

LAYING OF THE CORNER STONE OF THE OREGON CAPITAL

the fact that not a century ago, about the time when Lewis and Clark were making their celebrated exploration of the grand Columbia river, the members of a learned society in Europe were sitting in judgment upon America, and their verdict was that seriously it was a question whether, on the whole, the discovery of America had been of advantage to the world. Evidently they had learned that China was in Venezuela and that Japan was in Newfoundland.

Is it strange, then, that Oregon is comparatively unknown abroad? Her explorers, her trappers and her traders knew but little of her wonderful resources. Before the settlement of California, Oregon was the terminus of western civilization. Today, by many in distant parts, and perhaps by some in that state, she is supposed to be a county in California. We were once asked of the coast of that state, by a professional gentleman traveling 'round the world if Oregon was not an unpopulated region near the White Mountains. Near the capital of this nation, but a few years ago, we were asked if wheat could be raised in Oregon, at a time when our flour was selling at a premium in the markets of the east. Purchasers are usually contented with the article purchased, they never inquire where it comes; and so it is with those who purchase Oregon flour in distant markets—they never inquire where it is obtained. They care not whence it comes. Hence it is that those who purchase the products of our state, as well as those of whom Oregon purchases, are almost entirely ignorant of her resources and interests. The money they make in the trade is all that is visible or valuable to them. Oregon has exported without having the name of an exporter. Her products have gone into the marts of the world accredited to others, while those whom she has enriched have not respected her even for what she has done. For the sake of policy it has been deemed essential to success by jobbers and middlemen to destroy all rivalry in commerce, not only to put up their own price, but to prevent the sale of the article, but also to be little the pretensions of Oregon. Thus our state has stood a beggar, literally, in another market even with all her gold. When she parted with the gold as a slave parts with his last farthing, she has passed up and down the Bosphorus, so to speak, for over 30 years and has paid dear tribute to thousands for things which none could produce or manufacture better than herself. This tribute money is paid to a few who appreciate her gold and nothing more. Shall we ask, when will our state be free from the crushing exactions of our present policy of purchasing everything abroad? When will she turn her attention to the development of her own abundant resources? If she add to the wealth of other states by exporting our gold for articles of food and raiment, for the implements of husbandry, in short, for everything we use, almost, except the air we breathe, is required of a new state like this, let us feel that the central continent of it, and Oregon holds some of the most important keys to her commerce. With these commercial advantages, with the finest of agricultural lands, abundantly watered, which not only insure never failing crops, but are able to sustain a very dense population, the time will come when our state will realize the fondest hopes of her early friends, who predicted for her a future of so much greatness and wealth.

Passing over that portion of the history of Oregon which commences with the discovery of the Columbia river by Capt. Gray in 1792, three hundred years from the discovery of the eastern shores of this continent by Columbus, and ends with the permanent settlement by Americans in 1832, we proceed to enumerate some of the events connected with our development since the last mentioned period.

The first permanent American settlers came in 1832. In 1863, Dr. Whitman and Rev. Mr. Spaulding, both missionaries, arrived in Oregon with their families. That winter they were the first American women who crossed the plains, and their children were the first Americans born in Oregon.

In 1840 there were about 250 inhabitants in this country, exclusively of Indians, 140 of whom were from the Hudson's Bay company. Dr. W. Smith of Clatsop county, now the oldest American pioneer now living. He came here in 1832.

In February, 1841, there was a meeting of a few pioneers—inhabitants of the Willamette valley—for consultation concerning steps necessary to be taken for the formation of laws and election of officers. Several meetings were held in 1841 for the purpose of drafting a constitution and code of laws. It failed to accomplish anything. In February and March, 1843, public meetings were held to adopt measures for carrying on

a defensive and destructive war against bears, wolves, panthers, etc. At the latter date a committee was appointed to take measures for the civil and military protection of the settlements. In March, 1843, the Canadian inhabitants of Oregon met at Champeck and nobly declared a unanimous expression of sentiment of "cordiality, desire of union and inexhaustible peace between all the people and also expressed a willingness to submit to any lawful government that might be extended over them. In 1844 the executive committee presented a message to the legislative assembly that had been chosen, recommending that the executive power should be vested in one person and further expressed themselves as follows: "It is a duty which devolves on you and us to use as much discretion, vigilance and caution in maturing and adopting measures for promoting the interests of this little colony as if we expected our names and acts would be carried in the pages of history or inscribed on pillars of stone when our days and generation shall have passed away."

These steps may be regarded as the first that were taken to found a government for those who, under their own words, "inhabited a portion of country remote from the civilization among the few remaining savages who are the original proprietors of the soil. It is a colony claimed by two powerful civilized and enlightened nations, proud of their national liberties and jealous of their respective rights and privileges."