

### Travels:—The Hudson and the Oregon or Columbia.

BY T. B. WAKEMAN.

The rivers and mountains of a country were its original Deities—and such they should ever remain; for winds and waters, indeed all, depend upon them. Think them over,—the Nile, Jordan, Tigris, Ganges, The Yellow, Danube, Seine, Thames, Hudson, Mississippi, Oregon or Columbia: all are mountain begotten. Yet they are humanly begotten, for they repeat and echo back the souls of the people who deified, or as we say modernly, poetised and thus consecrated them.

Until this consecration grows over THE Rivers and Mountains of a country it is, to and in the heart, the "Devil's Country," where new homes may be located and "occupied" but not really lived. The reason is that we are the creatures, the growths of environment, as Darwin and Spencer have proved, that is, we are at bottom, Fetichists. We cannot help it; we only live as we invest our minds, hearts and lives in the great God—the Environment which creates and sustains us. When we are transplanted to a new and very different country we are like trees, and we cannot feel it to be home—never! until our new roots pierce it and feed our hearts from it. Then it may become "God's Country," but it is hard for old trees. "Were you homesick when you first came to this wonderful country?" we said to a venerable old lady. "Sick' don't begin," she replied, "I just squalled and howled like a dog!"

Such are the thoughts natural to a modern thinker who sails up the Oregon, wild and wonderful, misnamed the Columbia, and yet remembers the Hudson. The reason is that the Hudson, one of the world's prettiest, humanest rivers and sea inlets—half tide and half river, is one of the few places on this continent that has become really consecrated by its people. It was not terrible, but all useful, fruitful, cheerful, benign and beautiful to begin with; and from it, every year since the "Half Moon" dropped its anchor in it, has it fed milder feelings into the souls of those who have lived, or passed or lingered over it. Thus Paulding, Poe, Bryant and Irving have helped to infuse deep into its landscape the soul-life of a mighty people.

In nearly the same latitude over more than 3,000 miles of dusty plains, rocky deserts, and arid mountains a similar people have now begun to humanize and consecrate their mightier, their wonderful river, THE OREGON. It is a hard task, but they will not fail, for they are invincible. The first difficulty is struck in its false name.

By accident, rather than sense, the name of Capt. Gray's merchant ship, "The Columbia," was given to the mouth of this river, or rather the adjoining land; but Carver and the other first explorers down from its source in distant mountains had given it the Indian name, the OREGON, "the great water." So was it generally known, and its consecration was thus begun by Bryant in 1817 in those ever memorable lines of the Thanatopsis:

"Take the wings  
Of morning, pierce the Barcan wilderness,  
Or lose thyself in the continuous woods  
Where rolls the OREGON, and hears  
no sound,  
Save his own dashings—yet the  
dead are there."

This passage should have fixed the name forever, for it was appropriate, and the name more nearly given by "the dead who are there," than any other. (See H. H. Bancroft's History of Oregon, Vol. 1, pp. 17-25.)

"Columbia," a foreign name taken from Capt. Gray's ship, would have done for the Americans to give to country, territory or state so as to honor Columbus and Washington in their two ultimate and adjoining states on the Pacific. Oregon was the river's common name in the whole territory. Columbus and Columbia had no more application to this river than the man in the moon—not half as much as Queen Elizabeth's Admiral Drake, who first sailed to its mouth in 1579. The Indians, the discoverers, the explorers, the President Jefferson, who had it annexed to the United States, the great consecrator Bryant, called the Great River the Oregon, and so it may be, even though the State has been named from it.

We used to say the Hudson, or North river—but now we say "The Hudson" only. So may it be "the Oregon or Columbia," until possibly "the Oregon" revives. Certainly that should be its home, poetic and sacred name; though geographers may for a long time use the other, or both. The name that Bryant adopted can never be wholly washed out, for Thanatopsis alone is likely to live as long as there is anything human to die.

The river is large, broad and mostly with good current; and sweet, clear, emerald water, like the green Niagara; which shows that it runs mostly over aluminous, or clay soils. The ocean receives it with a "bar" and a broad and beautiful bay, ten miles or so in diameter, the finest salmon fish-pond in the world. Astoria, perched on a promontory on the south-east shore, is an embryo city struggling with fish and lumber, but most of

the ships and business move up the mile-wide, slanting shored river to Portland, which is 12 miles up the Willamette.

