

OREGON SPECTATOR.

"Westward the Star of Empire takes its way."

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THE SPECTATOR.

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OREGON.

Brief description of, &c.
Oregon is four hundred and twenty geographical miles in extent from north to south, about six hundred miles from east to west, and peculiarly a country of mountains, valleys and plains.

Timber.

The timber of Oregon consists of pine, fir, cedar, oak, spruce, hemlock, cottonwood, cherry and maple. Probably there is no country in the world where timber grows so strikingly straight and beautiful, and to such gigantic altitude and dimensions as in Oregon. Two hundred feet is but a moderate height for the growth of cedars and spruce, and they frequently attain a much greater altitude. We have seen elder growing in Oregon three feet in circumference, and hazle thirty inches in circumference and of the height of forty feet. Black alder and a species of laurel grow to what would be termed, in most countries, large trees—logs of alder have been obtained thirty-two inches in diameter, and of the laurel four feet in diameter. In western Oregon groves of timber are found skirting and separating prairies; but the immense timber districts are mainly confined to the neighborhood of the coast of the Pacific, to the Coast, Cascade and Blue ranges of mountains, and the immediate vicinity of the rivers. There are about thirty saw-mills in Oregon, yet lumber is worth thirty dollars per thousand here, and one hundred and twenty dollars per thousand at San Francisco. There are many unoccupied mill sites in the country, where a mill could be stocked with logs for a year without clearing off more ground than would be required for the convenient use of the mill.

Mountains.

The "Coast range of Mountains" is hardly entitled to the name of mountains; the Blue Mountains are of greater altitude; but the Cascade and Rocky Mountain ranges are awfully grand and majestic piles, possessing many peaks which penetrate the frozen arch. The mountains of Oregon, and more particularly those west of the Blue Mountains, are altogether unlike the mountains of any other portion of the United States. In place of presenting the appearance of vast piles of rock, they appear like immense mounds of earth. At their base, and upon their sides and tops a singular absence of loose and projecting rocks is observed, and their soil is everywhere rich, black and deep, and in future years, probably, they will be more easily and successfully cultivated than are now the famous "Alpine ridges."

Salmon, Game, &c.

The streams of Oregon, from the mountain hill to the mighty river, abound with excellent fish. The profits now derived from the packing of salmon are very considerable; and considering the greatly increased demand for fish in the Pacific trade, the countless numbers of salmon and salmon-trout which periodically crowd into and up the rivers, and the ease with which these fish are taken, the wealth to be amassed from this branch of business cannot fail to be very great.

The game of Oregon is principally deer, Panther, Elk, Deer, Antelope, Squirrel, Geese, Swan, Ducks, Pheasants, Grouse and Quail. In this valley are found some Bear and Elk, and an abundance of black and white tailed Deer, and Geese and Ducks.

In the Umpqua, Rogues and Clamet valleys are found an abundance of Elk, Deer, Antelope, Geese and Ducks. The Deer of this country have been represented by some as small and inferior. Such is not the fact. The meat of the Deer of Oregon is as tender and delicious as the Deer of any other portion of the United States. The meat of the black-tailed Deer of this country is much superior to the meat of the white-tailed Deer of New York, Pennsylvania, or the Western States.

Grasses, Grains, and Fruits of Oregon.

The soil and climate of Oregon are peculiarly adapted to the growth of grasses,

grains, and fruits. The natural grasses are bunch-grass, blue-grass, and two species of clover. White and red clover, and timothy, grow luxuriantly. We have seen stalks of timothy from five to six feet long. Wheat, rye, barley, and oats; also potatoes, peas, beans, and all other vegetables are produced in abundance, with much less than ordinary care. With such attention as is bestowed upon corn-growing in New York, Pennsylvania, and New England, a fair crop of corn may be produced in this valley. Good corn crops were grown by the missionaries in middle Oregon.

We were told while en route to this country, that it produced a very good quality of wheat, but that the straw was so short that the harvesting was necessarily effected by "pulling." Wheat grows taller than in the most favored trans-mountain wheat districts. A fellow-traveller lately pointed out to us a field in Yam Hill county, from which we were assured that three successive fair crops of wheat had been taken—the two last of which were self-sown. The yield of wheat, per acre, does not exceed that of the Genesee valley, and the rich prairies of northern Indiana, and south western Michigan; but the wheat crop is not subject to injury from rust, smut, insect or worm. The statement of Dr. White, of raising 5114 bushels of wheat from ten acres of ground, is corroborated by respectable men here, and is entitled to credit.

