

MARION COUNTY, OREGON.

OUR Willamette valley is one of the garden spots on the surface of the great green earth. The fabled "Garden of the Gods" could have been planted here in many places. If the long coast line could pass before us in panorama, so we could see the Pacific shores from far Alaska to southernmost California, from the northern seas to the southern gulf, from the glaciers of Stickeen to semi-tropic orange groves of Los Angeles, there is no region in it all to equal, much less eclipse, this, in the beauty and harmony of surroundings. There are many rivers, hills and plains that vie with earth's fairest scenes, but not one of them can bear away the palm from the lovely Willamette. It is no mere spot in miniature; it is as broad as a degree of longitude, and its waters flow hundreds of miles from where the fountains rise to where the broad river blends with the Columbia. Shrined by mountain ranges whose fountains furnish living streams, the river gathers from circling hills and rugged heights the streams that vivify and beautify these hills and vales to swell the flow that seeks the sea. Multnomah is but the gateway, and not the valley; Clackamas, with its wooded hills, guards the lower vale; there are broad prairies in "Old Linn," and Lane is charmingly diversified; west of the life-dealing river are the fields of Polk, and the graces and glories of Yamhill; but we stand where Hood takes its first view of cultured vales. Where the beautiful hills mingle so deftly with the fruitful plains, is Marion, the queen of counties, if not the queen of Oregon. Here all that is admirable and fruitful and beautiful in the great valley finds expression, for it has hills and vales and forests and streams which represent the Willamette at its best.

One-half a century ago the great rendezvous of the mid-continent was Green river. There hunters and trappers, traders and travelers, mountaineers and plainmen, met at midsummer and canvassed everything of interest to all. Those who came from the far West compared the parched mid-continent, and all the region east of the Cascades—the plains where no tree gave shade and where no rivulets strayed—with the valleys of Western Oregon, where foliage of richest green and densest shade, bordered streams that were fed by innumerable fountains. This region, they said, knew neither summer's fervent heat nor winter's Arctic frost. Their tales were carried back and told to the frontiersmen east of the Missouri, and made a deep impression. The time came when Americans looked to Oregon for homes, and these "travelers' tales," more than twice told, beguiled the winter firesides of those destined to become pioneers of Oregon. The earliest of them, having traversed two thousand miles of shadeless plains, fragrant with sage brush and alkali; having crossed the Cascade mountains as their last endeavor, came to the long-sought-for Willamette valley. They came down out of the trackless mountains to a land that seemed Eden, to fields that indeed were elysian. The meadows and pastures were rich and luxuriant; they waved before the fresh sea-

winds like billows of emerald. There were then no flocks and herds as we have them now, but the "native races" peopled this wilderness. What we call savage tribes ruled nature; planted their lodges by the streams and had their canoes on all the rivers; hunted and fished and lived by simple laws; the wild deer and elk, the black and brown bear shared dominion with them, and with the fish in the streams gave them their winter's food. Forty years ago the antlered elk ranged free and numerous on all these valleys, prairies and hill ranges. Nature was supreme and the native races, savage and wild, shared the land among them. It is related that as early as 1812 there were hunters who killed game along the river, west of French prairie, to send elk meat for the food supply at Astoria. Aged men of the Calipooias tell how they laid in their winter's meat. Their villages were along the Willamette, the Santiam and Molalla, and also along the foothills. The day was set and early in the morning conch shells were blown to call men out for the great hunt of the year. A great cordon of hunters reached around what is now Marion county, who set fire to the autumn grass, driving all the game before it to a common center. When the space was narrowed enough the best men went in and killed sufficient game to answer their purpose, being careful not to weaken the herds by diminishing their productive capacity. They lived this unfettered life before the white men came among them. There was at Salem, a winter village of immemorial usage, called Chemeketa, where the Calipooias brought their stores of camas, berries, cured meats and fish. The measles became a pestilence, half a century ago in this, their "old home," as Chemeketa has meaning. They followed their old way of sweltering in their sweat houses and then plunging into the river, and many times deaths were sudden. From a prosperous nation these Indians became only a few scores. Chemeketa saw them come no more to winter on the shore where Salem now has possession. While one people inhabited this valley there were many tribes, and those living on different sides of the Willamette quarreled at times. When the old men met on the river and talked matters over unavailingly, and when diplomacy was exhausted, they went to war. When tired of war, the young men turned the matter over again to their elders and so peace would be made. The name of the river has full significance of this old custom, for the meaning of the word Willamette is "The Waters of Peace."

The time came when constant trapping and hunting lessened the number of fur-bearing animals, and the beaver became scarce in all the country west of the Rocky mountains. Then it was necessary for the Hudson's Bay Company to make business for its employees. There were no settlers and only very few missionaries, but the company made a contract to supply the Russians of Alaska with bread, and to send timber and lumber to China and the Sandwich islands. This necessitated wheat growing, and a number of half-breed mountaineers settled in the valley and became farmers. They