

A GEM OF THE WILLAMETTE.

MILE upon mile of level valley and rolling hills, stretching in all directions as far as the eye can see, the whole bearing the universal tint of the golden yellow of harvest time, interspersed with long lines and patches of the green of oaks, alders, firs and orchards, is the sight which opens out to the view of every one who, at this season of the year, visits the county of Polk, one of the fairest gems of the Willamette valley. Such a sight would warm the blood in the veins of the most sluggish man, who retains in his composition one grain of admiration for the beautiful, or one atom of appreciation of the bountiful gifts of nature. But there is more than beauty in the scene. The thousands upon thousands of acres of yellow grain, the hum of scores of harvesters, and the busy whirl of threshers, all testify to a successful harvest and a rich reward for the labor of the husbandman. Around him are the products of his toil, and over him, from a cloudless sky, nature seems to smile in benediction upon his efforts. Such a scene of peaceful beauty and undeniable prosperity may well evoke exclamations of surprise and admiration from one unfamiliar with the sight. And from one accustomed to the uncertain harvests of other regions, the assurance that this busy scene, these miles of grain, these cloudless days, are repeated year by year, at each recurring harvest, can not but win expressions of astonishment, and convince him that the husbandman who enjoys these gifts of nature, in this most favored region, is blessed above all his fellows, no matter in what corner of the great terrestrial footstool their lot may be cast.

There are, of course, many sections deemed by those familiar with their characteristics, and ignorant of the advantages offered by other regions, as the best in existence. I have traveled over the entire Pacific coast, and through all the states of the great Mississippi valley. I have seen fields of grain without number, barns almost bursting with the fruits of harvest, beautiful homes, and happy and contented people; but in all this, I have never yet seen the region combining all the advantages possessed by this favored portion of the green and fertile Willamette. Such an assertion as this requires a strong array of facts to sustain it, and these I will proceed to give.

Take down the map of Oregon, and turn your attention to the long valley lying between the Coast range and Cascade mountains. Follow up the winding course of the Willamette until the city of Salem, capital of the state, is reached. The broad stretch of valley land lying west of that city, extending along the river many miles, and stretching away westward to the Coast range, constitutes the county of Polk, named in honor of President James K. Polk, during whose administration the original territory of Oregon was organized. It includes more valley and arable land, in proportion to the entire area, than any other county in Oregon. In fact, there is scarcely a foot of land not valuable for the growth of cereals or the rearing of stock. Within its limits are upwards of three hundred thousand acres of deed-