

Emigrant's Guide 1842
Sketch of The Oregon Territory

or

Emigrant's Guide

P.L. Edwards, Esq

1842

Richmond, Mo., 15th September, 1842.

My Dear Sir: Your favor of the 13th ult., soliciting information of the Oregon Territory, is now before me. I regret that the pressure of professional and other engagements, has prevented a more prompt compliance with the wishes of yourself and friends. I will now, however, with pleasure, endeavor to atone for my seeming neglect, by appropriating a day of leisure to your service. In assuming, however, the responsible task which your confidence has imposed upon me, I cannot refrain from observing, that writing descriptions of the utmost attainable accuracy, will wholly fail to impart an impression of the country in all respects, just and adequate. Perhaps not one in a thousand who may visit the Territory, will find it to correspond with his previous conceptions ; and personal observation will present a state of things greatly differing from that portrayed by his previous wild imaginings. The reality will be in some respects more, and in others less, favorable than the fancy sketch. And disappointment, either pleasurable or painful, will be an emotion of no unfrequent recurrence.

It is a hacknied sentiment, that there is, upon the whole but little difference in the comparative excellence of various countries. Those most distinguished by advantages, are usually subject to disadvantages of an adequate countervailing character. Nature is an impartial mother, and has distributed her favors with reference to an equilibrium in the happiness of her children. The country which presents to the eye of the traveller little else than a continuous scene of barrenness and sterility, is, perchance, abundantly supplied with rivers and fisheries, and eminently adapted to the pursuits of the savage who discards industry from the catalogue of the virtues. But we are ever prone to woo that happiness abroad which home does not confer—and change our habitations and pursuits, as we may, the happy El Dorado still lies beyond. While the restless American pines for a cottage in the bosom of the deep, unfathomable West, perchance the lone pioneer reclining upon some proud promontory of the Pacific, gazes upon the wild and fearful heavings of the frenzied ocean, and weeps to revisit the land from which he is an exile forever. But to return to your letter. You first ask for information in regard to the route and outfit of emigrants.

In reply, I can recommend no other route than that usually taken by traders and trappers, with occasional deviations which it would be useless to endeavor to point out on paper. I mean the route up the South Platte, a short distance above the junction of the north and south forks, thence up the north fork, until you have traveled some six or eight days within the first range of mountains, called the Black Hills ; thence to the Colorado of the West, and thence to Fort Hall, on Lewis's river, by the way of Bear river.

I have been frequently asked whether I considered it practicable to perform the expedition with wagons ?

I answer, that in my opinion, about two-thirds of the trip might be thus accomplished ; and as to the remaining part, I am so far from believing that any sort of wheeled vehicle could be rendered available, that in my opinion, in many places it would be very difficult, perhaps nearly impossible to get them along empty. And were I to join a company of emigrants, I should always prefer horses and mules to any other mode of conveyance ; and inconvenient as it may seem, I should always prefer packing the few necessaries of the journey, to the encumbrance of wagons. If the latter are employed at all, let them be light but substantial, and drawn by horses and mules. Let it also be understood, that they are to be abandoned by the way. But even this might, in many cases, be advisable, as women and children might thereby perform the first part of the journey with greater facility, and become gradually inured to its fatigues. Some people think that when they reach Lewis's river, the difficulties of the trip are all surmounted, and that they will then have nothing to do but jump into boats or canoes, and glide down the stream to the mouth of the Columbia. This opinion is wholly wrong. The most difficult part of the journey is yet to be performed. Lewis's river is so obstructed by rapids and falls, that the Hudson's Bay Company, with the most experienced boatmen, never think of navigating it.

As to the distance, you will be better enabled to form a satisfactory estimate by reference to a correct map, and by my telling you that the journey is never performed by large companies, in less time than four months. The expedition which I accompanied, reached Fort Vancouver in something less than five months, traveling, on an average, say twenty miles per day; but this included frequent delays to recruit our animals, and for other purposes, amounting in the whole to about one month. We, however, had nothing worse than horses and mules to retard our march. A company composed of men, women and children promiscuously, need not expect to perform the same trip in less than from five to six months.

