

CORVALLIS AND YAQUINA BAY.

ONE of the most prosperous and populous counties of Oregon, and to which a new and important railroad enterprise, now well advanced, gives promise of a brilliant future, is Benton, lying partially in the upper end of the Willamette valley and extending across the Coast Range Mountains to the ocean. In this combination of valley, mountain and coast, with good routes of travel connecting them, it possesses advantages not enjoyed by any other county in the State. This is the foundation of the railroad project which is doing so much to develop its resources, increase its population and enhance the value of property of every description.

Benton embraces an area of 2,000 square miles, extending from the Willamette River to the Pacific, and lying between Polk and Tillamook Counties on the north and Lane on the south. The eastern end lies within the limits of the Willamette Valley, and includes thousands of acres of the most fertile arable land in Oregon, much of which has been under cultivation for a third of a century. This is divided into three general classes, prairie, bottom and foothills. The prairie land extending for miles north and south of Corvallis, the county seat, lies within the great wheat belt of the valley. This is generally level or slightly rolling, becoming more broken as it approaches the base of the mountains. Wheat, barley and oats are the leading products of the prairie land, the first being the one great staple to which the majority of farms are devoted. Under careful cultivation, by use of the summer fallow method, this land produces from twenty-five to forty bushels of winter wheat to the acre, in exceptional cases even large fields exceeding that limit. Even with such prolific yields, the present low prices ruling in the wheat market are leading to a greater diversity of products, and a rotation of crops, much to the benefit of the soil and the improvement of the farmers' condition, rendering them more independent of the grain market. They thus stand ready to profit by high prices, but not to become impoverished by low ones. The farms are nearly all well improved, with comfortable and pleasant dwellings, commodious farm buildings and good fences. There are, however, many tracts not yet broken by the plow, over which a few sheep and cattle graze. Land will soon become too valuable to be used in that manner. Good farms can be purchased here at from \$25 to \$40 per acre; though the choice ones, with exceptionally good improvements, cannot be secured at such prices. Comparatively unimproved farms can be bought at much lower rates. A farmer with a little capital cannot do better in Oregon than to purchase land of this character in Benton County, where railroads, highways, good schools and churches already exist. This is certainly better than settling in an entirely new country, where the future must be looked to for supplying home and social comforts and necessary conveniences for reaching market. A farmer in the East who is making a scant living on from 100 to 200 acres of land, valued at from \$60 to \$100 per acre, can sell his property, move his family to Benton County, purchase twice the quantity of

equally good land, and have considerable of his capital left with which to settle himself well in his new home. Many such have located there the past two years, and seem to be well satisfied with the change. A few fruit trees are to be found on nearly every farm, while a considerable number of quite extensive orchards have been in bearing condition for years. Such fruit as pears, apples, plums, cherries, grapes, etc., are of superior quality, and the trees and vines yield abundantly. This is an industry now rapidly increasing in Oregon, under the influence of the extensive markets opened up by the railroads, and in the future much greater attention will be given to fruit culture than formerly.

Along the Willamette there are long stretches of bottom land, some of it overflowed in the spring time, which is extremely valuable. This land was formerly covered with a dense growth of fir, maple, balsam, ash, scrub oak, hazel, etc., and was cleared with much difficulty; but it is now well worth all the labor and expense of improving it. Timber and brush still standing here and there give an indication of the former condition of all the bottom lands. The higher portions of the bottoms make splendid wheat land, while the lower become natural meadows where the grass never fails. Dairying is an important and profitable industry along the river; also the raising of vegetables. This low land is especially adapted to the culture of hops, a business which is rapidly increasing and promises soon to become one of the distinctive industries of Oregon. There are a number of hop fields in the county and plenty of excellent land upon which to start new ones. This is one of the most profitable crops a farmer can raise. The price of hops is not regulated by the quantity raised on the Coast; so that it frequently happens that the general supply is short at a time when the producers here have an unusually abundant crop. Fortunes have been made in one season by such a condition of affairs, as was the case in 1882. The price fluctuates from 20 cents to \$1.00 per pound, but has never in the history of hop culture here fallen below the cost of producing.

The foothills lie between the prairie land and the mountains. Here is considerable land open to settlement, much of which is very desirable. In its natural state it is covered with oak trees and shrubs, beneath which there is fine pasturage, where sheep, cattle and hogs can be maintained at little expense. This submits readily to cultivation when properly situated, giving the possessor generally a combination of arable and pasture land. Much of this land in its unimproved state can be purchased at a nominal sum, while land with greater or less improvements is held at from \$5 to \$25 per acre. There is, also, considerable government land, though not so desirable as that which is held for sale.

There are two rivers flowing through the mountains to the Pacific, the Yaquina in the northern end of the county and the Alsea at the southern. The latter flows from the divide which separates it from Mary's River, a tributary of the Willamette, and for four miles is simply a beautiful mountain stream. It then passes out into a