not prove as great a bonanza as those on the eastern coast, which "perfidious Albion" claims, and which has cost our Government millions of dollars. A single fact in corroboration of the theory that there is a bank near the eastern shore of the Pacific seems worthy of attention.

A few years since the late Jeremiah Lamson, Esq., father of Captain Lamson, Clerk of the United States District Court, here in Portland, settled just north of Sand Cape, Tillamook County, building his house in a gap of the lofty cliffs, but still high above the highest tide. One morning, on glancing seaward, he was astonished to discover, several miles from land, the approach of what appeared to be a black wall of water, nearly perpendicular, which, as it neared the beach, he judged to be fifty feet high. It broke with a tremendous roar, and came up into his house to the depth of a foot, but immediately receded, leaving a line of foam and driftwood to mark the boundary of its encroachment. I am positive about this matter, for I entered land adjoining Mr. Lamson's place and lived there nearly two years. The evidences are still visible, all along the shore, in a line of driftwood, that a tidal wave must have recently broken far inland and high upon the cliffs.

I intend this paper merely as introductory to a series in reference to the Northwest, in which I shall endeavor to so embellish and popularize science that my articles shall prove interesting to the general reader. Most scientific writers are so dry and technical that their papers are seldom read outside of the charmed circle of scientific inquirers. This style I shall strive to avoid.

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