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REMOVE HANDICAP ON JOHN DAY VALLEY.

Electric Railway Being Built From Baker To Prairie City---Fabulously Valuable Min- ing Properties---Road a Great Money Maker.

The John Day country is one of the most beautiful and fertile valleys on the globe. A Miner representative was over at Prairie City last week, rode up and down the banks of the John Day river for a dozen miles, and was more forcibly and favorably impressed than ever before with the innumerable attractions of that favored region. To the eye it is now at its best.

After the ride of forty odd miles from Sumpter, through pine forests that shut out a view of the surrounding landscape, over roads that are a cruelty to man and beast, it is a spiritual delight to pause on the high ground two or three miles from Prairie City, at the timber line, and survey with unobstructed vision the unrolled panorama, doubtless something akin to that experienced by the children of Israel as they emerged from their forty years wandering in the wilderness and saw the promised land of Canaan. At this season of the year, up and down the valley, Mother Nature is nourishing into vigorous life young vegetation. The air is laden with the fragrance of fruit blossoms and flowers, wild and cultivated; which constitute a color scheme entrancing to the sight, and this perfumed picture is framed in snow capped mountain ranges as grandly picturesque as any Alpine scene.

Thus the poet and painter would estimate the proposition. But the utilitarian, that commanding figure of our present practical age, while conceding that there is something pleasing to the senses in all this, recognizes something of greater value, according to his standards. He sees profits in fruit culture, he knows that the meadow lands are fattening cattle for the beef trust, that those green fields on the bench lands are producing wheat and other grains, and speculates mentally on the worth of the precious metals in the surrounding mountains—to him it is all an alluring prospect of acquir-

ing gold, literally and figuratively speaking.

For the edification of those materialistically inclined, it will perhaps be well to go somewhat into detail on this subject. The John Day valley and contiguous territory of arable land, is about seventy-five miles long and varies from two to six miles in width. The soil is rich—any foot of it would fertilize the most valuable piece of land in New England. From the mountain ranges in to the river that drains the valley flow hundreds of shallow streams, fed by springs and melting snow. These supply more cheaply and conveniently water for irrigation than is found anywhere else on the continent, rendering unnecessary either the construction of long, costly ditches or expensive pumping plants, in order to get the water on high ground. Here all that is necessary is to plow a furrow from one of these streams across the field with the trend towards the lower levels and the water follows on the plowman's heels. The average altitude of the valley above sea level is about 3000 feet, fully 2000 lower than that of Sumpter. These combined conditions render this the ideal, perfect agricultural country, giving it an almost limitless range to its products. For these reasons, during the thirty years since farming operations were inaugurated there, there has never been a crop failure; cattle have not died there for lack of food, as on other ranges.

Therefore, the farmers and stockmen of the John Day valley are rich. Their wealth is displayed in the substantial improvements seen on every farm, really handsome dwellings, elegantly furnished; not the plain houses found in the prairie states to the east, the cheap shacks on the ten-acre fruit orchards in California, or the log cabins of the homesteaders in the coast timber region. They remind one more of the luxurious plantation homes of

the South. And yet, this section has labored under one handicap imposed upon no other equally favored in America, the lack of railroad transportation. Prairie City, the nearest point to the O. R. & N., is seventy-six miles from Baker City, from which place all freight is hauled in wagons. It is true that the Sumpter Valley could cut off forty or fifty miles of this wagon haul, but its rates are so exorbitant that it is cheaper to pay the teamsters one dollar a hundred pounds to bring freight through from Baker City. Further down the valley the wagon trains go to Shaniko, the terminus of the Oregon Southern, from seventy-five to more than 100 miles. Until three years ago, when this branch was built, they went to Heppner and other towns on the O. R. & N. Columbia river line.

But it now looks as if this handicap is about to be removed. In that event, those interested in observing the rapid development of a region, the sudden springing into life of towns and cities, will find there an interesting object lesson. While in Prairie City last week the writer chanced to meet Major J. W. Bonta, the gentleman from Philadelphia who is going to build the road, and talked with him. He is a well poised, self contained man, who does not take the public into his confidence, rather than to state confidently that the line will be constructed and rushed to early completion. He is asking for no bonus, no franchise or anything else, therefore, he very naturally feels that it is not incumbent upon him to issue bulletins to the public regarding his movements.

The origin of this enterprise makes a brief, interesting story: For four years past Cleaver Brothers have been working on two immense mining propositions in the Strawberry range, known as the Oregon Wonder and the Will Cleaver groups. They are both big things and large capital is absolutely necessary to put them in shape to yield up their rich treasure of gold and copper. These hustlers, Cleaver Brothers, have taken several mining men into the mountains and showed them these properties. While all have seen and recognized their inestimable value, they acknowledged that they are not strong enough financially to handle so gigantic a proposition. Finally, after two years of correspondence, on the strength of a favorable report from his own mining expert, who spent sixty days on the ground exploiting the ledges and making assays, Major Bonta last summer made a personal examination of the mines. He saw that cheap transportation would be necessary to profitably work the Wonder, and would eventually add hundreds of thousands of dollars to the profits to be taken from the Will

Cleaver. He bought both groups, and is now acquiring other properties.

The former is the largest gold bearing ledge ever discovered on the globe. It is positively 600 feet wide—let the tiresome skeptics scoff as they may, when they read this statement. It outcrops for a distance of five miles, in places standing above the country rock full 100 feet. The most prominent of these can be distinctly seen with a spy glass from Prairie City, six miles away. Three years ago the writer took a snap shot at this ledge with a cheap kodak, while standing on a peak 1000 feet below, which can be seen very distinctly in the photograph. Assays of this rock run from \$2.75 to \$8.00 in gold, while picked samples have gone as high as \$27. Colors are frequently found by panning. Values contained in this immense deposit can therefore be estimated only by many millions. If Major Bonta carries out his plans to erect great reduction plants for the economical treatment of this ore, he will lay the foundation for the greatest mining fortune known to the modern world of bonanza kings—greater than those taken from the Treadwell, the Homestake and the Comstock combined. The Will Cleaver is a high grade gold-copper proposition that could be worked today at a profit if reasonable transportation charges to the smelter at Sumpter could be secured.

Well, the Major soon learned two facts; first, that he couldn't realize quickly on his rich mineral holdings without a railroad; second, that such a railroad, in itself, will be a money maker better than the "gold mine" of symbolic wealth. He decided to build it and is now at work on the enterprise.

Not in the west before has a road been built under similar favorable conditions. Other lines have been pushed into new, unsettled regions, relying upon their own efforts to build up the country and create a business for itself. But this one goes into an old settled, prosperous country, with the tonnage anxiously, impatiently waiting for its advent. These rich farmers have the price and are liberal spenders. The merchants up and down the valley carry great, expensive stocks of goods. With markets for their products on every side within a radius of 100 miles, these farmers restrict production to the lowest point and raise hay on rich fruit and grain lands, because there is a ready home market for the former. Stockmen pay high cash prices for hay, for winter feed, and drive stock from 75 to 150 miles to reach rail connection with the markets of the east. In this long drive twenty-five per cent of the cattle's value is lost. This road will do a vast business in stock trans-

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