

The settled portions of the country on the sound bear somewhat the same relation to its waters that Venice does to the Adriatic. Communication between points is maintained wholly by water. The sound, with its bays, inlets and rivers, forms the main highway of the country, like the canals which penetrate every part of Venice. There are nearly one hundred steamboats plying regularly between different ports on the sound and stations on the rivers, besides many sloops and barges that are engaged more or less constantly in local traffic. The merchant down at New Dungeness, on the Straits of Fuca, keeps a sloop steadily employed in exchanging the farm products of that remote settlement with the Puget Mill Company, at Port Gamble, for the goods which the farmers require. It is a simple commerce that he thus carries on, demanding the use of very little money, but he has found it profitable to himself, as it is indispensable to the settlement. Most of this local trade is controlled at Seattle, whose central position makes it possible for these little steamboats to make daily trips to and from the city. This gives Seattle its principal advantage over Tacoma. In its immediate vicinity Tacoma has larger inland settlements to support it, and much territory that is susceptible of cultivation, which will furnish it with an increasing local traffic.

The principal hop region is adjacent to Tacoma and Seattle, and this is destined to be greatly extended. The valleys of the Puyallup, the White and the Snoqualmie rivers are admirably adapted to this industry. During the past season about twenty thousand bales have been raised, and sold for an average price of twenty cents a pound. It costs about eight cents a pound to make the crop, and as failures are unknown, the business is profitable whenever the price is as high as it has been the past year.

All the country that is susceptible of cultivation produces a great abundance of everything that is adapted to the climate. On the tide lands, which are extensive in some places, enormous crops of wheat, hay and oats are raised, and and potatoes and the hardy fruits grow almost too luxuriantly. On the Skagit river there are ten townships of this land in one body, which is of inexhaustible fertility, and so interpenetrated by navigable channels that its products can be loaded conveniently upon water transports. There are ten navigable rivers entering the east side of the sound, which traverse large sections of agricultural land.

One peculiarity of this region, as of all the country lying between the Cascade mountains and the Pacific ocean, in Washington Territory and the state of Oregon, is that the atmosphere may be said to be fertile. Vegetation seems to require but little more than a foothold in the soil, while the atmosphere supplies the food necessary to its growth. Around Puget sound there is a luxuriance of vegetation which suggests the flora of the carboniferous age. This is caused by the humid atmosphere that is borne across the ocean with the current of that mighty river in the sea, a thousand miles wide, which starts in the tropics with a temperature of eighty degrees, and, striking against the island of Borneo, is deflected northward and flows at the rate of three miles an hour from Japan to Alaska.

The moisture from this heated current floats inward and is precipitated in rain upon the earth, making possible the vast forest growth of this region. "The clouds drop fatness." The rainfall robs them of the carbonic acid, which is one of the principal elements of food for plants, and is absorbed by the leaves and roots. Gigantic ferns grow among the great conifers, and other luxuriant