It is always necessary to start with provisions enough to last until you reach the buffalo ; from your town, say one month's regular travel. I should always advise a company to start with a good supply of cattle. It is easier to drive them than to pack other provisions, and, besides, fresh meat is greatly to be preferred. I will also state, that I should never desire a company of more than 100 or 150 persons, though a goodly proportion of these were women and children. Small companies advance more rapidly, and incur less inconvenience from want of food and pasturage. A company of this character, should be large enough to insure safety with proper vigilance, and all beyond this is unnecessary, and sometimes worse than useless. I would also advise emigrants to encumber themselves with little more than they will need for the journey. It is frequently asked by those who intend going to the country, " What will I need when I arrive there ?" This question admits but one safe and sensible answer. You will need every thing there, that you would need here in the same pursuits. But what proportion of all this can be taken across the mountains ? The answer is, comparatively nothing. Then we must resort to other means of supplying a colony in the Oregon with necessaries. As yet, the Hudson's Bay Company have liberally supplied the infant settlement. But I am not prepared to say, what stress may be placed either upon their disposition or immediate ability to supply a great number of emigrants. In my opinion, the safer course on all occasions, when justified by the number and resources of the emigrants, would be to freight a vessel with supplies from the United States : otherwise, I should have no fears that a small company might, at any time, be supplied with the real necessaries of life, but perhaps, with very little beyond. I should

always entertain misgivings as to the issue, if I saw a rush of emigration, unless I had first seen supplies thus forwarded by sea, or other arrangements made to offset the same ends. To think of transporting the implements of agriculture and mechanics across the Rocky Mountains, as utterly preposterous ; and the Hudson's Bay Company, if willing, might not be able to supply the wants of a great number, unless previously advised that there would be such increased demand. If the colony could command a vessel, many of the necessary supplies might, in the course of a few weeks, be procured from the Sandwich Islands. The distance of these Islands from the mouth of the Columbia, is about two weeks ordinary sail. And here I will observe, that in my opinion, the difficulty of emigration, and that of procuring supplies when there, are the great obstacles to the speedy colonization and prosperity of the Territory. A colony once established there, with the implements of agriculture and mechanics in their possession, and it needs no prophet's ken to foresee that their destinies would be onward.

So much for the route and outfit. You next ask for a general description of the country itself.

For the sake of convenience, I will consider the country in three divisions, corresponding with the three principal ranges of mountains which traverse it north and south. First, the country lying between the Rocky mountains proper, and the range called the Blue Ridge, Second, the country between the Blue Ridge and Cascade, Klamet or California mountains : and third, the country between the Cascade mountains and Pacific coast : And,

First. The division lying between the Rocky mountains and the Blue Ridge. This is by far the least interesting portion of the Territory ; and, perhaps, it would be difficult for imagination to picture a region more entirely unavailing to any of the purposes of civilization. The traveller is fated to a feeling of dreary sterility, which is seldom relieved. The eye seldom rests upon a spot which might, by any sort of unnatural torture, be rendered capable of production, while the climate and almost entire destitution of rain, preclude the idea of cultivation. Even the game which enliven and enrich the mountains, seem averse to this region, and seldom honor it with their tread. It is true, that with the assistance of a good glass, you might sometimes see the wild and reckless mountain sheep bounding on some lofty and inaccessible crag, as if he too, would fain ascend above that accursed land which he had unfortunately inherited from his forefathers. Occasionally, too, you might see a motly group of Indian dogs and gaunt and dirty Diggers, a sort of half human, half vegetable race, indolently plodding along the margin of the river, or gravely loitering around the fisheries, as if they considered the country which the beasts have forsaken, as amply good enough for them. And, there too, you might sometimes see the decayed bones of animals which do not now inhabit the country, indicating most satisfactorily to any sensible antiquary, that in olden time, ere yet tradition had learned to chronicle the achievements of men or beasts, there had existed a mortal feud between the aforesaid Indians and their allies, the dogs, on the one part, and the buffalo, deer, & c, on the other part, and that the fierce contest had finally terminated in the expulsion of the latter, or, perchance, their total annihilation. But in sober earnestness, the country presents few redeeming traits. I only speak of that portion of this division over which I have traveled, for beyond this, my information is very limited.

