

SNOW BLOCKADE ON THE COLUMBIA.

A TRAIN snow bound three weeks in Oregon! It will be difficult to make old Oregonians believe such a statement until it is added that the location of the blockade is in the gorge of the Columbia. That strangers may also understand, a brief description of the topography of this region is necessary. Oregon and Washington are divided into eastern and western districts by the Cascade Mountains, a high range running nearly due north and south from California to British Columbia. Through this the Columbia River has forced its way in a deep gorge some forty miles in length. Along this gorge, following the south bank of the stream, runs the track of the Oregon Railway & Navigation Company. The sides of the gorge are so steep, and border so closely upon the river, that in numerous places the track is forced out into the stream and runs over the water on long trestles. In other places a passage has been blasted around the face of precipices or tunneled through jutting points of rock. When it rains in the Willamette Valley it snows in the mountains, but, as these storms are generally the product of a warm southern wind, there is comparatively little drifting of the snow. It is only at long intervals, when a portion of an Eastern "blizzard" flies off on a tangent and comes whirling westward across the Territories and down the Columbia, that a genuine snow storm prevails. Then the Middle Columbia freezes solid, the snow drifts into the gorge and banks up against the bluffs and in the cuts to a great depth. A few hours are sufficient to block it completely, and were such storms prevalent—as, happily, they are not—the only protection possible would be staunch and highly expensive snow sheds, such as the Central Pacific has been compelled to construct on the summit of the Sierra Nevada.

Monday evening, December 15, a cold eastern wind began blowing down the Columbia, and as it encountered the warmer, moisture-laden air from the ocean, a heavy precipitation of snow was the result. The wind blew that night with a velocity of twenty-five miles an hour, and the snow was swirled about like a plaything, and lodged against every bank or obstruction, packing down solid. In some places it was solidified almost to the consistency of ice. This was in the neighborhood of the numerous waterfalls which plunge over the edge of the gorge and fall from great heights—one of them, the Multnomah, a distance of 300 feet. The strong wind picked up this falling water and whirled it about with the snow, until it packed so deep and solid that, in some places, giant powder has been used to blast it out. There is one section of three miles, near Oneonta Gorge, where this frozen snow and water accumulated on the track to a depth of forty-five feet before the storm ceased.

Shortly after midnight the train which left The Dalles on the 17th, following a snow plow, was almost buried beneath an avalanche of snow. Conductor Lyons, realizing that he was blockaded till the storm was over, walked through the blinding storm four miles to a station and telegraphed for food. For fifteen days the train, which had been shoveled out and backed upon a trestle to pre-

serve it from the avalanches that were constantly sliding down the sides of the gorge, lay there before the four snow plows at work effected its release. Food was brought from both directions—Hood River and the Cascades—by men who struggled through the snow with infinite difficulty and much suffering from exposure. Wood was plentiful, though there was much difficulty in cutting it. On the fifth day, for fear food would run short, all the able-bodied men (some seventy) started through the snow for this city. When they came to the ice gorge they were compelled to chop a trail around the bluff, and across the long and slippery trestles, some of them more than a hundred feet high, they crawled on hands and knees, in imminent danger of being blown from their precarious position by the terrific gale. However, they all reached the Cascades in safety, and finally this city. The company kept four snow plows and a thousand men with shovels constantly at work clearing the track, but for many days they made little progress because of the violence of the storm, new snow constantly falling and drifting. Even after the storm had ceased it took more than a week to break through the almost solid barrier, the ice gorge above Multnomah Falls being almost impenetrable. The various phases of the blockade have been depicted by our artist, who could also relate many personal experiences with the wind and snow.

The storm lessened in violence as it proceeded up the Willamette Valley, and did not penetrate into Southern Oregon. In the valley snow accumulated to a depth of ten to fifteen inches, and the thermometer never fell below twelve degrees above zero. In contrast with this is the reported temperature of Minnesota and other States of the upper Mississippi during the same period, reaching, in some instances, forty degrees below zero, or fifty-two degrees colder than in the city of Portland. Even as it was, the storm was remarkably severe for Oregon, one not experienced before for years, and such as we will probably not see again for many winters. It was the peculiar conditions which blocked up the Columbia Gorge, and by shutting us out from all communication with the East paralyzed business for three weeks, which have caused us the most inconvenience. It simply shows what a "tempest in a teapot" a snow storm in a mountain pass can create.

FROM the mass of statistics of 1884, given in the most excellent New Year's edition of the *Oregonian*, the following leading totals for the city of Portland are extracted:

Hands employed in manufacturing.....	5,399
Value of manufactured products.....	\$11,222,000
Value of wholesale trade.....	\$1,050,000
Value of building improvements in Portland, East Portland, Albina and Bellwood.....	2,160,000
Domestic exports (two-thirds to San Francisco).....	4,393,798
Foreign exports (chiefly wheat and flour).....	3,716,854
Domestic imports.....	15,686,129
Foreign imports.....	1,013,363

The principal produce receipts were:

Wheat, bushels.....	5,045,999
Flour, barrels.....	403,403
Wool, pounds.....	8,573,230
Hides, pounds.....	1,313,266
Hops, pounds.....	3,904,171