

# The Christian Era.

Boston, December 21, 1871.

## LETTER FROM A RAILROAD ENGINEER.

Once more I am in camp in charge of a survey party, and Enson is with me as next in charge. We have only been out a week and the winter rains have already set in, making camp life rather disagreeable. . . . This coast is to me very "provincial," a word which as used in England is rather an abusive term, yet just now the people are taking vigorous measures in building railroads and opening up the country. We are engaged in making surveys for the Oregon Central Railroad intended to connect Astoria with the southern end of the Willamette Valley. We are on the most settled portion of the route in the fertile and well-settled valley of the Yamhill—a word, by the way, having nothing to do with *yams*, but meaning "bald hills," for which this section is noted. I have rarely seen a richer or a lovelier country; some parts of it are much like the best portions of southern England. Portland has made rapid progress this season in wealth and improvements, but I guess there was no corresponding increase of population.

The Northern Pacific Railroad Company are actively engaged in prosecuting their surveys in Idaho, Montana, and Dacotah, and will, no doubt, build considerable amount of the line next season. I think that road has a great future before it, passing as it does through an agricultural or pastoral country which extends almost the entire length of the line. The Southern Pacific is also actively at work in southern California; indeed, railroading seems active everywhere through the West. The narrow gauge may possibly be the cause of increased activity in railroad building. Russia has gone in heavily for narrow gauge roads, as has also British India.

There has been an abundant harvest here this season and prices have been unusually high, so that money is abundant and farmers have well-lined pockets.

As a wheat growing country this is, I think, far ahead of the Mississippi Valley, both as regards the quality and the quantity of the grain. To-night a heavy rain storm from the south is raging and the flapping canvass and pattering rain-drops remind us that we are camping out in winter in a rainy climate. Give me the free open prairies and exhilarating breezes of the sunny Western States! This is such an animal life we lead, our entire time being devoted to work out of doors, that the pleasures we have depend largely on blue skies and fine weather.

In Camp; Yamhill Cou nty, }  
Oregon, Nov. 12, 1871. }