Second. The division between the Blue Ridge and the Cascade mountains. And here the westward traveler is impressed with an obvious improvement in the country. The climate is mild, equable and healthy—but the country is adapted to a pastoral and not to an agricultural people. I am of opinion that the description of this country given by Capt. Wyeth, is the most accurate I have seen, and that I cannot do better than to quote his own language. He says,

“ I think the agriculture of this district must always be limited to the wants of a pastoral people, and to the immediate vicinity of the streams and mountains, and irrigation must be resorted to if a large population is to be supported in it. This district, which affords little prospect to the tiller of the soil, is perhaps one of the finest grazing countries in the world. It has been much underrated by travellers, who have only passed by way of the Columbia river, the land along which is a mere collection of sand and rocks, and almost without vegetation. But a few miles from the Columbia, towards the hills and mountains, the prairies open wide covered with a low grass of the most nutritious kind, which remains good throughout the year. In September, there are slight rains, at which times the grass starts ; and in October and November, there is a good coat of green grass, which remains so until the ensuing summer ; and about June, it is ripe in the lower plains, and drying without being wet, is like made hay. In this state it remains until the autumn rains again revive it. The herdsman in this extensive valley of more than one hundred and fifty miles in width, could at all times keep his animals in good grass by approaching the mountains, on the declivities of which there is almost any climate ; and the dry grass of the country is at all times excellent. It is in this section of the country, that all the horses are reared for the supply of the Indians and traders in the interior. It is not uncommon for one Indian to own several hundreds of them. I think this section for producing hides, tallow and beef, is superior to any part of North America. There is no question that sheep may be raised to any extent in a climate so dry, and sufficiently warm, where little snow or rain falls. I think this the healthiest country I have ever been in.” So far Capt. Wyeth has, I think, very accurately described this division. He is a practical man, and speaks from extensive personal observation. There is one inconvenience, however, to which this division must always be subject. The navigation of the Columbia river to any part of this division, is impeded by rapids and cascades, and can only be effected by frequent portages, both of cargoes and boats ; and there is no practicable land route to the point on the river, below which the obstructions to navigation cease. From the best information, however, which I could obtain, a road might be made from Fort Nezperce, in this district, to Puget’s Sound, without any inadequate expenditure. Here there is as fine a harbor as the world affords ; and if the proposed road be attainable, this would of course become the most eligible outlet for the larger portion of this division. In this section are located the Missions of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, and in its western extremity the Methodist Was-co-peem Mission, under the immediate charge of the Rev. Messrs. Perkins and D. Lee. In this division, the Indians display more wealth and character than in any other part of the Territory. Here are the Ki-oos, Nez-per-ces, Wal-la-wal-las and Sa-lish; these tribes have been long distinguished by their honesty and fidelity to the whites. They now seem to be gradually merging into one tribe, and have, in a great measure, adopted the Nez-per-ce as a common language. I will not here omit to state, that this district is generally well supplied with the finest of fish. Game is not abundant—the buffalo never advance so far westward. In this division, timber is scarce and is seldom found, except in the mountains and immediately on the water courses; there is also a great deal of sandy and unproductive land. The waters are of course pure and healthful. In concluding this brief sketch, I will observe, that in my opinion, those who have been reared in the West, will rarely see much in the district to excite their admirations : they will recognize little semblance to the countries which they have been taught to esteem, and would rarely be content here. Those who have been accustomed to countries less fertile than the west, would be more inclined to appreciate this division.

Third. The country between the Cascade mountains and the coast. And here we are to examine by far the most interesting portion of the Territory. This division includes the valleys of the Cowalitz, Chasty, Umpqua, and far-famed Willamette. The Cowalitz is a stream which empties into the Columbia from the north, about fifty miles from its mouth. The valley

formed by the river is said to be fertile, but is only sufficiently extensive for a small county. The climate here is more capricious than it is in the Walhimmette and valleys south. There were in 1838, in this valley, but two small farms.

The Chasty valley lies on Chasty river, and is near the line between the United States and Mexico ; it is a country of pleasing and varied scenery, and sufficiently extensive for, say two counties. It is, however, too remote from navigation to invite settlement for years to come—the nearest ports being the Columbia and San Francisco.

The Umpqua valley lies between the Chasty on the south, and the Wallamette on the north, and is separated from each by a transverse range of mountains. This valley is much more extensive than either of the former, and in point of soil and scenery, is not inferior to any portion of the Territory—but like the Chasty, it is remote from navigation, the Columbia being the nearest port. I have no doubt, however, that a road traversed with wagons, might, with little difficulty, be opened from this to the Wallamette.

