

## A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF CENTRAL OREGON.

**B**EAR CREEK BUTTE rises from the elevated table land of Eastern Oregon to an altitude of between five and six thousand feet above the level of the sea. It is near the geographical centre of the State, twenty-five miles south of Prineville, the county seat of Crook County, and about forty miles east of the Cascade range of mountains. Like the greater part of Eastern Oregon, this mountain is without timber except a scraggy growth of juniper. From its summit is obtained one of the most expansive prospects I have had on the Pacific Coast—a bird's-eye view of an area of country larger than New England. The grand snow-capped Cascades to the west, northwest and southwest, the grass-covered hills as far as the eye can reach to the north, wooded mountains to the northeast, sage plains to the east, and the great uneven expanse to the south and southeast formerly known as the "Great Oregon Desert," make up a view well worth the time and labor required to obtain it.

In the month of November last I stood upon this summit alone and breathed an expression of satisfaction that I was permitted to look upon so grand a scene. The air whistled fresh and keen through the clumps of stunted juniper that adorn the brow of this mountain of the plain. The sky was perfectly clear, and the altitude and the pure, bracing, rare atmosphere made up that condition, almost peculiar to the West, that enables one to see so far. Far to the north were seen the rolling hills of Crook and Wasco counties. At my feet a slight depression marked the beginning of one of the many gulches that cut and scar the face of the mountain. These gulches are of great depth, their walls of basalt almost vertical, and down these natural channels the rush of waters wake the echoes of hidden caverns among them. In the spring time these streams become swollen to the proportion of rivers and go rushing and roaring down the mountain side to join the Des Chutes on the west and Crooked River on the north, or are lost in the "Desert" to the south.

At the foot of the mountain the country spreads out in an almost level table land, fifteen or twenty miles wide, covered with bunch grass and sage brush, with here and there scattered forests of juniper. Large areas of excellent soil are found on this table, and the presence of the industrious pioneer is made known by the houses, barns and cultivated spots which begin to dot the plain. Stock raising is the chief occupation, but the adaptability of climate and soil for agriculture has been fully demonstrated, and presages a prosperous agricultural country as soon as facilities are furnished for transportation. The climate, though somewhat rigorous in the winter, is wonderfully healthful, and but little feeding of stock is required. Further on toward the north is seen the Ochecho Valley, about one thousand feet lower than the table land just described, and though not a large one, yet one of the richest in Eastern Oregon. The Ochecho is about forty miles long, with a varying width of from one to five miles. Prineville is located in this valley, at the junction of the Ochecho and Crooked rivers, and does an

immense business as the base of supplies for a large radius of country. Its population is about five hundred, with all that goes to make up a thriving and prosperous town—schools, churches, two newspapers, a flouring mill, two good hotels, etc.

The settlement of Ochecho Valley has been rapid and its improvement wonderful. Almost everything needed for the table that can be produced on a farm is here yielded in abundance. Apples, pears, plums and other fruits are raised and are of an excellent quality. Vegetables and the cereals grown here are not excelled on the Coast. The wool clip of this valley and the surrounding country is very large. The scenery is picturesque, the climate, though colder than Western Oregon, is excellent. Water is abundant and of the finest quality, fish are plentiful in the streams, and the people seem healthy, contented and happy. Timber is plentiful to the north and northeast, in the Ochecho Mountains, for all domestic demands, consisting of pine, fir, spruce and cedar. With a railroad, which seems to be one of the most distinct shadows cast by coming events, Ochecho Valley would become of great importance to the State by the fuller development of its resources and the profitable shipment of its products. Still on to the north, but beyond the line of vision, are other valleys equally rich and productive, though smaller. And everywhere were seen thousands of cattle, horses and sheep. The distance to The Dalles is about 120 miles. From my elevated perch on Bear Creek Butte I could also see many little valleys along the line of the Des Chutes River.

Turning to the south and southeast, a panorama entirely different from the one just described met my view. In this direction the view is unobstructed at points for more than a hundred miles, comprising an immense area of country. Directly below, clad in its sombre garments of the ever-present sage, with here and there dark piles of basalt rearing their frowning forms above the plain, lies the "Great Oregon Desert," where for many a weary mile no surface water is to be found. The desert from this lofty stand presents a very peculiar appearance, dotted as it is with spots bright and shining in the perfect semblance of lakes, and to one not acquainted with the country the illusion is calculated to deceive. The mirage of the desert, how many have been its victims since the eyes of man first played him false! Many a weary traveler has been lured on and on, led by thirst and deceived by the ever-receding vision of lakes, streams and shady groves, until tired and discouraged, with the exasperating mirage only a little in advance, changing its form and feature, as if laughing at the torture of weak humanity, he has fallen and perished miserably and alone, his bleaching skeleton left to the speculation of those who should follow him. Such things as this have occurred even in this once barren waste, in times long past, before the trails were known and the hidden springs were found. It has since been demonstrated that in most places, and at an easy depth, water can be had in abundance, and settlers are now selecting eligible spots and establishing comfortable homes. It is found that a