

CORRESPONDENCE.

OUR NEW GOLD FIELDS.

Washington, D. C., Nov. 18, 1897.—Senator Wilson of Washington has just returned from Puget Sound, bringing with him wonderful tales of the prosperity of the Pacific northwest. He says the good crops and the Klondike have entirely changed the condition of the states of Washington and Oregon. Said he to me last night:

"If you will imagine a man going to bed expecting the sheriff to set him out next morning and awaking to find his pockets full of money and everything free, you will have the condition of a large number of our people. A year ago the times were hard. Now there is so much money that the people hardly know what to do with it. Our crops in Washington this year have brought us in something like \$50,000,000. This means more than \$100 for every man, woman and child in the state. On the average it amounts to more than \$500 a family. Think of a state where every family has an average bank account of \$500, and you get some idea of Washington today. In some of our counties the average is even higher than this. In Whitman county it is estimated that the crops have brought in a sum equal to \$750 for every man, woman and child there. This would be \$3,750 per family. There are about 23,000 people in that county, so you see what an enormous amount it is."

"Where does all the money come from, senator?"

"The amount I have been speaking of is from the soil alone. A great deal of it came from wheat. I know one man who got \$60,000 for his wheat crop. That man last year was thinking of selling his farm to pay the mortgages on it. He did not expect it to bring much more than his indebtedness. It has now paid all that he owes and has money in the bank. In the county of Sherman, Oregon, there are only seven hundred voters, and that county produced over 3,000,000 bushels of wheat this year. We have one part of the Pacific northwest which we call the 'inland empire.' This comprises a part of Oregon, a part of Washington and one or two counties in Idaho. That region alone produced more than 42,000,000 bushels of wheat this summer, and it has all been sold at good prices."

"How about the other crops, senator?"

"Everything has done well," said Senator Wilson. "We have had big crops of barley oats and hops, and have gotten high prices for everything. Washington is, you know, one of the greatest hop-raising countries of the world. The vines have been loaded and the crop has sold well."

LUMBER IN THE NORTHWEST.

"How about the lumber market?"

"The lumber men are making money all over the West. We have in Oregon and Washington the bulk of the best lumber of the country. We are now exporting millions of dollars' worth of it every year. The lumber is shipped by sea to South America, Asia and Europe and around the Horn of the United States. Our shingle trade has never been so good. We sent 324,000,000 shingles east last September, or enough to give five shingles to every inhabitant of the United States. In the last nine months we have spent about seven times that many. As a result of the grain and lumber shipments, the railroads have had more than they could do. There is no lack of work in Washington now. I am told that \$10,000,000 will be paid in wages for lumber men and wood workers this year."

"How about fish?"

"The salmon crop this year has been exceptionally large. We have pulled \$5,000,000 out of the water, and Oregon has also done an enormous business of the same kind. There are salmon canneries on all the rivers about Puget Sound and on the Columbia river. There are so many salmon in some parts of the Columbia river that they use fish wheels to catch them. These wheels are something like the water wheels of a grist mill, save that they have a wire basket nets attached to the outer rim of the wheel, so that they strike the water, and, going down, scoop up the salmon which are running up the river. As the wheel turns it throws the fish into a chute which carries them off into a boat. Sometimes tons of fish are caught in this way, and I heard of one instance of a scow which was attached to such a fish wheel and left over night. In the morning it was found that so many fish had been run into the scow through the chute that the weight had sunk the scow."

"How about your towns and cities, senator? Are they growing?"

"I think they will begin to grow from now on. The smaller towns have been growing rather than the cities during the hard times. I live in Spokane. We put up 500 new houses there this year, ranging in price from \$40,000 down."

"How about Seattle and Tacoma?"

"They are both in good, healthy condition. The discovery of gold in the Klondike has put new life into them. Three-fourths of all the men who go to Alaska get their outfits in these towns. Every steamship line which goes there has its headquarters on Puget Sound, and goods of all kinds are being manufactured there for the gold miners. Everything in the way of a vessel that will float has been loaded with goods and taken up to Alaska. Great preparations are being made for next spring, and these cities are having a prosperity such as they have never had before."