Winter wheat may be sown from July, to March, and ripens earlier or later, according to the time of sowing. Red wheat takes the character of spring-wheat, and ripens the same season, if sown in April. By sowing wheat after oats, nearly as much oats is obtained as wheat. There are many fields from which two, three, and perhaps more, successive good crops of oats have been taken from one sowing. Peas sown broadcast, with or without oats, bring a product about equal to wheat. Apple and peach-trees perfect abundant fruit annually. There are a few bearing pear trees in the country. Apple trees of less than two inches diameter, are loaded with fruit. We have eaten peaches from Gov. Abernethy's orchard, the trees from which they were taken being the product of the mission garden, which were very large and delicious, and considered to be an improvement of the mission stock of fruit. We have heard of no tame, bearing plum, cherry, quince, apricot, or neclarine trees in the country. Wild white plumbs, grapes, cherries, and black, red, and yellow currants, are indigenous to some portions of Oregon, but are rarely found in this valley. A choice white plum grows in the Umpqua valley, upon a tree, or rather shrub, so small that their growing and ripened fruit bends them to the ground. Several gentlemen of the immigration of 1847 brought through good selections of growing fruit trees.

One gentleman brought through some eight varieties, comprising apple, pear, peach, plum, cherry, quince, and grape; another gentleman brought several thousand of an equal or better selection, and lost but very few on the road. Oregon may be set down as well suited to the growth and perfection of fruits. Wild berries are very abundant, some of which are peculiarly delicious. The berries are strawberries, dewberries, whortleberries, sallowberries, black and yellow raspberries, gooseberries, junberries, and cranberries. The cranberries are good, but found in abundance only in the vicinity of the ocean; the june, salmon, and gooseberries are not particularly desirable; the dew, sallow, and raspberries are choice, and quite abundant; and the straw and whortleberries are extremely abundant and delicious. The prairies may be truly said to be literally red with strawberries, and the timbered openings blue with whortleberries, in their season. The season of ripe strawberries is from three to six weeks, and that of whortleberries from six to ten weeks. The whortleberry bush, except in the mountains, like the Umpqua plumb shrub, is borne prostrate upon the earth's grassy covering, from the weight of its delicious fruit. The wild strawberry of Oregon is larger and better than any we have ever seen, except the largest of the large garden cultivated English strawberry. The whortleberry has more acidity than those of unshaded growth, growing east of the mountains. English gooseberries and currants are cultivated here with success.

Atmosphere, Climate and Healthfulness of Oregon.

In passing from the Missouri river to Oregon, the traveller cannot fail to observe the positive and increasing clearness and purity of the atmosphere. Objects seen at a distance are found to be of a remove nearly double their apparent distance; the spirit of the traveller becomes unusually buoyant and excitable, and he finds himself and animals possessed of far greater powers of endurance than he had supposed possible.

The same brilliantly clear atmosphere smiles benignantly over all Oregon. Objects may be seen with the unaided eye at the distance of two hundred miles, and the eye still reaches off beyond in search of a more distant object upon which to rest. Persons abroad may form some idea of the charming transparency of the atmosphere of Oregon, from the fact, that at this city, (lat. 45 deg. 20 min.) daylight and twilight, in the longest days of summer, consume twenty-one out of the twenty-four hours of the day.

From location upon the Pacific, and from being traversed from north to south by mountain ranges, the climate of Oregon is necessarily diversified. That portion between the Rocky and blue mountains, possesses a remarkably salubrious climate, sufficiently warm and delightfully agreeable in summer, but cold and frequently snow-mantled in winter. That portion between the Blue and Cascade mountains, it is believed, possesses one of the most mildly temperate, even and invigorating climates on the face of the earth: snow, rain nor hail seldom fall, except in the spring or fall; yet excellent consecutive crops of wheat, corn, oats, peas, potatoes, and garden vegetables have been raised there without irrigation, and almost the entire surface of the country is bountifully overspread with the richest of grasses. That portion between the Cascade mountains and the Pacific enjoys a climate eminently pure and healthy, and as mild as forty-eight degrees of north latitude as the opposite side of the continent does at forty degrees.

Rains fall occasionally in June, July, and September, more frequently in October, February, March, April, and May, and frequently, although far from incessantly in November, December, and January. The prevailing winds of winter are from the south and south-west, and of summer from the north and north-west. South winds here are slightly less warm than in most parts of the United States, and they are less certainly, and much less copiously attended with rains.