Soon after passing this gentle river, the banks of the Oregon became more abrupt. The morning mists veil the sight until finally Mount Hood looms above them with its snowy peak—as if to forbid further progress. Soon the sun and breeze sweep the mists away and the secret they would hide stands revealed. Those snows came ages ago to quench and freeze a volcanic hell. Through that frozen hell our sturdy little steamer works its way against a stiff current all the day, till at sunset we reach The Dalles. It is mostly all the same story of an invested and solidified Inferno; that is told with grotesque and wonderful variations of rocks, now perpendicular almost to the sky, now columned, now twisted, gnarled and distorted so as to defy the imagination as to how they came, unless they once lived and cavorted like the Hell Craggs in Faust:

"And Craggs giant shouted—ho! ho!  
How they snort and how they blow."

But all this you have, or will have learned, from sight, books, photos or pictures. Milder features relieve. There are breaks through the walls that tell of fruitful and habitable backgrounds and valleys, like the shaded gate to the Hood river peach and fruit valley. Then there are a few drift banks and shelves along the river that begin to smile with a human echo. But these are rare, even the few brooks on the mountains having to run off into the air, all become a spraying mist before they reach the river below.

"Ah me!" as Dante said when he entered the Inferno. Who shall translate this frozen hell into a lovely and blessed pathway and bower of "The Earthly Paradise." The people will feel it and are coming. There is no delight without contrast. There could be no heaven unless founded upon hell as its contrast. To open these valleys, and spread new homelife over these lava rocks and ledges will make those who do it most sensible of the value of that new life which is already replacing the Indian barbarism,—spreading the turf carpet, stippling the landscape with trees, and veiling the petrified horrors of the hell that was, with the mantling vines of the coming paradise. Of that paradise those horrors are, by reason of the contrast, the best possible foundation as to both chemistry and sentiment; for lavas make the richest soils; and agonies past make only more exquisite the comforts and joys that overgrow them.

Year by year this chaos of wonders will become properly clothed and even properly named. We

shall call the beauty acquiring river "the Oregon;" the now meaningless "Rooster Rock" will take its new name, "Castle Rock," and so match the "Cathedral." Yes, the wonderful will be clothed by the appropriate and beautiful in time, for the people who are to do it are living, or being born every day. Where do they live? Why, in that awful purgatory, "the great middle West", with heat or cyclone swept prairies, with scorching alkali deserts, with the barren solitudes of parching and freezing mountains! Ye miserable who are doomed to live in that torturing purgatory, save up your money, so as to get a summer's breath of heaven by the clear mountain rivers and shores east of the Alligaries or west of the Sierras and Cascades. Of all places the valley of the Oregon is and will be more and more the unequaled watering place of the West. The summer air, always pleasant by day, just cool enough at night, and (only think of it!) never a mosquito! The water always fresh, clear and drinkable, always ready to kiss you all over when you enter it for a bath. And if you follow these ever talking waters to their home you will find it in those mighty rollers of the Pacific which will lift you in their embrace at "Seaside."

An esteemed Eastern friend says that the people should make THE river of their country its bride, and that they can only be well-to-do, happy and blessed in constantly recognizing and sustaining their marriage. She finds authority for it in her favorite artist writer, Van Dyke, thus:

"The life of a river, like that of a human being, consists of the union of soul and body, the water and banks. They belong together. They act and react upon each other. The stream moulds and makes the shore; hollowing out a bay here, and building a long point there. The shore guides and controls the stream, now detaining, now advancing it, now bending it in a hundred beautiful sinuous curves, and now speeding it straight as a wild bee on its homeward flight, to its ocean home."

These travels must end here. But we now know that next summer the dust begrimed and perspiring victims of the "middle West" will miss the great delight of the year unless they wait upon and enjoy the "Great Water" of the West as she journeys from The Dalles to the Ocean—helping to marry to her the newly civilized landscape, as the Catskills to the Hudson, and old Venice to the sea.