While I was in the country, a schooner entered the mouth of the Umpqua river, but the entrance is difficult, and the harbor unsafe, besides the river is not navigable ; and it would be next to impossible to effect a good road from the coast to the agricultural part of the valley. The intervening country consists of rugged and almost impassable mountains.

The Wal-Lam-Ette Valley. (And here we are to describe that portion of the Territory which has generally engaged the almost exclusive attention of travellers. The average distance from its western limits to the ocean is, say, seventy miles. The intervening country is mountainous and covered with immense forests. This valley is between 200 and 250 miles in length, and averages say, 60 miles in width, in the middle of which meanders the Wallamette river. From the mouth of the Wallamette for about forty miles upward, there is little country adapted to agriculture; on both sides, lofty hills and mountains generally approach the river, and those on the west extend far away to the ocean. They are, however, generally covered with luxuriant vegetation and immense forest trees, indicating that the most formidable obstacles to their cultivation, are their uneven surface and the immense labor that would be requisite to prepare them. I have no doubt, however, that when cleared, they would in many instances prove as productive as any other portions of the Territory. About forty miles from the mouth, are the Wallamette Falls. They are about twenty-five feet in height—in some places nearly, and in others quite, perpendicular. They are from six to eight hundred yards wide ; and except in very high water, there are two channels—a mass of rocks projecting out in the middle—and presenting a semi-circular fall on the west, and one in the form of a segment on the east. Here is one of finest water-powers in the world. The river is at most times navigable for vessels of ten or twelve feet draught, to within two miles of the falls ; and from the falls to the lower settlement about twenty miles above, it is navigable for small steamboats, and in the winter for those of almost any dimensions.

From the falls to the settlement, the country immediately contiguous to the river, is similar to that below, but the hills and mountains are less elevated; and at the settlement, this valley spreads out in all its loveliness and verdure. There is, however, a most beautiful valley called the Fallattec, from the tribe of Indians who inhabit it on the west side of the river, and separated from it by the broken country before mentioned. This valley extends from the main Wallamette, of which it is a part, to a point opposite the falls, from which it is but a few miles distant, and a good road is said to be attainable from the one point to the other, this would open up a good land communication from the falls to every part of the Wallamette valley.

From this point to the southern extremity of the valley, I am confident that I hazard little when I say, that no country in the world, of the same dimensions, will support a denser population ; and there is no country in which agriculture, in all its varied departments, may be prosecuted with more facility. In this valley, about ten miles above the lowest settlement, is located the Methodist Mission, under the superintendence of the Rev. Jason Lee. But you want more specific information of this portion of the Territory, and I will now proceed more in detail, premising that I must necessarily omit many items of which the emigrant would wish to be advised. And first.

Of the Soil and Products.

The soil is generally of a silicious nature, and bears little resemblance to the dark vegetable mould which we of the west are used to prefer. It produces well without the application of manure ; but I have never known any country in which its happy effects are so palpable. Even the ashes deposited from the burning of stubble or other remains of the previous year's produce, effect a marked improvement in the crops. The soil is deep and its productive qualities durable, but little if any deterioration being yet perceptible in the oldest fields. Capt. Wyeth considers " the soil equal to that of any part of New York." It is adapted to the culture of wheat, rye, oats, barley, and generally all sorts of small grain ; all varieties of peas and beans, Irish potatoes, and nearly all sorts of roots cultivated in the United States. I have seen a large field of wheat, measuring from six and a half to seven feet in height, which had received no other manuring than the straw which had been produced on the same ground the two previous years. I have also seen a field of flourishing wheat growing and maturing on ground which had received no other preparation than having been ploughed in the spring, and sown in peas, and after these had been removed, the wheat was sown and harrowed in. The ground without manure, produces from fifteen to twenty bushels of wheat per acre, varying with the culture and season; and I should not omit to observe, that the cultivation is generally quite defective. I will also observe that small grain is generally of a better quality, being heavier and more healthful than I have been accustomed to see. In no country in the world, may the husbandman look forward with more assurance to the reward of his toil—for as sure as he sows, " he will in due season reap." The grain crops have never failed, or been affected by blight, weevil or mildew. The harvest occurs in the dry season, and I have never but once known it in the least interrupted by rain. There is but little difference in the produce of grain sown in the spring and that sown in the fall.