Oregon is now, at home, known to be, and ere long, abroad, must become proverbial for its healthfulness. Its location upon the mother of oceans; its lofty and extensive mountain ranges; its soft pure waters, unequalled for transparency and deliciousness; its clear and pure atmosphere; and its mild, even, and salubrious climate, all conspire to make Oregon a truly and peculiarly healthy country.

Minerals, Metals, &c.

Iron-ore is known to exist in the country. It is said, that there is an extensive bed of good pipe ore ten miles below this city, and one mile from the Willamette river. Other beds of iron-ore, more or less extensive, are said to have been discovered. It is believed that iron-ore in abundance, and of good quality, exists in Oregon. Extensive beds of rich lead ore have been discovered in different portions of the territory. Black lead of a superior quality is known to exist in abundance in the middle portion of Oregon, between the Columbia and the British possessions. Copper of a very pure quality is said to exist in the western portion of the territory, between the British possessions and the Columbia. Eastern and north-eastern Oregon abounds in granite and marble. Sandstone is found in different portions of the country, some beds of which are sufficiently hard for building purposes, while others are very soft. Limestone is also found in different portions of the country. Stone-coal has been discovered in several places at the foot of the Cascade Mountains in the neighborhood of the Columbia, on the Cowlitz river, on the Columbia in Catalmet bay, and in the vicinity of the coast about ninety miles below the mouth of the Columbia. The coal from these localities have been but imperfectly tested. A good article of coal exists in abundance on Vancouver's Island, and the same vein crops out on the coast south of the 49th parallel. Good stone-coal is believed to

exist in abundance in Oregon. Platinum is said to exist in vast quantities in the Flathead country, in the neighborhood of Fort Okanagan.

Gold has been discovered in several different places in Oregon, but nowhere as yet in great abundance. Within the last three weeks gold has been discovered on the Santiam river, a tributary of the Willamette, taking its rise in the neighborhood of Mount Jefferson. Some persons engaged in gold-digging on the Santiam are making about four dollars per day, and think the prospect good for finding the gold considerably abundant when, from the disappearance of the snow, they shall be able to penetrate farther into the mountains. We have conversed with several who have returned from the California mines, and all agree in ascribing a striking similarity in the geological character of several portions of eastern and southern Oregon and the gold regions of California, and they all unite in confident opinion, that gold will be found in great abundance in Oregon.

Valley between the Coast Range and the Pacific.

Until recently, the coast range of mountains has been supposed to form the immediate shore of the Pacific; such is the appearance from the sea, but the fact is otherwise. The coast of the Pacific has been explored about one hundred miles south of the mouth of the Columbia, and for this distance the bold rocky reef forming the shore of the Pacific is found to be distinct from the coast range of mountains, and separated from it by a very considerable valley. This valley is from about two to twelve miles in width, mostly covered with timber, yet containing many prairies, some of which are several miles in extent. The soil of the valley is deep, black and rich. Some of the prairies are covered with clover, and other grasses; but they are more usually covered with fern, which grows to the height of eight, and some say ten feet. Fern lands have been usually avoided in this country; yet a tall, heavy growth of fern indicates a rich deep soil. We have frequently noticed that where we have seen fern growing the rainiest, the soil appeared looser, blackest, and richest. The best garden we have seen in the country, was made in a fern patch, without manure. The coast range furnishes the head springs of several small rivers, some of which cross the valley, while others traverse it north and south. The rivers usually empty into bays, some of which are quite spacious.

Tilamuke bay, situate about forty miles below Clatsop Plains, is several miles in extent, receiving five rivers, some of which are good mill-streams—two miles back of this bay, a prairie commences, varying from one and a half to three miles in width, and eight miles long. Below the Tilamuke bay, two others have been discovered, which are worthy of being noticed; the first of which is known to the natives by the name of Celeste, and the second by the name of Yaquina. The Celeste bay is from a fourth of a mile to a mile in width, three miles long, and receives the waters of two rivers. A bed of excellent stone-coal has been discovered on the bank of the Celeste river, ten miles from its entrance into the Celeste bay. There are several small rich level prairies on the Celeste river. The Yaquina bay is three fourths of a mile wide at its mouth, from a mile to two and a half miles wide, extends parallel with the coast from six to ten miles in length, and is perfectly sheltered from the ocean winds. There is considerable prairie in the immediate vicinity of the Yaquina bay. All the rivers emptying into these bays abound with salmon and other fish, and the bays all afford clams, crabs, &c., in abundance. Within the Yaquina bay the water is deep, and the waves roll into the mouth from the ocean without any apparent obstruction. Clatsop Plains, situate at and below the mouth of the Columbia, is the only portion of the coast yet settled by the whites, but other portions of the coast are soon destined to teem with a healthy, busy and flourishing population. Clatsop Plains is justly famed for the salubrity of its climate, and the rare productiveness of vegetables; the coast valley below, must be equally healthy, and more productive in grains. Previous to the breaking out of the gold mania, arrangements were being made for the careful survey of the Yaquina bay, and the establishment of settlements upon its banks and at its mouth; but that, like most other home enterprises, was crushed amid the wild rage for gold digging.

