

into three great divisions, differing from each other by marked peculiarities of soil and climate; these may be denominated for convenience as Western, Middle, and Eastern Oregon. The Far West Mountains, being, as the name implies, the westernmost chain, running northward at a distance of one hundred or one hundred and twenty miles from the Pacific coast. "About one hundred and fifty miles east of the Far West Mountains," says Mr. Greenhow, "is another chain called the Blue Mountains, stretching from the Snowy Mountains northward to the forty seventh degree of latitude, and forming the western wall of the valley of the Lewis, the great southern branch of the Columbia."

To show what are the capacities of the country for agriculture and commerce, and what encouragements generally it offers for emigrants, we will begin with Eastern Oregon, which lies between the Blue and the Rocky Mountains. A short quotation from Mr. Greenhow, whose work is a very convenient and faithful summary of all the accessible information upon this subject, will place in a very clear light the true character of this region.—His testimony, it may be observed, is unimpeachable, when used for this purpose, as the sole object of his book is to defend the American claim, and to advocate the retention of the country by the United States.

"The country between the Blue mountains and the Rocky mountains appears to be, except in a very few, small detached spots, absolutely uninhabitable by those who depend on agriculture for subsistence. It is, in fact, a collection of bare, rocky mountain chains, separated by deep gorges, through which flow the streams produced by the melting of the snows on the summits; for in the lower grounds rain seldom falls at any time. On the borders of the Lewis, and of some of the streams falling into it, are valleys and prairies, producing grass for cattle; but all the attempts to cultivate the esculent vegetables have failed, chiefly, as it is believed, from the great difference in the temperature between the day and the succeeding night, especially in the summer, which is commonly not less than thirty, and often exceeds fifty degrees of Fahrenheit's thermometer.* North of the 48th parallel, the climate is less dry, and the bases of the mountains are covered with wood; but the temperature in most places is too cold for the production of any of the useful grains or garden vegetables."—pp. 27, 28.

This is bad enough, and Middle Oregon according to the same authority, is but little better. Here, the rain never falls from April to November, and even during the remainder of the year, which is called the wet season, the rains are neither abundant nor frequent. It is impossible to form settlements, then, except upon the borders of streams, which are not numerous, and the banks of which offer but few attractions in other respects to the emigrant. There are but few trees, chiefly sumach, cotton-wood, and other soft and useless woods. Fuel and building materials can be obtained only from a great distance up the north branch of the Columbia, or from the Pacific region, by few and difficult passes through the mountains. The soil is very unpromising, consisting, in the northern part, generally, of a yellow, sandy clay, covered only with grass and small shrubs. In the valleys farther south it is a little better, as there is more vegetable mould, and a few trees are found of the species above mentioned, Mr. Greenhow's conclusion is, "that little encouragement is offered for the cultivation of this part of Oregon," though cattle may be pastured to advantage, as grass is abundant.

We cannot wonder, then, that emigrants from the United States pass through both the regions which we have described, and seek a home only in Western Oregon. West of the Cascade range is the only portion of this assumed El Dorado on the Pacific which can never be inhabited except by hunters and their game. The extent of this more favoured region is shown by a very simple calculation by our author.

"The Strait of Fuca, which bounds this region on the north, is in latitude 48 1-2 degrees; and assuming the 42d parallel as the southern limit of the territory, its extreme length is 6 1-2 degrees,

* "The thermometer was seen by Wyeth, at Fort Hall, on the Lewis, near the forty third parallel of latitude, at the freezing point in the morning, and at ninety two degrees of Fahrenheit in the middle of a day in August. —Frosts occur at this place in nearly every month in the year."

or less than 450 miles English. Its breadth—that is, the distance between the Pacific shore and the great chain of mountains which forms the eastern boundary of this region—does not average a hundred miles; and, by multiplying these two numbers, forty-five thousand square English miles appears as the superficial extent of the westernmost region of Oregon. It has, however, been gravely asserted and repeated on the floor of the Congress of the United States, that the valley of the Willamette, which is but an inconsiderable portion of this region, contains not less than *sixty thousand square miles of the finest land*; and many other assertions, equally extravagant, have been made, and are believed, respecting the vast extent of land in the country of the Columbia, *superior in quality to any in the United States.*"—p. 26.

Western Oregon, then, is rather larger than the State of Pennsylvania, but it is much less fertile. Mr. Greenhow says that only a small portion of it 'not exceeding an eighth, is fit for cultivation.' We learn, further, that, the country cannot be made very productive without artificial irrigation, which is practicable only in a few places. Very little rain falls from April to November, but it is violent and almost constant during the remaining months. Dr. White, who has recently returned to the United States from the valley of the Willamette, after a residence there for two or three years, states that it rains there constantly for three months out of the year. Indian corn, it is admitted, does not succeed in any part of Oregon, from the want of rain during the summer. The valley of the Willamette, a river which runs a little west of north, and empties into the Columbia, is far the most valuable part of this region for agricultural purposes; and here nearly all the emigrants from the United States have established themselves.—According to Mr. Farnham, the habitable portion of this valley is about 150 miles long, and 60 broad. Wheat may be raised here to the extent of 20 or 30 bushels to the acre, and other grains and vegetables, though with some difficulty, own to the constant droughts of summer. The winters, of course, are wet, stormy, and uncomfortable; though this valley be the Eden of Oregon, it is certainly a most cheerless place for a residence.

But whatever may be the climate and fertility of this part of Western Oregon, lying south of the Columbia, there is luckily but little dispute about the ownership of it. In all the negotiations upon the subject, Great Britain has constantly offered to cede to the United States the whole region south of the Columbia. North of this river, and south of the 49th parallel of latitude, which on four occasions, and by three several administrations, has been offered by this country as the northern limit of its possessions, lies the only territory really in dispute between the two powers. It comprises the northern and least valuable moiety both of Western and Middle Oregon.—It is bounded on the south and east by the Columbia river, the mouth of which is in latitude 46° 19', and on the west by the Straits of Juan de Fuca and the Pacific Ocean. By a rough estimate, it appears a little larger than the state of New York. To give an idea of its value for agricultural purposes, we shall merely string a few extracts from the work of Mr. Farnham,* a most earnest advocate of instant assertion of our claim to the whole of Oregon, and from the report of Captain Wilkes, made after the examination of the country by the Exploring Expedition. Of the eastern half of this 'disputed territory,' which belongs to what we have designated as Middle Oregon, Mr. Farnham says:—

"It is a broken plain, partially covered with the short and bunch grasses, but so destitute of water that only a small portion of it can be depastured. The eastern and middle portions of it are destitute of timber,—a mere sunburnt waste. The northern part has a few wooded hills and streams, and prairie valleys. Among the lower hills of the President's Range [the Far-West mountains], too, there are considerable pine and fir forests, and rather extensive prairies, watered by small mountain streams. *But nine-tenths of the whole surface of this part of Oregon is a worthless desert.*"—*Travels*, p. 99.

Of the other half of this territory, belonging to Western Oregon, the same writer observes:—

"It is thickly covered with pines, cedars, and fir of extraordinary

* *Travels in the Great Western Prairies and the Oregon Territory*—By Thomas J. Farnham. New York, 1843.