



THE FAR WEST

IDAHO'S RESOURCES AND PROGRESS.

Up to the time Idaho applied for admission into the sisterhood of states, it was popularly believed to be a barren waste of sage brush table lands and mountain heights, whose only feature of usefulness would be a permanent sporting ground for jack rabbits and coyotes. This belief was fostered principally by those entirely unacquainted with the territory, except as it appeared on the maps of their old school geographies. No special occasion had ever before offered for presenting Idaho's claim to public attention, and as a consequence her growth and development had been comparatively slow and unnoticed by the country generally. Those who had settled there and were thoroughly acquainted with the resources and had unbounded faith in her future, eagerly seized the opportunity of presenting an array of statistics and pressing her claims to being one of the best portions of the United States for the conduct of any kind of enterprise. Her leading resource, of course, is the mineral wealth of her mountains. The fame of her gold mines has traversed the entire globe, and her copper mines, while not developed to the extent of some of the older states, bid fair to exceed in value any yet discovered. The large majority of early arrivals in the state were imbued with the popular idea that mining was the only industry that could be made profitable there, and except to a limited extent this was correct, circumstances being as they then were. To all appearances the rocky hills and wide stretches of table land were a barren desert, and the only farming and gardening carried on for a number of years was confined to the lowlands bordering the streams, and the narrow valleys leading up to the tops of the mountains where the melting snows supplied water for the irrigation of crops. The greater part of the soil of Idaho is of volcanic ash and lava, and the streams flowing through the state have cut deep channels, and as a rule run far below the level of the country. The few fields of grain and garden patches grown, however, demonstrated the fact that water was all that was required to make the soil productive, but the heavy expense of constructing irrigating canals or establishing pumping stations along the water courses, served to retard the agricultural growth of the state. To enlist the interest of capitalists in such enterprises was a herculean undertaking, but the indomitable energy and pluck of the pioneers of Idaho finally triumphed, and have resulted in the state being threaded in all directions by huge canals, bearing water to hundreds of thousands of acres of land which now yield golden harvests of grain and teem with orchards of luscious fruit, where but a few years ago the only vegetation to be seen was the russet sage brush and greasewood. The agricultural possibilities of the state are now second only to the mineral, and as the fertility of the soil and bountiful water supply become better known, it may be but a few years until the revenue derived from tilling the soil will exceed that of any other calling. The valleys through which flow the rivers are sheltered from the cold blasts of winter, and being supplied with an abundant flow of water from the melting snow and ice in the mountains are especially adapted to producing the very finest fruits. The yields of some of the orchards in the valleys of the Snake and Boise rivers are almost incredible, and accounts of them, to one unacquainted with the facts, read almost like fairy tales. Cattle and sheep also thrive there, the sides of the hills too rugged for agricultural purposes furnishing a splendid range for them during the summer months. Immense crops of hay and alfalfa are raised for their maintenance in winter, and stock raising has been found to be very profitable. High up in the mountains are found immense forests of the finest timber in the world, which as yet have scarcely been touched. The lumbering industry is in its infancy, and promises with the growth of the other resources to assume gigantic proportions. The power afforded by the streams is used for operating mills in the valleys, while the water in its descent from the mountains is also utilized for floating logs from the camps above.

The enumeration of resources of this new candidate for public favor might be continued almost indefinitely, as its possibilities are practically unlimited. It offers an attractive field for investments for the capitalist, and the laborer is afforded an opportunity to win for himself a competency by a few years of well-directed toil. The citizens are progressive, honest and open-hearted, and gladly welcome accessions to their number from the over crowded sections of the east and elsewhere.

MINING IN ALASKA.

