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OFFICE—At the Drug Store.
RESIDENCE—Three Blocks South of Drug Store.

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Annual Address.

By Joseph Gaston at the Washington County Fair.

Fellow Citizens, Ladies and Gentlemen: It is meet and proper, that at the close of a bountiful harvest, gathered without loss in the most delightful climate, and in the midst of general good health in the county, that we should meet at this harvest-home-gathering to hold the annual Fair.

Free from the insect plagues which consume the farmer's crops in the States beyond the Rocky Mountains, and turn his life into a consuming care, and far removed from the devastating floods and storms which ruin in an hour the labors of a lifetime, the Oregon farmer is not only vouchsafed with scriptural fidelity the promise of "seedtime and harvest," but he has also added thereto, a luxurious climate which enables him to sow his seed in the dreamy days of mellow Autumn, or in the brightest days of joyous Spring, and then gather his harvest without fear of destroying storms, but with cooling breeze to temper the Summer heat.

These circumstances which surround us call for thanks to the "Giver of every good and perfect gift," for these many and incomparable blessings. It is therefore with no ordinary feeling that I congratulate the Officers and Directors of the Agricultural Society, and the people in attendance, on this auspicious opening of their Ninth Annual Fair.

The Oldest County Society.

I believe that this is the oldest County Agricultural Society in the State; and the regular annual holding of its Fair for nine successive years would in itself be a fact of just pride to the people of the county. And when we add to this, the fact that it has annually increased in importance, deepening and strengthening its influence with the people, and yearly attracting a greater measure of attention from the people of the State and surrounding Territories, we as citizens may do a little boasting of substantial progress in this direction.

I well remember when visiting the first Fair held on these grounds eight years ago, when the Society was young and weak, and in debt for its land and most of its improvements, that not a few croakers could be heard saying that it must soon fail, that debts and interest would eat it up, that it was only a "horse-race" anyhow, and Simon's would get the land back with a good board fence into the bargain. The prophets of evil had their say, but they have not yet seen their day; and judging from present appearances they are not likely to; and I know I but express the hearty wish of every true friend of the county, and every true farmer, when I hope that no lukewarm friend or open enemy may ever live to see the Washington County Agricultural Society compelled to close its gates and haul down its banner of progress and public spirit. And that there shall be no abatement of the interest and improvement of the Society and its beautiful grounds and annual exhibitions, let every citizen join hands with the Board of Directors to encourage them not only with reassuring words, but also with larger and more varied exhibitions of the products of the county, and with larger attendance, so that "gate money" and entrance fees may be fully equal to an annually enlarged premium list, current expenses, and better improvements to meet the demands of a rapidly growing county.

General Benefits of Fairs.

No man need now say that these annual Fairs are not beneficial to the county and the people. The benefits of Fairs have been proven by the experience of hundreds of years in all civilized countries, and it is not now necessary to discuss the question. While this Fair is more particularly a Farmer's

institution, yet it brings together all trades, arts and professions, develops public spirit, encourages public and private improvements, and last but not least, enlarges the sympathies and creates friendship and good feeling among all classes of society, who thus once a year meet and mingle on a common level.

Agriculture itself is greatly indebted to other workers besides those who follow the plow. There are many present who can remember when all the produce of the great Mississippi Valley had to be reduced to the smallest bulk, flour, whisky or bacon, and floated to New Orleans in the "broadhorn," the bold navigators returning on foot or by pony through the "Indian country" with the proceeds of their year's labor in Spanish coin; while the dry goods, groceries and hardware for the scattering settlements in all the West were hauled or packed over the Alleghany Mountains. The introduction of the steamboat on the rivers, the railroad on the land, McCormick's and other Reapers in the harvest field, speedily transformed the Western wild into a created an Empire in the Mississippi valley.

But in thousands of ways is the farmer indebted to the busy brain and skillful hands of the mechanic and inventor. The recent introduction into Oregon of the Alden and Plummer Fruit Dryers is a notable instance in which the mechanic has rendered great service to the farmer and orchardist, and by which thousands of acres of rough and comparatively valueless land will be made productive and profitable in the culture of plums, prunes, and other fruits, to be dried and shipped to foreign countries.

The Advantages of the County.

Washington county, although long considered a little cut of the way, possesses more advantages for a permanent home, with greater prospects for a rise in the value of lands than any other county in the State. It is to the Commercial Metropolis of Oregon, or to any future commercial entrepot which may be built up at Astoria, just what Chester county is to Philadelphia, or Westchester is to New York—it is the nearest body of good land to the City.