Irish potatoes are of a much finer quality than we rear in the west, being dry and mealy. Indian corn will not produce well, owing alone, as I suppose, to the coolness of the springs, and the drouth of the summers. The small, hard corn may, with occasional irrigation, be matured in quantities sufficient for all useful purposes. Nearly all sorts of garden vegetables reared in the United States, do well there ; but those which are late in maturing require irrigation. The first cabbage planted at the Mission, and reserved for seed, was standing in the garden three years afterwards, and in the third year, produced three good heads ; and when I left the country, the venerable vegetable was still flourishing in its green old age, and vieing with the junior generations around. The experiments made with apples, and a few other fruits, have proved very successful. I cannot, however, state from personal observation, what number and variety of fruits may be reared in the Wallamette valley—but from the experiments made at Fort Vancouver, which is situated north, there can be no doubt that many of the most valuable fruits may be reared, and that even grapes, in select localities, will amply repay the labor of culture. The indigenous products, are principally the kam-as and wappa-to roots, hazle nuts, service berries, huckle berries, and others for which I know no English

name—all of which constitute the principal subsistence of the natives; neither grapes, walnuts, hickory nuts, persimmons, nor many other wild products are found in an indigenous state west of the Rocky mountains. The number of wild esculent products is, I should say, more limited in the Territory than in the Mississippi valley, if we exclude the kam-as and wap-pa-to roots.

The *Climate* is mild and equable, and wholly dissimilar to that of any country of the same latitude east of the Rocky mountains, or on the Atlantic coast. It seldom snows, and then it usually melts as it descends—the ground is seldom covered, and then it remains but a few hours. During a residence of four winters, I knew but one exception. There is no weather which a western or northern man would call cold—the mercury seldom approaches the freezing point—and ploughing may be generally prosecuted throughout the winter. Vegetation is green during the winter, and stock continue fat without feeding. In the language of Mr. Slocum, “I do not think there is a finer grazing country in the world, if we take the whole year into consideration.” The winter rains are, however, a very serious objection to the country; the rainy season usually sets in about the middle of September, and continues for two or three weeks, when it remits for about the same length of time; when it again resumes, no safe calculation can be made for dry weather, until the next regular dry season. I have, however, seen about a month in winter, of as lovely weather, with clear frosty nights and sunny days, as I have ever seen in a Missouri autumn. Upon the whole, from the safest estimate I can make, I will state that it seldom rains in the months of June, July, August, and the early part of September. During the months of November, December, January, and the early part of February, there is little dry weather; and the remaining parts of the year will be varied with rainy and dry weather. These seasons will not always occur exactly in this order—but without pretending to exactitude, they will generally bear to each other about these proportions.

From the sandy nature of the ground, it is not so muddy as strangers would naturally suspect. I have seen the ground more mirey at the breaking up of a Missouri winter, than I have ever seen it there. The rivers too are short, and the waters soon find their level. The rains are usually more odious to strangers than to the old residents; the latter have, generally, learned to prefer them to the snows and intense cold which prevail in the northern and western States of the Union.

Scenery.

The general appearance of this country, is picturesque and lovely beyond anything to which we of the Mississippi valey have ever been accustomed. In a memorial to the Congress of the United States, presented by Dr. Linn in the winter of 1838-9, and which I drew up for the settlers before I left the Territory, it is said, that “a large portion of the Territory, from the Columbia river south to the boundry line between the United States and the Mexican Republic, and extending from the coast of the Pacific about 250 or 800 miles to the interior, is either well supplied with timber, or adapted to pasturage or agriculture. The fertile valleys of the Wallamette and Umpqua, are varied with prairies and woodland, and intersected by abundant lateral streams presenting facilities for machinery.” And I will here simply refer to this memorial, as containing a brief general description of the country.

Never shall I forget the wild ecstasy of one hour in that Territory. 'Twas a lovely day in a lovely autumn—for nine weary months had I been far away from that lone home; and oft when I lay down to repose, I knew not that I should ever awake—and when I arose, I knew