Umpqua and Rogues Valleys.

The Umpqua river is about 250 miles in length, and takes its rise in the Cascade mountains; the tide sets up the river about 75 miles, and within sixteen miles of Fort Umpqua. A short distance above Ft. Umpqua a broken ridge, (which the river aided, probably, by convulsions of the earth, has formed) stretches entirely across the valley, dividing it into upper and lower. The valley contains some good cultivated land, the upper valley is more than half timbered as the Willamette valley. Rogues river is also a large river, and combines the upper Umpqua, the valleys are longer than that of the Willamette, and more desirable as a point of climate, richness of soil, and beauty of local scenery. Like many other of the rich valleys of Oregon, the upper Umpqua valley shows marked evidence of having once been a vast lake. As yet, but one claim has been taken in the Umpqua valley, and none has been taken in the Rogues valley. Game is very plenty, wild fruits abundant, and the soil rich and deep in these valleys, and they are only from one to two degrees of latitude removed from the upper gold mines of California.

The land route from the settlements in Oregon to California, and the southern route from the United States to Oregon pass through these valleys. To settle these valleys securely and advantageously, a settlement should be made in the Umpqua valley of twenty or thirty families, and in the Rogues valley of fifty or sixty families, and in each case provided with machinery for the erection of a flouring and saw-mill. Such settlements would rapidly increase to large and flourishing communities. No portion of Oregon, presents a better opportunity for the selection of desirable homes than these valleys; their climate is mild and salubrious; their grasses abundant and nutritious; their soil easily cultivated, and capable of producing all the necessaries, and many of the luxuries of life; and, probably, they are better adapted to the successful cultivation of fruit than any other portion of Oregon—either north or south. In the neighborhood of these valleys, the Cascade mountains recede from the ocean, allowing the valleys to penetrate much farther into the interior, and receive more of the wash of the mountains. A large delicious white plum, and excellent grapes grow spontaneous in these valleys.

Agriculture and stock growing will probably be neglected in California; if, therefore persons were desirous to enter into stock growing for the market which the gold mines of that country must afford, these valleys being at the door of that market, are very desirable locations; if persons are inclined to engage in agriculture, these sections of the country are in the immediate neighborhood of gold that will be freely paid for the necessities of life; if men desire to enter into mining, they can pass from the bosom of their families in these valleys into the California mines, and back at will. If gold is discovered in workable quantities in Oregon, it will be in her southern, eastern, or middle portions, and in either case residents of the Umpqua and Rogues valleys will have the advantage of those of the Willamette valley. The Clamet valley still south of these valleys, is but little known, even here. The Clamet river is large, and it is reasonable to suppose that its valley contains considerable good land.

Cowlitz, Chehalis and Puget's Sound Country.

For the Oregon Spectator
Ma. Editor.—Sir, according to your request, I communicate a brief description of that portion of the Territory lying between the Columbia river, and Puget's Sound, and the country immediately adjoining. The Cowlitz settlement is in a prairie district, situate on the Cowlitz river about thirty miles, by way of the river, from its mouth. The settlement is small as yet, and composed principally of Canadians, who are excellent citizens, and the industry, not surpassed by any citizens of the Territory.

The soil in the neighborhood of the Cowlitz river, is extremely rich, and covered with timber up to the settlement. In passing up the Cowlitz river, twenty miles from its mouth, strong signs of lead and iron ore appear, which continue as you proceed up the river. Stone-coal is found here in great abundance, and from the indications, and the opinion of intelligent men who have been conversant with iron districts, it is supposed that Iron Ore ex-

ists here in abundance.

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Falls of the Willamette.

The natural cascade or falls of the Willamette river may be truly regarded as one of nature's most magnificent works. Oregon City is located immediately below the falls on the east side of the river. Lewis and Multnomah City are situated on the west side of the river, the first above and the latter below the falls. The line of the dam, crossing the river, is on a line with the west line of Oregon City, and commencing at the falls, extends about a fourth of a mile, across the river, forming the dam, and continuing the river below the falls, and continuing irregularly down the west side of the river.