"Are there many people in Seattle who have not been able to leave for Alaska?"

"No. I think most of those who wanted to go have been able to get away some way or other. Such as have been stopped are now waiting the coming of spring in Alaska. We have a number of boats preparing to start out next year. One company offers to take a man to Dawson City from Seattle and to give him a full outfit, including one year's supplies, for \$600. Another steamship line advertises to leave Seattle about June 10, and every ten days after that. Passages are already being engaged on these boats."

"Have you any idea how many people will go to the Klondike next year?"

"Of course such an estimate would be to a large extent guess work. Still, from the letters we get at Puget Sound we can form some idea. I think there is no doubt but that there will be 100,000. I have just heard that something like 15,000 miners will go from Colorado alone. All of the western states will furnish a large number. There will be thousands from New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio, and companies are being organized in all parts of the United States. Some will go by sea around the Horn, but the most will go across the trunk lines of railroads to Puget Sound. We expect to have a large number drop off and settle in Washington, and of the gold miners who return we hope to get a

good share. In addition to this we are going to supply the most of the food for the outfitting parties, so you can see that the Alaskan gold discoveries are a good thing for us."

"How about the gold mines of your own state, senator? Have any developments been made lately?"

"New discoveries are being made right along all over the West. The various mining districts are being worked over and re-prospected. I visited the old mining camp of Florence, Idaho, last year. This is not far from the boundary of Washington. The gold there was found in a basin surrounded by mountains. The basin was just about as big as that of Washington city. The gold was in the shape of nuggets and dust, and along in 1862 more than fifty million dollars' worth of metal was washed out of the grass roots. The camp was then given up. Gold is now being found much further down. It may exist for a hundred feet below the surface, and if so a vast amount of free gold will be discovered. In the Coeur d'Alene country, in western Washington, we have valuable mines of lead and silver. The Standard mine there is paying \$75,000 a month in dividends. The Le Roy gold mine, in which Senator Turner is interested, is paying dividends of \$50,000 a month, and there are valuable mines on the Colville reservation. There is considerable placer mining. I am doing something of this myself on the Salmon river, in Idaho. We have there a 160-acre farm, the dirt from which we are washing in the river to get out the gold. We find about 10 cents' worth in every cubic yard, and can clean up from ten to fifteen thousand dollars a year. This is not a great deal, but the property cost us very little, and it gives us a big percentage on the investment."

"I suppose you have good facilities on Puget sound for getting information concerning Alaska, senator?"

"Yes," replied Senator Wilson. "Our people talk little else than gold now. I have met scores of men who have just returned from Alaska, and a number who have prospected in other parts of the territory than along the Yukon. There is no doubt about the enormous amount of gold on the Klondike, but I believe if anything that there is more gold in Alaska than in British Columbia. Old prospectors tell me that they have never yet washed earth from an Alaskan stream which has not shown some color. Nearly all the beaches of the Alaskan islands have gold mixed with their sand. On the big island of Kodiak there are men who are always washing the sand to get out the gold, and they make a good profit. The Alaskan Commercial company has mines on one of the islands which pay them \$30,000 a month. The great Treadwell mine keeps pegging along turning out more than half a million dollars' worth of gold every year, and there are undoubtedly great quantities of gold about Juneau. There is gold at Cook's Inlet and on the Copper river, and you have heard of the recent new discoveries in the Munook region below Fort Yukon."

"It is a question whether southeastern Alaska will not prove to be a bigger gold field than the Klondike. There is a man named Smith from my town of Spokane who has just come back, bringing a big lot of free gold with him. He has been prospecting along the Stickeen river, near Fort Wrangel, and he says he has discovered gold which will assay \$100,000 to the ton. The gold is free gold. You can see it in his samples. The yellow specks stick out all over the chunks of ore. He says it lies in a five-foot ledge between walls of porphyry and slate, and that the outcroppings can be traced a distance of 300 feet. The ledge crops out on the side of a mountain half a