

NORTHWEST CLIMATE.

Col. Donan Makes a Few Remarks in N. Y. Herald.

PORTLAND, Or., July 31—To the Editor of the New York Herald.—Dear Sir: A paper here publishes, this morning, an alleged request sent by you to your Portland correspondent last night for a report of the heat prostrations and deaths in this city and region during the day. I must be permitted to doubt the genuineness of the dispatch. It would be a sad shattering of my lifelong implicit faith in the omni-science of Great—not to say Greater—New York editors, to be forced to believe that one of them could be so lacking as such a communication would indicate, in knowledge of any important part of the glorious hemisphere he adorns and is supposed to illuminate.

The veriest tyro in United States climatology ought to be aware that sun-strokes and prostrations and deaths from heat are unknown in Portland and Oregon and the Pacific Northwest.

Climate, as everybody above the grade of an average American statesman or a Digger Indian in intelligence, is supposed to know, is not regulated by latitude alone. Ocean currents and altitude are potent factors in it. The snows of untold ages lie unmelted on the lofty peaks of the Cordilleras in Mexico, the Andes in South America, and the Himalays in India. The Alaskan coast, in the latitude of Labrador and Greenland, has a climate little more rigorous than that of Maryland and Virginia. California, on the same parallels with Nebraska, Kansas and Oklahoma, raises oranges, bananas, pineapples, figs, lemons, limes and pomegranates. And Oregon and Washington, in the latitude of hard-frozen Maine and blizzardy Dakota—where it is mid-winter half the year, and a mixture of furnace-heated dog-days and very-late-in-the-fall during the other half—enjoy a climate that, in mildness and equability, is unsurpassed on earth, and is unrivaled anywhere else in the United States.

With the Pacific Ocean laving its western shores for 300 miles with the warm waters of the Japanese current, and with range on range of giant mountains, many of them capped with glaciers and perpetual snow, traversing its entire length, Oregon is climatically a realized dream of paradise. There are no extremes of temperature at any season, below the snow-line on the mountain peaks. The mean temperature of Portland for twenty-seven years past, has been 53 degrees. The mean annual temperature of the coast region is 51 degrees, the thermometer rarely rising above 78 degrees in the summer, or falling below 35 degrees in the winter. In Coos county, according to the United States weather bureau reports for twenty years, the mean temperature for January, the coldest month, has been 45 degrees, and for July and August, the warmest months, 58 degrees—a total range for the year of but thirteen degrees.

Every temperate zone grain, grass, fruit and vegetable grows luxuriantly, and many semi-tropical fruits and flowers flourish; and yet, there is not a day in the year when one cannot, if he will, wallow in a snowdrift twenty feet deep, or seat himself on an iceberg a hundred yards square, by climbing a few miles up some huge mountain side.

Last winter, as you doubtless remember, was a howling terror of frigidty, all over the hapless east—with the thermometer crawling down to 30 degrees below zero in New England and northern New York, and 40 degrees to 48 degrees

below in the Dakotas, blizzards whistling at sixty miles an hour, snow piled to the tops of the lamp-posts and telegraph-poles, whiskey freezing in the glasses, and frigid death and horror stalking everywhere. While here in Portland, Oregon, roses budded and bloomed and lawn-mowers were running, all through November, December and January; and, in February, Spring had donned her sweetest and fairest robes of leaf and flower, and birds were singing love-songs as they built their airy homes. The last week in February one magnolia tree at The Dalles, Oregon, charmed the breezes and the sunshine with over 500 full-blown blossoms.

This summer the whole east and south have seethed and sweetered, as they do every summer, with intolerable heat. From Maine to Texas, people have died by hundreds, of sunstrokes and caloric prostrations. The press dispatches report seventy deaths from these causes in your great city yesterday. From Cape Cod to Corpus Christi the whole continent has been a vast sizzling bake oven, with a sky of glowing brass for a lid, and every brick and cobble-stone a gleaming coal. All the corn-patches in Iowa and Illinois have popped instead of sprouting, and the hills are full of red, white and blue popcorn balls, ready for the next circus season. Ohio and Pennsylvania agriculturists have been picking baked apples from their trees and digging roasted turnips and potatoes out of their gardens. Fishermen in all the Michigan and Wisconsin lakes are catching boiled trout and pickerel with chili sauce. Your eastern hens are said to be laying only hard-boiled, lunch-counter eggs. Even in the vaunted summer climate of Chicago and Minnesota, every thermometer has kicked the top out and boiled over—like the Arkansas doctor's patient, who took twelve blue and twelve white seidlitz powders separately—with from 98 degrees to 112 degrees of hideous hotness in the shade. A universal wall of sweaty anguish, beyond the power of juleps and gin-fizzes to allay, has gone up for many horrid, torrid weeks, from your whole wretched land and people.

And, in all the time, there has not been a night when the thrice-blessed dwellers in western Oregon and Washington have not slept under blankets, and not a day when they could not look out upon the everlasting snows that wreath their mighty mountain-tops. We have no blizzards, no tornadoes, and no thunderstorms. No hot weather in summer, and no cold weather in winter. There is seldom, if ever, a day in the year when flannels and light overcoats are not comfortable, or a night when heavy blankets are not a necessity. Flowers bloom and fruits and vegetable ripen in the open air all the year round, and magnolias, oleanders and jessamines unfold their fragrant loveliness, as they do in far southern lands. Trees and grass are green as living emerald in December and January, and the snowy crowns of Mount Hood, Mount Adams, Mount Saint Helen and Mount Rainier-Tacoma glisten white and dazzling in July and August. Could God Almighty himself have devised a more gloriously delightful climate?

And it is as healthful as it is delightful. The absence of all sudden changes and trying extremes contributes much to make it so. If the human system were as expansive and contractile as mercury, a six-foot man in Dakota or Minnesota would stalk along in mid-summer, at 110 degrees in the shade, with his head in the tenth-story windows of city skyscrapers; and in mid-winter, at 35 degrees to 55 degrees below zero, he would shrink down into the bulbs of his brogans, shorter than a tin toy-soldier. This alternate running of the whole thermometrical gamut would, sooner or later, wear off the paint and exhaust the elastic vitality of a gunjun-rubber doll. There is none of it in Oregon, and it is

consequently not a matter of surprise that the official statistics of the government show the death rate of Oregon and her two sister states of the Pacific northwest to be the lowest in the union.

The United States census figures as to the yearly number of deaths to the 1000 of population are: Idaho, 6.62; Oregon, 8.76, and Washington, 9.67—as compared with 19.16 for Massachusetts; 16.58 for New York and 14.72 for California. That is, in proportion to population, there are about two deaths in California to one here, and three to one in Massachusetts—so the chances of living are three times as good out here as in New England, and twice as good as in the Golden State, with all its boasted health resorts. The report of the surgeon general of the United States army places the annual death rate among the troops stationed in various parts of the country at one in 529 in the Pacific northwest—that is here; one in 283 in New England; one in 113 in the central Mississippi valley; one in 67 in Texas, and one in 65 in New York. Portland has an active and jolly club of billiard players, whose ages average seventy-nine years, the baby of the lot being seventy-five; and a party of harvesters in an eastern Oregon wheat field, last week, averaged seventy-four years, the driver of the harvesting machine being a spry young chap of eighty-five years.

All blessedness of climate combine to produce health and vigor—out here.

Yours very respectfully,
P. DONAN.

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