We hold our Fair to-day within seventeen miles of ships' docks at Portland, and within forty miles (as the bird flies) of the Pacific Ocean. And we stand in the centre of a circular valley of a half million acres of as desirable prairie and intervening wood lands as can be found anywhere on the globe. And the future railroad development of Oregon will unquestionably place this beautiful valley around the railroad tripod of the State, the pivotal centre being in the vicinity of the "Grove," while one arm leads to Portland, another south through the Willamette valley, and the third piercing the Coast Range, will give the Washington county farmer the choice of Portland, Astoria or Nevada markets.

From the speaker's stand on this Fair Ground the observer can take in at one view one of the grandest panoramic scenes to be found in any land. The entire boundary of vision is skirted by gently rising hills, wooded to their summits, while to the east the majestic "Hood" dominates the landscape, and to the north the scarcely less pretentious "St. Helens," crowned with eternal snows. The entire topography of the county combines the useful with the beautiful.

The "hill country" too surrounding the valley, will in time be settled up as land becomes more valuable, just as all other hill countries have been settled. Roads will insinuate themselves through yonder foothills and up their gentle slopes. Flocks and herds will occupy the "ferry openings," and orchards of never failing fruits will take the place of superfluous woodlands. The public school house will crown the eminences or nestle in the valleys, iterating back the glorious influences of our own "Pacific University."

All of this will be witnessed by some of those within the sound of my voice to-day. And then will the shepherd from the heights of Chehalis, the fruit growers from the "Portland hills," with the farmers of the Scappoose and Coast Ranges, gather here with the old families of the "Plains" to take up the labors you must by and by lay down.

Some Other Matters.

It will be observed that I have so far not given any advice as to the best methods of cultivating the soil, or the most profitable crops to be raised, or the most desirable breeds of stock to be kept. You will understand the wisdom of this on my part, when I frankly admit that it is doubtless true that most of you know a great deal more about that than I do. While I was raised on a farm and helped grub one out of the beech woods and limestone hills of Eastern Ohio, yet it has been a long since I did much at practical farming until my recent return to this honorable calling, that I do not feel like an oracle on the subject.

Yet there are some things which I do know about the business as well as anybody, and knowing them I have always embraced every opportunity to express my sympathy and friendship for the farmer and his interests. I know what it is for farmers to struggle from year to year for the bare necessities to clothe and educate their families, their brains and muscle consumed with labors which permit little or no respite or time for reading or recreation. I know their necessity for counting the value of small things, for their business is, all things considered, the poorest paid of any in the United States.

I know it is the custom of the professional politician, and often heard too in Agricultural addresses, that the farmer is the most independent of all classes of society. And while this is true,—and it is the glory of the farmer that it is true,—yet these same orators who count it so great an advantage, forget to consider at what cost of toil and self-denial this independence is maintained.

The farmer, his wife and children, can appreciate as well as any the comforts and luxuries of looks, music, leisure, travel, elegant furniture, goodly raiment and fine houses. And yet how few there are who can afford them without sacrificing their honest pride and independence to the master of debt.

Why is This So?

Why is it that the farmer and his wife have to labor so much harder for so much less than his seemingly more favored acquaintance in the city? I'll tell you the reason. It is because the farming interests of the country have been the oyster on which the trading professional and non-producing classes have been living, and living too at too high a rate of speed.

Farmers go on from year to year hoping to make this or that improvement, or hoping to send one of the boys or girls to school, and wondering why their means slip away so fast without their being able to compass the coveted point. Your earnings are swept away by the unreasonable cost of reapers, threshers, wagons and other farm machinery, while the store bills are largely increased by unjust import duties. And to these taxes upon necessities comes the burdens of taxation imposed by a high priced and outrageously expensive (to use no harsher terms) government. Think of an army of one hundred thousand Federal office holders in the United States, added to our own State and county officers, each one of whom are paid from five to one hundred times as much as any of you farmers could make on the best farm in Oregon. Think of the Army and Navy too, necessities to the government of course, but grossly and unnecessarily expensive. Think of all this array of patriots "who neither toil nor spin," and not forgetting their stratagies (commonly called irregu-

larities) and remembering that in numbers and capacity they compare with the locusts of Egypt and the grasshoppers of Kansas, and you might well be surprised that you have a plow on your farm or a coat to your back.

No Use to Blame the Office-holders.

It is no use to condemn the office-holders, except those who steal, for you have never seen but very few of these fellows who would not take all the law allowed. The fault is in the law which permits injustice. What do you think of a law which enables an officer to save thirty-five thousand dollars every year, in addition to a good salary, out of a fund of seventy thousand dollars annually given him to do public work? How is that for a good fat place? And yet that thing is being done here in Oregon in this very year of grace 1875. And the officer is not guilty of any violation of law, or any dishonesty, as the world goes. He simply lets contracts to his friends at the rates and in the manner provided by the law, and when a man is favored with a two thousand dollar contract he comes around the next day and makes the officer a present of a thousand dollars to testify his high consideration for the aforesaid public functionary.

