A N IMPORTANT QUESTION.

Among the important subjects to come before the constitutional convention at Olympia it is probable that the question as to the title law of the state will have precedence. The question has been before the Oregon public for a long time, and it has been admitted as a state a dozen years ago the subject would have received little or no mention in her constitutional convention; but the commercial development of the territory has now grown so large that the commercial value of lands under the title law may be immeasurably augmented by the use of water front for commercial purposes.

There is no question but that the title to these lands will vest in the state. It has even been held by highest authority that the state is the proprietor, not only the trustee, holding the lands under the territorial condition in trust, as it were, for the coming state, could not dispose of them—a singular and far-fetched conclusion, it would appear, since, unquestionably, the United States is sole proprietor of the territory, and might sell the whole of it to a foreign power. But Judge Hill, in his luminous essay on the subject, published in The Oregonian last Thursday, shows that those principles are well settled as to the legal status of these lands, viz:

First—They belong to the state by virtue of its sovereignty emanating from its constitution, by law of the land, and it has absolute domain over, and power of disposition of them, no matter whether occupied by private individuals or unoccupied.

This is all the land by the United States during the territorial condition of the country, covering any of these title lands, confers title upon the grantees;

Third—That riparian or littoral proprietors of land fronting upon these title lands have no rights in them when the state is in law, bound to respect.

It is in the highest degree necessary that there shall be a definite settlement as to these lands, in the constitution itself. If the subject is left open to speculation it will be a source of endless jobbery and corruption. It will defile and scandalize the politics of the state and furnish the material that will soon debase the public conscience; it will also be beyond the ability of any legislative body, and will poison the fountains of law and of justice. The rightful power of the state over these lands should therefore be asserted by constitutional enactment. Judge Hill's treatment of this subject is one of the most valuable parts of his great essay, and the constitutional provisions he suggests appear to be fully adequate to the conditions and requirements of the subject.

Morning Oregonian, July 6, 1889, at 4