not that I should sleep again. For two days had I toiled in advance of my company, and now I was upon the summit of a tall mountain which commands a bewildering prospect of that loved valley, and I stayed upon that green summit. The birds of autumn caroled their soft melodies around, and the blushing flowret bent at the feet of the intruder. On every side stretched away the undulating and verdant prairie to the far mountain's base—and sunny groves rose like fairy isles on the tranquil bosom of some still, green ocean of romance. Away to the north was the smoke wreathing above the trees which clustered around the lone mission-house—and I thought there was an altar to God, and incense from the bosom of the wilderness. There dwelt the guideless benefactors of their race—the pure in spirit—whose fondest hopes are garnered in the world to come ; and beyond, was the ice-bound summit which knows no variety of season—and summers come and go—and the nations live and die—and the pure flowers bend at the feet of the unvarying deity and wither in the breath—and still he looks down with the same cold and icy smile on the annual successions of variegated vegetation in the soft valleys below—and is changeless ever !—and mountains rose on mountains, and receded far away in the dim, blue distance, until they mingled in the soft bland skies. And I thought of the green phantom-land beyond, whither retires the spirit of the fierce warrior when the conflict of life is over—and there was intensity of contrast ! Below my feet was all that was soft, and bland, and holy—and beyond, all was the stem rivalry of sublimity and grandeur !—and I thought too, of the vast Infinite that made them all ! I know not how long I paused—I started at the admonition of my solitary Indian guide, brushed away the unconscious tear from my eye, and rushed down the dark glen before me—the scene of enchantment was gone—but the recollection never !

Health.

The interior regions are, as I have before stated, as healthy as any portions of the world. But you will desire information of this division. To express myself in general terms, I do not consider the country either as peculiarly healthy, or as peculiarly unhealthy. The diseases of the country are principally colds, influenza and intermittent fevers, all of which are generally of a mild character. To these we may add, among the Indians, consumption ; of the latter, great numbers of the natives die annually. I have, however, never known but two white persons die of this disease, nor do I now recollect to have ever heard of any but the two, laboring under pulmonary affection ; and these cases were never attributed to the country. Previous, I believe, to the year 1819 or 1820, a case of fever and ague was never known in the Territory. About this time it commenced its fearful ravages among the Indians, and has continued ever since, though greatly mitigated in its character. In one day's ascent of the Wallamette in a canoe, I have counted nine depopulated villages : in some instances whole tribes were nearly annihilated, and the few desolate survivors fled from the abodes of death, and identified themselves with their less unfortunate neighbors. In thousands of instances where this disease did not itself prove fatal, by being long protracted, it induced others, which soon brought the sufferer to his grave, and ushered him into the far spirit-land whither his wives and babes had already gone. To protracted fever and ague, is no doubt attributable most of the pulmonary diseases before mentioned. This fever yields readily to prompt medical treatment, and I have never known it prove fatal to a white person ; indeed, the administration of the mildest cathartics followed by the usual tonics, is generally sufficient to arrest it in a few days. This unprecedented fatality among the natives, extended from the coast about 100 miles interior—but was more marked in its effects, commencing about 50 miles from the coast and extending about 50 miles further inland ; and from the Columbia south, to within about 50 miles of San Francisco in California, a distance of near 600 miles. Over this vast

region did the dark angel of death move his leaden sceptre—the children of the forest knew no remedy and died—

Died the stalwart chieftain and his slave—
The frenzied mother and her babe.

And often, when wearied in his far sojournings, has the humble writer pillowed his head upon bones which the destroyer had left none to bury. But this fatality was confined exclusively to the natives—and from the health enjoyed by the whites, the country may be safely placed in the category of the healthy. Persons whose judgments are entitled to high regard, think that the former prevalence of the intermittent fever was attributable to temporary causes, and that it will finally disappear. In point of health, however, this division will never rival the interior and less fertile portions of the Territory.

Extent of Country.

Mr. Slocum estimates that “ there are in the Territory, exclusive of the Columbia and Walmette, 14,000,000 acres of as good land as any in Missouri or Illinois.” I am forced to say that I think this estimate quite extravagant ; there is really very little country on the Columbia fit for agriculture. From the mouth of the Columbia to the middle division which I have described, lofty hills and mountains generally approach the river, and for more than 100 miles interior, they are, with few exceptions, covered with heavy and almost impenetrable forests ; neither is there any good farming country of any extent, immediately on the coast ; the mountains usually project up to the ocean, and are covered with forests like those just described. It is really difficult to make an estimate approximating certainty. If we take into consideration the mountain regions which are heavily timbered, and produce abundant vegetation, it will add greatly to the extent of the Farming country. But in these regions, no experiments have ever been made ; and it will be long, I imagine, before men can be found of sufficient hardihood to attempt preparing them for cultivation. The country lying north of the river, with the exception of the Cowalitz, the small tract around Fort Vancouver, and the country in the vicinity of Puget’s sound, is, so far as I am informed, generally of the same character with the mountain regions just described. This portion of the Territory, derives its principal importance from its timber, and from the fact that Cape Disappointment commands the entrance of the river. A well constructed military post on this point, would bid defiance to half the navies of the world. Whoever commands the north side of the river, virtually commands the Territory.