It would seem to be the dictate of common sense, to say nothing of justice to the taxpayers, for some law maker to rise in his place and try to have that leak stopped by an amendment to the law, which should require all such public work to be given to the lowest responsible bidder. And yet where is the man in (either political parties who have made the effort? The fact is that many of our representatives connive at just such practices in order to create a corruption fund to keep themselves in office.

This is but one item. There are plenty more all over the country, in all departments of the public service, state and national. And it is this unnecessary and corrupt expenditure of public money, amounting to millions upon millions of dollars, which being saddled upon the industry of the country, and all of it in the end wrong out of the tillers of the soil, which makes your life and labors harder than they need be.

The money to support an expensive government, I need not tell you is collected either by direct taxes, or by duties on imports. And it don't make any difference whether you pay it directly on your land, or on beer and tobacco, or indirectly in the higher price of your clothing, hardware, groceries or machinery, caused by a tariff which works injustice to the Pacific Coast, in order to foster and aid New England factories, which buy but little or no Oregon produce. You have to pay it in the end, and will have to continue paying it until the laws are reformed, not only to secure a more economical administration of the government, but also to more equally distribute the burdens of taxation and the benefits of the laws among the different sections.

Chartered Monopolies.

Another species of imposition upon the producing classes is found in the power which the government has either directly granted to certain private corporations, or which allows them to assume it, and by which they make inordinate and unjust profits out of the people. The best illustration of the first class of monopolies may be found in the National Banks. While I would not in the least decry the safety of the National Bank system, yet it is so organized as to be a grievous burden upon, and a dangerous power to the people. These Banks are not only the custodians of large amounts of the people's money out of which they make profits, but they are allowed to draw interest on both their securities and their circulation notes, thus giving them double interest on their money. In addition to this they have a monopoly to these advantages. If a dozen

well-to-do farmers wanted to start a bank and do the banking business of this county, and it won't be long until such an institution is needed, you can't have the benefits of the National Bank Act, because a few capitalists in Portland have secured all of the benefits of that law for Oregon. And for the same reasons all the other counties, with the large towns of Salem, Albany, and other places are shut out from the benefits of that law. That such a law should ever have been passed is a wonder in a Republican form of government; but that it is now tolerated and maintained on the necks of the people, almost without question, shows only the overwhelming power of these Banks and their money to control the politics, parties and legislation of the country. The law ought to be amended so as to compel the Banks to pay a part of their enormous profits to the government for the benefits they receive, so as to lighten the load of taxation on the people, and so as to allow every locality to have as many Banks as the business of the country demanded.

A fair specimen of the second class of monopolies referred to, is to be found in the Trans-Continental Railroad Companies, which assume and uses the power to unjustly tax the people who are compelled to use its line. Oregon feels this imposition directly in the high rate of fares and freights charged against the Immigration and merchandise coming to this State. While the Act of Congress chartering these railroads does not in express words grant, it does not forbid the power to impose any rate of freight or passage; and the companies are exercising the power to collect such rates as will pay them dividends on millions of dollars of watered stock. This power is being exercised so as to prevent Immigration to Oregon, and settlement of the State, and also to onerously tax our farm machinery and other merchandise coming over that line. We have settlers in our county now, and there are many more in Oregon, who have crossed the "Plains" this year with ox-teams in the old fashioned way, chiefly because the fare on this line of railroad, built by the people's money, is too outrageously high.

The Remedy.

I need not discuss to the Farmers of Oregon, the power of Congress to regulate these Corporation abuses. Congress has as much power, and it is just as plainly its duty to exercise that power, to control these Bank and Railroad monopolies, as the people of this State have to regulate our own Railroads. The people through their representatives, created these corporations, and the creature cannot rise superior to the creator. The only wonder is, that the power to protect the rights and to promote the interests of the people has not been exercised by Congress and the Legislature long ago.

But the Legislative body can only act as instructed by the people. If the people want reform they must vote for it. Somebody may say, "you are discussing politics at a Fair." Very well, if this is politics it is just the kind which needs agitation here and everywhere. If any politician or party feels aggrieved at this sort of talk, it is only evidence that their politics need reforming.

The evils I have mentioned are pressing down the industries of the country, and especially the Farmers, everywhere, and daily growing worse. We hear a universal complaint in the United States, of hard times. That it is not worse in Oregon than it is must be credited to our prolific soil, regular crops and commercial position which generally commands fair prices. But this great cancer of extravagance in the public service and exorbitant profits to chartered monopolies, eating, gnawing, and continually sapping the vitals of the nation must sooner or later bring the inevitable result of

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