Prospectors have been busy in the interior of Alaska during the year just closing, and already the annual glowing reports of the fabulous wealth

stored away in that frigid region are being scattered broadcast. One thing noticeable is that it is still stored there and the prospectors fail to bring it away with them. That the interior streams of Alaska have immense deposits of the precious metal is not to be denied, but the means necessary for obtaining and marketing it are not at the command of the average party attracted by the statements made by prospectors who have worked over the country. Nothing, practically, has been done in the way of development. There are no railroads or steamboat lines in operation, and the only means of communication between the coast cities and the interior is by pack trains, rafts and the primitive Indian canoe, and even were the entire mountains solid masses of rich ore, the ordinary miner would be none the better off. The climate of the interior portion of Alaska is extremely cold, and the working season during the summer is very short, so that but a fraction of the year can be employed in prosecuting actual work. Supplies have to be carried over the pack trails, and owing to the rugged nature of the country, and the fact that snow lies on the ground late in spring and appears early in the fall, nearly the entire season is consumed in getting a sufficient store accumulated to last during the long, severe winter, particularly if the miner penetrate far into the interior. Then, too, mining can not be carried on without water, and as the streams freeze early in the season, this necessary article is soon a scarcity. Parties who have had experience in mining on the Yukon have repeatedly given warning to prospectors and small parties of miners with limited means, and the exact state of affairs as detailed by them has been published time and again, and yet, the romantic tinge given such a trip by a recital of the adventures encountered seems to outweigh the cool judgment of men of intelligence. Until railroads are built which will permit of supplies and appliances required for successfully operating mines being taken in, and reduce the time and expense of reaching the mines, no marked progress can be made in the mineral development of the interior. Occasional finds are made of rich placer claims, where a man has succeeded in securing a quantity of nuggets and dust in a short time, and it is the reports of these that excite the average miner until his imagination pictures Alaska to him as one vast pocket of gold only awaiting someone to carry it away. Men of small means can not prosecute work successfully, and many, after demonstrating this to their own satisfaction, and enduring almost untold hardships, gradually change from earnest prospectors to eager pocket hunters, and finally drift back to the coast cities with nothing to show for their season's work, and frequently without the means for paying passage back to their homes. West SNOX has twice before published experiences of deluded miners who have been tempted to undertake, single-handed, work requiring unlimited capital, but the warning is soon forgotten, and each year witnesses the return of a fresh band of enthusiasts who were guided by their cupidity rather than their sober judgment.

A dam is being built across the Bruneau river, in the northern part of Owyhee county, Idaho, for the purpose of raising the water of that stream to a height that will admit of its being taken out by means of canals and distributed over the surrounding country for irrigation purposes. The dam will be thirty-four feet high and 175 feet long. The foundation will be built in the most substantial manner, and bedded in cement. Eighteen feet from the top of the dam will be placed two thirty-six inch iron pipes, so that in case of there being a sudden rise in the river, the waste water can be discharged through them. Iron gates will be placed on the ends of the pipes that can be easily raised or lowered at pleasure. A roll-way 100 feet wide will be placed on top of the dam, built of iron, so arranged that an immense amount of water can be discharged over it, without tearing away any of the stone work below. To prevent any surprise by the sudden rising of the river, a gate will be made in the flume built from the dam, so that a large volume of water can be carried through it and emptied into the river below about the water pipes and roll-way fail to carry away the water fast enough. This enterprise was commenced some four years since, but a sudden rise in the river caused by heavy rains last spring carried away the dam, and in rebuilding, the company is putting in a structure which it is thought will withstand any pressure that may be brought to bear upon it, and which will also give increased service for irrigation.

An effort is being made at Weston, Oregon, to organize a company for the manufacture of pottery ware of different kinds. A large deposit of clay has been discovered near the town, and several tests of samples have proved it to be of excellent quality. Market could be found for the output of such an establishment throughout Eastern Oregon and Washington, and Weston would derive a great deal of benefit from it.

The Old Fellows of Roseburg are contemplating the erection of a fine brick building in that city. It will contain store rooms, a lodge room and an opera hall. The lodge owns one of the finest business corners in the city, and such a building would doubtless prove to be a paying investment besides being an ornament to the town.