The Timber of the country, consists principally of fir, ash, pine, cedar, white oak, cottonwood, white maple and elder. Some portions of the valleys are defectively timbered ; but the timber in the neighboring mountains, will always be inexhaustible. There is no walnut, hickory, black oak or sugar maple, west of the mountains. It is in the vicinity of the coast, that the immense trees spoken of by travellers are generally found.

Stock.

The year previous to my departure for the United States, a joint stock company was formed for the purpose of procuring cattle from California, and placed under the command of Mr. Ewing Young, and I accompanied the expedition in the character of treasurer and joint purchaser. The cattle were to be driven through the intervening country usually laid down on our maps, as “ the unexplored region.” With a company of seventeen white men and three

Indian boys, we started with 800 cattle, and reached the Wallamette with 630. The expedition was replete with hardships and dangers which we need not detail. Previous to this, there were but few cattle in the Territory, except those belonging to the Hudson's Bay Company, numbering between 700 and 800. and all of which had proceeded from one cow and bull since the year 1818. In California, a similar country for stock, thirty per cent, per annum increase of a promiscuous herd of cattle, is considered a moderate estimate. Those which we brought to the Wallamette, were all young cows, with barely a sufficiency of males for the purposes of procreation. From these data, you can pretty satisfactorily determine the extent to which the country is now supplied with cattle. I am not apprised that any others have been since brought to the country. An expedition started to California in 1838, but the party was defeated by the Chasty Indians, and returned. I do not know that there are in the country, any sheep, except those belonging to the Hudson's Bay Company, and these were, when I left, but few. There were then a sufficiency of horses in the Wallamette valley, to answer the wants of the settlers—and they have no doubt increased beyond their wants ; they might at any time be procured in any reasonable numbers from the interior. I should always, however, recommend a company of emigrants to take with them as many horses and cattle, of good stock, as they could conveniently manage. The Spanish cattle are not considered good for the purposes of the dairy. Sheep might, with more facility, be obtained by sea, or from California by land. Hogs do well—but there is no mash on which they can fatten, as in the western States. They will never be an article of much commercial interest, unless a trade in pork and bacon hams should be opened with China, when the profits might amply repay the feeding. There are, also, a sufficiency of ordinary domestic fowls—the wild game is pretty well exhausted in the Wallamette. The salmon do not ascend above the Falls—but at this place, there is one of the finest fisheries in the Territory ; settlers will find little difficulty in securing an abundant supply. Above the falls, there are but few fish, and those are of inferior quality.

Society is of course, too young to have assumed any fixed and permanent characteristics, composed as it is, of such dissimilar elements. But I here recollect, that many persons reared east of ourselves, consider the antiquity of a country, as the best criterion of its intelligence and refinement ; and when these paragons of stupidity gather up energy enough to venture beyond the old barn, and clear out unto the dark regions of the far and benighted west, it requires several years of rigid discipline to convince them, that we are not heathens, and of the no less unpleasant truth, that they are fools. So you will just be cautious, that you do not estimate the rudeness of the society by the test of its longitude west.

The Missionaries have, since the year 1834, wielded a most happy influence on the moral and intellectual character of the infant colony ; and around the Mission, there is slowly and gradually forming a moral, religious and industrious population—perchance the germ of a powerful State. The missionaries have not confined their labors to the Indians, but have always kept up regular sabbath preaching to the white population. Connected with the Hudson's Bay Company, there are also, many gentlemen who would do no discredit to any circles of society. These gentlemen sustain the forms and courtesies of civilized life, much more than Americans engaged in the same pursuits.

Statistics.

When I left the Territory, I supposed that there were about 55 permanent settlers in the Wallamette valley—I mean adult males, including the Missionaries. I recollect that in 1837, Mr. Slocum and myself made an estimate of the population of Fort Vancouver, and we determined it at something over 700, including whites, Indians.

Sketch of the Oregon territory; or, Emigrant's guide (1842)

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